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Responsive Social Support to Disclosures of Racial Discrimination: Expectations and Implications for Well-Being

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Objectives: Social support helps people of color (POC) cope with stressors such as racial discrimination. Yet when POC disclose lived experiences of racism, confidants may fail to provide support that meets disclosers' emotional needs. Drawing on theories of shared reality and emotion reappraisal, we compare two emotion-focused social support approaches: *validation* (conveying that recipients' feelings or responses are appropriate) and *reframing* (seeking to reduce recipients' distress by offering a more positive perspective). ***Method:*** Two POC samples of Canadian young adults (35% South Asian, 32% East Asian, 9% Black, 8% Southeast Asian, 7% Middle Eastern, 2% Latino/a/e, 1% Indigenous, 6% other; 78% women, 19% men, 2% nonbinary; mean age = 19.9) recalled a lived experience of racism then were randomly assigned to imagine disclosing it to a White or same-race confidant. ***Results:*** In Study 1 ($N = 430$), POC rated validation as more helpful than reframing and forecasted larger gaps between desired and expected support from White than same-race confidants. Study 2 ($N = 651$) found that (a) experiences of racism are disclosed to same-race and White confidants more often than other groups and (b) imagining a confidant's reframing (vs. validating) response led to worse overall affect, less perceived responsiveness, less racial shared reality, and more rumination. In both studies, the gap between validation and reframing on perceived support increased for experiences that participants more strongly attributed to race, especially when disclosed to White confidants. ***Conclusions:*** Implications for providing responsive emotional support for lived experiences of racism are discussed.

Public Significance Statement

This research finds that when people of color (POC) anticipate discussing a personal experience of racial discrimination, they tend to prefer responses that validate their perspective over those that reframe the experience in a positive light. This preference is even stronger when POC imagine a White rather than same-race listener and more strongly attribute their experience to racism. Anticipating validation rather than reframing led POC to feel less upset, more supported and empowered, and less likely to ruminate on the experience.

Keywords: racism, discrimination, social support, coping, rumination

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For each study, the authors provide full materials, deidentified datafiles, and reproducible analysis code (https://osf.io/2zjxb) and the Study 2 preregistration (https://osf.io/dt5wq). To support open science, the online Supplemental Material (including all referenced appendices) reports secondary measures and analyses. This line of research is reported completely, including all studies conducted to test these hypotheses, as well as all exclusions, conditions, and measures.

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continued

Experiences of racism remain common in Western societies, including Canada, where experiences of "everyday" racism remain a fact of life for many people of color (POC). In national polling from 2024, 51% of POC report having experienced discrimination in the past 5 years (Statistics Canada, 2024) and over two thirds of POC in the participant pool where this research was conducted reported having personally experienced negative treatment based on their race. Contending with racial discrimination takes a cumulative toll (Hurd et al., 2022) and is associated with reduced mental and physical health (Brooks et al., 2021; Hudson et al., 2012, 2016; Madubata et al., 2018; Roach et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2014; Statistics Canada, 2024; D. R. Williams & Mohammed, 2013). In one study, experiencing everyday racial discrimination emerged as the strongest predictor of Black Canadians' depressive symptoms (Cénat et al., 2021), and perceived racial discrimination has been linked to worse mental health (including heightened distress and reduced belonging) in racially diverse POC populations in Canada (Nepton et al., 2025; M. T. Williams et al., 2022).

Social Support Strategies for Coping With Racial Discrimination

Social support—such as discussing discrimination experiences with friends or family—is a pervasive and powerful buffer against the harmful effects of racism (Jacob et al., 2023; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Indeed, appropriate social support has been deemed "one of the most beneficial and effective coping mechanisms used to counter racial trauma" (Jacob et al., 2023, p. 407), helping "buffer the sting of oppression" (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 417). For example, social support specifically tailored to address racism has been found to buffer against negative physical and mental health outcomes for Black Americans facing discrimination (Marshburn & Campos, 2022; McNeil Smith et al., 2020; Seawell et al., 2014). In a sample of Iranian, Korean, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, and Irish newcomers communities in Canada, same-race social support protected against discrimination-related depressive symptoms (Kim & Noh, 2016). However, the stress of racism may be amplified if others provide support that fails to meet the discloser's needs. Unhelpful reactions recounted by POC include minimizing or dismissing their experiences (Dix et al., 2021; Roberts & Rizzo, 2021), lack of understanding (Holoien et al., 2015), and defending perpetrators (Marshburn, 2016). In sum, when responding to disclosures of racial discrimination, the type of social support provided matters for psychological well-being.

Theoretical Perspectives on Effective Social Support

The general aim of social support is alleviating distress and helping the recipient cope with negative situations, though forms of social support vary widely in their effectiveness. For example, support recipients almost always see expressions of caring as helpful and blaming as unhelpful (Burleson, 2003; Rafaeli & Gleason, 2009). Effective support involves responsiveness—a construct describing how people attend to and support each other's needs and goals (Reis & Gable, 2015). Optimal matching theory (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) and models of effective support (Rini & Dunkel Schetter, 2010) emphasize alignment between support provision and recipients' individualized needs, which conveys that the support provider notices and understands their stressors (Cavallo et al., 2016; Cutrona et al., 2007; Horowitz et al., 2001).

In conversations about negative experiences, potential support providers may deploy two distinct emotion-focused social support approaches: validation and reframing (Marigold et al., 2014). *Validation* conveys that the recipient's feelings or responses are appropriate given the negative situation, such as acknowledging the difficulty of the experience. *Reframing* seeks to reduce the recipient's distress by offering a more positive perspective such as predicting improvement, downplaying negativity, or highlighting personal growth. Relevant psychological theories and literatures give rise to competing predictions about whether (and why) validation versus reframing effectively supports POC coping with racial discrimination, as outlined below.

Validation and Shared Reality

When someone discloses a negative personal experience, validation conveys understanding and acceptance of their perspective, such as assurances that their "feelings, actions, or responses … are normal and appropriate to the situation" (Marigold et al., 2014, p. 57) and is nearly always considered helpful (Burleson, 2003, 2009; Holmstrom & Burleson, 2011; Servaty-Seib & Burleson, 2007). Feeling understood—believing someone accurately perceives one's "needs, constructs, feelings, self-definition, and life predicaments" (Reis & Shaver, 1988, p. 380)—is recognized in the clinical literature as "one of the most rewarding of human experiences, and all too rare" (Rogers, 1961, p. 323). In both same- and cross-race friendships, feeling understood and accepted mediates the link from self-disclosure to intimacy, highlighting its interpersonal benefits (Shelton et al., 2010). Felt understanding and acceptance between Asian, Black, and Latine same-race friends often exceed that in cross-race friendships (Debrosse et al., 2023)

conceptualization, supervision, validation, and writing–review and editing, and an equal role in investigation, methodology, and visualization. Pamela Campos-Ordóñez played a supporting role in conceptualization, writing–original draft, and writing–review and editing and an equal role in methodology. Ashling Ayekun played a supporting role in data curation, formal analysis, validation, and writing–review and editing. Mahsa Edalatkhah played a supporting role in conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, project administration, and preregistration and an equal role in investigation and methodology. Hilary B. Bergsieker played a lead role in conceptualization, data curation, funding acquisition, resources, supervision, validation, writing–original draft, writing–review and editing, and preregistration, a supporting role in formal analysis, and an equal role in methodology and visualization.

The data are available at https://osf.io/2zjxb.

The experiment materials are available at https://osf.io/2zjxb.

The preregistered design and analysis plan is accessible at https://osf.io/dt5wq.

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and negatively predict depressive affect (Debrosse et al., 2024). Focus group discussions of racism experiences and social support point to mutual understanding as a primary (often necessary) theme for support to feel helpful (Marshburn & Campos, 2022).

Because validation involves expressions of mutual understanding, we predict that it will improve relational and mental health outcomes via increases in *shared reality*—the perception of sharing inner states regarding some aspect of the world (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Unlike empathy, shared reality not only requires similar states (e.g., sadness) but also a matching referent (Echterhoff et al., 2009). For example, if a White support provider feels angry that a POC recipient had a stressful experience, but the recipient feels angry about the persistence of systemic racism, empathy may be present but their realities are not shared. This example highlights a need for domain-specific *racial shared reality*—perceived consensus with another person about the societal role and relevance of race in daily life (Yantis, Green, & Taylor, 2025). White people who demonstrated greater understanding of the reality of racial bias were more likely to validate Black people who confronted racial bias (Dix & Devine, 2024). For POC, higher racial shared reality boosts felt identity safety with White people (Yantis, Green, & Taylor, 2025) and sharing similar racial attitudes (implying racial shared reality) predicts relational well-being in POC's same-race conversations and friendships (Garcia et al., 2017).

Reframing and Emotion Reappraisal

Our studies compare validation to another type of emotion-focused support: reframing, whereby support providers seek to offer a more "positive" perspective. From the perspective of the provider, reframing is typically intended to reduce recipients' distress and rumination (i.e., brooding or dwelling) on such experiences. Per optimal matching theory, for stressors that feel uncontrollable (where nothing can prevent their recurrence, as may be the case for everyday racism), emotional support that lessens the intensity of recipients' negative feelings is especially needed (Cutrona, 1990) and potentially creates an opportunity for reframing to be beneficial.

Although reframing is a multidimensional construct, here, we draw on prior theorizing that defines *positive reframing* in a social support context as "verbal support that includes things like reassurances that the negative event is ultimately beneficial to the recipient's growth, that improvement is very likely, and that the problem is minor and ultimately insignificant," with the caveat that "this kind of support may be intended to be caring and helpful, but it may be perceived as dismissing or invalidating" (Marigold et al., 2014, p. 57). Evidence is mixed on whether such reframing is beneficial to recipients (Clark et al., 1998; Dunkel-Schetter et al., 1992; Jones & Burleson, 1997), possibly due to variability in its delivery (or measurement). Reframing-related support messages may focus on offering alternatives for the recipients' perspective and/or feelings about any given negative experience, so successful reframing messages are more context-dependent than validation responses.

Relatedly, a growing clinical and affective science literature finds benefits of *reappraisal*, a cognitive strategy that entails reframing one's assessment of a stimulus or situation to change its emotional impact (Gross, 1998, 2015), typically to reduce the affective toll of a negative event (Ford et al., 2017). Multiple meta-analyses (Aldao et al., 2010; Riepenhausen et al., 2022; Stover et al., 2024; Webb et al., 2012) find that reappraisal can help alleviate negative stress states, repair mood, improve mental health, increase personal resilience, and weaken links from stressors to depressive symptoms (Troy et al., 2010), malignant physiological responses (Jamieson et al., 2013), and suicidal thoughts (Franz et al., 2021).

Reappraisal is theorized as an alternative to rumination (e.g., see Duker et al., 2022), which is a risk factor for depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). Experiencing racism is associated with rumination on such experiences (Burford, 2009; Hill & Hoggard, 2018; Hoggard et al., 2012; Miranda et al., 2013), with rumination in turn predicting (i.e., mediating) negative mental health outcomes (Burford, 2009; Miranda et al., 2013). In contrast, reappraisal attenuates the link from racial discrimination to anxiety (Juang et al., 2016) and depression (Teng et al., 2023; Young et al., 2022). Reappraisal is an umbrella term for multiple cognitive tactics, the two most common of which are distancing and reinterpretation (Denny & Ochsner, 2014). *Reinterpretation* involves "mentally changing the meaning of the actions, context, and/or outcomes" of an emotionally evocative stimulus (Denny & Ochsner, 2014, p. 426) or "subjectively reinterpreting stressful and adverse experiences in a more positive manner" (Stover et al., 2024, p. 1). For instance, an event may be reframed such that it "is not as bad as it first seemed … or help is on the way" (Denny & Ochsner, 2014, p. 426). Positive reframing of one's own racism experiences (e.g., "I looked for something good in what happened" and "I tried to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive") is also associated with greater positive affect among undergraduates (Pearson et al., 2014).

Notably, these correlational benefits of opting to reframe one's *own* experiences of racism may not emerge when support providers attempt to reframe *someone else's* experiences. In particular, some reinterpretation-based reframing may challenge or deny race-related causes of such experiences. Reinterpretation attempts that minimize racism are often cited by POC as particularly unhelpful (Dix et al., 2025; Marshburn, 2016). In the words of one participant, "when I talk to minorities or White people who, um, who deny that racism is as big as it is, that, it kinda saps the hope that we're gonna get over this one day" (Marshburn, 2016, p. 27).

Nevertheless, recent experiments find that *nonminimizing* reinterpretations of discrimination experiences can benefit POC. Experimentally reframing past experiences of oppression by asking people to reframe their own past experiences of oppression by reflecting on identity-specific strengths (Silverman et al., 2023) and generating positive appraisals in the form of "redemption narratives" (Duker et al., 2022, 2024) led to positive outcomes (e.g., greater academic persistence, reduced negative affect). This works suggests that reframing racism can be adaptive in certain contexts, even when externally prompted, but its efficacy may depend on how (and potentially by whom) reframing is suggested. Thus, despite the promise of spontaneous reappraisal in clinical contexts, we predicted that POC disclosing lived experiences of discrimination would prefer validation to reframing and that reframing—particularly when perceived as minimizing—would lead to more negative psychological outcomes.

Contextual Moderators

We theorize that effective support for POC disclosing experiences of racism also varies based on the race of the support provider and the degree of ambiguity in the specific experience.

Discussing Racism in Same-Race or Cross-Race Contexts

Concerns about unsupportive reactions are likely to be higher for cross-race interactions, especially when POC discuss experiences of racism with White people. For example, in *Why I Am No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, British journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge (Eddo-Lodge, 2017) recounts the frustration of discussing her lived experiences of race and racism as a Black woman with White friends and acquaintances who often questioned the reality or relevance of her experiences. In (separate) studies of discrimination experiences and social support, Black Americans experienced less positive affect when discussing past experiences of racism with non-Black than Black strangers (Marshburn et al., 2024), and 43% reported that talking to non-Black friends about racism made them feel worse (Marshburn & Campos, 2022). Disclosing experiences of racism to a White rather than same-race person may feel riskier because White people sometimes derogate POC who bring up racism as "complainers" (Kaiser & Miller, 2001), "self-interested"(Gardner & Ryan, 2020), or "overreacting" (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Even among friends, Black people often feel more hesitant to discuss race-related experiences with White (vs. same-race) friends, who may not understand the role of race in the experience (Sanchez et al., 2022).

Experience Ambiguity: Attributions to Race

Coping with racial stressors involves perceiving negative experiences as being due to one's race, then identifying appropriate resources—including social support—to address them (Ajrouch et al., 2010; Trawalter et al., 2009). We posit that the effectiveness of validation versus reframing for supporting psychological and emotional well-being may vary based on how strongly POC attribute specific experiences to their race. For overt, unambiguous experiences of racism, POC may center feeling heard and having one's emotions validated. However, many day-to-day discrimination experiences (e.g., poor service) contain elements of ambiguity (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986) that can create some uncertainty about the true cause(s) of one's mistreatment. Making attributions of racial discrimination can entail expending significant emotional and cognitive energy on a "process of questioning one's observations and perceptions, replaying a situation in one's mind over and over again … which can be stressful above and beyond the original experience" (Harrell, 2000, p. 45). To resolve the ambiguity of whether negative treatment was race related, POC may turn to others to discuss an experience, seeking social support that provides clarity about the event. Making sense of an ambiguous experience can include discussing its causes, such as whether mistreatment was due to racism or other factors—potentially with a degree of reframing.

This prediction aligns with our prior studies in which participants rated actual comments from previous White participants to POC who had disclosed either racial or nonracial negative experiences. Validating comments were perceived as more responsive (i.e., supportive) than reframing comments, and this difference was significantly larger for racial (vs. nonracial) experiences and among participants who more strongly attributed the recounted experiences to race (Campos-Ordóñez, 2022). The more that these experiences were seen as unambiguously racist, the more participants saw validation as more supportive than reframing.

In addition, we theorize that receptivity to receiving reframing rather than validation will also vary based on the race of the person providing support. As noted previously, someone else's effort to positively reframe one's experience often runs the risk of appearing to downplay its negativity (unlike validation, which explicitly affirms severity). Given that White individuals are seen by POC as generally less likely to agree with them on racial issues (Yantis, Green, Marshburn, et al., 2025), their attempts to reframe blatant examples of racism may imply misunderstanding and be especially unwelcome or aversive. We reasoned that POC may be wary of reframing from White (vs. same-race) people—preferring validation instead—especially when disclosing discrimination experiences seen as unambiguously racist.

We hypothesize that when disclosing negative experiences to White people, greater certainty that these experiences were due to one's race will lead POC to more strongly reject reframing as unhelpful and prefer validation. In contrast, POC may be somewhat receptive to reframing (even from White people) when disclosing ambiguously racial negative experiences.

Overview of Studies

Two experiments centering the perspectives of POC addressed the anticipated likelihood, perceived helpfulness, and psychological impact of receiving validation versus reframing when disclosing a lived experience of racial discrimination. Study 1 used both open- and close-ended measures to document which reactions participants expect versus desire when disclosing an experience of discrimination and assess where gaps emerge (i.e., under- or overprovision of support). Study 2 had two parts: Part A measured how often POC reported having disclosed a recalled experience of racism to same-race, White, or cross-race POC confidants, and Part B then experimentally varied which type of support (validation or reframing) participants imagine receiving, testing implications for psychological well-being. Study 1 used established measures of validation and reframing drawn from the social support literature (Marigold et al., 2014), then Study 2 probes nuances of reframing by testing distinct "comforting" and "minimizing" variants.

Each experiment compared same- and cross-race interactions by assigning participants to imagine disclosing a personal experience of racism to either a same-race or White confidant. We designed these studies to capture a range of positive and negative reactions that POC may anticipate based on lived experience, without presupposing that racism disclosures are always motivated by seeking support (e.g., some disclosures seek to educate White people about experiences for which POC already have closure; Marshburn & Campos, 2022) or that all conversation partners try to respond supportively, so we describe the people hearing these disclosures as "confidants" rather than "support providers" throughout.

Prior work attests that same-race community members play a special role in providing social support after racial trauma (Joseph & Kuo, 2009; Kuo, 2013; Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006; Marshburn & Campos, 2022), with higher levels of felt understanding even relative to cross-race POC (Debrosse et al., 2025). Conversely, reports of White people providing unhelpful reactions to such disclosures abound (Dix et al., 2025; Holoien et al., 2015; Marshburn, 2016).

We hypothesized that relative to predictions for same-race confidants, reactions expected from White confidants would diverge more from desired reactions (Study 1) and lead to worse anticipated psychological outcomes (Study 2). Each study also tested whether

comparisons between validation and reframing vary by the degree to which participants attributed their experience to their race. An additional goal of Study 2 was assessing the frequency with which POC report disclosing personal experiences of racial discrimination to White and same-race confidants, to confirm the ecological validity of our experimental conditions.

Transparency and Openness

Study materials, anonymized data sets, and analysis code are publicly available at https://osf.io/2zjxb. The Online Supplemental Materials provide appendices with additional methodological details and analyses.

Analytic Approach

Unless otherwise specified, analyses use linear regression models (equivalent to analysis of variance models but with directional effects). We effects-coded categorical variables (e.g., confidant race: −1 = same-race, 1 = White) and standardized continuous predictors (e.g., attributions to race) to make lower order effects interpretable (Aiken & West, 1991). Unstandardized effect sizes are *b*s for specific regression parameters. Standardized effect sizes are *d*s (computed per Rosenthal & Rubin, 2003; Equation 3); this operative effect size (also denoted d_o) represents "the mean condition difference divided only by those variance components that contribute to its standard error" (Judd et al., 2017). We report *p* values to 3 decimal places in text and by four thresholds in tables (.001, .01, .05, .1) to facilitate appropriate evaluation of them as "graded measures of the strength of evidence against the null hypothesis" (Amrhein et al., 2017, p. 1). This approach avoids the pitfalls of equating all "significant" results—effects with $p < .01$ are more replicable than those where $.01 \leq p < .05$ (Bogdan, 2025)—or falsely asserting the null hypothesis whenever $p > .05$ (Amrhein et al., 2019). For difference scores, whose comparison to zero affects interpretation, we also report 95% CIs.

Study 1: Anticipated Reactions From Same-Race and White Confidants

Study 1 compares expected and desired types of social support among POC randomly assigned to imagine disclosing a specific personal experience of racial discrimination to a same-race or White confidant. Within-participant factors included question framing (expected or desired reactions, assessed in counterbalanced order) and support type (validation, reframing).

Hypotheses

We predicted that participants would rate validation more highly than reframing for both expected and desired reactions to racial discrimination disclosures, especially for White rather than same-race confidants. We also hypothesized that for disclosures to White—relative to same-race—confidants, participants would *expect* to receive less validation and more reframing, but they would *desire* less reframing (we had no firm prediction for desired validation). When contrasting expected versus desired levels support, we predicted that such support gaps would be larger for White than same-race confidants. We explored whether confidant race-based gaps in participants' relative preference for validation versus reframing were stronger for experiences of racism that felt less ambiguous (i.e., higher on self-reported attributions to race).

Method

Participants

We recruited undergraduates at a large public university who identified their primary race as any group besides White and answered "Yes" to "Can you recall a time when you experienced negative treatment based on your race?" in a separate prescreening questionnaire. The final sample of 430 participants included 34% self-identified as South Asian, 30% as East Asian, 9% as Middle Eastern, 9% as Black, 8% as Southeast Asian (for exclusions and full demographics, see Supplemental Appendix A). Sample size was determined by recruiting across three consecutive terms.

Procedure

Participants completed this online survey for course credit. First, participants were prompted to recall and describe a time they experienced negative treatment related to their race/ethnicity. To minimize potential distress, we encouraged participants to recall a "typical or 'everyday'" situation and provided two experiences from past research (Carter & Murphy, 2017). Coding of participants' recalled experiences revealed that most were perpetrated by White people (78%) and complete strangers (64%); occurred in public (55%); and had family (24%), friends (16%), or acquaintances (15%) present (for coding categories and sample participant experiences see Supplemental Appendix B). Coders categorized 57% as reflecting subtle/ambiguous racism and 43% as reflecting overt/blatant racism. Participants shared experiences like the following:

> I was meeting my friend's family for the first time. When I introduced myself, they started to make comments like "your English is so good" and "When did you come to Canada?" I felt insulted that they had just assumed I was an immigrant because of the colour of my skin. After I had told them that I was born and raised in Canada, they continued to ask questions about my "culture."

Confidant Race Manipulation. Next, we randomly assigned participants to "think of a specific friend[1] of the same gender and similar age" who was "the same or similar race/ethnicity as you" ($n = 210$) or "White" ($n = 220$), and then to provide this person's initials (embedded in later survey prompts). The next instructions situated this person as the participant's confidant: "Now, please imagine that shortly after the experience described below, you ran into this person (with initials [XX]) and they asked how you were doing, so you told them what had just happened."

Anticipated Support. Participants were then asked to write two to three sentences describing the reactions they expected or desired, on separate pages in counterbalanced order. After these open-ended responses, participants rated randomly interspersed reactions (including validation and reframing) on how much they were expected or desired, also in counterbalanced order.

Last came demographics, attention checks, and individual differences (see Supplemental Appendix D).

[1] On an exploratory basis, we also varied whether this person was a "friend" or "acquaintance" (see Supplemental Appendix C).

Measures

Correlations are reported for all support measures (see Supplemental Appendix E).

Open-Ended Support Descriptions. To capture participants' initial, self-generated support descriptions, we asked participants "How would you *expect* this person to react? Please describe the reactions you think are most likely" and "How would you *want* this person to react? Please describe the reactions you think are most helpful" [emphasis in original].

Participants' written responses were later coded independently by three condition-unaware research assistants whose ratings were averaged (for interrater reliabilities, see Table 1). Coders rated indicators of validation (empathizing, recognizing difficulty) and reframing (minimizing, encouraging) used in prior work (Marigold et al., 2014), as well as two new overarching measures of general validation and reframing. We based the general validation measure on definitions of validation as conveying that someone's feelings and responses are normal and appropriate (e.g., Marigold et al., 2014). Our general reframing measure parallels prior measures of positive reframing for racism (e.g., "I tried to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive"; Pearson et al., 2014, p. 94), adapted to the confidant perspective. Coders rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) the extent to which confidants would "acknowledge and validate the participant's negative reaction (upset, sad, angry)" (*general validation*), "express sympathy or empathy" (*empathizing*), "acknowledge the difficulty/frustration/unfairness of the situation" (*recognizing difficulty*), "try to shed positive light onto the outcome of situation" (*general reframing*), "try to minimize the problem, and suggest that the participant shouldn't be so upset" (*minimizing*), and "say something encouraging to the participant" (*encouraging*).

Close-Ended Support Ratings. Participants then answered the same questions (on separate counterbalanced pages) about how they expected and wanted the confidant to react to their disclosed experience, but this time they rated the likelihood and helpfulness of various specific reactions, including both focal support types (validation, reframing) and other plausible reactions (humor, freezing, racism recognition, offering help, blaming, claiming understanding; see Supplemental Appendix F) not central to our research questions. Participants rated items from 1 (*not at all [likely/helpful]*) to 7 (*extremely [likely/helpful]*). Validation items were: "Validating what I am feeling," "Telling me that it's okay to feel the way I do," "Agreeing that my experience is serious," and "Showing that they feel bad about my situation, too" (for reliabilities, see Table 1). Reframing items were: "Trying to downplay my negative feelings," "Reminding me worse things can happen," and "Pointing out the upsides of my situation". We dropped an unreliable fourth item: "Trying to cheer me up".

Experience Severity and Attributions to Race. After all support-related outcomes, participants reported features of their recalled experience (see Supplemental Appendix B) and rated how *upsetting*, *negative*, and *hurtful* they found it (averaged into a severity composite) and the extent to which they believed it was due to their race (i.e., attribution to race), from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). On average, participants characterized their experiences as moderately to very severe ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.99$) and very much due to their race ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.95$).

Table 1
Expected and Desired Support by Confidant Race

Measure	*N*	α	Confidant race: Same-race *M* (*SD*)	Confidant race: White *M* (*SD*)	Difference: *t*	Difference: *d*
Validation-related support coding						
Expected general validation	428	.69	2.57 (1.16)	2.31 (1.06)	2.54*	−0.25
Desired general validation	427	.74	2.92 (1.23)	2.71 (1.30)	1.60	−0.16
Expected empathy	428	.76	2.55 (1.26)	2.63 (1.28)	0.55	0.05
Desired empathy	427	.75	2.71 (1.25)	2.61 (1.32)	0.79	−0.08
Expected recognizing difficulty	428	.63	2.02 (0.99)	1.94 (0.95)	1.09	−0.11
Desired recognizing difficulty	427	.65	2.09 (1.03)	2.05 (1.06)	0.33	−0.03
Reframing-related support coding						
Expected general reframing[a]	428	.55	1.08 (0.28)	1.13 (0.41)	1.67†	0.16
Desired general reframing	427	.48	1.09 (0.33)	1.05 (0.21)	1.56	−0.15
Expected minimizing[a]	428	.87	1.28 (0.71)	1.47 (0.97)	2.35*	0.23
Desired minimizing	427	.40	1.09 (0.30)	1.08 (0.29)	0.23	−0.02
Expected encouraging	428	.61	1.61 (0.84)	1.55 (0.81)	0.85	−0.08
Desired encouraging	427	.54	1.76 (0.85)	1.55 (0.79)	2.60**	−0.25
Close-ended support ratings						
Expected validation	429	.86	5.61 (1.23)	5.02 (1.38)	4.72***	−0.46
Desired validation	430	.80	5.90 (1.06)	5.73 (1.17)	1.63	−0.16
Expected reframing[a]	429	.63	2.74 (1.25)	2.72 (1.43)	0.18	−0.02
Desired reframing	430	.63	2.69 (1.25)	2.17 (1.16)	4.54***	−0.44

Note. Regression models tested effects of confidant race (−1 = same-race, 1 = White), while covarying for confidant relation (acquaintance or friend). α = average reliability across raters (open-ended coding) or items (close-ended ratings).
[a] Homogeneity of variance violation ($p < .05$).
† $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results

Our main analyses assess the extent to which participants expect and desire receiving validation versus reframing, related gaps in anticipated support, and variation in these effects due to confidant race (for exploratory analyses of other reactions, e.g., humor, see Supplemental Appendix F).

Prefacing our core analyses, we note that several tested outcomes had more variable responses in the White than same-race confidant condition, violating Levene's homogeneity of variance test (see *SD*s in Table 1). All variance ratios were well below 4, so no statistical corrections were needed (Howell, 2012), but this differential variability in anticipated support is noteworthy because it aligns with our theorizing about the greater uncertainty or apprehension that POC may feel when disclosing to White rather than same-race confidants.

Confidant Relation

On an exploratory basis, we tested whether the confidant's relation to the participant as a friend or acquaintance (randomly assigned) affected anticipated support. Participants expected more validation from friends than acquaintances, but confidant relation did not significantly moderate effects of confidant race on any focal outcomes (see Supplemental Appendix C), so it is retained only as a covariate in all later models.

Support Gaps

Our analysis of support gaps extends prior comparative work on support provision. Past work on support gaps in couples directly contrasted experienced support, defined as "the level or degree of support an individual feels he or she actually receives from a particular other," and desired support, defined as "the level of support that one would like to receive from a particular other" (Xu & Burleson, 2001, p. 539). Similarly, analyses of support provision following disclosures of negative experiences between friends has contrasted ratings of the likelihood versus helpfulness of specific types of social support, including validation and reframing (Marigold et al., 2014; Study 4). Rather than relying exclusively on repeated-measures analysis of variance to test comparisons, we tested support gaps via analytically equivalent regression models on difference scores (e.g., testing whether each intercept differs from zero).

To quantify each support gap, we calculated difference scores for each support type, computed as each participant's expected score minus their desired score. Values further from 0 in either direction thus indicate a larger gap (i.e., discrepancy) between expected and desired support: Values above 0 indicate participants expecting to receive more of a given support type than they desire (i.e., overprovision), whereas values below 0 indicate a desire for more of that support type than they expect to receive (i.e., underprovision).

Open-Ended Support Descriptions. In participants' open-ended descriptions of how they expected a White (vs. same-race) confidant to react, coders detected less *general validation* ($p = .011$, $d = -0.25$), marginally more *general reframing* ($p = .096$, $d = 0.16$), and more *minimizing* ($p = .019$, $d = 0.23$), but no confidant race differences in the other three coding categories (see Table 1). For coding of desired support, only one confidant race effect emerged, such that participants wanted less *encouragement* from White (vs. same-race) confidants ($p = .010$, $d = -0.25$). Confidant race effects on gaps between expected versus desired support emerged specifically for *general reframing* ($p = .017$, $d = 0.23$) and *minimizing* ($p = .018$, $d = 0.23$), in each case with greater overprovision of each support type from White (vs. same-race) confidants.

In summary, we found evidence for confidant race effects on several reframing-related coding categories, including expected *minimizing* and desired *encouraging*; however, no confidant race effects emerged for our subindices of validation (*empathizing* or *recognizing difficulty*). These results merit cautious interpretation because many reframing-related categories were rarely mentioned (with means close to 1 on a 1–5 scale; see Table 1), and restriction of range also affects interrater reliability.

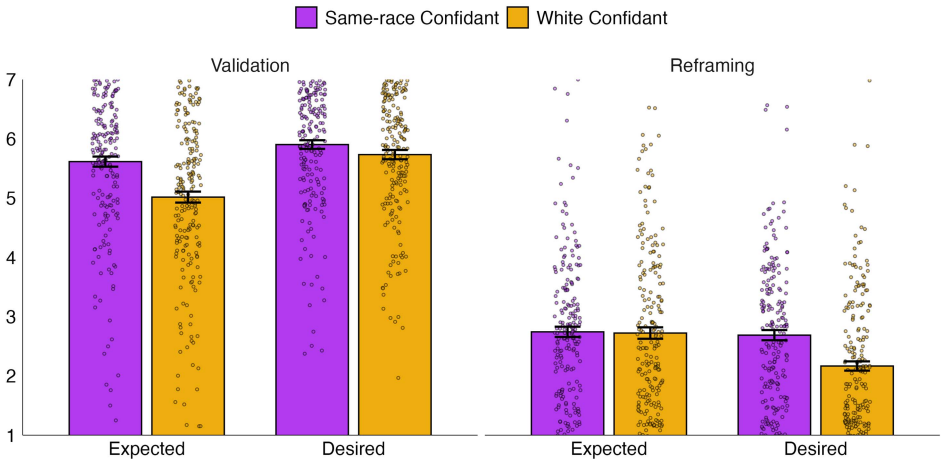
Close-Ended Support Ratings. We now turn to close-ended ratings of anticipated support, where broader variation and more normal distributions enable more robust tests of our predictions. Participants *expected* less validation from White than same-race confidants ($p < .001$, $d = -0.46$), as predicted (see Figure 1); notably, *desired* validation did not differ appreciably ($p = .104$, $d = -0.16$). Counter to our predictions, *expected* reframing ($p = .855$, $d = -0.02$) did not differ by confidant race, though participants *desired* reframing less from White than same-race confidants ($p < .001$, $d = -0.44$).

Gaps in Expected Versus Desired Support. We first tested whether participants generally anticipated gaps between expected and desired support when disclosing personal experiences of racism. Overall, participants expected *underprovision* of coded general validation, recognizing difficulty, and close-ended validation; but *overprovision* of minimizing and close-ended reframing, as indicated by 95% confidence intervals excluding zero (see Table 2). Supplemental tests of close-ended support ratings found support gaps in the same direction for the five largest self-identified racial groups (significant for South and East Asian participants; more variable for groups with *ns* of 36–40; see Supplemental Appendix G).

Support gap magnitude (or direction) differed by confidant race for two of reframing-related coding categories (general reframing: $p = .017$, $d = 0.23$; minimizing: $p = .018$, $d = 0.23$) and both close-ended ratings (validation: $p < .001$, $d = -0.33$; reframing: $p < .001$, $d = 0.42$; see Figure 2A); no differences emerged for coded validation-related coding categories. In each instance, the support gap was larger for White confidents and significant (with a 95% CI excluding 0), indicating *underprovision* of validation and *overprovision* of reframing. For same-race confidants, the reframing-related support gaps were either attenuated (for validation and minimizing) or not significant (for general and open-ended reframing).

Support Comparisons: Validation Versus Reframing. We next compared validation and reframing directly, to test for variation based on confidant race in participants' *relative* expectation about whether validation versus reframing is more likely (i.e., expected validation—expected reframing) or *relatively* preferred (i.e., desired validation—desired reframing). Overall and for each confidant race, participants reported validation as both more likely and more helpful than reframing, in open-ended support coding and close-ended ratings (all 95% CIs exclude 0, see Table 3). These support comparisons for close-ended validation versus reframing also emerged

Figure 1
Close-Ended Support Ratings by Confidant Race



Note. Expected validation and desired reframing differed by confidant race. Bars = 95% confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

within each of the five largest racial groups (all *p*s < .001; see Supplemental Appendix G).

Participants' relative expectation of receiving validation versus reframing shrank for White versus same-race confidants for both expected open- and close-ended support (open-ended: $p = .008$, $d = -0.26$; close-ended: $p = .006$, $d = -0.27$). Conversely, their relative preference for validation over reframing grew even larger when disclosing to White rather than same-race confidants, as reflected in close-ended ratings of desired support ($p = .038$, $d = 0.20$; see Figure 2B). As noted previously, these tests of "differences in differences" are equivalent to mixed-factorial tests of a two-way support type by confidant race interaction. Relative support expectations for validation versus reframing varied for White versus same-race confidants (for both self-generated support descriptions and close-ended support ratings), and relative support preferences also varied (specifically for close-ended support ratings), but in the opposite direction. Thus, anticipated support from White (vs. same-race) confidants aligned less well with support preferences of POC.

Moderation by Self-Reported Attributions to Race. Next, we investigated whether the strength of this relative preference for validation versus reframing may depend on the racial ambiguity of a disclosed experience, especially when disclosing to White confidants. Specifically, we tested whether the difference in the rated helpfulness of validation versus reframing (see final row of Table 2) varied based on the extent to which participants attributed their experience to race (from *not at all* to *extremely*).[2]

Our first moderation model for Study 1 directly tested effects of attributions to race and confidant race on the validation versus reframing gap (covarying for confidant relation). The initial model (see Table 4) revealed that participants desired validation much more than reframing, $b = 3.39$, $t(424) = 41.69$, $p < .001$, and that this preference increased marginally for disclosures to White (vs. same-race) confidants, $b = -0.09$, $t(424) = 1.70$, $p = .089$, and significantly for experiences more strongly attributed to race, $b = 0.42$, $t(424) = 5.16$, $p < .001$. As hypothesized, confidant race and attributions to race interacted to predict participants' desire for validation over reframing, $b = 0.21$, $t(424) = 2.56$, $p = .011$ (see Figure 3).

We probed this interaction by testing simple slopes of attributions to race within each dummy-coded confidant race condition (see last two rows of Table 4) and testing desired validation and reframing separately (see last two columns of Table 4). Desire for validation over reframing was only marginally related to attributions to race for disclosures to same-race confidants, $b = 0.21$, $t(424) = 1.84$, $p = .067$, but for disclosures to White confidants we found strong evidence of moderation: The more participants attributed their experience to race, the more they rated validation as more helpful than reframing, $b = 0.63$, $t(424) = 5.46$, $p < .001$. Testing desired validation and desired reframing separately confirmed that when disclosing to White confidants, stronger attributions to race were associated with more desire for validation, $b = 0.26$, $t(424) = 3.48$, $p < .001$, and less desire for reframing, $b = -0.37$, $t(424) = 4.61$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

In Study 1, we found that in the context of disclosing personal experiences of racism, POC anticipate that their emotion-focused social support needs will often be unmet. Here, we examined discrepancies in expected and desired support across different types of support (validation-related and reframing-related) as a function of confidant race. Consistent with our primary prediction, participants both wanted and expected to receive more validation than reframing. However, significant support gaps emerged for the level of each overall support type, reflecting anticipated *underprovision* of validation and *overprovision* of reframing overall. As predicted, confidant race influenced magnitude and direction of support gaps, which were larger when imagining disclosures to White rather than

[2] Notably, self-reported attributions to race aligned with coders' independent judgments of whether experiences reflected subtle ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.03$) or overt racism ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(426.0) = 5.56$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.52$.

Table 2
Gaps in Expected Versus Desired Support by Confidant Race

	Confidant race				
	Overall	Same-race	White	Difference	
Measure	*M* [95% CI]	*M* [95% CI]	*M* [95% CI]	*t*	*d*
Validation-related support coding					
General validation	−0.39 [−0.51, −0.26]	−0.35 [−0.52, −0.18]	−0.42 [−0.60, −0.24]	0.60	−0.06
Empathizing	−0.08 [−0.21, 0.06]	−0.16 [−0.35, 0.03]	0.01 [−0.19, 0.20]	1.20	0.12
Recognizing difficulty	−0.11 [−0.22, −0.01]	−0.07 [−0.22, 0.07]	−0.15 [−0.30, 0.01]	0.63	−0.06
Reframing-related support coding					
General reframing	0.04 [−0.01, 0.08]	−0.01 [−0.07, 0.04]	0.08 [0.03, 0.14]	2.40*	0.23
Minimizing	0.29 [0.21, 0.38]	0.19 [0.09, 0.29]	0.40 [0.26, 0.53]	2.36*	0.23
Encouraging	−0.08 [−0.17, 0.01]	−0.15 [−0.29, −0.01]	−0.01 [−0.13, 0.10]	1.55	0.15
Close-ended support ratings					
Validation	−0.51 [−0.63, −0.39]	−0.29 [−0.44, −0.15]	−0.72 [−0.91, −0.52]	3.39***	−0.33
Reframing	0.31 [0.19, 0.43]	0.05 [−0.11, 0.20]	0.56 [0.39, 0.73]	4.31***	0.42

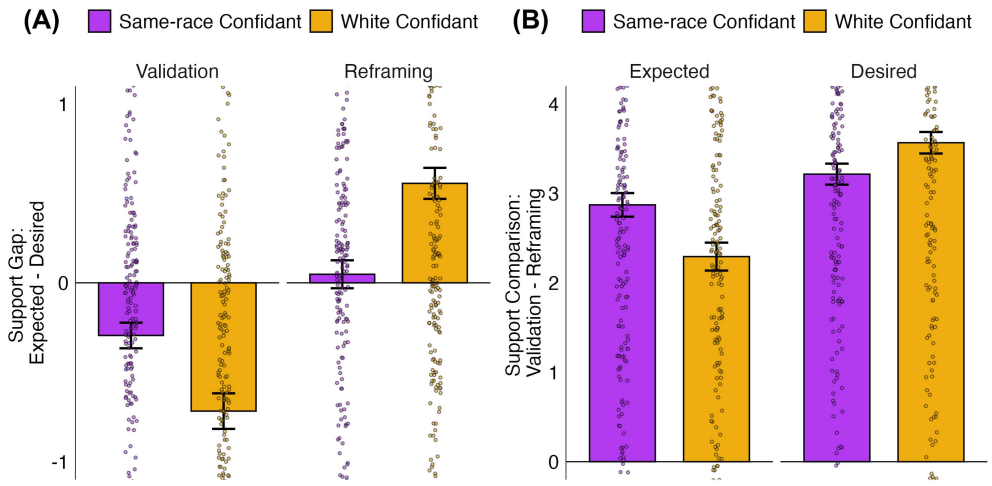
Note. CI = confidence interval.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

same-race confidants. The larger validation support gap for White confidants was primarily driven by the predicted confidant race effect for *expected* validation: Participants expected less validation from White than same-race friends (desired validation did not vary). The larger reframing support gap for White confidants was primarily due to confidant race effects for *desired* reframing (participants wanted less reframing from White than same-race confidants, as predicted), not expected reframing (counter to predictions). This latter result is surprising, given widespread anecdotal (Eddo-Lodge, 2017) and empirical (Dix & Devine, 2024; Dix et al., 2025; Marshburn, 2016) evidence of White people seeking to positively reinterpret (or minimize) experiences of racism and may reflect the variability within the reframing construct in the social support literature (and as measured here) and/or floor effects for reframing-related coding categories.

Attribution to race influenced support type preferences as a function of confidant race. Attributing one's experience more strongly to race shaped relative preference for validation versus reframing support from White confidants only (not same-race confidants), highlighting the possibility that receptivity to reframing may depend on confidence that one's experiences reflected racism and who is providing support. Crucially, POC rated reframing from White confidants as especially unhelpful for unambiguously racist experiences.

Perceptions of reframing from White confidants as particularly unhelpful could have several plausible explanations, including understanding, cultural competence, or defensiveness. A growing literature on racial shared reality documents concerns that many White people fundamentally fail to understand racism (Yantis, Green, Marshburn, et al., 2025; Yantis, Green, & Taylor, 2025) and

Figure 2
Support Gaps and Comparisons by Confidant Race



Note. Bars = 95% confidence intervals. Support gap scale is condensed (range: −1 to 1) for presentation purposes. (A) Support Gaps. (B) Support Comparisons. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Table 3
Support Comparisons Between Validation and Reframing by Confidant Race

	Confidant race				
	Overall	Same-race	White	Difference	
Measure	*M* [95% CI]	*M* [95% CI]	*M* [95% CI]	*t*	*d*
Open-ended support coding					
Expected support	1.33 [1.22, 1.45]	1.49 [1.32, 1.66]	1.18 [1.03, 1.34]	2.68**	−0.26
Desired support	1.75 [1.62, 1.87]	1.83 [1.65, 2.01]	1.66 [1.49, 1.83]	1.33	−0.13
Close-ended support ratings					
Expected support	2.57 [2.37, 2.78]	2.87 [2.61, 3.13]	2.29 [1.99, 2.60]	2.78**	−0.27
Desired support	3.39 [3.23, 3.56]	3.22 [2.98, 3.45]	3.57 [3.33, 3.80]	2.08*	0.20

Note. Comparisons of coded support contrast *general validation* versus *general reframing*. CI = confidence interval.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

do not truly understand the frequency and impact of racial bias in daily life (Dix & Devine, 2024). Alternatively, even White individuals who do appreciate the severity of racism may give reframing attempts in a culturally unresponsive manner, such as comparing racism to other forms of oppression (Marshburn, 2016). Finally, the impact of reframing may depend on the perceived underlying motivation and whether efforts to reframe the experience in a positive light sound more comforting and encouraging, or defensive and minimizing. Most recalled experiences involved White perpetrators, so participants might have anticipated that White confidants would feel more awkward or defensive than same-race confidants, perhaps motivating denials that the actions of a fellow White person were racist.

In contrast, for reframing from a same-race confidant, no support gap between expected and desired reframing emerged, suggesting that reframing in same-race settings may be better calibrated to POC preferences, perhaps reflecting a skillful and more optimal integration of encouraging elements and downplaying negativity (e.g., "Don't let it ruin your day!"). Initial evidence for this possibility emerged in coding of participants' open-ended descriptions of desired support: Desired general reframing correlated with both minimizing and encouraging for same-race confidants but only with encouraging for White confidants (see Supplemental Appendix E). A key Study 2 aim was to test whether reframing's psychological impact depends on how it is given.

Study 2: Impact of Validation or Reframing From Same-Race or White Confidants

Next, we pivoted from measuring anticipated validation versus reframing in Study 1 to testing the psychological impact of experimentally manipulated support provision in Study 2. Responsive social support can buffer the negative impacts of racial stressors, but receiving nonpreferred types of support may fail to alleviate—or even exacerbate—distress, as evident in work on negative behaviors in relationship that can outweigh their benefits (Coyne et al., 1987; Rook, 1998). Study 2 directly compares the influence of social support type (validation vs. reframing) on perceived responsiveness, psychological well-being, and racial shared reality.

In addition, we designed Study 2 to test two distinct reframing conditions that contrast similar reframing comments delivered in a "comforting" versus "minimizing" manner. We drew this distinction for empirical, theoretical, and practical reasons. First, we thought that the greater variability observed in Study 1 for reframing—as seen in somewhat lower alphas for composites (across coders or items) and in larger standard deviations (especially for White confidants)—might be partially explained by participants imagining reframing delivered differently. Second, theoretical accounts of reframing (and reappraisal) range widely, including distinct elements that may feel variously uplifting and comforting versus dismissive or minimizing (Denny & Ochsner, 2014; Duker et al., 2022;

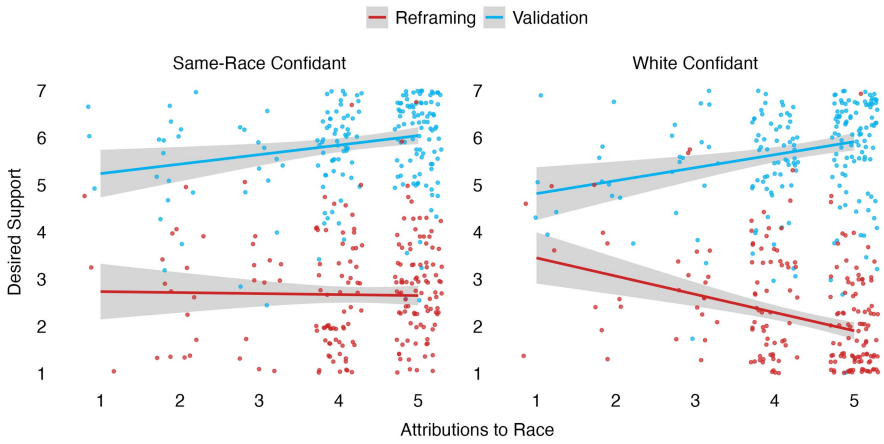
Table 4
Desired Validation Versus Reframing by Confidant Race and Attributions to Race

	Desired validation—desired reframing	Desired validation	Desired reframing
Parameter	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Omnibus model			
Intercept	3.39*** (0.08)	5.81*** (0.05)	2.42*** (0.06)
Confidant race	0.15† (0.08)	−0.09† (0.05)	−0.24*** (0.06)
Race attribution	0.42*** (0.08)	0.23*** (0.05)	−0.19*** (0.06)
Confidant Race × Race Attribution	0.21* (0.08)	0.03 (0.05)	−0.18** (0.06)
Confidant relation	−0.003 (0.08)	0.02 (0.05)	0.02 (0.06)
Simple slope: Race attribution			
Within same-race condition	0.21† (0.12)	0.19* (0.08)	−0.02 (0.08)
Within White condition	0.63*** (0.12)	0.26*** (0.08)	−0.37*** (0.08)

Note. Models were run with attributions to race standardized. For all models *df* (424). *SE* = standard error.
† $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3

Desired Support by Type, Confidant Race, and Attributions to Race



Note. For White but not same-race confidants, self-reported attributions to race interacted with support type (validation vs. reframing) to predict rating support as desired (i.e., helpful). Points are jittered to avoid overplotting, and bands indicate 95% confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Marigold et al., 2014). On a practical level, we sought to differentiate our work from other research on White people's "accepting" versus "challenging" responses to disclosures of racism (Dix et al., 2025). Testing variants of reframing avoids the oversimplistic assumption that validation is always "good" support and reframing is "bad" support, drawing on prior findings that validating racism can sometimes perpetuate negative affect (Marshburn & Campos, 2022) and reframing racism can improve positive affect (Duker et al., 2024).

Study 2 included two sets of measures (collected in one session) to probe preregistered hypotheses about (a) demographic patterns of real-world support seeking and (b) effects of varying social support type and confidant race on psychological well-being. First, Part A investigated the retrospective (or prospective) frequency of POC disclosing experiences of racism to real-world same-race, White, and cross-race POC confidants, given past findings that POC most often seek support for racism from racial/ethnic ingroup members (Houshmand et al., 2014; Jacob et al., 2023; Lewis-Coles & Constantine, 2006). We also wanted to assess whether our participants (who were attending a university whose undergraduate population is 38% White, within a metropolitan area that is 81% White) had past experiences with disclosing racism to White confidants, and whether the racial distribution of actual confidants (to whom participants had previously disclosed their experience) differ from that of probable confidants (to whom participants said they would be likely to disclose their experience).

In Part B, we randomly assigned participants to imagine a disclosure scenario in a 2 (support type: validation vs. reframing) × 2 (confidant race: same race vs. White) factorial design. A nested manipulation varied the confidant's manner of giving reframing: trying to downplay the severity of the situation ("minimizing") or console the participant ("comforting"; preregistration: https://osf.io/dt5wq.)

Hypotheses

We predicted that (a) POC would report disclosing experiences to same-race confidants most often, but list White confidants as the next-most common group, and (b) psychological well-being would vary based on support type, its apparent intent, and confidant race (three main effects). Specifically, we hypothesized that validation (vs. reframing) and support from a same-race (vs. White) confidant would lead POC to anticipate experiencing greater racial shared reality, greater perceived support, greater coping self-efficacy, greater state self-esteem, greater positive affect, less negative affect, and less rumination (both on the event itself and on the conversation). A secondary preregistered hypothesis contrasted two versions of reframing, which differed in the confidant's delivery: A "minimizing" (vs. "comforting") manner was theorized to lead to worse psychological well-being. As preregistered, exploratory tests of interaction terms assessed whether the psychological impact of receiving validation versus reframing (or the manner of reframing) varied based on confidant race.

Method

Participants

Using the same eligibility criteria as Study 1, we recruited 651 undergraduate POC (35% South Asian, 33% East Asian, 9% Black, 8% Southeast Asian, 6% Middle Eastern; for exclusions and full demographics, see Supplemental Appendix A). As preregistered, data collection stopped in late 2023, once our projected sample size (allowing for 25%–30% exclusions) was over 600.

Procedure

Study 2 used the same procedures as Study 1 consent and eliciting a recalled experience of racial discrimination. Next, in Part A,

participants were asked "Can you recall sharing this experience with someone else (including online)?" Based on whether they said "yes" (71%) or "no" (29%), they were then prompted to list the initials of up to five people with whom they had shared or would share their experience, respectively. Later, participants again saw these five actual or hypothetical confidants' initials and reported each one's race and gender (after completing all the preregistered Part B outcomes, to avoid drawing attention to real-world confidant race prior to our manipulation of scenario-specific confidant race in Part B).

Confidant Race Manipulation. Then, we used the same Study 1 procedure in which participants thought of one specific same-race or White friend[3] and imagined telling this friend about their negative experience. As confidant relation (acquaintance vs. friend) did not moderate confidant race effects in Study 1 (see Supplemental Appendix C), the confidant was always a friend in Study 2.

Support Type Manipulation. Participants were asked to imagine their friend offering either validation or reframing. The validation condition read (emphasis in original):

> Your friend seems concerned about your well-being, and expresses *empathy*. They encourage you to *talk about your feelings* and want to *validate* them. For example, they may agree about how upsetting this experience was, show that they feel bad about your experience, too, or recognize that going through this experience was difficult.

We designed the reframing conditions to be as parallel as possible to prevent confounding related to valence, length, or structure. Respectively, the "comforting" and "minimizing" variants read:

> Your friend seems concerned about your well-being, and expresses [*consolation/skepticism*]. They encourage you [to *talk about the details of the event/not to blow things out of proportion*], and want to offer a more *positive* perspective. For example, they may point out ways your experience could have been worse, downplay any negative feelings you have, or highlight possible upsides of your situation.

All participants were prompted to vividly imagine this conversation and specific things the confidant might say along these lines. Next, they completed the following outcome measures.

Measures

Our main dependent measures were rated on Likert scales (for reliabilities, anchors, and items, see Supplemental Appendix H) in the following order. We also measured state self-esteem, specific coping strategies (see Supplemental Appendix I), and individual difference measures (see Supplemental Appendix D).

Positive and Negative Affect. Our affect measure had 20 items, most from the expanded Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Thompson, 2007; Watson & Clark, 1994), with the prompt updated to read "Right now, thinking about this friend's reaction, I feel ____." We drew items from the existing general negative affect, hostility, guilt, fear, self-assurance attentiveness, and general positive scales (Crawford & Henry, 2004), with some additional items relevant to interpersonal interactions (e.g., *irritated, thankful*, *respected*, *relieved*, *encouraged*). Based on reliability analysis, we subdivided positive affect into two subscales: powerful and positive interpersonal affect, $r(649) = .77$, $p < .001$. We also subdivided negative affect into two subscales: other-directed and self-directed negative affect, $r(649) = .60$, $p < .001$.

Perceived Responsiveness (Support). We used a nine-item perceived responsiveness measure (adapted from Marigold et al., 2014) to assess how supported participants felt by the confidant's reaction (e.g., "Right now, thinking about this friend's reaction, I feel supported"). This measure includes validating, understanding, and caring subscales (see Supplemental Appendix H).

Coping Self-Efficacy. We measured participants' anticipated coping self-efficacy (MacGeorge et al., 2004) after hearing their friends' response (e.g., "Right now, thinking about this friend's reaction, I feel able to manage any emotional distress I was having").

Rumination. We adapted existing measures of rumination (Marchetti et al., 2018; Treynor et al., 2003) to assess perceived likelihood of engaging in rumination on their experience and on the friend's reaction (e.g., "Right now, after imagining this friend's reaction, to what extent do you think you would be likely to rehash in your mind the things your friend said in response to your experience?"). Our rumination measure thus comprises subscales for rumination about the racial experience or about the friend's reaction.

Racial Shared Reality. To assess participants' perceptions of racial shared reality with the confidant, we used a five-item scale (Yantis, Green, Marshburn, et al., 2025; Supplemental Appendix B), with question stem wording updated to reference a friend rather than coworker (e.g., "How likely is it that your friend would agree or disagree with you on … the extent to which race plays a role in negative events in someone's life").

Results

Part A: Actual and Probable Confidant Disclosures

Previously Disclosed Versus Undisclosed Experiences. Most participants (71%) indicated having previously disclosed their experience to someone; 29% had not. Experiences that had been disclosed were rated as more severe ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.03$) than nondisclosed experiences ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(647) = 2.10$, $p = .036$, and attributed more strongly to race ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.87$) than nondisclosed experiences ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.89$), $t(647) = 2.17$, $p = .030$.

Race of Nominated Confidants. Almost all participants (81%) nominated confidants of the same race as themselves, who on average represented 2.3 of the up to five people listed (see Table 5). Among everyone else listed, White confidants were nominated next most often, by 33% of participants. Notably, participants who had disclosed their experience were more likely to nominate White confidants (37%) than those who had not done so (25%), $\chi^2 = 7.78$, $p = .005$.

Part B: Testing Condition Effects on Focal Outcomes

We tested our hypotheses directly using preregistered orthogonal contrasts. The first contrast compared the validation condition (Coded 2) with the two reframing conditions (each Coded −1, such that contrast coefficients sum to 0). The second contrast specifically compared "minimizing" (Coded −1) against "comforting" (Coded 1)

[3] To avoid confusion with the Part A confidant-listing task, we asked participants whether someone they knew fit this description (yes/no) instead of providing confidant initials. If they said "no," instructions appeared to think of a "specific peer" fitting the description and then answer all subsequent "friend" questions with respect to this peer.

Table 5
Race of Nominated Actual and Probable Confidants

	Confidant type			
	All	Actual	Probable	Difference in % listing
Confidant race	*M* (%)	*M* (%)	*M* (%)	χ^2
Same race	2.30 (81)	2.16 (81)	2.64 (82)	0.10
Different race				
White	0.56 (33)	0.60 (**37**)	0.46 (**25**)	7.78**
South Asian	0.29 (19)	0.27 (19)	0.33 (19)	0.01
East Asian	0.23 (16)	0.20 (15)	0.29 (21)	2.71†
Black	0.17 (13)	0.17 (13)	0.19 (14)	0.11
Southeast Asian	0.12 (10)	0.11 (9)	0.16 (11)	0.18
Middle Eastern	0.09 (8)	0.09 (8)	0.09 (7)	0.03
Latino/a/e	0.08 (6)	0.06 (6)	0.10 (6)	0.09
Indigenous	0.01 (1)	0.01 (1)	0.01 (1)	0.28

Note. Means indicate the average number of confidants listed of each race, whereas percentages indicate how many participants listed at least one individual of that race. Boldface indicates that actual versus probable disclosures to White confidants differ at the $p < .05$ level.
† $p < .1$. ** $p < .01$.

reframing, with the validating condition excluded (Coded 0). Confidant race was effects coded (same race −1, White 1) as in Study 1.[4]

Interaction of Support Type and Confidant Race. We preregistered exploratory tests of whether confidant race moderated effects of support type on our focal outcomes. Because no consistent interaction pattern emerged, those results are detailed in the Supplemental Appendix J. For both same-race and White confidants, participants anticipated the most favorable outcomes in the validation condition and the least favorable outcomes in the "minimizing" reframing condition (see cell means in Supplemental Appendix J). Descriptively, the race-related gaps in anticipated outcomes (i.e., better for same-race than White confidants) tended to be largest for validation and smallest (often nonsignificant) for "minimizing" reframing.

Our final model thus dropped the interaction terms between confidant race and each support type contrast (see Table 6). We found no condition effects on state self-esteem and inconsistent condition effects on specific coping strategies (e.g., self-blame; see Supplemental Appendix I). Otherwise, most observed results fit the preregistered pattern (see correlations in Supplemental Appendix K).

Confidant Race. When prompted to imagine disclosing their experience to a White (vs. same-race) confidant, participants anticipated worse outcomes on average (see Figure 4). Specifically, they reported lower positive affect ($p = .001$, $d = -0.26$), perceived responsiveness ($p < .001$, $d = -0.43$), coping self-efficacy ($p = .001$, $d = -0.26$), and racial shared reality ($p < .001$, $d = -0.46$). Counter to our predictions, we found no confidant race effects on negative affect ($t < 1$, $d = -0.02$) or general rumination ($t = 1.04$, $d = 0.08$), except a marginal effect for rumination on the conversation specifically ($p = .082$, $d = 0.14$). Subscales showed similar results to overall scales (see Supplemental Appendix J).

Validating Versus Reframing Support. Participants who envisioned getting validation rather than reframing reported more positive affect ($d = 1.03$), less negative affect ($d = -0.67$), greater perceived responsiveness ($d = 1.43$), more coping self-efficacy ($d = 0.58$), less rumination ($d = -0.69$), and greater racial shared reality ($d = 0.36$), all ps $< .001$ (see Figure 5).

"Comforting" Versus "Minimizing" Reframing. For reframing given in a comforting rather than minimizing manner, participants reported anticipating more positive affect ($d = 0.42$), less negative affect ($d = -0.40$), more perceived responsiveness ($d = 0.72$), more coping self-efficacy ($d = 0.36$), and less rumination ($d = -0.49$), all ps $< .001$, plus higher racial shared reality ($p = .022$, $d = 0.22$). The pattern of results for "comforting" versus "minimizing" reframing was identical to that observed for comparing validation to reframing, except for the self-directed affect subscale (see Table 6), and replicated directionally within the five largest racial groups, except support condition effects on racial shared reality were more variable (see Supplemental Appendix G).

Mediation by Racial Shared Reality

On an exploratory (not preregistered) basis, we tested whether racial shared reality statistically mediated condition effects on four outcomes: positive affect, negative affect, perceived responsiveness, and rumination. We used the PROCESS macro (Model 4; Hayes, 2017) with 10,000 bootstrap samples to estimate each indirect effect, as well as reporting the significance of its components as a robustness check (Yzerbyt et al., 2018). Notably, the *b* path from racial shared reality to each outcome was weakest for negative affect. Racial shared reality significantly mediated effects of confidant race and support type (validation vs. reframing) on positive affect, perceived responsiveness, and rumination, but not negative affect (see Table 7). Racial shared reality mediated effects of "comforting" versus "minimizing" reframing on positive affect and perceived responsiveness, but not negative affect or rumination. In all models, the direct (*c'*) paths (omitted for brevity) remained significant, consistent with partial mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986), suggesting that additional mediating processes are likely at play.

[4] Here, we deviated from our preregistration (which reversed the sign of this contrast) for cross-study consistency.

Table 6
Effects of Confidant Race and Support Condition on Focal Outcomes

Outcome	Confidant race	Contrast 1: Validation versus reframing	Contrast 2: "Comforting" versus "minimizing" reframing
	B (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Positive affect	−0.11** (0.03)	0.32*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.04)
Powerful	−0.14*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.09* (0.04)
Interpersonal	−0.09* (0.04)	0.41*** (0.03)	0.27*** (0.05)
Negative affect	−0.005 (0.03)	−0.18*** (0.02)	−0.15*** (0.04)
Other-directed	−0.02 (0.04)	−0.28*** (0.03)	−0.26*** (0.05)
Self-directed	0.01 (0.03)	−0.10*** (0.02)	−0.06 (0.04)
Perceived responsiveness	−0.29*** (0.05)	0.67*** (0.04)	0.48*** (0.06)
Validating	−0.19** (0.06)	0.73*** (0.04)	0.46*** (0.07)
Understanding	−0.58*** (0.06)	0.65*** (0.04)	0.42*** (0.08)
Caring	−0.20*** (0.05)	0.58*** (0.04)	0.48*** (0.06)
Coping self-efficacy	−0.18** (0.05)	0.28*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.07)
Rumination	0.06 (0.05)	−0.33*** (0.04)	−0.33*** (0.07)
On experience	−0.06 (0.07)	−0.18*** (0.05)	−0.24** (0.08)
On confidant's reaction	0.09† (0.05)	−0.39*** (0.04)	−0.36*** (0.07)
Racial shared reality	−0.30*** (0.05)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.14* (0.06)

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients test effects of confidant race (−1 = same-race, 1 = White), validation versus reframing (Contrast 1: −1 = reframing, 2 = validation), and reframing manner (Contrast 2: −1 = minimizing, 0 = validation, 1 = comforting). *SE* = standard error.
† $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Moderation by Self-Reported Attributions to Race

Our final analyses sought to replicate the moderation pattern observed in Study 1, in which preferences for receiving validation over reframing from White confidants increased for experiences more strongly attributed to race.[5] To test whether self-reported attributions to race similarly affected effects of validation versus reframing on outcomes related to well-being in Study 2, we added interactions between attributions to race (standardized), confidant race, and condition effects to our main regression model. For concision, we report results for overall measures (see Table 8), not subscales: Results for the latter paralleled the former except as noted.

Per our preregistered prediction that participants who more (vs. less) strongly attributed their experience to their race were expected to show larger support type effects, attributions to race were indeed linked to larger magnitude effects of validation (vs. reframing) on negative affect, $t(637) = -2.51$, $p = .012$, perceived responsiveness, $t(637) = 2.11$, $p = .035$, coping self-efficacy, $t(637) = 1.98$, $p = .049$, and rumination, $t(637) = -2.75$, $p = .006$ (an effect driven by rumination on the confidant's reaction, $p = .002$, not the experience, $p = .196$). No evidence of moderation emerged for positive affect or racial shared reality (ts < 1; see Table 8).[6]

Our full moderation model also tested whether attributions to race interacted with support type (validation vs. reframing) and confidant race to predict psychological outcomes. Despite the challenges of achieving sufficient statistical power for higher order attenuation interactions, we found modest evidence that confidant race, support type, and attributions to race marginally interacted to predict positive affect, $t(637) = 1.96$, $p = .051$ (powerful affect: $p = .049$; interpersonal affect: $p = .083$); perceived responsiveness, $t(637) = 1.76$, $p = .079$ (see Figure 6); and coping self-efficacy, $t(637) = 1.91$, $p = .056$, but not negative affect or racial shared reality (ts < 1). For rumination, only a trending three-way interaction emerged, $t(637) = -1.61$, $p = .109$.

Probing this overall pattern (per our preregistered analysis plan for interaction effects approaching significance), attributions to race did not moderate effects of receiving validation versus reframing from same-race confidants on any outcome (see Table 8), but did so for support from White confidants for negative affect, $t(637) = -2.18$, $p = .030$; perceived responsiveness, $t(637) = 2.84$, $p = .005$; coping self-efficacy, $t(637) = 2.86$, $p = .004$; and rumination, $t(637) = -3.20$, $p = .001$. If White confidants provided validation, stronger attributions to race were weakly associated with only one outcome: higher coping self-efficacy, $t(637) = 1.67$, $p = .095$ (see Table 8). In contrast, for reframing from White confidants, stronger attributions to race were associated with more negative affect, $t(637) = 4.29$, $p < .001$; less perceived responsiveness, $t(637) = -2.81$, $p = .005$; less coping self-efficacy, $t(637) = -2.73$, $p = .006$; and more rumination, $t(637) = 4.25$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

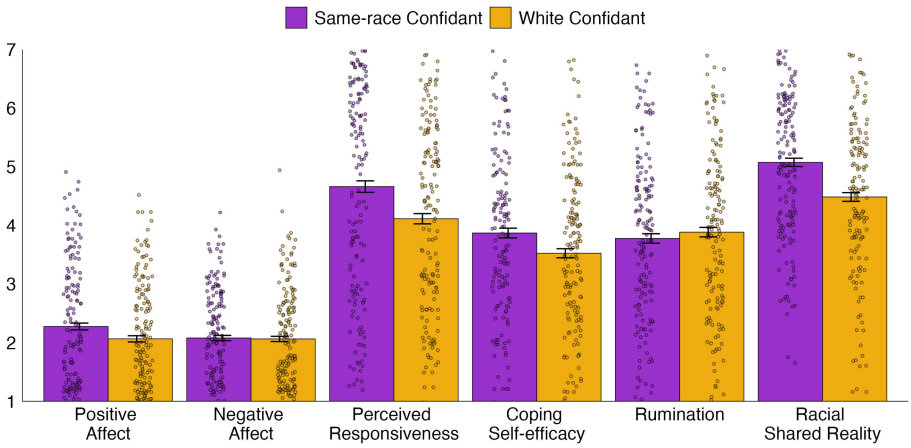
Study 2 provided evidence consistent with our prediction that when POC disclose racial discrimination, the type of support they receive and the race of the person delivering it influences perceived responsiveness and psychological well-being. The results confirmed almost all preregistered predictions about condition effects on psychological well-being, aside from state self-esteem (which yielded null effects) and specific coping strategies (which yielded scattered effects). Overall, POC anticipated worse psychological outcomes when they imagined receiving reframing rather than validation, when reframing was given in a "minimizing" rather than "comforting" manner, and when support came from a White rather than same-race confidant. In these conditions, participants anticipated feeling less

[5] As in Study 1, self-reported attributions to race aligned with coders' judgments of whether experiences reflected subtle ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.93$) or overt racism ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(646) = 4.50$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.35$.

[6] Tests of other potential moderators in our preregistration yielded less consistent results than attributions to race.

Figure 4

Focal Outcomes by Confidant Race



Note. Bars = 95% confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

positive affect (e.g., feeling encouraged), more negative affect (e.g., feeling angry), less confidence that their confidant shared their racial reality, and less ability to successfully cope with their experience.

As anticipated in our preregistration, we found only modest evidence of an interaction between support type and confidant race. Nonetheless, tests of simple effects (see Supplemental Appendix J) suggested that when POC imagined receiving reframing that seemed to minimize their experience of racism, they anticipated poor psychological outcomes regardless of confidant race.

Although correlational evidence of statistical mediation cannot prove causal process (Spencer et al., 2005), the mediation results in Study 2 fit our theorizing that racial shared reality may play a pivotal role in explaining why social support from same-race (vs. White) confidants, as well as social support containing validation (vs. reframing), leads POC to experience more positive affect, perceived responsiveness from their confidant, and less rumination.

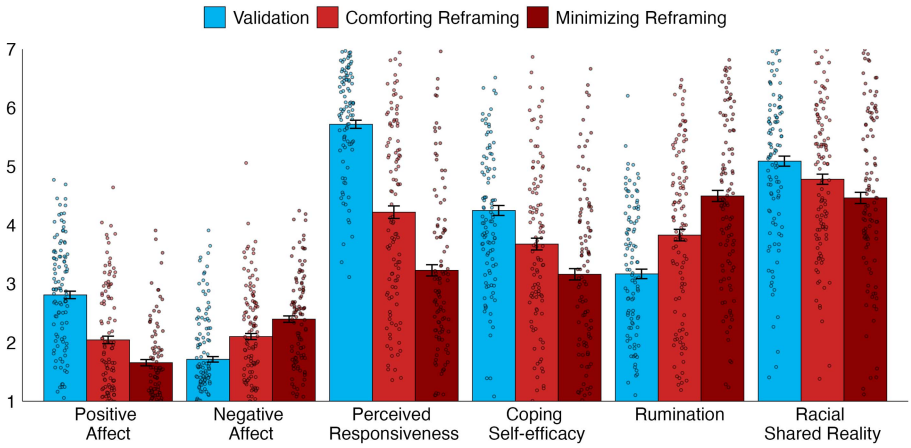
Finally, this study provides additional converging evidence that attributions to race moderate which types of support are most preferred and beneficial for POC disclosing racial discrimination experiences. The more certain POC felt that their experience reflected negative treatment due to their race, the larger the relative benefits of receiving validation instead of reframing, particularly from White confidants.

General Discussion

Our work demonstrates that providing responsive support for disclosed personal experiences of racism is a complex process influenced by factors such as recipient expectations, the race of support provider, the type of support offered, and the self-reported ambiguity of an experience of racism. By integrating theory and methods from the intergroup relations, affective science, and social support literatures, these studies contribute to a larger body of evidence about key interpersonal process (like support provision) that function distinctively in the context of oppression. Extending prior findings that Black Americans both prefer and benefit from receiving racism-specific social support from their same-race

Figure 5

Focal Outcomes by Support Condition



Note. Bars = 95% confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Table 7
Racial Shared Reality Mediating Condition Effects on Focal Outcomes

Path	Variable sequence	*B* [95% CI]	*t* or *z*
a	Experimental condition → Racial shared reality (RSR)		
a_1	Confidant race (White vs. same-race) → RSR	**−0.30 [−0.40, −0.20]**	**−5.89*****
a_2	Support type (validation vs. reframing) → RSR	**0.16 [0.09, 0.23]**	**4.54*****
a_3	Reframing manner (comforting vs. minimizing) → RSR	**0.14 [0.02, 0.26]**	**2.31***
b	Racial shared reality → Outcome		
b_1	RSR → Positive affect	**0.11 [0.06, 0.17]**	**4.16*****
b_2	RSR → Negative affect	**−0.05 [−0.09, −0.0004]**	**−1.98***
b_3	RSR → Perceived responsiveness	**0.28 [0.20, 0.36]**	**7.16*****
b_4	RSR → Rumination	**−0.10 [−0.18, −0.02]**	**−2.41***
a_1b	Confidant race → RSR → Outcome		
a_1b_1	Confidant race → RSR → Positive affect	**−0.03 [−0.06, −0.02]**	**−3.37*****
a_1b_2	Confidant race → RSR → Negative affect	0.01 [−0.0003, 0.03]	1.86
a_1b_3	Confidant race → RSR → Perceived responsiveness	**−0.08 [−0.12, −0.05]**	**−4.52*****
a_1b_4	Confidant race → RSR → Rumination	**0.03 [0.004, 0.06]**	**2.21***
a_2b	Support type → RSR → Outcome		
a_2b_1	Support type → RSR → Positive affect	**0.02 [0.01, 0.03]**	**3.03****
a_2b_2	Support type → RSR → Negative affect	−0.01 [−0.02, 0.0001]	−1.78
a_2b_3	Support type → RSR → Perceived responsiveness	**0.05 [0.02, 0.07]**	**3.81*****
a_2b_4	Support type → RSR → Rumination	**−0.02 [−0.03, −0.002]**	**−2.09***
a_3b	Reframing manner → RSR → Outcome		
a_3b_1	Reframing manner → RSR → Positive affect	**0.02 [0.002, 0.03]**	**1.97***
a_3b_2	Reframing manner → RSR → Negative affect	−0.01 [−0.02, 0.0004]	−1.43
a_3b_3	Reframing manner → RSR → Perceived responsiveness	**0.04 [0.005, 0.08]**	**2.18***
a_3b_4	Reframing manner → RSR → Rumination	−0.01 [−0.02, 0.0002]	−1.60

Note. We report *t* values for individual paths (*a* and *b*) and Sobel *Z* for indirect effects (*ab*), along with 95% bootstrap confidence intervals. Bolded paths significantly differ from zero. CI = confidence interval.
$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

peers, family, and community members (Marshburn & Campos, 2022; Marshburn et al., 2024; McNeil Smith et al., 2020; Seawell et al., 2014), our studies suggest that support-related preferences and psychological outcomes within Canadian POC populations also vary for experiences that feel blatantly race-related rather than ambiguous.

Practical Applications for Support Provision

For social support to realize its full potential as one of the best coping mechanisms to counter racial trauma (Jacob et al., 2023), support providers need to know when and why different support strategies are most likely to meet the goals of POC disclosing lived experiences of racism. Ill-informed reactions to such disclosures can add insult to injury, heightening racism's harm among POC and widening provider–recipient divides. Providers may realize only too late (or never) that their support backfired, and recipients may resolve never again to share such experiences to that person (Dix et al., 2025) or across racial lines (Eddo-Lodge, 2017).

To tackle this urgent societal challenge, we seek to illuminate responsive social support strategies for racism, to enhance closeness and intergroup learning (Sanchez et al., 2022). On top of focal benefits for POC well-being, broader effects of conversations with others about race can extend can beyond provider–recipient dyads, given evidence that cumulatively hearing POC's experiences of racism raises White people's awareness of racism's pervasiveness and heightens their respect for POC who divulge such experiences (Carter & Murphy, 2017).

This work has applications in day-to-day settings for the broader public. In a recent study of Canadian POC students, the most commonly reported strategy for coping racial discrimination (from among 30+ alternatives) was talking to friends, which 5 times more participants (84%) selected than talking to a therapist or counselor (Nepton et al., 2025). Indeed, POC may be especially likely to rely on "informal" social support to cope with racism, because clinical practices do not adequately address racism and racial trauma (Naeem et al., 2024). One clear implication is that support providers who choose a reframing strategy for disclosures of racism should avoid minimizing experiences' severity or invalidating the negative emotions they evoke.

Constraints on Generality

Both studies rely on convenience samples of POC who are young, educated (enrolled at a selective 4-year university), liberal-leaning, mostly women, and North American. Thus, the preferences and effects we found for reactions to validation versus reframing could differ in older, less educated, conservative, majority-men, or non-North American populations.

Our use of imagined rather than actual disclosures to a confidant may have activated forecasting biases (e.g., the intergroup forecasting error; Mallett et al., 2008) and could not capture the richness of in-the-moment support. To increase ecological validity, our study design integrated lived experience by asking participants to recall one of their own experiences with racism and imagine disclosing to an actual friend or acquaintance, not an imagined event or imagined

Table 8

Condition Effects on Focal Outcomes by Self-Reported Attributions to Race

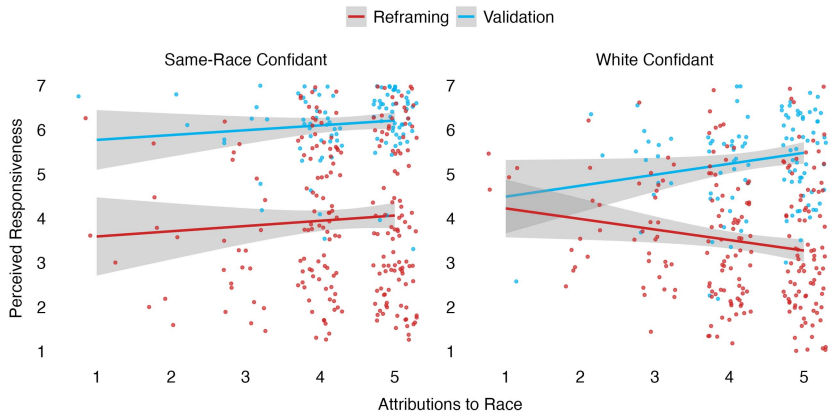
Parameter	PA	NA	PR	CSE	RUM	RSR
Omnibus model	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)	*B* (*SE*)
Intercept	2.16*** (0.04)	2.09*** (0.03)	4.37*** (0.05)	3.67*** (0.05)	3.86*** (0.05)	4.77*** (0.05)
Confidant race	−0.12*** (0.04)	0.001 (0.03)	−0.30*** (0.05)	−0.18*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	−0.29*** (0.05)
Contrast 1 (Validation vs. reframing)	0.33*** (0.03)	−0.18*** (0.02)	0.68*** (0.04)	0.28*** (0.04)	−0.34*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)
Contrast 2 (“Comforting” vs. “minimizing”)	0.19*** (0.04)	−0.16*** (0.04)	0.49*** (0.06)	0.26*** (0.07)	−0.34*** (0.06)	0.13* (0.06)
Confidant Race × Contrast 1	−0.03 (0.03)	−0.03 (0.02)	−0.06 (0.04)	−0.03 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Confidant Race × Contrast 2	−0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	−0.09 (0.06)	−0.05 (0.07)	0.02 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)
Race attribution	0.01 (0.04)	0.09** (0.03)	−0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.06)	0.08 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
Confidant Race × Race Attribution	−0.01 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	−0.08 (0.05)	−0.09 (0.06)	0.11† (0.05)	−0.13* (0.05)
Contrast 1 × Race Attribution	−0.003 (0.03)	−0.06* (0.02)	0.08* (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	−0.11** (0.04)	−0.003 (0.04)
Contrast 2 × Race Attribution	0.03 (0.04)	−0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	−0.06 (0.06)	−0.02 (0.06)
Confidant Race × Contrast 1 × Race Attribution	0.05† (0.03)	−0.01 (0.02)	0.07† (0.04)	0.08† (0.04)	−0.06 (0.04)	−0.01 (0.04)
Confidant Race × Contrast 2 × Race Attribution	0.02 (0.04)	−0.003 (0.04)	0.002 (0.06)	−0.05 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	−0.07 (0.06)
Simple interactions: Contrast 1 × Race Attribution						
Within same-race condition	−0.05 (0.04)	−0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.06)	0.003 (0.06)	−0.05 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)
Within White condition	0.05 (0.04)	−0.07* (0.03)	0.15** (0.05)	0.16** (0.06)	−0.17** (0.05)	−0.01 (0.05)
Simple slope: Race attribution						
Within White confidant/validation condition	0.09 (0.09)	0.01 (0.08)	0.22 (0.14)	0.24† (0.14)	−0.16 (0.14)	−0.14 (0.13)
Within White confidant/reframing conditions	−0.05 (0.06)	0.20*** (0.05)	−0.24** (0.08)	−0.24** (0.09)	0.36*** (0.09)	−0.10 (0.08)

Note. PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; PR = perceived responsiveness; CSE = coping self-efficacy; RUM = rumination; RSR = racial shared reality; *SE* = standard error. For all models $df = 637$.

† $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 6

Perceived Responsiveness by Support Type, Confidant Race, and Attributions to Race



Note. For White but not same-race confidants, self-reported attributions to race interacted with manipulated support type (validation vs. reframing) to predict perceived responsiveness. Points are jittered to avoid overplotting, and bands indicate 95% confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

other (and when asked, over two-thirds confirmed having previously disclosed this experience; Study 2). Investigating these support dynamics in live interactions is a key next step.

Finally, although our samples are North American, their composition (all POC, mostly East and South Asian Canadians) contributes to the diversification of psychological science (Roberts et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2023). Our descriptively similar support-related effects across South Asian, East Asian, Black, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian participants (see Supplemental Appendix G) contribute to evidence of cultural variation and convergence in social support-related processes for coping with racism (Chen et al., 2012; Juang et al., 2016; Kim & Noh, 2016). For example, effects of reappraisal on general health outcomes vary by racial group, type of microaggression, and degree of discrimination (Juang et al., 2016).

Highlighting Potential Helpfulness of Reframing

Our focus on others' (positive) reframing for personal experiences of racism highlights a pivotal interpersonal process with implications for the broader intergroup climate. First, this work is grounded in the lived experience of POC encountering unhelpful forms of reframing (Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Marshburn, 2016). Second, it speaks to the disconnect between intent and impact, insofar as reframing is often conceptualized as well-meaning yet risks backfiring (hence the title "You can't always give what you want"; Marigold et al., 2014). Third, unlike support approaches that intuitively seem maladaptive (e.g., blaming), with reframing approaches the "positive" can ironically become "negative" (akin to toxic positivity). Fourth, reframing may involve ignorance of context, for instance, if support providers overestimate how well they understand racism (Marshburn, 2016). Fifth and finally, because reframing sounds benign it may be an especially appealing pitfall for well-intentioned White people whose desire to affiliate with POC leads them to overestimate how well they understand POC's race-related experiences (Holoien et al., 2015). A combination of benign intent, ironic impacts, ignorance, and affiliative impulses may drive individuals to provide reframing (even when they suspect they should not; Marigold et al., 2014) which is experienced as harmful across many domains, from infertility (Balsom et al., 2025) to illness (Lehman & Hemphill, 1990), and as we posit, to racism.

Our research reveals how interpersonal behaviors that seem relatively innocuous in mundane settings, like attempts to reinterpret stressors as less serious or find upsides to adverse events (Marigold et al., 2014), can potentially turn toxic, resembling minimization or dismissal. For example, we found that reframing was seen as especially undesirable when coming from White rather than same-race confidents (Study 1) or delivered in a minimizing, almost combative manner in which a confidant expresses skepticism and advises not blowing events out of proportion (Study 2). We deliberately designed this condition to convey the "gaslighting" aspects that may be conveyed by culturally unresponsive attempts at reframing. Future work could explore whether an even "kinder" variant (one that involves expressions of uncertainty and trying to put an experience in perspective) could lead to better psychological outcomes.

Future Directions

Another notable pattern in our results that highlights an urgent need for further research is greater variability related to reframing (vs. validation) emerging in both studies. For example, in Study 1, measures of reframing achieved lower reliability than measures of validation, especially for desired support. We also observed significantly more variable responses for expected reframing from White confidants in Study 1 and for negative affect, perceived responsiveness, coping self-efficacy, rumination, and racial shared reality in the reframing (vs. validation) conditions in Study 2. These results suggest that distinct types of reframing (e.g., downplaying negativity vs. pointing out upsides)—which converge and feel supportive in nonracial contexts (Marigold et al., 2014)—may have different psychological effects in response to racial discrimination. Study 2 approached this question by varying whether the confidant's apparent manner of reframing was minimizing (vs. comforting),

which led to worse outcomes on all focal measures: However, further research is needed to explore whether (as well as when and how) reframing support can successfully incorporate forms of reappraisal previously found to benefit POC who have experienced discrimination, such redemption narratives (Duker et al., 2024) and identity-based strengths (Silverman et al., 2023). The favorable outcomes observed for affect, perceived responsiveness, racial shared reality, and coping self-efficacy for imagined "comforting" (vs. "minimizing") reframing conditions raise questions about the feasibility of support that provides a combination of validation—to first establish racial shared reality—with reframing focused on strength or resilience as a means of empowering POC.

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