

Ambiguously-Racist Scenarios

The ambiguously-racist scenarios below were developed, piloted, and used by us in an experiment in which we assessed African Americans' and European Americans' perceptions of racial discrimination when its presence was ambiguous.

The stimuli set comprises 11 short scenarios. Each scenario depicts an everyday ambiguously-racist situation. The contexts in each of the scenarios are ones in which attributions of race discrimination are plausible. In each scenario, the executor of the ambiguously-racist behavior was identified as either "white" or "black" and the recipient or recipients of that behavior always were identified as "black."

On the following page begins the set of scenarios. (In our work, we counterbalanced their order of presentation across participants.) Each scenario is presented on a separate page to discourage comparison of the scenarios when providing responses. Four scenarios feature a prototypical (i.e., White) executor, four scenarios feature a non-prototypical (i.e., Black) executor, and three distracter scenarios feature an executor whose race is not specified. Only the prototypical and non-prototypical stimuli (not the distracters) are scored.

Each scenario is followed by a question that reads, "**In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?**" **The response scale for this item ranges from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much so*).** Higher scores indicate a greater perception of discrimination. A mean score is obtained for both the White-executed scenarios and the Black-executed scenarios (via summing across the 4 (White or Black) scenarios and dividing by 4 [the number of scenarios]). Each participant, then, produces a mean perception of discrimination score for both the prototypical (i.e., White-executed) scenarios and the non-prototypical (i.e., Black-executed) scenarios.

You are welcome to use these materials without seeking further permission. The citation is:

Corning, A. F., & Bucchianeri, M. M. (2010). Perceiving racism in ambiguous situations: Who relies on easy-to-use information? *Journal of Social Psychology, 150*(3), 258-277.

Instructions:

On each of the following pages is a short scenario. Please read each scenario carefully. As you read, imagine that each situation is being described to you by a peer. There are no right or wrong answers; your personal opinion is what matters. After reading each scenario, read the question that follows and indicate your response by circling an answer choice.

Last Sunday I was sitting on a bench in the park. Near where I sat, a white father was playing with his young son. A black couple walked by with their dog, and the boy went over to pet the dog. The father pulled his son back toward him and told him to leave the dog alone.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

One day, I was driving around town, running errands with my aunt, who is black. As we were stopped at a red light, we noticed a black pedestrian walking down the sidewalk on our same side of the street. The man was dressed in layers and appeared to be carrying a bundle of newspapers. Upon seeing the man, my aunt asked me to lock the car doors.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Saturday afternoon I was at a jewelry store in the mall. I noticed a couple come into the store and begin looking at some of the jewelry on display. The lady behind the counter then approached the couple and greeted them by asking, "Are you here to buy something today?"

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Last evening, I boarded a plane and had a seat in first class. A black man was seated next to me and a white man was sitting across the aisle. The flight attendant, who was black, politely asked the black passenger if she could check his seat assignment again before take-off.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Last weekend I was out at a popular nightclub. Sometimes they ask for IDs. There were two young women in line ahead of me. The bouncer, who was white, asked the white woman to pay the fee, and then let her in. He then asked the black woman to pay the fee, and then asked to see her ID.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

I was in this gimmicky-type merchandise store the other day—the kind where they have items on display that you can try out yourself, like massage chairs and remote-controlled cars. When a middle-aged guy came in and started checking out some sort of radio device, a clerk asked him if he could help him. The guy said he was just browsing, and went on moving throughout the store. Each time I looked up from my own shopping, I noticed that the same clerk was arranging merchandise near the guy.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

A week ago I dined in a restaurant that was very busy. At another table, I saw a black couple sit for 30 minutes before getting served. Three couples were served before them, two of which had come into the restaurant after the black couple. Over the noise, I overheard their waiter, who was black, tell the hostess that another server was supposed to be covering that table.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Yesterday I was on the downtown bus. I saw a young white woman occupying a side-facing bench seat. A black couple boarded and sat down next to her. Shortly after the couple sat down, the young woman got up, walked down the aisle, and held a handrail. I noticed she did not get off at the next stop.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

My brother told me this story about when he and a friend, who is black, were coming onto campus last Friday. They had their windows open because it was a nice day, and the black guard sort of leaned over a bit toward their car. He commented on the nice weather and asked if they were headed to practice.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Earlier today I was in the parking lot of the grocery store. A woman who was just arriving was getting her kids out of the car. Two of her kids were already out and standing near the back of the car. A man headed toward the store was walking through the parking lot. As the man neared, I heard the mother tell the children to move closer to the front of the car. She was saying, "You need to stay away from passing vehicles."

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

At the gym yesterday, there was a fight between two men, one black and one white. The owner of the gym, who is a white woman, said she saw the whole thing. She ended up revoking the gym membership of the black man, saying he had instigated the fight.

In your mind, to what extent did this situation depict an instance of unfair treatment based on race?

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Not at All
(it definitely was not an instance of unfair treatment based on race)

Very Much So
(it definitely was an instance of unfair treatment based on race)