

Intergroup Vicarious Ostracism and Perceptions of Prejudice

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INTRODUCTION

- Humans have used social connections to enhance survival and reproduction – losing these connections is very detrimental to us.
 - We have evolved sensitive neural and perceptual systems that detect and respond to ostracism threats.¹
 - Vicarious ostracism – the experience of distress when viewing another person being ostracized
 - Conflicting research between vicarious ostracism and intergroup vicarious ostracism:
 - Recent research leans on the perspective that exclusion from an ingroup member is costlier than ostracization from an outgroup member.²
 - There is little research on experiences of vicarious ostracism and how they influence perceptions of and experiences with ostracism targets.
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- The present study aims to analyze the roles of group membership on an individual's perceptions and observations of vicarious ostracism experiences, and additionally their thoughts of the person being ostracized.
 - **Hypothesis:** observing an ingroup member being ostracized by an outgroup member would be seen as more prejudicial than an outgroup member being ostracized by outgroup members, which would in turn be related to a more positive view of the ingroup target who was ostracized.

METHOD

Study 1:

- 179 (135 women and 44 men) Caucasian undergraduate college students
- Mean age = 19.65 years old ($SD = 1.94$)

Study 2:

- 372 (229 women and 143 men) Caucasian and African American adults (210 Caucasian and 162 African American)
- Recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk
- Mean age = 32.20 years old ($SD = 6.38$)

Materials:

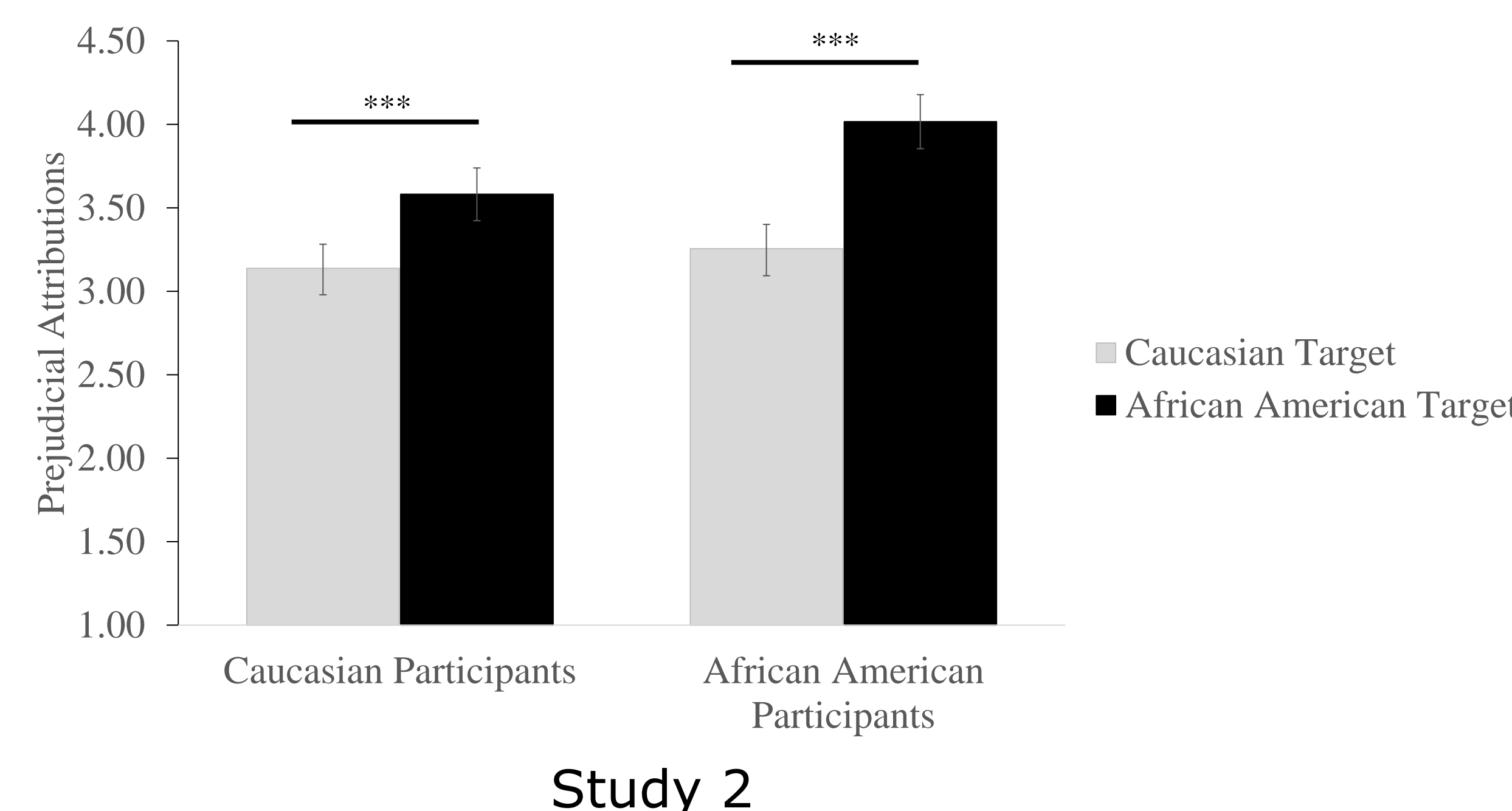
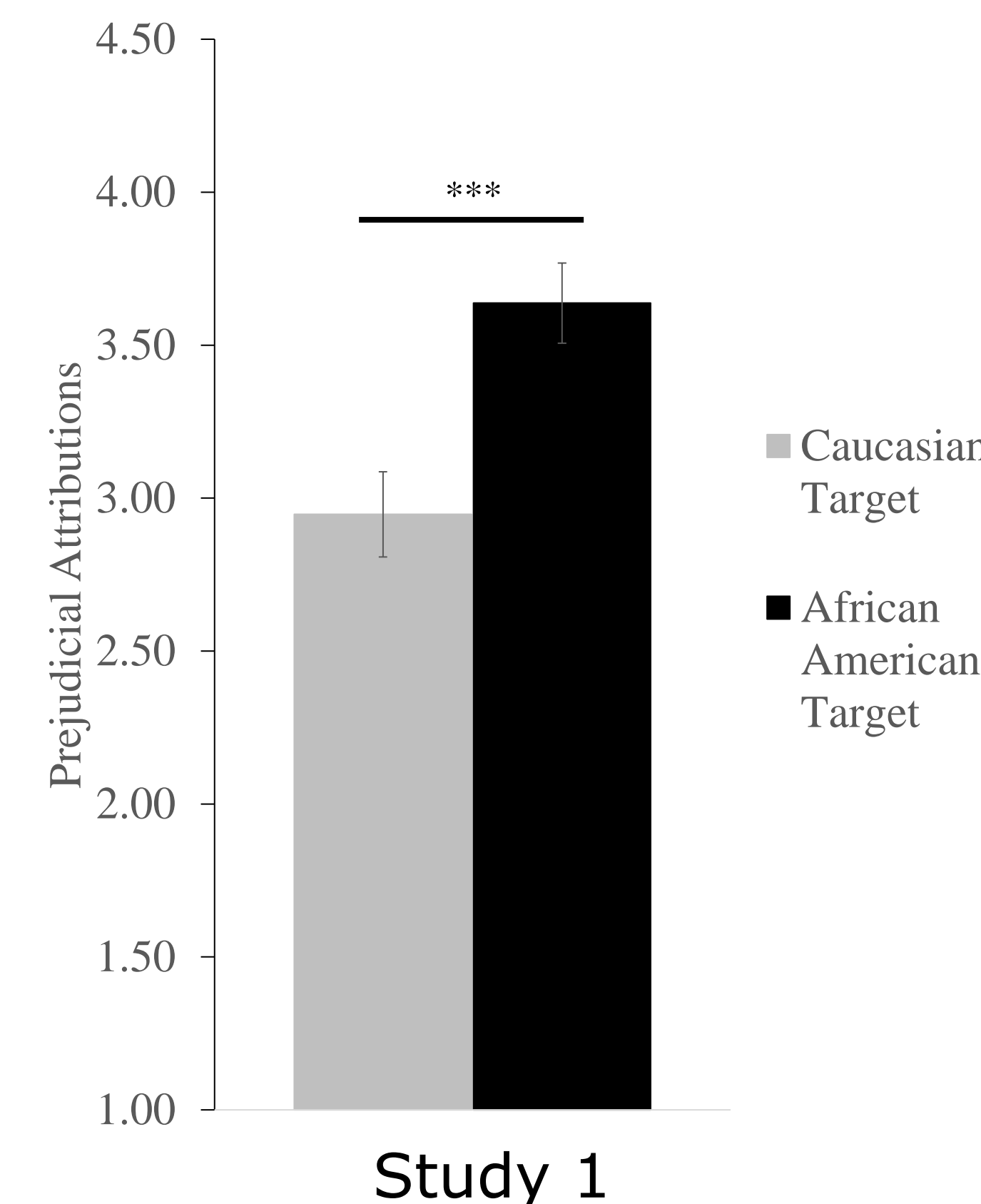
- Ostracism vignette
- Self-report measures on prejudicial attributions and target impressions

PROCEDURES

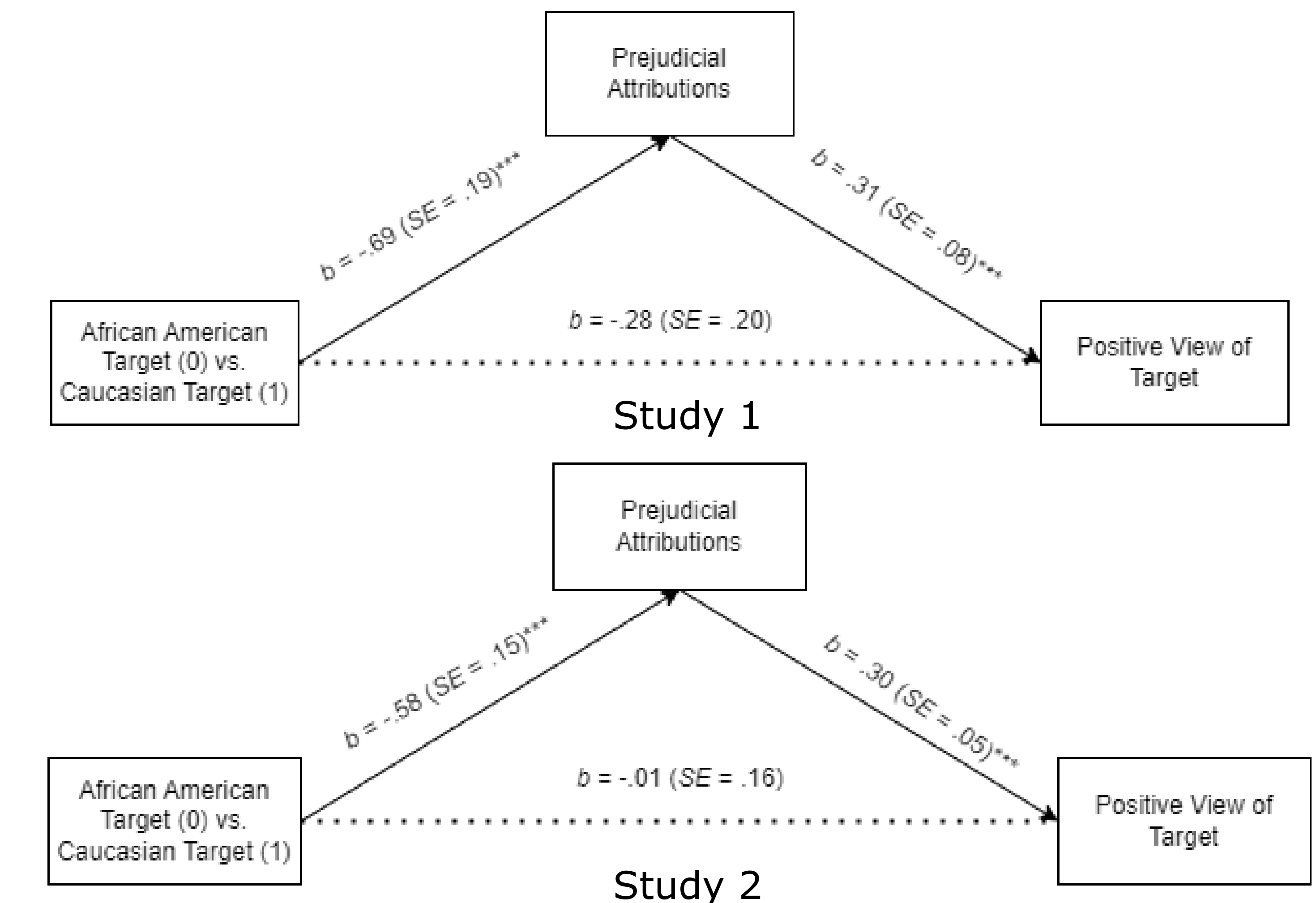
- Participants were first represented with group-based ostracism vignettes where they read about a racial ingroup or outgroup member being ostracized by members of the ingroup or outgroup.
- Then, participants completed self-report questionnaires assessing the degree to which they viewed the depicted ostracism being attributable to prejudice by the sources, as well as their impression of the ostracism target.

RESULTS

- Analyzed using a one-way between-subjects ANOVA, with Tukey post-hoc tests.
- In both studies, regardless of the race, we found that participants in the Intergroup Black condition viewed the ostracism as more prejudicial than people who saw the ostracism in the Intergroup White condition.



RESULTS cont.



Study 1 $b = -.22, SE = .08, 95\% CI [-.384, -.081]$
 Study 2 $b = -.17, SE = .06, 95\% CI [-.291, -.074]$

- It was found that, in both studies, prejudicial attributions mediated the relationship between the depicted ostracism and participants' impression of the target, such that **when people viewed a African American target being ostracized by Caucasian sources, they rated the ostracism as more prejudicial, which in turn was associated with liking the target more.**

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, the findings above were the opposite of the hypothesis and instead suggest that our evolved cognitions that process experiences of group-based vicarious ostracism may be influenced by contemporary social norms and group dynamics.
- These findings present important implications for understanding the ecological factors that influence behavioral and perceptual outcomes associated with vicarious ostracism, particularly within the context of intergroup conflict.

References

- Williams, K. D. (2009). Chapter 6 Ostracism: A Temporal Need-Threat Model. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 41, pp. 275–314). Academic Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)00406-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)00406-1)
- Veldhuis, T. M., Gordijn, E. H., Veenstra, R., & Lindenberg, S. (2014). Vicarious Group-Based Rejection: Creating a Potentially Dangerous Mix of Humiliation, Powerlessness, and Anger. *PLOS ONE*, 9(4), e95421. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0095421>