Perceiving the Present from the Past: Consequences of Understanding Historical Victims' Experiences

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2015

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Abstract

Historical conflicts can fuel prejudice and discrimination towards the conflicting groups even in the present. Individuals from different groups often perceive and experience the same historical conflicts differently, and these divergent perceptions perpetuate present-day conflicts and hamper reconciliation processes. Why might these groups fail to see eye-to-eye in the present?

In the current research, I propose that members of historically victimized groups and historical perpetrator groups differ in the level of connecting—or experience-taking (Kaufman & Libby, 2012)—with past victims, and this divergent level of experience-taking may be one reason for group differences in perceptions of present-day injustices against the historically victimized group. Furthermore, I examine a potential way to increase historical perpetrator group members’ experience-taking with past victims by having them read a first-person (vs. third-person) narrative about a past victim.

Two studies tested these predictions by looking at women’s vs. men’s (Study 1a) and Blacks’ vs. Whites’ (Study 1b) thoughts about past victims (i.e., women and Blacks) and present-day discrimination against the victimized group. These studies demonstrated that group membership influences perceptions of present-day discrimination, such that members of historically victimized groups see more discrimination against their group in the present than members of historical perpetrator groups do, and that experience-taking
of past victims mediates this group difference. An additional study (Study 2) investigated the effect of first-person (vs. third-person) narrative voice on experience-taking among different groups who read a story about a past victim’s experiences. Implications and future directions of these studies are then discussed.
Dedicated to my family
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Lisa Libby, for her guidance throughout my graduate school career. I really appreciate her patience and words of encouragement throughout the process.

I would also like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Kentaro Fujita and Ellen Peters, for taking the time to serve on my committee and for providing me with feedback on this project.

I am grateful to the Mershon Center for International Security Studies for their financial support.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the SuPeR Lab for providing helpful suggestions and being supportive throughout the duration of this project. I especially thank Deborah Holoien for taking her time to read and give helpful feedback on this work.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... ii

Dedication ....................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................... v

Vita .................................................................................................................................. vi

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ................................................................................................................. x

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................. 1

What is Experience-Taking? .......................................................................................... 3

Defining Experience-Taking .......................................................................................... 3

Distinctions between Experience-Taking and Other Concepts ..................................... 4

Experience-Taking with Historical Victims and its Consequences ................................. 7

Meeting Mutual Understanding: Increasing Experience-Taking through Narratives .... 9

The Present Research .................................................................................................... 11

Chapter 2: Group Differences in Perception of Present-day Discrimination against
Historically Victimized Group and Experience-taking as a Mediator ............................... 12
Study 1a........................................................................................................... 13

Method............................................................................................................. 13

Results ............................................................................................................. 19

Discussion....................................................................................................... 25

Study 1b........................................................................................................... 26

Method............................................................................................................. 26

Results ............................................................................................................. 31

Discussion....................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 3: Increasing Experience-Taking through a First-person narrative......... 37

Study 2............................................................................................................. 40

Method............................................................................................................. 40

Results ............................................................................................................. 45

Discussion....................................................................................................... 59

Chapter 4: General Discussion....................................................................... 60

Implications...................................................................................................... 61

Open Questions and Future Directions ........................................................... 63

Factors Preventing Women from Perceiving Greater Present-Day Gender

Discrimination ................................................................................................. 63
Factors Preventing the Effects of Narrative Voice on Historical Perpetrator Group Members ................................................................. 65
Effects of Third-Person Narrative Voice on Historically Victimized Group Members ..................................................................................... 67
Distinction between Experience-Taking and Perspective-Taking ...................... 68
Factors Linking Experience-Taking and Perception of Present-day Discrimination 73
Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 75
References .............................................................................................................. 76
Appendix A: First-person Narrative .................................................................... 81
Appendix B: Third-person Narrative .................................................................... 84
List of Figures

Figure 1. Experience-taking as a mediator of gender effect on greater perception of present-day gender discrimination ................................................................. 20
Figure 2. Percentage of female and male participants focused on women who experienced discrimination vs. employers who engaged in discrimination ......................... 22
Figure 3. Mean extent of focus ratings within the women first counterbalance condition, depending on focus and gender ............................................................................. 24
Figure 4. Experience-taking as a mediator of race effect on greater perception of present-day racial discrimination ..................................................................................... 32
Figure 5. Percentage of Black and White participants focused on Black people who experienced discrimination vs. employers who engaged in discrimination. .................. 34
Figure 6. Mean composite empathic concern score, depending on narrative voice and race ................................................................................................................................. 47
Figure 7. Negative indirect effect of race by narrative voice interaction on perception of perception of present-day racial discrimination through empathic concern ................. 49
Figure 8. Mean ratings of the subjective temporal distance to the time of school desegregation, depending on narrative voice and race .......................................................... 51
Figure 9. Mean composite target evaluation score, depending on narrative voice and race

Figure 10. Percentage of Black and White participants within the first-person narrative voice condition picturing the story from the target point of view vs. non-target point of view

Figure 11. Percentage of Black and White participants within the third-person narrative voice condition picturing the story from the target point of view vs. non-target point of view

Figure 12. Ratings of extent of visual perspective of main character, other characters, and non-character, depending on narrative voice and race
Chapter 1: Introduction

Historical conflicts can fuel prejudice and discrimination towards the conflicting groups even in the present. Individuals from different groups often perceive and experience the same historical conflicts differently, and these divergent perceptions perpetuate present-day conflicts and hamper reconciliation processes. For example, different perceptions of the historical right to claim certain lands partly contribute to ongoing conflicts between Israel and Palestine. Moreover, when attempts to achieve a peace treaty failed during the Oslo Peace Process, many Israelis blamed Palestinian violence whereas many Palestinians blamed Israeli settlement activity (United States Department of State Office of the Historian, 2015). These discrepant views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict worsened the already strained relations between the two groups.

Another conflict exacerbated by discrepant views exists between South Korea and Japan. The relationship between South Korea and Japan has soured over different perceptions of historical injustices that occurred during World War II. One dispute arose from Japan’s denial of the existence of South Korean “comfort women,” or women forced into wartime brothels for the Japanese Army during World War II, despite testimonies provided by South Koreans and others (e.g., Panda, 2014). Across the world, contemporary conflicts between different nations remain in part due to different perceptions of the past.
Closer to home, similar patterns of conflicts stemming from discrepant perceptions exist even within the United States. Black and White Americans disagree, on average, about the extent to which past injustices against Blacks continue to have lingering consequences: 43% of Black Americans said that there still is a lot of discrimination against Blacks compared with just 13% of White Americans (Pew Research Center, 2010). Moreover, Black Americans subjectively feel America’s past history of racial discrimination as being closer in the present time, see more present-day racial discrimination, and perceive less progress toward equality than White Americans do (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). These differing perceptions contribute to conflict and disagreement over policies such as affirmative action and slavery reparations (e.g., Libby, Eibach, & Ross, 2015). As suggested by these examples, current intergroup prejudices and conflicts can stem from the lack of mutual understanding of past injustices, and therefore understanding what prevents groups from achieving mutual understanding is important for post-conflict reconciliation.

Why might these groups fail to see eye-to-eye in the present? In my research, I propose that one barrier for arriving at a common understanding may be that groups differ in the extent to which they relate to past victims’ experiences. Many present-day injustices trace their roots to historical wrongdoings perpetrated against victimized groups. For example, racial inequality exists in subtle forms, although the amount of blatant and legal discrimination lessened. Black Americans, relative to White Americans, may better relate to past victims’ experiences and perceive that the history of slavery has led to where America currently stands, seeing a great extent of present-day racial
discrimination against Black Americans. On the contrary, White Americans may have a
harder time connecting with past victims’ experiences and consequently, perceive that
slavery is “over” and unrelated to present-day race relations. By failing to relate to past
victims’ experiences, descendants of historical perpetrator groups may feel disconnected
from the past and see less relevance of past injustices on the present state. In the current
research, I attempt to show the hypothesized group difference in perceptions of present-
day discrimination against historically victimized group and that group differences in
connecting—that is, experience-taking (Kaufman & Libby, 2012)—with past victims’
experiences may lead to this group difference in perceptions of present-day
discrimination (Studies 1a and 1b). I also investigate the role of narrative voice, or
reading a story about a past victim narrated in first- or third-person voice, as a potential
way to increase understanding of past victims’ experiences (Study 2).

What is Experience-Taking?

Defining Experience-Taking

Experience-taking is an immersive phenomenon in which individuals
spontaneously simulate the subjective experiences of a target person as if those
experiences were their own (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). When experience-taking,
individuals “lose” themselves, assume the target person’s identity, and immerse
themselves in the target person’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Past research has
investigated experience-taking in the specific context of narratives such that readers
assume the experiences of a character in a narrative (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). I consider
experience-taking more broadly as assuming the experience of any target person
individuals think about in general, not just of a character in a narrative. For example, when seeing another person stubbing his toe, individuals with high level of experience-taking with the target person may assume the experience of the target person and feel what the target person might have felt, perhaps even involuntarily cringing in pain.

As a result of experience-taking, individuals may come to internalize aspects of the target person into the self and adopt the target person’s mindset, goals, and behaviors (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Past research has shown that experience-taking with a character in a narrative indeed leads to shifts in readers’ self-views, intentions, and behaviors. Experience-taking leads individuals to simulate the experiences of the target person to do what the target person has done, such as voting on Election Day (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Moreover, when individuals experience-take with a stigmatized out-group member, they express more favorable attitudes toward the stigmatized group and judge the target person with less stereotyping and prejudice.

**Distinctions between Experience-Taking and Other Concepts**

Experience-taking relates to several social psychological concepts that focus on taking another’s inner states as one’s own. For example, research on vicarious dissonance has shown that perceivers experience dissonance when observing the actions of a target person with whom they share an identity, which then motivates the perceivers to change their beliefs or behaviors to reduce their dissonance (Cooper & Hogg, 2007). The recognition of having a shared identity with a target person can also allow vicarious self-perceptions, such that the perceiver assumes to possess the target person’s traits (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). Similarly, the observation of a target person’s goal pursuit
and its completion can lead to vicarious goal satiation, such that the perceiver takes the target person’s goal completion as his own and feel less need to pursue the goal himself (McCulloch, Fitzsimons, Chua, & Albarracin, 2011). Although these phenomena share a focus on taking a target person’s experiences, experience-taking is distinct in at least one aspect: Instead of recognizing the target person as a separate entity, experience-taking conceptually suggests that the perceiver spontaneously transcends the self to take on the target person’s experiences. Instead of comparing and recognizing similarity between the self and the target person, experience-taking replaces the self with the target person without conscious effort (Kaufman & Libby, 2012).

In addition, experience-taking shares similar properties with perspective-taking, as both concepts involve scrutinizing a target person’s experiences. As with perspective-taking, experience-taking leads to greater incorporation of a target person’s attributes into the self (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Experience-taking can also have many of the same positive effects of perspective-taking, such as reducing stereotyping and prejudice when the target person is a member of a stigmatized group (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Although experience-taking leads to similar outcomes as perspective-taking, the mechanisms underlying experience-taking and perspective-taking are distinct. Whereas prior research suggests that heightened attention to the self facilitates perspective-taking (e.g., Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996), heightening attention to the self actually inhibits experience-taking (e.g., Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Moreover, perspective-taking is viewed as an effortful process of consciously thinking about a target’s situation, often induced with explicit instructions to do so (e.g., Galinsky
& Moskowitz, 2000), whereas experience-taking is a phenomenon that occurs spontaneously without any explicit instructions (e.g., Kaufman & Libby, 2012). This suggests that experience-taking is a natural process that does not rely on the intention to imagine oneself in the shoes of the target person.

Experience-taking is also distinct from other-focus, or focusing on the target person and the target person’s experiences. All participants in past experience-taking studies received equal amounts of information about the narrative and the character, and presumably spent equal amounts of time reading and thinking about the content of the narrative (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). However, it was the quality of their thoughts (i.e., experience-taking) that led to very different consequences (i.e., assuming the target’s beliefs and behaviors), not just focusing on the target person and being engrossed in the target person’s situation. In these studies, factors that increased the likelihood of experience-taking (e.g., narrative voice, readers’ level of self-concept accessibility) did not increase individuals’ level of transportation, or the state of being immersed in a story world (Green & Brock, 2000), and the level of transportation did not influence the effects of experience-taking. Becoming deeply involved with a narrative or a situation does not necessarily lead to assuming experiences of the target person; an individual can equally be engrossed in a story or a situation whether taking the experiences of the target person or considering the target person and his situation as a spectator. Thus, I view experience-taking as not just having a focus on the target person and his experiences, but also having the quality of the focus as assuming the target person’s experiences.
Experience-Taking with Historical Victims and its Consequences

In the current research, I propose that members of historically victimized groups and historical perpetrator groups differ in the level of experience-taking with past victims, and this divergent level of experience-taking may be one reason for group differences in perceptions of present-day injustices against the historically victimized group. Past research has identified several conditions that increase the likelihood of experience-taking. One condition that can be applied outside of the narrative context is sharing a group membership with the target (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Perceivers are better able to experience-take with targets who share their group membership; in fact, knowing that the target is an outgroup member can block experience-taking that may otherwise occur (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Thus, due to shared group membership with past victims, descendants of the historically victimized group would experience-take with past victims, which would lead to internalization of the simulated person (i.e., the victim).

However, descendants of the historical perpetrator group may have a hard time experience-taking with past victims due to the victims’ out-group membership. In fact, focusing on past injustices and past victims’ experiences may often backfire with historical perpetrator group members. Although some descendants of historical perpetrator groups may seek to compensate for their ancestors’ wrongdoings, others may believe their group is blamed unjustly and may seek to psychologically distance themselves from reminders of the past. Even with relatively clear cases of historical injustices, these perpetrator group members tend to use biased attributions and perceive historical crimes as caused by external factors (Doosje & Branscombe, 2003; Pettigrew,
1979). They also tend to subjectively perceive the past injustices as being more remote in time. For example, Germans who read about wrongdoings committed by their nation during the Holocaust perceived this period as further away in time, and this temporal distancing reduced feelings of collective guilt (Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010). Moreover, descendants of perpetrator groups often blame historical victims for their fate (Lerner, 1980) and hold prejudices against the victim group when reminded of the victim group’s present-day circumstances (Imhoff & Banse, 2009). Perpetrator group members use prejudice as a way to distance from in-group responsibility for historical injustices.

In sum, sharing group membership with past victims may heighten the possibility of historically victimized group members to spontaneously experience-take with past victims. However, the quality of the focus on past victims may differ for historical perpetrator group members, even if historical perpetrator group members focus their thoughts on past victims as much as historically victimized group members. In turn, the internalization of the past victims may lead historically victimized group members to perceive the past injustices against their group as relevant to present events and circumstances (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). By contrast, descendants of historical perpetrator group may be less inclined to spontaneously experience-take with the past victims due to their outgroup membership. Consequently, the inability to internalize the past victims’ experiences may lead historical perpetrator group members to disconnect from the past and see less relevance of the past on the present, which may dampen their sensitivity to perceive present-day discrimination against the historically victimized group (see Jetten & Wohl, 2012).
Thus, I propose that historically victimized group members’ and historical perpetrator group members’ differences in experience-taking with past victims of injustices would contribute to group differences in perceiving present-day discrimination against the historically victimized group. Studies 1a and 1b tested these predictions by looking at women vs. men (Study 1a) and Blacks vs. Whites (Study 1b) and examining the relationship between thinking about past victims (i.e., women and Blacks) and perceptions of present-day discrimination against the victimized group.

**Meeting Mutual Understanding: Increasing Experience-Taking through Narratives**

In addition, I sought a way to enhance historical perpetrator group members’ understanding of past injustices and present-day discrimination in Study 2. Specifically, I investigated a way to increase historical perpetrator group members’ experience-taking with past victims through reading a first-person narrative. People frequently encounter instances of past injustices and discrimination in narrative forms such as from books, documentaries, and even other people telling stories about their own or others’ experiences. These stories of past injustices could be told in an autobiographical, first-person narrative form, where a person tells a story about his or her own experiences, or in a biographical, third-person narrative form, where a person tells a story about someone else's experiences. For example, readers may learn about stories of past discrimination against Black Americans in *The Color Purple* (Walker, 1982), which is written in the first-person narrative voice, or by reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Stowe, 1852), which is written in the third-person narrative voice. Both are critically acclaimed narratives with equally impactful and vivid depictions of characters and situations. For example, *The
*Color Purple* received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2015), and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has been translated into over 60 languages since its publication (Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 2015). However, the differential narrative voice may lead to different psychological processes among readers. Previous research suggests that first-person narrative voice, together with some access to a protagonist’s internal thoughts and feelings, promotes simulating the experiences of a protagonist as one's own without readers’ awareness or explicit effort (Kaufman & Libby, 2012).

Thus, I attempted to increase historical perpetrator group members’ likelihood of experience-taking with past victims by having them read a first-person (vs. third-person) narrative about past victims’ experiences in Study 2. Although past work has shown that readers often have difficulty experience-taking with outgroup characters (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), reading a first-person narrative that fulfills other features that heighten experience-taking (e.g., access to the main character’s thoughts and feelings, first-person narrative voice) may still increase the level of experience-taking, compared with a third-person narrative. Thus, I predicted that reading about an instance of past injustice in first-person (vs. third-person) narrative voice may lead readers to simulate the past victim's experiences and see greater present-day discrimination against the victimized group. Historical perpetrator group members simulating past victims' experiences of historical injustices may follow similar internalization as the simulated person (i.e., the victim), consistent with findings from previous research (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Because historically victimized group members tend to perceive the present in terms of past injustices, historical perpetrator group members’ simulation of past victims' experiences
may lead to achieving greater understanding of the victimized group's perceptions of present-day discrimination. With these perceptions of greater present-day discrimination, perpetrator group members may approach the issue with a similar view to that of victims, allowing a stronger possibility for reconciliation.

**The Present Research**

Through the current research, I sought to test a psychological mechanism that explains differences between groups’ perceptions of past and present-day injustices. Furthermore, I sought to investigate a potential way to enhance mutual understanding between groups with a history of conflict in the hopes of fostering post-conflict reconciliation. Studies 1a and 1b attempted to demonstrate that group membership (gender in Study 1a and race in Study 1b) influences perceptions of present-day discrimination, such that members of historically victimized groups see more discrimination against their group in the present than members of historical perpetrator groups do, and that experience-taking of past victims mediates this group difference. Study 2 then investigated the possibility of establishing mutual understanding between groups by increasing historical perpetrator group members’ experience-taking through a first-person narrative. If the first-person narrative indeed increases experience-taking in historical perpetrator group members, then it would also promote meeting mutual understanding with victimized group members of present-day discrimination against the victimized group.
Chapter 2: Group Differences in Perception of Present-day Discrimination against Historically Victimized Group and Experience-taking as a Mediator

The goals of Studies 1a and 1b are twofold. First, Studies 1a and 1b examined group differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination against a historically victimized group. In line with previous research (e.g., Eibach & Erhlinger, 2006; Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010), I predicted that members of the historically victimized group would perceive greater present-day discrimination against their own group than members of historical perpetrator group would. Second, Studies 1a and 1b examined whether experience-taking with historically victimized group members—and not just greater degree of focus on these past victims—contributes to these group differences.

To test these predictions, I recruited historically victimized group members and historical perpetrator group members (Study 1a: women vs. men; Study 1b: Black vs. White Americans) and had these participants think about specific past discrimination against the historically victimized group. I then measured whether participants focused on past victims or perpetrators, how much participants experience-took with the past victims, and how much present-day discrimination against the historically victimized group they perceived.
Study 1a

Method

Participants. One hundred nineteen (58 male, 61 female; age $M = 32.35, SD = 11.97$) online participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk completed the study for monetary compensation of $0.30. Participants were all residents of the United States. The sample included 85 White, 6 Black, 11 Latino, 12 Asian, 2 Native American, and 3 multi-racial participants.

Procedure. The questionnaire began with information about legal job discrimination against women in the United States before the Civil Rights Act. Participants read the information and typed whatever came to their minds as they thought about the information. The information and instructions were as follows:

*Until the Civil Rights Act was signed into law in 1964, it was legal throughout the United States for employers to explicitly discriminate against women in hiring decisions, treatment on the job, and promotion opportunities. For example, until the Civil Rights Act was signed into law it was legal for an employer to say that they would only hire men for a job even if there were qualified female candidates available.*

*As you think about this, use the box below to type whatever comes to mind for you.*

Next, they completed several questionnaires intended to assess a variety of conceptual variables (described below) and received debriefing information at the end of the study.
Measures.

Degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination. Participants responded to items designed to assess their degree of focus on the women who experienced discrimination or the employers who engaged in the discrimination. First, they responded to the question, “As you think about the job discrimination that occurred against women during the time it was legal, are your thoughts focused more on the women who experienced the discrimination or on the employers who engaged in the discrimination?” by choosing the women who experienced the discrimination or the employers who engaged in the discrimination (presentation of answer choices were counterbalanced). Then, participants indicated the extent to which their thoughts were focused on the women who experienced the discrimination and on the employers who engaged in the discrimination, respectively, on five-point scales labeled Not at all (1), A little bit (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4), and An extreme amount (5). The order of the rating scales matched the counterbalanced order of the response options in the preceding forced-choice measure.

Experience-taking with targets of past discrimination. Participants completed items intended to assess the quality of their focus on the women who were the targets of discrimination. These items were from the seven-item experience-taking scale (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), modified to measure experience-taking with women who experienced legal job discrimination before the Civil Rights Act (e.g., “I feel like I can put myself in the shoes of a woman then,” “I find myself feeling what a woman then might have been feeling”). A final item was added to the scale: “When I think about the time when job
discrimination against women was still legal in the United States, I imagine being a woman then.” Participants responded to each item on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points as Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9). Responses on these items were averaged to create the experience-taking composite score (α = .90).

**Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination.** Next, participants indicated their subjective temporal distance between the present day and the time when job discrimination against women was legal in the United States. Specifically, participants read, “Regardless of how long ago a time period actually is, it can feel very close in time, or it can feel very far away in time.” Participants then responded to the question, “Does the time when job discrimination against women was legal in the United States feel relatively recent to you or relatively long ago?” on a nine-point scale with end points labeled Feels very recent, like yesterday (1) and Feels like a long, long time ago (9).

**Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized group.** Participants then answered two questions (r = .74) assessing their perceptions of present-day gender discrimination. Specifically, they rated the extent of present-day gender discrimination, “In your opinion, to what extent do women experience gender discrimination in the United States today?”, on a five-point scale labeled Not at all (1), A little bit (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4), and Extremely (5), and the seriousness of present-day gender discrimination, “How serious of a problem do you think gender discrimination is for women in the United States today?”, on a five-
point scale labeled *Not at all serious* (1), *Slightly serious* (2), *Moderately serious* (3), *Quite serious* (4), and *Extremely serious* (5).

I also included the following exploratory measures.

**Gender identification.** Participants answered a few demographic questions, including a question asking for their gender in which they indicated either *Male* or *Female*. Depending on their responses to this item, participants received either a male or female version of a gender identification measure. The gender identification measure included four items, modified from Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) to refer to specific gender groups (e.g., “Overall, being a man (woman) has very little to do with how I feel about myself” (reverse scored), “Being a man (woman) is an important component of who I am”; \( \alpha = .82 \)). Participants used a nine-point scale labeled at every two points as *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9).

**Political ideology.** Participants then responded to three items assessing their political ideology. These items assessed participants’ political orientations on overall, economic, and social issues on a seven-point scale labeled *Extremely liberal* (1), *Moderately liberal* (2), *Slightly liberal* (3), *Neither liberal not conservative* (4), *Slightly conservative* (5), *Moderately conservative* (6), and *Extremely conservative* (7).

**System justification.** Participants completed the system justification measure, an eight-item questionnaire measuring perceptions of the fairness, legitimacy, and justifiability of the prevailing social system (e.g., “In general, the American political
system operates as it should.” “America is one of the most just and fair countries in the world”; $\alpha = .90$; Kay & Jost, 2003), on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9).

**Social dominance orientation.** Next, participants responded to the social dominance orientation measure, a sixteen-item questionnaire assessing the extent to which one wants one’s in-group to be superior to out-groups (e.g., “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups,” “Group equality should be our ideal” (reverse scored); $\alpha = .94$; Pratto et al., 1994), on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9).

**Benevolent sexism.** Participants then completed the benevolent sexism measure, which is an eleven-item scale that measures attitudes toward women that are seemingly positive but are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and undermining equality (e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men,” “A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man”; $\alpha = .95$; Glick & Fiske, 1996), on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9).

**Knowledge of women’s history.** Participants then indicated their knowledge of women’s history on a five-point scale labeled Not at all knowledgeable (1), Somewhat knowledgeable (2), Moderately knowledgeable (3), Very knowledgeable (4), and Extremely knowledgeable (5).
**Feminist identity.** Participants responded to four statements with varying degrees of feminism endorsement, which were intended to assess their feminist identity (e.g., “Being a feminist is central to who I am,” “I am not a feminist, but I believe in gender equality”; modified from Williams & Wittig, 1997), on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points as Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9).

**Racial identification.** Next, participants indicated their race and completed the four-item racial identification measure (e.g., “Overall, my race has very little to do with how I feel about myself” (reverse scored), “My race is an important component of who I am”; \( \alpha = .87 \); adapted from Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (3), Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9). They then indicated their knowledge of Black history on a five-point scale labeled Not at all knowledgeable (1), Somewhat knowledgeable (2), Moderately knowledgeable (3), Very knowledgeable (4), and Extremely knowledgeable (5).

**Perspective-taking tendencies.** Finally, participants completed a subscale of Interpersonal Reactivity Index that assesses general perspective-taking tendencies (e.g., “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision,” “I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both”; \( \alpha = .84 \); Davis, 1980; Davis 1983), on a five-point scale with end-points labeled Does not describe me well (1) and Describes me well (5).
Results

**Primary analyses.** I analyzed all the following primary results collapsing across the counterbalanced conditions because the counterbalanced conditions did not significantly moderate any of the effects.

**Experience-taking with targets of past discrimination.** Due to their shared group membership with past victims (i.e., women who experienced the gender discrimination), I predicted that female participants would report greater experience-taking with women who experienced past gender discrimination than male participants would. As predicted, female participants experience-took more ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.32$) than male participants did ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.41$), $t(117) = 5.73, p < .001$.

**Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized group.** I predicted that female participants would perceive greater present-day gender discrimination than male participants would. Contrary to my predictions, female and male participants did not differ in their perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today, $t(117) = 0.23, p = .82$.

**Mediation analysis.** Although gender did not significantly predict perceptions of present-day discrimination, this could be due to a variety of reasons, including low power and competing mediators (see Hayes, 2009, 2013). Because a significant total effect is not necessary for mediation to occur (Hayes, 2009, 2013), I tested whether participant gender predicted differences in experience-taking with past victims, which in turn led to differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination using mediation analysis. Bootstrapping procedures ($N = 10,000$) recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008)
revealed the predicted indirect effect of gender on perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking as a mediator (see Figure 1 for the beta weights). The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through experience-taking had a 95% confidence interval that was reliably different from zero, 95% CI [.02, .49]. This indicates that female participants experience-took more than male participants did, and this greater experience-taking in female participants predicted greater perception of present-day gender discrimination.

Figure 1. Experience-taking as a mediator of gender effect on greater perception of present-day gender discrimination. Path values represent the standardized regression coefficients. The number in brackets is the standardized regression coefficient for gender when experience-taking was included in the equation. * p < .05, ** p < .01
Secondary analyses. Next, I conducted the following secondary analyses to examine whether female and male participants also differed on subjective temporal distance from past discrimination and degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination.

Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination. Consistent with past work (e.g., Eibach & Erhlinger, 2006; Libby, Eibach, & Ross, 2015; Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010), female participants felt the time when job discrimination against women was legal in the United States was closer in time ($M = 5.28, SD = 2.27$) than male participants did ($M = 6.12, SD = 2.16$), $t(117) = 2.07, p = .04$.

Degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination. A chi-square test looking at gender and forced-choice responses of focus revealed marginally significant differences between male and female participants in focusing on women who experienced the discrimination, $\chi^2 (1, N = 119) = 3.67, p = .05$ (see Figure 2).
Figure 2. Percentage of female and male participants focused on women who experienced discrimination vs. employers who engaged in discrimination.

I then submitted the scale ratings of extent of focus to a 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (focus: women vs. employers) x 2 (counter balance condition: women first vs. employers first) mixed model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on focus. There was no significant gender by focus interaction, $F(1, 115) = 1.06, p = .31$. However, there was a significant main effect of focus, $F(1, 115) = 11.02, p = .001$, indicating that participants had a greater focus on women who experienced discrimination ($M = 3.60, SD = 0.85$) than employers who engaged in discrimination ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.10$), and a marginally significant three-way gender by focus by counterbalance condition interaction, $F(1, 115) = 3.35, p = .07$.

Within the women first counterbalance condition, the gender by focus interaction emerged, $F(1, 57) = 3.98, p = .05$ (Figure 3). Female participants had greater focus on
women who experienced discrimination \((M = 3.83, SD = 0.74)\) than on employers who engaged in discrimination \((M = 2.89, SD = 1.14)\), \(F(1, 57) = 12.39, p = .001\), while male participants did not differ in their focus, \(F(1, 57) = 0.07, p = .80\). Moreover, a significant gender difference emerged in the extent of focus on women who experienced discrimination such that female participants had greater focus on women who experienced discrimination \((M = 3.83, SD = 0.73)\) than male participants did \((M = 3.30, SD = 0.82)\), \(F(1, 57) = 3.93, p = .01\). No gender difference emerged in the extent of focus on employers who engaged in discrimination, \(F(1, 57) = 1.18, p = .28\). Within the employers first counterbalance condition, the gender by focus interaction did not emerge, \(F(1, 58) = .33, p = .57\).

Next, looking at the between-subjects effects of gender and counterbalance condition apart from focus revealed a marginal significant effect of gender, \(F(1, 115) = 3.67, p = .06\). Female participants reported to have greater focus regardless of the target (women who experienced discrimination or employers who engaged in discrimination; \(M = 3.43, SD = 0.60\)) than male participants did \((M = 3.25, SD = 0.50)\). No main effect of counterbalance condition and gender by counterbalance interaction emerged, \(Fs < 1.0, ps > .30\).
Figure 3. Mean extent of focus ratings within the women first counterbalance condition, depending on focus and gender. Higher scores reflect greater focus.

More female (vs. male) participants reported to have focused on the women who experienced past discrimination rather than the employers who engaged in past discrimination, and female participants (vs. male participants) focused on these women to a greater extent than they focused on the employers when the question about women was presented first. Although these findings suggest that victimized group members focus on past victims more and to greater extent than perpetrator group members, the group difference on the focus of thoughts may be dependent on incidental factors such as the question order.

Next, I tested whether my primary findings would hold controlling for the extent of focus on women who experienced discrimination in the past. Including the extent of focus on women who experienced gender discrimination as a covariate revealed the same
patterns of results as the primary results I previously reported. Female participants experience-took more ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.32$) than male participants did ($M = 5.42, SD = 1.41$), $F (1, 116) = 27.83, p < .001$. Although female and male participants did not differ in their perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today, $F (1, 116) = 0.02, p = .90$, bootstrapping procedures ($N = 10,000$) revealed the predicted indirect effect of gender on perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking as a mediator, $95\% \text{ CI } [.03, .43]$. This indicates that even after controlling for their extent of focus on women who experienced gender discrimination in the past, female participants experience-took more than male participants did, which predicted greater perception of present-day gender discrimination.

**Discussion**

Study 1a demonstrated that female participants had higher level of experience-taking with women who experienced gender discrimination in the past than male participants had, which in turn led to greater perceptions of present-day gender discrimination against women. However, I did not find the predicted overall gender difference on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination against women in this study. Although experience-taking contributed to gender difference in perceptions of present-day gender discrimination, another variable might have acted on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination in the opposite way as experience-taking, masking the overall gender difference on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination. I further discuss this potential explanation in Chapter 4. Study 1b was designed to address this
concern and to replicate the indirect effect of experience-taking on perceptions of present-day discrimination with different groups (Blacks and Whites).

**Study 1b**

**Method**

**Participants.** One hundred twelve (53 male, 59 female; age $M = 35.17$, $SD = 12.50$) online participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk completed the study for monetary compensation of $0.30. Participants were all residents of the United States. The sample included 63 White and 49 Black participants.

**Procedure.** The procedure of Study 1b was the same as that of Study 1a except that the victims of discrimination were Black people instead of women and relevant measures were modified accordingly to reflect race instead of gender.

Similar to Study 1a, the questionnaire began with information about legal job discrimination before the Civil Rights Act. Participants read the information and typed whatever came to their minds as they thought about the information. In this study, however, the information was about the job discrimination against Black people, instead of against women.

Next, they completed several questionnaires intended to assess a variety of conceptual variables (described below) and received debriefing information at the end of the study.

**Measures.**

*Degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination.* Similar to Study 1a, participants responded to items designed to assess their degree of focus on
Black people who experienced discrimination or the employers who engaged in the discrimination. First, they responded to the question “As you think about the job discrimination that occurred against Black people during the time it was legal, are you thinking more about the Black people who experienced the discrimination or about the employers who engaged in the discrimination?” by choosing the Black people who experienced the discrimination or the employers who engaged in the discrimination. Then they indicated the extent to which their thoughts were focused on the Black people who experienced the discrimination and on the employers who engaged in the discrimination, respectively, on five-point scales labeled Not at all (1), A little bit (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4), and An extreme amount (5). As with Study 1a, the order of these questions and response options were counterbalanced.

Experience-taking with targets of past discrimination. Participants then completed items intended to assess the quality of their focus on Black people who were the targets of discrimination. These items were from the seven-item Experience-taking scale (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), modified to measure experience-taking with Black people who experienced legal job discrimination before the Civil Rights Act (e.g., “I feel like I can put myself in the shoes of a Black person then,” “I find myself feeling what a Black person then might have been feeling”). A final item was added to the scale: “When I think about the time when job discrimination against Black people was still legal in the United States, I imagine being a Black person then.” Participants responded to each item on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree
Neither disagree nor agree (5), Agree (7), and Strongly Agree (9). Responses on these items were averaged to create the experience-taking composite score (α = .93).

**Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination.** Similar to Study 1a, participants indicated the subjective temporal distance between the present day and the time when job discrimination against Black people was legal in the United States on a nine-point scale with end points labeled Feels very recent, like yesterday (1) and Feels like a long, long time ago (9).

**Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized group.** Participants then answered two questions (r = .87) assessing their perceptions of present-day racial discrimination. They rated the extent of present-day racial discrimination, “In your opinion, to what extent do Black people experience gender discrimination in the United States today?”, on a five-point scale labeled Not at all (1), A little bit (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4), and Extremely (5), and the seriousness of present-day racial discrimination, “How serious of a problem do you think racial discrimination is for Black people in the United States today?”, on a five-point scale labeled Not at all serious (1), Slightly serious (2), Moderately serious (3), Quite serious (4), and Extremely serious (5).

I also included the following exploratory measures.

**Racial identification.** Participants answered a few demographic questions, including a question asking for their race in which they indicated White/European-American, Black/African-American, Latino/Chicano, Asian/Asian-American, Native
*American/Alaskan, Pacific Islander, or Other.* Participants then completed a four-item racial identification measure used in Study 1a ($\alpha = .84$; adapted from Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9).

**Biological conceptions of race.** Participants moved on to complete the twenty-two-item biological conceptions of race measure (e.g., “No one can change his or her race – you are who you are,” “I believe physical features determine race”; $\alpha = .90$; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008) on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9). This measure assesses the extent to which one believes racial group membership is biologically based and static.

**Political ideology, system justification, and social dominance orientation.** Participants then responded to the three items assessing their political ideology, and the system justification ($\alpha = .90$) and social dominance orientation ($\alpha = .92$) measures from Study 1a.

**Modern racism.** In addition, White participants received the Modern Racism Scale before the social dominance orientation scale. The Modern Racism Scale is an eight-item measure that assesses the extent to which one holds subtle racism (e.g., “Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States,” “Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted”; $\alpha = .91$; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; McConahay, 1983). Participants indicated their agreement with each item.
using on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9).

**Knowledge of Black history.** After completing those measures, participants indicated their knowledge of Black history on a five-point scale labeled *Not at all knowledgeable* (1), *Somewhat knowledgeable* (2), *Moderately knowledgeable* (3), *Very knowledgeable* (4), and *Extremely knowledgeable* (5).

**Racial activism.** Participants then responded to four statements that varied in degrees of endorsement of racial activism, which assessed the extent to which they identify themselves as a racial activist (e.g., “Being a racial activist is central to who I am,” “Although I would not want to be considered a racial activist, I believe in racial equality”), on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9).

**Gender identification.** Participants then indicated their gender and completed the same four-item gender identification measure as Study 1a (α = .78) on a nine-point scale labeled at every two points from *Strongly Disagree* (1), *Disagree* (3), *Neither disagree nor agree* (5), *Agree* (7), and *Strongly Agree* (9). They then indicated their knowledge of women’s history on a five-point scale labeled *Not at all knowledgeable* (1), *Somewhat knowledgeable* (2), *Moderately knowledgeable* (3), *Very knowledgeable* (4), and *Extremely knowledgeable* (5).

**Perspective-taking tendencies.** Finally, participants completed the same general perspective-taking scale as in Study 1a (α = .79).
Results

**Primary analyses.** I analyzed all the following primary results collapsing across the counterbalanced conditions because the counterbalanced conditions did not significantly moderate any of the effects.

*Experience-taking with targets of past discrimination.* I predicted Black participants would experience-take with Black people who experienced the racial discrimination than White participants would, because Black participants share the same group membership with past victims. As predicted, Black participants experience-took more ($M = 7.49$, $SD = 1.37$) than White participants did ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.37$), $t(110) = 7.26$, $p < 0.001$.

*Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized group.* I predicted that Black participants would perceive greater present-day racial discrimination than White participants would. As predicted, Black participants perceived greater present-day discrimination ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .95$) than White participants did ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(110) = 4.70$, $p < .001$.

*Mediation analysis.* Using mediation analysis, I tested whether participant race predicted differences in experience-taking with past victims, which in turn led to differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination. Bootstrapping procedures ($N = 10,000$) recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) revealed the predicted indirect effect of race on perceptions of racial discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking as a mediator (see Figure 4 for the beta weights). The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through experience-taking had a 95% confidence
interval that was reliably different from zero, 95% CI [.04, .72]. This indicates that Black participants significantly experience-took more than White participants did, and this greater experience-taking in Blacks predicted greater perception of present-day racial discrimination.¹

Figure 4. Experience-taking as a mediator of race effect on greater perception of present-day racial discrimination. Path values represent the standardized regression coefficients. The number in brackets is the standardized regression coefficient for race when experience-taking was included in the equation. * p < .05, ** p < .01

¹ I also tested the indirect effect switching variables such that perception of present-day racial discrimination was a mediator. Bootstrapping procedures (N = 10,000) recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) revealed the indirect effect of race on the level of experience-taking with perceptions of present-day racial discrimination as a mediator. The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through experience-taking had a 95% confidence interval that was reliably different from zero, 95% CI [.04, .64]. This indicates that Black participants perceived greater present-day racial discrimination, and greater perceptions of present-day racial discrimination in Blacks predicted greater level of experience-taking.

These results suggest that the relationship between experience-taking and perceptions of present-day discrimination may be bi-directional. However, given Studies 1a and 2 do not show this bi-directional relationship between experience-taking and perceptions of present-day discrimination, further empirical investigation is needed to determine clear causality between experience-taking and perceptions of present-day discrimination.
Secondary analyses. Next, I conducted following secondary analyses to examine whether Black and White participants also differed on subjective temporal distance from past discrimination and degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination.

Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination. Consistent with past work (e.g., Eibach & Erhlinger, 2006; Libby, Eibach, & Ross, 2015; Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010), Black participants felt the time when job discrimination against Blacks was legal in the United States was closer in time ($M = 4.14, SD = 2.25$) than White participants did ($M = 5.19, SD = 2.47$), $t(110) = 2.21, p = .03$.

Degree of focus on targets vs. perpetrators of past discrimination. A chi-square test looking at race and forced-choice responses of focus revealed no significant difference between Black and White participants in focusing on Black people who experienced the discrimination, $\chi^2 (1, N = 112) = .36, p = .69$ (Figure 5).
I then submitted the scale ratings of extent of focus to a 2 (race: Black vs. White) x 2 (focus: Black people vs. employers) x 2 (counter balance condition: Black first vs. employers first) mixed model ANOVA with repeated measures on focus. I did not find a significant race by focus interaction, $F(1, 108) = 0.17, p = .68$. Instead, I found a significant main effect of focus, $F(1, 108) = 18.53, p < .001$, indicating that participants, regardless of their race or counterbalance condition, had a greater focus on Black people who experienced discrimination ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.02$) than employers who engaged in discrimination ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.12$).

Next, looking at the between-subjects effects of race and counterbalance condition apart from focus revealed a significant race by counterbalance condition interaction, $F(1, 108) = 4.85, p = .03$. In the Black first counterbalance condition, Black
participants reported to have greater focus regardless of the target (Black people who
experienced discrimination or employers who engaged in discrimination; \( M = 3.54, SD =
0.64 \)) than White participants did (\( M = 3.19, SD = 0.61 \)), \( F (1, 108) = 4.11, p = .05 \).

However, there was no significant race difference in the employers first counterbalance
condition, \( F (1, 108) = 1.19, p = .28 \). Moreover, within Black participants, those who
were in Black first counterbalance condition reported to have marginally greater focus
regardless of the target (\( M = 3.54, SD = 0.64 \)) than those who were in employers first
counterbalance condition did (\( M = 3.19, SD = 0.60 \)), \( F (1, 108) = 3.76, p = .06 \). There was
no difference in counterbalance conditions within White participants, \( F (1, 108) = 1.28, p
= .26 \).

No other significant interactions or main effects emerged, \( Fs < 1.0, ps > .40 \).

Black and White participants did not differ in degree of focus on targets or
employers, although how much they focused in general varied depending on race and the
question order. Together with the findings from the primary analyses, these findings
suggest that the group differences in the quality of thoughts about past victims predicted
the group differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination even though these
groups did not differ on the extent of focus on the past victim.

Next, I tested whether my primary findings would hold controlling for the extent
of focus on Black people who experienced racial discrimination in the past. Including the
extent of focus on Black people who experienced racial discrimination as a covariate
revealed the same patterns of results as the primary results I previously reported. Black
participants experience-took more (\( M = 7.49, SD = 1.37 \)) than White participants did (\( M

Black participants perceived greater present-day discrimination ($M = 3.96, SD = .95$) than White participants did ($M = 3.01, SD = 1.14$), $F(1, 109) = 21.89, p < .001$. Furthermore, bootstrapping procedures ($N = 10,000$) revealed the predicted indirect effect of race on perceptions of racial discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking as a mediator, 95% CI [.002, .55]. This indicates that even after controlling for their extent of focus on Black people who experienced racial discrimination in the past, Black participants experience-taking more than White participants did, which predicted greater perception of present-day racial discrimination.

**Discussion**

Replicating the results from Study 1a with different groups, Study 1a demonstrated that Black participants had higher level of experience-taking with Blacks who experienced racial discrimination in the past than White participants had, which in turn led to greater perceptions of present-day racial discrimination against Blacks. This study also demonstrated the predicted overall racial difference on perceptions of present-day racial discrimination against Blacks such that Black participants perceived greater present-day racial discrimination.
Chapter 3: Increasing Experience-Taking through a First-person narrative

In Study 2, I sought to examine a way to increase understanding of past victims’ experiences. Specifically, I was interested in how different forms of narratives about a past victim may influence readers’ level of understanding of a past victim’s experiences and whether that in turn would lead to changes in perception of related issues in the present. Importantly, I wanted to investigate whether these different forms of narratives would affect members of different groups in the same way.

Reading a story about everyday events in first-person (vs. third-person) narrative voice increases readers’ likelihood of experience-taking with the character in a story and adoption of that character’s motivations and behaviors, especially when the story gives some access to the character’s thoughts and feelings (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Furthermore, increased experience-taking with the character leads to favorable perceptions of the character and the character’s group, such that high levels of experience-taking with a stigmatized group member reduces stereotyping and prejudice toward the character’s group (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Hence, a first-person narrative about a past victim’s experiences has the potential to heighten understanding of a past victim’s experiences and internalization of the past victim’s views.
In this study, I also tried to broaden the scope of my research by examining a closely related theoretical construct of experience-taking, empathic concern. Empathic concern is pro-social other-directed feeling that may result from focusing on a target person’s experiences (e.g., Batson et al., 1997). Empathic concerns are thought to be composed of two similar but distinct emotions: empathy, the state of experiencing the target person’s experience and emotions as one’s own, and sympathy, the state of conceptually understanding the target’s feelings and the reason for them (Escalas & Stern, 2003). Because experience-taking is not only focusing on the target person’s experiences but also assuming the experiences as one’s own, empathic concern would also co-occur with experience-taking. Thus, I predicted that when there is a narrative voice effect, the first-person (vs. third-person) narrative voice would lead to increased empathic concern toward the past victim and greater perception of present-day discrimination. I further discuss how different components of empathic concern may be linked to experience-taking in Chapter 4.

To this end, I recruited Black and White participants and had them read a narrative in first- or third-person voice about a Black student who goes to school on the first day of school desegregation in the 1950s. I then measured participants’ levels of empathy and sympathy toward the Black student and their perceptions of present-day racial discrimination.

I predicted that reading a first-person narrative with several features that heighten experience-taking (e.g., access to the main character’s thoughts and feelings, first-person narrative voice) would lead White participants to have heightened empathic concern
toward the target of discrimination in the narrative and perceive greater present-day racial discrimination, compared with reading a third-person narrative. Since victimized group members tend to naturally experience-take with past victims and perceive present-day discrimination against their own group to a great degree (e.g., Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006; Libby, Eibach, & Ross, 2015; Peetz, Gun, & Wilson, 2010), I expected Black participants to be less sensitive to narrative voice conditions. Specifically, I predicted that Black participants would have high empathic concern toward the target of discrimination and perceive great present-day racial discrimination regardless of whether they read a first-person or third-person narrative.

Although I predicted the narrative voice effect among White participants but not among Black participants, there was also a possibility for an opposite pattern of results. Previous research suggests that first-person narrative voice is the most effective in increasing experience-taking when readers either shared the group membership with the character or the character’s out-group membership was revealed later in the story (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Given that the narrative in the current study is based on actual historical events familiar to most Americans, participants may likely be able to infer the group membership of the target of discrimination in the narrative from the beginning. Thus, there was a possibility for a stronger narrative voice effect emerging among Black participants who share group membership with the main character in the narrative, compared with White participants.

One additional goal of this study was to replicate previous findings that increased experience-taking with the target person leads to favorable evaluations of the target
person (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). To this end, I also measured participants’ evaluations of the target person on positive and negative traits. I predicted that to the extent there is a narrative voice effect on target evaluations, a first-person narrative would lead to more positive and less stereotypic evaluations of the target person than a third-person narrative.

**Study 2**

**Method**

**Participants.** Two hundred fifty five (133 male, 122 female; age $M = 19.13$, $SD = 1.93$) Ohio State undergraduates completed the study for partial course credit. I excluded from analyses participants who did not identify as White or Black ($N = 13$) and who failed the story comprehension check, by incorrectly identifying the race of the target of discrimination ($N = 4$). The final sample consisted of 203 White participants (110 male, 93 female) and 35 Black participants (13 male, 22 female).²

**Procedure.** Participants arrived at the lab in mixed-race groups of up to ten students and completed the study on computers at individual workstations. In the beginning of the study, participants received instructions to put on headphones. Through the headphones, they heard background information about school desegregation in 1950’s. The background information was as follows:

*Before 1954 many American schools were segregated: there were separate schools for Black and White students. One of the goals of the Civil Rights Movement was to integrate the schools so that Black and White students attended school together. In the 1954 US Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education, the Court ruled that*

² Although participants indicated their race as African American or Caucasian in this study, I will use terms Black and White in my descriptions of results to be consistent with previous study descriptions.
segregation in the schools was unconstitutional. In the wake of this decision, schools around the country were forced to integrate. In many communities White citizens protested this order, and in some cases US Army troops had to be sent in to ensure the safety of Black students as they attended previously White schools for the first time.

Participants then located a folder at the side of their workstation, which contained a one-page story depicting a Black student’s experience on the first day of school after school desegregation in the 1950’s (see Appendices A and B). In the story, the Black student arrived at school in a car with police and walked up the stairs to the school building while White parents protested against school desegregation in front of the building. Depending on the manipulation condition, participants read the story in either first- or third-person narrative voice. The first- and third-person narrative voice versions differed only in the pronouns and possessives used (e.g., “I/my” in the first-person narrative voice version, “he/his” in the third-person narrative voice version).

After participants read the story, they completed several questionnaires intended to assess a variety of conceptual variables (described below) and received debriefing information at the end of the study.

**Measures.**

*Empathic concern toward the target of discrimination.* Participants responded to items designed to assess their levels of sympathy and empathy toward the target of discrimination (Escalas, & Stern, 2003). Five items assessed sympathy (e.g., “Based on what was happening in the story, I understood what the main character was feeling,” “While reading the story, I tried to understand the main character’s motivation”), and five

41
items assessed empathy (e.g., “While reading the story, I experienced feeling as if the events were really happening to me,” “While reading the story, I felt as though the events in the story were happening to me”). Participants indicated their agreement with each statement using a seven-point scale labeled Strongly disagree (1), Moderately disagree (2), Slightly disagree (3), Neither agree nor disagree (4), Slightly agree (5), Moderately agree (6), and Strongly agree (7). The order of these empathy and sympathy items were counterbalanced such that participants were randomly assigned to receive empathy items first or sympathy items first. Responses to these sympathy and empathy items were averaged to create an empathic concern composite score ($\alpha = .84$).

**Degree of focus on visual perspective of the target vs. perpetrators of past discrimination.** Participants then took a moment to close their eyes and picture the last scene in the story, in which the Black student was on the steps of the school looking back at the protesting crowd. Then, they reported from which visual point of view they saw the scene, by choosing one of three options From the main character's visual point of view, From the visual point of view of another character in the story, or Other. Next, participants reported whether they pictured any of the scenes from the story in their mind while they were reading by indicating Yes or No. Participants who indicated Yes responded to three follow-up questions assessing how much of the time they pictured the scenes from each of three visual points of view: (1) the point of view of the main character, (2) the point of view of the characters in the story other than the main character, and (3) the point of view that were not the main character's or any other character's. Participants responded to these three questions using five-point scales labeled
Never (1), A little bit of the time (2), Some of the time (3), Most of the time (4), and All of the time (5).

Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination. Participants went on to evaluate the subjective temporal distance between the present day, and the time of the events in the story as well as the time of desegregation. Specifically, participants responded to the question about the event in the story, “to you, how far away in time does it feel like the event in the story occurred?”, using a nine-point scale with end points labeled Feels very recent like yesterday (1), and Feels like a long, long time ago (9). They then answered a similar question with reference to the time when the desegregation of American schools occurred.

Subjective perception of change in discrimination against historically victimized group. Next, participants responded to the question “How would you say that racism against Blacks has changed in the US, if at all, since the time of school desegregation?” using a seven-point scale labeled Racism has decreased greatly (-3), Racism has decreased moderately (-2), Racism has decreased slightly (-1), Racism has remained unchanged (0), Racism has increased slightly (1), Racism has increased moderately (2), and Racism has increased greatly (3).

Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized group. Participants then answered three questions (α = .84) assessing their perceptions of present-day racial discrimination. They rated the extent (“To what extent do you think racism is a problem for Blacks in the US today?”), frequency (“How often do you think Blacks encounter racism in the US today?”) and seriousness (“How serious
do you think the problem of racism is for Blacks in the US today?”) of present day racism using a five-point scale labeled *Not at all* (1), *A little bit* (2), *Moderately* (3), *Very much* (4), and *Extremely* (5).

I also included following exploratory measures.

**Stigma consciousness.** Participants answered a few demographic questions, including a question asking for their race with response options *Caucasian, African-American, Latino/a, Asian, Native American,* and *Other.* If participants indicated that they were African American, they received the Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire. The Stigma Consciousness measure is a ten-item measure about one’s perception about the negative impact of stereotypes about one’s own group (e.g., “Stereotypes about Blacks have not affected me personally” (reverse scored), “Most Whites have a problem viewing Blacks as equals.”; \( \alpha = .68; \) Pinel, 1999). Participants indicated their agreement with each item using a seven-point scale labeled *Strongly disagree* (1), *Moderately disagree* (2), *Slightly disagree* (3), *Neither agree nor disagree* (4), *Slightly agree* (5), *Moderately agree* (6), and *Strongly agree* (7).

**Modern racism.** If participants indicated that they were of a race other than African American, they received the Modern Racism Scale (\( \alpha = .84; \) McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; McConahay, 1983). Participants indicated their agreement with each item using a seven-point scale labeled *Strongly disagree* (1), *Moderately disagree* (2), *Slightly disagree* (3), *Neither agree nor disagree* (4), *Slightly agree* (5), *Moderately agree* (6), and *Strongly agree* (7).
Evaluations of the target of past discrimination. Participants then answered a set of questions assessing their evaluations of the target of past discrimination. These statements started with “I feel that the main character in the story is...” and ended with seven-point bipolar scales. These scales included Very bad (1), Moderately bad (2), Slightly bad (3), Neither bad nor good (4), Slightly good (5), Moderately good (6), and Very good (7), Very different from me (1) to Very similar to me (7), and Very unlikable (1) to Very likable (7). They then indicated how much they felt that the main character's style of thinking was like theirs on a five-point scale labeled Not at all like mine (1), A little bit like mine (2), Moderately like mine (3), Very much like mine (4), and Exactly the same as mine (5). Participants then rated the extent to which the target of discrimination possessed five positive traits (intelligent, kind, thoughtful, dependable, considerate) and five negative traits (hostile, unlikeable, selfish, boring, unfriendly) using five-point scales labeled Not at all [trait] (1), Slightly [trait] (2), Somewhat [trait] (3), Moderately [trait] (4), and Extremely [trait] (5). Participants received these ten trait items in a random order.

Results

Primary analyses. Since I found no moderating effects of the counterbalanced conditions for subsequent measures, I analyzed all the following results collapsing across counterbalance conditions.

Empathic concern toward the target of discrimination I hypothesized that a first-person narrative about an experience of a victim of historical injustices would lead to greater empathic concern toward the past victim and that this narrative voice effect on
empathic concern would be greater for White participants. A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA predicting empathic concern revealed a main effect of narrative voice such that reading in first-person narrative voice led to higher empathic concern ($M = 5.39, SD = 0.89$) than reading in third-person narrative voice ($M = 4.99, SD = 1.01$), $F (1, 234) = 5.42, p = .02$, and a main effect of race such that Black participants had higher empathic concern toward the target of discrimination ($M = 5.39, SD = 1.20$) than White participants did ($M = 4.98, SD = 0.89$), $F (1, 234) = 5.58, p = .02$. Critically, these were qualified by a significant interaction between narrative voice and race, $F (1, 234) = 4.92, p = .03$ (Figure 6).

Among Black participants, first-person narrative voice led to more empathic concern toward the target of discrimination ($M = 5.78, SD = 0.70$) than third-person narrative voice did ($M = 5, SD = 1.49$), $F (1, 234) = 6.06, p = .02$. However, there was no significant effect of voice on empathic concern among White participants, $F (1, 234) = 0.02, p = .89$. In the first-person narrative voice condition, Black participants had more empathic concern toward the target of discrimination ($M = 5.78, SD = 0.70$) than White participants did ($M = 4.99, SD = 0.87$), $F (1, 234) = 10.8, p = .001$. However, there was no race difference in the third-person narrative voice condition, $F (1, 234) = 0.01, p = .92$. 


Figure 6. Mean composite empathic concern score, depending on narrative voice and race. Higher scores reflect greater empathic concern toward the target of discrimination in the story.

Thus, these findings revealed unpredicted patterns of the first-person (vs. third-person) narrative leading to greater empathic concern toward the Black target of past discrimination in the narrative for Black participants, but not for White participants.

Subjective perceptions of present-day discrimination. A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of race on perception of present-day discrimination, $F(1, 234) = 25.35, p < .001$. Black participants perceived more present-day racial discrimination ($M = 3.31, SD = .77$) than White participants did ($M = 2.58, SD = .79$). However, there was no main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 234) = 0.53, p = .47$, and no interaction between narrative voice and race, $F(1, 234) = 0.37, p = .55$. 
Mediation analysis. Bootstrapping procedures ($N = 10,000$) revealed the indirect effect of interaction between narrative voice and race on perceptions of present-day racial discrimination with emphatic concern as a mediator (see Figure 7 for the beta weights). The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through emphatic concern had a 95% confidence interval that was different from zero, 95% CI [-.26, -.0002], indicating that emphatic concern significantly mediated the effect of interaction between narrative voice and race on perception of present-day racial discrimination. This suggests the first-person narrative voice condition causing Black participants to have more empathic concern toward the target of discrimination led to their increased perception of present-day racial discrimination.
Secondary analyses. Next, I conducted following secondary analyses to examine whether Black and White participants differed on subjective temporal distance from past discrimination and subjective perception of change in discrimination against Blacks. I also tested whether the current study replicated previous findings of increased experience-taking with the target person leading to favorable evaluations of the target person. Furthermore, I examined whether Black and White participants differed on how much they focused on visual perspective of the target vs. perpetrators of past discrimination depending on their narrative voice conditions.
Subjective temporal distance from past discrimination. To assess narrative voice effects on subjective temporal distance, each measure of subjective temporal distance from the event in the story and from the time of desegregation was submitted, separately, to a 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA. For the measure of subjective temporal distance from the event in the story, a significant main effect of race emerged, such that Black participants felt the event in the story to be closer in time ($M = 4.32, SD = 2.15$) than White participants did ($M = 5.59, SD = 2.12$), $F(1, 234) = 10.50, p = .001$. There was no main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 234) = 0.08, p = .78$, and no interaction between narrative voice and race, $F(1, 234) = 0.22, p = .64$.

For the measure of subjective temporal distance from the time of desegregation, there was a significant main effect of narrative voice such that participants who read the story in first-person narrative voice felt the time of desegregation closer in time ($M = 5.28, SD = 1.99$) than participants who read in third-person narrative voice felt ($M = 5.98, SD = 1.8$), $F(1, 234) = 4.83, p = .03$, and a significant main effect of race such that Black participants felt the time of desegregation to be closer in time ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.77$) than White participants did ($M = 6.67, SD = 1.7$), $F(1, 234) = 42.52, p < .001$. However, these main effects were qualified by a marginally significant interaction between narrative voice and race, $F = 3.38, p = .07$ (Figure 8).

Among Black participants, first-person narrative voice led them to feel closer to the time of desegregation ($M = 3.94, SD = 1.55$) than third-person narrative voice did ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.64$), $F(1, 234) = 4.78, p = .03$. However, there was no significant effect of voice on subjective temporal distance from the time of desegregation among White
participants, $F = 0.22, p = .64$. In the first-person narrative voice condition, Black participants felt closer to the time of desegregation ($M = 3.94, SD = 1.55$) than White Americans felt ($M = 6.62, SD = 1.79$), $F(1, 234) = 35.84, p < .001$. Similarly, in the third-person narrative condition, Black participants felt closer to the time of desegregation ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.64$) than White Americans felt ($M = 6.72, SD = 1.75$), $F(1, 234) = 10.69, p = .001$.

![Figure 8](image_url)

**Figure 8.** Mean ratings of the subjective temporal distance to the time of school desegregation, depending on narrative voice and race. Higher scores reflect greater subjective temporal distance from the time of desegregation.

There was no first-person narrative voice effect on subjective temporal distance between the present and the event in the story. However, the first-person (vs. third-
person) narrative about the Black target’s experiences led Black participants to feel closer to the time of desegregation, but not White participants.

**Subjective perception of change in discrimination.** A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of race on participants’ perception of change in racism, $F(1, 234) = 8.54, p = .004$. Black participants reported seeing less decrease in racism ($M = -1.66, SD = 0.80$) than White participants did ($M = -2.09, SD = 0.80$). There was no main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 234) = 2.53, p = .11$, and no interaction between narrative voice and race, $F(1, 234) = 1.91, p = .17$.

**Evaluation of the target of discrimination.** First, participants’ evaluations of the target of discrimination on stereotypic Black traits, intelligence and hostility, were each submitted to a 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA. For intelligence, a marginal main effect of voice emerged such that participants who read the story in first-person narrative voice rated the target of discrimination as more intelligent ($M = 3.97, SD = 0.85$) than those who read in third-person narrative voice ($M = 3.72, SD = 0.72$), $F(1, 234) = 3.03, p = .08$. There was no main effect of race, $F < 2, p > .15$, and no interaction between narrative voice and race, $F < 2.5, p > .1$.

For hostility, only a marginal main effect of race emerged such that Black participants tended to rate the target of discrimination as less hostile ($M = 1.77, SD = 1.11$) than White participants did ($M = 2.09, SD = .98$), $F(1, 234) = 3.06, p = .08$. There was no effect of narrative voice, $F < 1.5, p > .25$, and no interaction between narrative voice and race, $F < .15, p > .7$. 52
To assess general evaluations of the target of discrimination, composite scores were created by averaging the positive trait and reverse-scored negative trait evaluations ($\alpha = .76$). Higher scores correspond to more positive evaluation of the target. A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) $\times$ 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA revealed no main effects of narrative voice, $F(1, 234) = 0.82, p = .37$, and race, $F(1, 234) = 1.94, p = .17$. However, there was a significant interaction between narrative voice and race, $F(1, 234) = 3.92, p = .05 \text{ (Figure 9).}$ In the first-person narrative voice condition, Black participants rated the target of discrimination more positively ($M = 4.15, SD = 0.43$) than White participants did ($M = 3.85, SD = 0.53$), $F(1, 234) = 5.83, p = .02$. However, there was no significant effect of narrative voice on evaluation of the target of discrimination in the third-person narrative voice condition, $F(1, 234) = 0.17, p = .68$. Moreover, there was no significant effect of race on evaluation of the target of discrimination among Black participants, $F(1, 234) = 2.44, p = .12$, and White participants, $F(1, 234) = 1.97, p = .16$. 
Figure 9. Mean composite target evaluation score, depending on narrative voice and race. Higher scores reflect more positive evaluation of the target of discrimination.

These findings show that Black participants who read the first-person (vs. third-person) narrative evaluated the Black target of past discrimination more favorably, but no such narrative voice effect emerged among White participants.

**Degree of focus on visual perspective of the target vs. perpetrators of past discrimination.** A chi-square test looking at the forced-choice visual focus measure revealed significant differences between Black and White participants in taking the target of discrimination’s point of view within the first-person narrative voice condition, $\chi^2(1, N = 239) = 9.77, p = .01$ (Figure 10). There was no race difference in taking the target’s point of view within the third-person narrative voice condition, $\chi^2(1, N = 239) = 2.02, p = .36$ (Figure 11).
Figure 10. Percentage of Black and White participants within the first-person narrative voice condition picturing the story from the target point of view vs. non-target point of view.

Figure 11. Percentage of Black and White participants within the third-person narrative voice condition picturing the story from the target point of view vs. non-target point of view.
I submitted the scale ratings of extent of visual perspective to a 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) x 3 (visual perspective: main character vs. characters other than main character vs. non-characters) mixed model ANOVA with repeated measures on visual perspective (Figure 12). There was a significant main effect of visual perspective, \( F(2, 228) = 47.65, p < .001 \), indicating that participants had more visual perspective of the main character in the story \( (M = 3.62, SD = 1.13) \) than visual perspective of characters in the story other than the main character \( (M = 2.29, SD = 1.13) \) or visual perspective that were not the main character’s or any other character’s \( (M = 2.35, SD = 1.20) \), \( p < .01 \). The extent to which participants took visual perspective of characters in the story other than the main character and visual perspective that were not the main character’s or any other character’s did not differ, \( p = 1 \).

There was also a significant race by visual focus interaction, \( F(2, 228) = 6.83, p < 0.01 \). Black participants had more visual perspective of the main character in the story \( (M = 4.06, SD = 0.78) \) than visual perspective of characters in the story other than the main character \( (M = 2.21, SD = 1.18) \), \( p < .01 \), or visual perspective that were not the main character’s or any other character’s \( (M = 2.24, SD = 1.05) \), \( p < .01 \). White participants also had more visual perspective of the main character in the story \( (M = 3.19, SD = 1.14) \) than visual perspective of characters in the story other than the main character \( (M = 2.39, SD = 1.12) \), \( p < .01 \), or visual perspective that were not the main character’s or any other character’s \( (M = 2.45, SD = 1.22) \), \( p < .01 \). Moreover, a significant race difference emerged in the extent of taking visual perspective of the main character in the story such that Black participants took more visual perspective of the main character in
the story ($M = 4.06, SD = .078$) than White participants did ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.14$), $F (1, 228) = 18.33, p < .01$.

Next, looking at the between-subjects effects of race and narrative voice condition apart from visual perspective revealed a marginal significant effect of race, $F (1, 228) = 3.26, p = .07$. Black participants reported to have greater extent of visual perspective in general ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.56$) than White participants did ($M = 2.68, SD = 0.42$).

No other significant interactions or main effects emerged, $F s < 3.0, ps > .10$. 
Figure 12. Ratings of extent of visual perspective of main character, other characters, and non-character, depending on narrative voice and race. Higher scores reflect greater extent of visual perspective.

These findings show that although both Black and White participants focused greater extent on the main character’s visual perspective, compared with visual
perspectives of other characters, Black participants focused on the main character’s visual perspective to greater extent compared with White participants.

**Discussion**

The findings showed that narrative voice influenced the empathic concern and perceptions of Black participants but not White participants. In particular, Black participants who read the story in the first-person narrative voice showed more empathic concern toward the target of discrimination, perceived greater present-day discrimination against Blacks, felt that the time of desegregation was subjectively closer in time, and evaluated the target of discrimination more favorably compared with those who read the story in the third-person narrative voice, but no such narrative voice effects emerged amongst Whites. Furthermore, greater empathic concern of Black participants who read the story in first-person narrative voice led to greater perception of present-day racial discrimination.
Chapter 4: General Discussion

The current studies provided preliminary evidence that experience-taking is one factor that leads to group differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination against historically victimized groups. Women experience-taking more with women who experienced legal job discrimination in the past than men did, and this higher level of experience-taking led to greater perceptions of present-day gender discrimination against women (Study 1a). Similarly, Blacks experience-taking more with Blacks who experienced legal job discrimination in the past than Whites did, and this led them to perceive more present-day discrimination against Blacks (Study 1b).

In addition, Study 2 focused on whether narrative voice influenced different group members’ levels of empathic concern, or emotional states thought to be related to experience-taking, which in turn would shape perceptions of present-day discrimination. The results suggested that narrative voice has different effects on historically victimized and historical perpetrator group members. Blacks who read a narrative about a Black target of discrimination in first-person (vs. third-person) narrative voice had more empathic concern toward the target, which led to greater perceptions of present-day discrimination against Blacks. However, Whites’ empathic concern and perceptions of present-day discrimination did not seem to be influenced by narrative voice.
Implications

The current research extends understanding of experience-taking and group differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination in several ways. Previous research has primarily focused on experience-taking with a fictional character in a narrative about everyday events and has shown that high levels of experience-taking leads to positive consequences, such as positive evaluations of the target person and the target’s group (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Although past research suggested that a real-life other might increase the salience of the self-other distinction and make it difficult to experience-take (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), the current studies have shown experience-taking for real target people in the context of historical injustices and its consequences on perceptions of the present. Further, they provide evidence that experience-taking is not just focusing on the target person and his experiences, but that it refers to the quality of incorporating that target person’s experiences as one’s own.

Collectively, Studies 1a and 1b showed converging evidence that group differences in perceptions of present-day discrimination against the historically victimized group partially comes from different levels of experience-taking with past victims. Women and Blacks, compared with men and Whites, had higher level of experience-taking with their historical group members who experienced past legal job discrimination, respectively, which led to greater perceptions of present-day discrimination. Men and Whites, on the other hand, seemed to lack experience-taking with women and Blacks, respectively, which led to perceiving less present-day discrimination. Moreover, these findings suggest that just focusing on past victims and
their experiences is not enough to understand how past injustices carry over to influence perceptions of the present day, as experience-taking accounted for perceptions of present-day discrimination independent of the focus of thoughts in these studies.

In addition, Study 2 examined the effects of first- and third-person narrative voice on empathic concern toward the past victim and perceptions of present-day discrimination against the historically victimized group. Building on past research (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), this study showed that the way in which a story about a historically victimized group member is narrated can differentially influence ingroup and outgroup members’ perceptions of historical injustices and present-day discrimination. I found that Blacks were more sensitive to the narrative voice manipulation than Whites: Blacks who read the first-person narrative had more empathic concern toward the past victim, judged the past victim more positively, and perceived greater present-day discrimination compared with Blacks who read the third-person narrative. On average, Whites did not seem to be influenced by narrative voice. I also found that first-person narrative voice, compared with third-person, heightened empathic concern toward the past Black victim in the narrative among Blacks, and this heightened empathic concern led to perceive greater present-day racial discrimination against Blacks. This finding further provides evidence of indirect effect of experience-taking that understanding and assuming the target person’s experiences influences perceivers’ perception of present-day discrimination against the target’s group.
Open Questions and Future Directions

The current studies provide initial support for the role of experience-taking in influencing perceptions of the present and first-person narrative voice as a potential way to increase experience-taking. However, there are still several open questions that could extend these findings and enable more definitive claims on the effects of experience-taking on perceptions of present-day discrimination.

Factors Preventing Women from Perceiving Greater Present-Day Gender Discrimination

In Study 1a, there was no predicted overall effect of gender on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination, although I found the predicted indirect effect of gender on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination through experience-taking. Although intergroup perceptions are complex and can be multiply determined, I predicted an overall gender difference in perceptions of present-day gender discrimination given abundant evidence from past research (e.g., Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010).

One possible explanation for the lack of a total effect of gender on perceptions of present-day gender discrimination could be that another variable is acting on perceptions of present-day discrimination in opposite way as experience-taking, cancelling out the total effect. Perhaps a certain feature in this study is influencing another variable, in addition to experience-taking, and this suppressor variable is reducing perceptions of present-day gender discrimination. Thus, there could be two mediators that have opposite effects on perceptions of present-day discrimination acting together, in which case I
would not see a significant total effect of gender on perception of present-day gender discrimination.

To test this possibility of the suppression effect, I entered a second variable measured in this study, namely system justification, that could act “opposite” to experience-taking and cancel out the total effect into my analyses. System justification theory proposes that people are motivated to defend and justify the status quo, even when they are in low status group and the system may actually be disadvantageous for them (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Although the theory suggests that both high and low status groups justify the system, female participants in the current sample might have had higher levels of system justification compared with male participants, and this may have acted as a suppressor variable masking gender difference on perception of present-day gender discrimination.

However, bootstrapping procedures \( (N = 10,000) \) with both experience-taking and level of system justification as independent mediators revealed only the indirect effect of gender on perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking as a mediator, but not with system justification as a mediator. The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through experience-taking had a 95% confidence interval that was reliably different from zero, 95% CI \([.05, .50]\), but the indirect effect through system justification was not reliably different from zero, 95% CI \([- .19, .04]\).

Since the level of system justification did not seem to be the suppressor variable in this case, a different suppressor variable that was not measured in this study may have
acted the opposite way with experience-taking in female participants. Although results of Study 1a theoretically support my hypothesis that differential levels of experience-taking indirectly drive divergent perceptions of present-day discrimination in groups, the expected findings were not replicated. Future research needs to further investigate potential suppressor variables so to replicate the expected overall gender difference on perceptions of present-day discrimination as well as show the indirect effect of experience-taking.

**Factors Preventing the Effects of Narrative Voice on Historical Perpetrator Group Members**

One interesting finding was that there seemed to be no narrative voice effect among White participants in Study 2. This lack of a narrative voice effect may be due to differential motivations among these White participants. According to Social Identity Theory, group membership influences how people navigate through the social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1999). Group members, especially those who are highly identified with the in-group, are motivated to maintain a positive group membership and behave in a way to maintain the positive image (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Research on prejudice reduction suggests that attempts to change group members’ intergroup perceptions can be experienced as threatening to social identity by highly identified group members and can ironically lead them to form negative attitudes toward out-groups (Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). In line with this, compared with less identified group members, highly identified group members tended to use a greater number of negative traits to describe an out-group after being instructed to
perspective-take (Tarrant, Calitri, & Weston, 2012). Because of the potential blame that would potentially hurt one’s positive image of the ingroup (Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010), being reminded of historical injustices perpetrated by one’s own group in the victim’s point of view can especially be threatening to highly identified group. Thus, as they try to avoid threats to a positive ingroup image, highly identified perpetrator group members may be resistant to experience-take with past victims even with a first-person narrative. Less identified perpetrator group members, on the other hand, may feel less threatened by the reminder of historical perpetration and be more open to experience-take with past victims.

In addition to the potential threat highly identified group members may have felt, these group members’ high accessibility to their social identity may have prevented from fully experience-taking with the past victim. Experience-taking posits that one needs to “let go” of self and assume the target person’s experiences. Previous studies have shown that those who are high on chronic private self-consciousness or those who were in high self-concept accessibility manipulation condition have a hard time experience-taking with a target person even after reading a first-person narrative (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Because the current study focuses at the group level, having high accessibility to one’s social identity of being the historical perpetrator group (i.e., having high group identification) may have prevented these highly identified White participants from experience-taking with the past victim.

Thus, White participants’ different levels of racial identification may have led to differential responses to the reminder of historical wrongdoings perpetrated by own
group. These differential responses within the White participants, in turn, may have cancelled out the narrative voice effect some may have had, making it seem there was no narrative voice effect within White participants on average. Further research examining this possibility and ways to remove threat to social identity in historical perpetrator group members, thus, leading them to experience-take with the past victim, would help close the perceptual gap between groups.

**Effects of Third-Person Narrative Voice on Historically Victimized Group Members**

Another unexpected finding in Study 2 was that rather than the first-person narrative boosting empathic concerns and perceptions of present-day racial discrimination in Black participants, the third-person narrative seemed to have decreased empathic concern, such that Black participants in the third-person narrative voice condition responded similarly as White participants did. One speculation may be that third-person narrative voice may have blocked the historically victimized group members’ otherwise natural process of experience-taking with the past victim by influencing the extent to which they identified themselves as a part of this past group. Past research suggests that distant selves are evaluated more negatively by people than recent selves are evaluated (Wilson & Ross, 2001). Reading the story in third-person narrative voice may have distanced Black participants from the target of discrimination and led them to see the shared group membership as a distant and less relevant social identity. Black participants who read in the first-person narrative voice, on the other hand, may have spontaneously engaged in experience-taking with the past victim, taking the shared group membership as their current social identity. Thus, third-person narrative
voice may have decreased experience-taking with the past victim by distancing from the social identity that is shared with the past victim. This distancing from the social identity may have led to decreased perceptions of present-day racial discrimination than they would normally perceive, ironically meeting mutual understanding with White participants. These are interesting possibilities for further investigation.

**Distinction between Experience-Taking and Perspective-Taking**

The present research raises conceptual questions regarding the distinction between perspective-taking and experience-taking. Perspective-taking and experience-taking share many characteristics. Perspective-taking is an active and effortful attempt to put self in another person’s shoes (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), while experience-taking is defined as a spontaneous, effortless process by which one “let go” of own identity and simulate the experiences of a target person as if those experiences were their own (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Previous research on perspective-taking has shown that its active attempt to understand the perspective of others lead to overlap in the self and the other. As a consequence, it reduces stereotyping and prejudice when the target person is a member of out-group (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Similarly, higher level of experience-taking leads to greater incorporation of a target person’s personality trait into the individual’s self-concept (Kaufman & Libby, 2012), and the current findings suggest that it influences perceptions of how the target person’s group is treated in the present.

While both perspective-taking and experience-taking with out-group members lead to positive consequences toward the out-group, I believe they differ both at conceptual and methodological ways and may sometimes lead to different consequences.
Perspective-taking is defined as conscious process of attempting to understand a target person’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences, while experience-taking is rather natural, spontaneous process that does not require conscious processes. To this end, common ways to induce perspective-taking has been through direct instructions to put oneself in the shoe of a target person or write about a target person’s day (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Experience-taking, on the other hand, has been induced more indirectly through narratives, which readers did not consciously try to put themselves in the shoe of the target person.

Apart from different induction processes, experience-taking and perspective-taking differ in one important aspect. Although both concepts lead to self-other merging, they approach this in very different way. Process of perspective-taking usually increases the activation of individuals’ self-concepts, and this heightened activation of self-concept mediates the effects of perspective-taking (e.g., Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). Perspective-taking, thus, requires individuals to anchor on their own point of view to estimate others’ point of view. In line with this, many work on perspective-taking shows projection of self on other (i.e., “inclusion of self in other”) that people tend to ascribe self-related traits to the target person when they perspective-take (Galinsky & Ku, 2004).

Experience-taking, on the other hand, requires reduction of self-concept activation (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). This process of self-other merger may be quite distinct from perspective-taking as rather than anchoring on one’s own perspective, experience-taking leads to anchoring on the target person’s. Instead of applying what one may conceptually believe the target would think, feel, or experience, experience-taking may lets go of self
and leads one to become the target. In this sense, experience-taking may lead to greater
ascription of other-related traits to self than self-related traits to others.

Although conceptually experience-taking and perspective-taking have distinct
features, the current studies do not provide definitive evidence of these distinctions.
Studies 1a and 1b attempted to measure spontaneous levels of experience-taking in
different group members by giving these group members minimal instructions in thinking
about the given topic. Because of the nature of the topic (i.e., thinking about historical
injustices), however, participants may have consciously tried to think in terms of the
target. Study 2 used a narrative, previously established way of inducing experience-
taking. However, because I measured empathic concern, instead of experience-taking,
and did not measure participants’ level of self-concept accessibility, it is unclear whether
the current findings were driven experientially, through experience-taking, or
conceptually, through perspective-taking. Thus, further research that clearly addresses
and distinguishes experience-taking and perspective-taking is needed to understand these
different processes.

Although experience-taking and perspective-taking are believed to have distinct
processes, downstream consequences studied so far have been similar to one another. If
these processes lead to the same consequences, parsing out these processes would have
minimal practical implications, although it may be theoretically interesting. I believe
experience-taking can have contributions beyond perspective-taking that makes it worth
further investigation. Recently, research on perspective-taking started to provide some
limitations and boundary conditions of perspective-taking. For example, perspective-
taking may backfire on highly identified group members or highly prejudiced individuals such that highly identified group members or highly prejudiced individuals evaluate outgroup members negatively following perspective-taking (Tarrant, Calitri, & Weston, 2012; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009). Inducing experience-taking may run into similar issues as I speculated that seemingly null effect of narrative voice on White participants in Study 2 may have stemmed from different responses to experience-taking induction among high and low identified White participants. Although reaching to heightened experience-taking may be similarly hard under these conditions, experience-taking may still lead to positive consequences once it takes place. Research on experience-taking suggests that once experience-taking takes place, positive consequences follow even when inhibiting factors such as outgroup memberships are revealed afterwards (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). This may be hard to occur with perspective-taking because of its explicit instructions and its tendency to require conceptual activation of the self and the other. Although experience-taking with outgroup members may sometimes be difficult with inhibiting factors, the process will result in positive evaluations of outgroups once the process kicks in. Thus, as long as we find a way to delay or remove inhibiting factors, inducing experience-taking may lead to positive consequences on intergroup perceptions.

Additionally, as a result of different processes underlying these two related but distinct modes of understanding others, the nature of the pro-social other-directed feelings that co-occur with these processes may differ. Past research has suggested that the feeling of empathy is an other-oriented emotion that enhances intergroup relations by decreasing biases toward the target and the target's group (e.g., Batson et al., 1997).
However, previous work in the intergroup context tends to overlook the distinction between empathy and sympathy (Escalas & Stern, 2003; Wispé, 1986). Empathy is considered as the state of experiencing the target’s experience and emotions as one’s own. In contrast, sympathy is the state of conceptually understanding the target’s feelings and the reason for them (Escalas & Stern, 2003). Because perspective-taking and experience-taking may involve different mechanisms, they may induce differential affective responses. Since experience-taking is experientially driven, individuals who experience-take with historical victims may feel empathy toward those victims, while those who perspective-take may feel sympathy by conceptually acknowledging the past injustice. Although both sympathy and empathy may promote concern over the past injustice against the victim's group, I believe that these perceptions will only carry over to the perception of the present for those who feel empathy with the victim through experience-taking.

The current research, however, did not provide clear evidence of these connections. Study 2 examined empathic concern toward past victims using previously established measure (Escalas & Stern, 2002) that included both empathy and sympathy items that I believed to be related to experience-taking and perspective-taking. I initially expected empathy to mainly drive differential perceptions of present-day discrimination in this study as empathy was seen as more related to experience-taking than sympathy was. However, findings suggest that the differential perceptions of present-day
discrimination were mainly driven by sympathy, not empathy. Further investigation to distinguish empathy and sympathy, with more sensitive measure of empathy and sympathy, is needed to have clear evidence of whether empathy and sympathy conceptually map onto the processes of experience-taking and perspective-taking, respectively.

Factors Linking Experience-Taking and Perception of Present-day Discrimination

One last lingering question for further investigation is the reason why experience-taking with the past victim increases perceptions of present-day discrimination. Although the current research was the first step into making connection between experience-taking and perception of present, it did not provide an explanation as to what connects experience-taking with a past victim and broad perceptions of present-day discrimination against the victimized group. One possibility is that experience-taking with the past

3 I separately analyzed sympathy and empathy items to examine whether first-person narrative voice has differential effect on sympathy and empathy.

First, I averaged five sympathy items to create a sympathy score ($\alpha = .80$). A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA predicting sympathy revealed a main effect of narrative voice such that reading in first-person narrative voice led to higher sympathy ($M = 6.21, SD = 0.72$) than reading in third-person narrative voice ($M = 5.76, SD = 1.02$), $F(1, 234) = 8.24, p = .004$, but no main effect of race, $F(1, 234) = .01, p = .91$. The main effect of narrative voice was qualified by a significant interaction between narrative voice and race, $F(1, 234) = 6.94, p = .01$. Among Black participants, first-person narrative voice led to more sympathy toward the target of discrimination ($M = 6.43, SD = .51$) than third-person narrative voice did ($M = 5.55, SD = 1.33$), $F(1, 234) = 8.89, p = .003$. However, there was no significant effect of voice on sympathy among White participants, $F(1, 234) = 0.09, p = .76$. In the first-person narrative voice condition, Black participants had more sympathy toward the target of discrimination ($M = 6.43, SD = .51$) than White participants did ($M = 5.99, SD = .73$), $F(1, 234) = 3.87, p = .05$. In the third-person narrative voice condition, White participants had marginally more sympathy toward the target of discrimination ($M = 5.96, SD = .81$) than Black participants did ($M = 5.55, SD = 1.33$), $F(1, 234) = 3.11, p = .08$.

Next, I averaged empathy items to create an empathy score ($\alpha = .91$). A 2 (narrative voice: first vs. third) x 2 (race: Black vs. White) ANOVA predicting empathy revealed a main effect of race such that Black participants had higher empathy toward the target of discrimination ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.43$) than White participants did ($M = 4.00, SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 234) = 8.85, p = .003$, but no main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 234) = 1.61, p = .21$. Moreover, there was no race by narrative voice interaction, $F(1, 234) = 1.61, p = .21$.

Separately analyzing sympathy items and empathy items revealed that race by voice interaction on empathic concern was mainly driven by sympathy.
victim may have decreased the subjective distance between the present and past, leading to perceive the past injustices against the historically victimized group as relevant to present events and circumstances. However, given an alternative analysis in Study 1a\(^4\) showed that experience-taking and subjective temporal distance independently accounted for different perceptions of present-day discrimination, the nature of closeness to the past led by experience-taking may differ from just subjective temporal distance. My speculation is that experience-taking may lead to perception of historical continuity by connecting the individuals to past victims. When one perceives historical continuity, which is independent of subjective temporal distance, one sees the present as continuation of and built upon the past. In contrast, when one perceives historical discontinuity, one sees the present as separate from the past and sees little connection between the past and the present. Little research on this psychological aspect of historical continuity has been conducted in the intergroup context, and existing research has only focused on perceptions of historical continuity with relatively positive historical instances.

\(^4\) An alternative analysis identified subjective temporal distance as another mediator for gender difference on perception of present-day gender discrimination. In this analysis, both experience-taking and subjective temporal distance independently mediated gender difference on perception of present-day discrimination, when controlling for the level of system justification. Given experience-taking and subjective temporal distance are independent mediators, this finding does not necessarily undermine my hypothesis that experience-taking mediates group difference in perception of present-day discrimination. Bootstrapping procedures (\(N = 10,000\)) recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) revealed the indirect pathways of gender on perceptions of gender discrimination in the United States today with experience-taking and subjective temporal distance as mediators, controlling for the level of system justification. The bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect through experience-taking and through subjective temporal distance had 95% confidence intervals that were reliably different from zero, 95% CI [.02, .44] and [.02, .28], respectively. This indicates that experience-taking and subjective temporal distance independently mediate gender difference on perception of present-day discrimination. Female participants experience-took more than male participants did, and this greater experience-taking in female participants predicted greater perception of present-day gender discrimination. Female participants also perceived the past injustice as closer in time, and that closer subjective temporal distance independently predicted greater perception of present-day discrimination.
(see Jetten & Wohl, 2012). However, I think it is possible that experience-taking may increase this perception of historical continuity, which in turn magnifies perceptions of present-day discrimination. Although intriguing, this possibility needs further empirical investigation.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the present studies provided a greater understanding of the processes by which historically victimized group members and historical perpetrator group members perceive past and present injustices and investigated a potential way for enhancing their understanding of past victims’ experiences. These studies offer initial steps in exploring the psychological processes that occur when thinking and learning about historical injustices in different narrative forms, and they raise many additional questions for future research. Since post-conflict reconciliation requires psychological acceptance of perpetrator groups’ apologies and victimized groups’ forgiveness, the current research offers important insight into enhancing mutual intergroup understanding in the wake of historical conflicts between groups.
References


Appendix A: First-person Narrative
I sat in the back of the station wagon, the deputies in front. As we neared the school, the sun was crashing over the entrance of Central High School. The chilled air bit the whites of those glaring eyes surrounding the station wagon. Every face that I looked into, as the car crawled, glistened. The din: “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate,” split the morning. Arms flailed the air with homemade signs. Bodies hunched. I sat in the back of the station wagon, my back pressed against the hot leather seat. A tomato splashed against the window on my left. I didn’t flinch.

The station wagon stopped. The pack writhed and screamed in a wild revival beat. “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate.” Little children were standing, blank and bewildered, amongst a sea of cardboard signs: GOD SAVE US FROM BLACKS. NO BLACKS IN OUR SCHOOLS. I was locked behind glass and steel, waiting for their parents to calm down. The attention of their mothers and fathers was focused on me. I didn’t know whether I should feel angry or proud. Dad had said that when this day came, I should feel proud. “The beautiful story that will become history,” Dad had said, “is all about you, kid, and you must hold to your dignity and not be daunted.” I held. The deputy had maneuvered the station wagon so that it stood directly in front of the entrance, ringed on both sides by the Army and the State Police. When the door opened for me, the frenzy increased. The troopers fought to restrain the crowd as I headed out.

Locked between the shoulders of the deputies, I began climbing the steps. I knew that in the minds of those two who were protecting me there was also the feeling that I was an invader. They had not made their feelings secret—they had told me during the drive. I was the Black challenger mounting the forbidden stairs. My throat felt parched. I
swallowed constantly. “Say, yeh Black, we don’ wancha here,” fell on my ears. It seemed as though the sun cracked over me, a huge egg, depositing a hot yolk. For some reason I stopped on the steps for a moment. One of the guards caught me by the arm. “Com’ on now,” the guard drawled, “we gotta git you inside.” I looked over the face of the building. The American flag fell over the heavily carved masonry of the peaked entrance. I smiled. Vines crept up the dark brick walls, mint-green on brown. The Army stood, legs spread, guns bayoneted held at their sides. They were silent and unblinking. “Here, Blackie,” someone yelled. “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate,” the crowd chanted. I didn’t know what possessed me, but I spun around. My two heavy-set guards, puffing and sweating, and swearing too, grabbed my arms. They dragged me up the two remaining steps. I looked back once more before entering the building.
Appendix B: Third-person Narrative
He sat in the back of the station wagon, the deputies in front. As they neared the school, the sun was crashing over the entrance of Central High School. The chilled air bit the whites of those glaring eyes surrounding the station wagon. Every face that he looked into, as the car crawled, glistened. The din: “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate,” split the morning. Arms flailed the air with homemade signs. Bodies hunched. He sat in the back of the station wagon, his back pressed against the hot leather seat. A tomato splashed against the window on his left. He didn’t flinch.

The station wagon stopped. The pack writhed and screamed in a wild revival beat. “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate.” Little children were standing, blank and bewildered, amongst a sea of cardboard signs: GOD SAVE US FROM BLACKS. NO BLACKS IN OUR SCHOOLS. He was locked behind glass and steel, waiting for their parents to calm down. The attention of their mothers and fathers was focused on him. He didn’t know whether he should feel angry or proud. His dad had said that when this day came, he should feel proud. “The beautiful story that will become history,” his dad had said, “is all about you, kid, and you must hold to your dignity and not be daunted.” He held. The deputy had maneuvered the station wagon so that it stood directly in front of the entrance, ringed on both sides by the Army and the State Police. When the door opened for him, the frenzy increased. The troopers fought to restrain the crowd as he headed out.

Locked between the shoulders of the deputies, he began climbing the steps. He knew that in the minds of those two who were protecting him there was also the feeling that he was an invader. They had not made their feelings secret—they had told him
during the drive. He was the Black challenger mounting the forbidden stairs. His throat felt parched. He swallowed constantly. “Say, yeh Black, we don’ wancha here,” fell on his ears. It seemed as though the sun cracked over him, a huge egg, depositing a hot yolk. For some reason he stopped on the steps for a moment. One of the guards caught him by the arm. “Com’ on now,” the guard drawled, “we gotta git you inside.” He looked over the face of the building. The American flag fell over the heavily carved masonry of the peaked entrance. He smiled. Vines crept up the dark brick walls, mint-green on brown. The Army stood, legs spread, guns bayoneted held at their sides. They were silent and unblinking. “Here, Blackie,” someone yelled. “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t wanna integrate,” the crowd chanted. He didn’t know what possessed him, but he spun around. His two heavy-set guards, puffing and sweating, and swearing too, grabbed his arms. They dragged him up the two remaining steps. He looked back once more before entering the building.