



## Reports

## The hubris penalty: Biased responses to “Celebration” displays of black football players

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### ABSTRACT

We posit that pride and arrogance are tolerated for high-status group members but are repudiated for low-status group members. Thus, we predict that Blacks, but not Whites, who behave arrogantly will be penalized. Specifically, we investigated the context of penalties against football players for “celebrating” after touchdowns. We propose that such celebrations reflect a racially biased “hubris penalty” because: (1) celebrations are primarily perceived as displays of arrogance (rather than exuberance), and (2) arrogance is penalized for Black but not White players. Three experiments demonstrate that all players who celebrated after touchdowns were perceived as more arrogant than those who did not celebrate. Although celebratory Black and White players were perceived as being equally arrogant, Black players were penalized with lower compensation whereas White players were not. Mediation analyses show that perceived arrogance mediated the effect of celebration on compensation, even when controlling for perceived aggression.

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A virulent controversy erupted when NBA superstar LeBron James announced his decision to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers to join the Miami Heat during a grandiose, hour-long ESPN special report. Two issues underlying the furor were: (1) whether he had the “right” to leave the Cavaliers at all (the team’s owner viewed the departure as a sign of hubris, “ingratitude”, and betrayal) and (2) whether LeBron had the right to leave in such an ostentatious, unapologetic, and seemingly arrogant manner. Some individuals, including the Reverend Jesse Jackson, saw the controversy as evidence of backlash that Blacks face when they display dominance rather than deference. Similarly, some sports commentators have questioned whether the NFL’s “celebration penalties” are a racially biased attempt to quell the confident and ostentatious displays of Black players. The current paper sought to investigate the consequences of high-status behaviors (e.g., confidence, dominance, arrogance) for members of low diffuse status groups, namely Blacks. We hypothesized that Blacks, but not Whites, would be penalized for exhibiting such behaviors because they violate the established social hierarchy.

Every civilization known to humankind has possessed some form of social hierarchy, with relatively privileged, high-status groups at the top and relatively disadvantaged, low status groups at the bottom (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). One quality of social hierarchies is that they tend to be stable and self-reinforcing (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). They are maintained and perpetuated by a number of mechanisms, including legitimizing

myths (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), or system-justifying beliefs (Jost & Banaji, 1994), that prescribe certain roles, traits, and behaviors to high- and low-status group members. The result is that high-status individuals tend to behave in socially prescribed high-status ways whereas low-status individuals tend to behave in socially prescribed low-status ways (Kraus & Keltner, 2009; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In addition, low-status individuals tend to be punished if they behave in high-status ways (Anderson et al., 2006), and high-status individuals tend to be punished if they behave in low-status ways (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). In short, social hierarchies possess internal dynamics and mechanisms (e.g., negative reinforcement of status-inconsistent behaviors) which serve to keep the hierarchical structure intact.

At the same time, most social hierarchies are characterized by some degree of permeability, such that an individual from a traditionally low-status group might sometimes occupy a higher position of privilege or power than an individual from a traditionally high-status group. This is a condition that we refer to as *social hierarchy reversal* (SHR). Because SHRs violate the existing social order, they have a higher likelihood of increasing social tension, discomfort, and/or resentment, as well as perceptions of illegitimacy. This may be especially true when the perpetrators of SHRs are male. According to the “outgroup male target hypothesis” intergroup bias and conflict are primarily male-on-male phenomena that are motivated by the desire for dominance and power (Navarrete, McDonald, Molina & Sidanius, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Moreover, recent research has shown that displays of dominance produce backlash for Black males but not Black females (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, in press). We posit that the tension created by SHRs can be mitigated by the presence of signals that evoke

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traditional social hierarchical arrangements, thereby attenuating the mismatch between an individuals' role or behavior and their groups' position within the larger social hierarchy. For example, a high-power Black leader might mitigate the (latent) tension experienced by White subordinates by behaving in a humble manner. Conversely, behaving arrogantly might *exacerbate* resentment due to the (implicit) perception that the individual is not entitled to a high-status role, and therefore should show gratitude and humility (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Livingston and Pearce (2009) found that disarming mechanisms—traits or features that signal warmth, humility, or docility (e.g., “babyfacedness”), were associated with higher success for Black male CEOs. The authors argued that a low-power “filial” physical appearance, that is more evocative of traditional hierarchical arrangements, assuaged the tension that resulted from Blacks in high-power “paternal” positions. In contrast, babyfacedness was associated with *lower* success for White male CEOs (Livingston & Pearce, 2009; see also Rule & Ambady, 2008). Whites in positions of power may be licensed to display arrogance and agency, and may even be disadvantaged by humility. Indeed, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, and Rudman (2010) found that too much modesty or humility could be a detriment to White males because it violated their socially prescribed high-power roles.

Although previous work has demonstrated the beneficial consequences of humility for Blacks versus Whites, no previous research has investigated whether there are detrimental consequences of arrogance for Blacks versus Whites. Being a high-status behavior, arrogance from a lower-status group member might be seen as subversive because it signals that the individual either does not know or does not accept his place in the social hierarchy. This would lead to a prediction that Black males will be punished for behaving in an arrogant manner, whereas White males will not be punished. An alternative prediction is that arrogance will elicit punishment, independent of a person's position in the social hierarchy, because it is a universally negative trait. We tested these competing predictions in the domain of professional sports.

The specific context is the “celebration penalty”, first adopted by the National Football League (NFL) in 2006, and subsequently by the NCAA. A celebration penalty falls under the realm of “unsportsmanlike conduct” and is defined by Rule 9–2, Article 1(d) of the NCAA rulebook as “any delayed, excessive, prolonged or choreographed act by which a player (or players) attempts to focus attention upon himself (or themselves)”; and asserts that “after a score or any other play, the player in possession immediately must return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot.” Some sports experts believe that the penalty reflects bias against Black players. For example, prominent sports announcer Tim Brando once suggested that the South Eastern Conference (SEC) had the highest incidence of excessive celebration (i.e., “unsportsmanlike conduct”) penalties of any conference division due to the legacy of racism in the South.

As a preliminary study, we conducted an analysis of the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties called after touchdown plays during the entire 2010–2011 NFL season (preseason and playoff games were excluded), based on Play-By-Play data provided by ESPN and NFL.com (ESPN NFL Scoreboard, 2011; NFL Players, 2011). We found suggestive real-world evidence that Blacks tended to be over-represented relative to Whites in unsportsmanlike conduct penalties called. Although the percentage of Black and White players in the NFL was 65% and 31%, respectively, over 91% of the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties imposed by the NFL in the 2010–2011 football season were against Black players, whereas only 9% were against White players<sup>1</sup> (see Table 1). What is unclear from these data is whether Blacks are more likely to celebrate,

<sup>1</sup> Based on ESPN.com play-by-play information, there were a total of 12 unsportsmanlike conduct penalties (and one taunting penalty) called on touchdown plays in the 2010–2011 regular season. Only 1 of these 13 penalties was called on a White player (see Table 1 for a full breakdown of unsportsmanlike conduct penalties by player race and position).

more likely to be penalized for celebration, or both. Given several salient examples of White players who celebrate after touchdowns (e.g., Tim Tebow, Aaron Rodgers),<sup>2</sup> we chose to focus the current investigation on the consequences of celebration rather than frequency of celebration.

We hypothesize that Black players will be more likely to be punished for celebrations compared with White players because: (1) celebrations will be seen as arrogant and self-promoting, rather than humble and self-deprecating, and (2) high-status behaviors (e.g., arrogance, self-promotion) are permitted of members of high-status groups (White males) but not low-status groups (Black males). Thus, we predict that Black players will be disproportionately sanctioned for celebrations. In many ways, the present context provides a basis for a conservative test of our hypothesis because if there were any domain in which arrogance might be permitted of Black males, it is the realm of professional sports. Indeed, empirical evidence has shown that Blacks are perceived as being more athletically-skilled than Whites (Devine & Baker, 1991; Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). Moreover, theoretical perspectives such as Social Identity Theory argue for the existence of “social creativity”, which allows minorities to attain positive distinctiveness by outperforming majority group members in specific domains (e.g., sports), even though they are subordinate to minorities in more general domains (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, Black athletes, even those at the top of their profession, might not be immune to the negative consequences of perceived arrogance. In sum, we argue that celebrations will be perceived as a sign of arrogance, which is tolerated for Whites but not for Blacks. Consequently, we predict that Black (but not White) football players will be punished for celebrating after touchdowns. We experimentally tested these predictions in three studies.

## Study 1

### Participants

Seventy-four part-time MBA students (39.2% female) participated in exchange for \$10. Because of the judgment context, we restricted our sample to non-Black individuals who were born and raised in the U.S. and were knowledgeable about American football. Thus, in both studies, we eliminated non-U.S. participants and those who did not know the number of yards on a football field. This yielded a final sample of 44 participants (38.6% female). There were no significant effects of gender.

### Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to read a scenario about a Black or White football player (manipulated by name) who scored a touchdown and either behaved arrogantly (celebration condition) or humbly (no celebration):

#### Celebration condition

*It was third down and four and the Tigers had the ball at the Shark's 45 yard line. Quarterback Ryan Phillips dropped back to throw a pass. He looked to the left, and then the right, and fired a pass to wide receiver Malik Johnson (Jake Biermann) who was open down the sideline. Johnson (Biermann) caught the pass with his finger tips and sprinted into the end zone for the touchdown. He immediately spiked the ball right next to defender Jake Biermann (Malik Johnson) of the Sharks. Johnson (Biermann) then did his signature dance followed by a muscle flex and waited for the crowd's response. Seconds later, Johnson (Biermann) heard the whistles blow and saw the penalty flag for his*

<sup>2</sup> In 2011, Aaron Rodgers was featured in a State Farm commercial for his signature dance.

**Table 1**  
Number of NFL players and Unsportsmanlike Conduct (UC) penalties by Player Race and Position: 2010–2011 Season.

Position	Total # of NFL players	# of Black players	# of White players	# of Other Race players	% Black players	% White players	% Other Race players	Total UC PENALTIES	Black penalties	White penalties	% Black penalties	% White penalties
Defensive back	519	466	45	8	90%	9%	1%	2	2	0	100%	0%
Linebacker	381	264	101	16	69%	27%	4%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Running back	245	203	30	12	83%	12%	5%	2	2	0	100%	0%
Offensive lineman	483	195	264	24	40%	55%	5%	2	1	1	50%	50%
Tight end	175	70	95	10	40%	54%	6%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Wide receiver	377	310	54	13	82%	14%	4%	5	5	0	100%	0%
Other	699	355	311	33	51%	44%	5%	0	0	0	0%	0%
Total	2879	1863	900	116	65%	31%	4%	13	12	1	92%	8%

celebration dance as 'unsportsmanlike conduct'. The Tigers lost yards for this penalty.

#### No-celebration condition

It was third down and four and the Tigers had the ball at the Shark's 45 yard line. Quarterback Ryan Phillips dropped back to throw a pass. He looked to the left, and then the right, and fired a pass to wide receiver Malik Johnson (Jake Biermann) who was open down the sideline. Johnson (Biermann) caught the pass with his finger tip, bolted past Shark's defender Jake Bierman (Malik Johnson), and sprinted into the end zone for the touchdown.

After reading the scenario, participants completed a number of questions and trait items related to compensation and perceived arrogance. The compensation composite included two questions: "Malik Johnson (Jake Biermann) should receive a salary bonus for this play" and "Malik Johnson (Jake Biermann) should be rewarded for his actions" ( $r = .72$ ). All questions were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Arrogance was measured using a three-item index (i.e., "arrogant", "cocky", and "self-promoting",  $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### Results

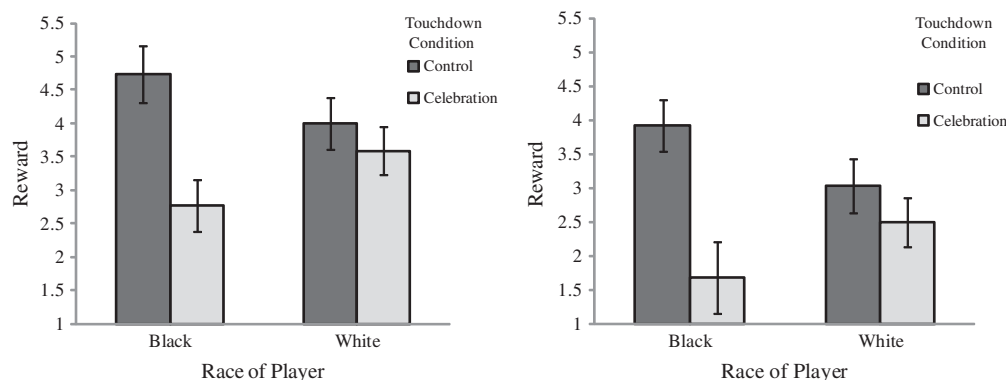
The two dependent variables of interest, perceived arrogance and compensation, were first subjected to a 2(Black vs. White)  $\times$  2(Celebration vs. None) between-subjects MANOVA. Results show only a main effect for celebration,  $F(1,39) = 25.87$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .57$ . For the arrogance index, players that celebrated after a touchdown were seen as more arrogant than players that did not,  $F(1,40) = 50.73$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .56$  ( $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = .74$  and  $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = .66$ , respectively,  $d = 2.20$ ). None of the other effects approached significance, both  $F_s < 1$ . Thus, celebrations were perceived as arrogant, and Black and White players were seen as equally arrogant when they celebrated.

A 2 (Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (Celebration vs. None) between-subjects ANOVA on the compensation index yielded a significant main effect of condition,  $F(1,40) = 9.20$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ , qualified by a Race  $\times$  Celebration interaction,  $F(1,40) = 3.94$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ . As seen in Fig. 1, Black players who celebrated were compensated significantly less than those who did not celebrate after a touchdown,  $t(22) = 4.95$ ,  $p < .0001$ ; ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = .99$  and  $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = .93$ , respectively,  $d = 2.04$ ), whereas there was no difference in compensation among White players who celebrated and those who did not,  $t(18) = .57$ ,  $p = .57$ ; ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 1.51$  and  $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ , respectively). Finally, we tested whether arrogance perceptions were correlated with compensation recommendations. The correlation between perceived arrogance and compensation was negative and significant for Black players,  $r(24) = -.64$ ,  $p = .001$ , such that Blacks perceived as arrogant were conferred lower compensation than those perceived as humble. However, the relationship did not approach significance for White players,  $r(20) = -.22$ ,  $p = .35$ .

#### Discussion

Consistent with the notion of a "hubris penalty" for low-status but not high-status groups, Study 1 demonstrated that Black football players who behaved in an arrogant manner were punished more than Black football players who behaved in a more humble manner. However, there was no difference in penalty between arrogant and humble White players. Furthermore, the magnitude of penalty against Black players was significantly correlated with the degree to which they were perceived as arrogant. Taken together, these data suggest that it is acceptable for members of high-status groups (i.e., Whites) to be arrogant, but it is not acceptable for members of low-status groups (i.e., Blacks).

An alternative explanation is that Black and White celebrations were perceived differently. Although there were no differences between the perceived arrogance of Black and White players who celebrated in



**Fig. 1.** Reward compensation as a function of Player's Race and Touchdown Condition (Study 1 and Study 2).

**Study 1**, it might be the case that “celebrations”, as the name suggests, are (also) seen as displays of exuberance for Whites but not for Blacks. This discrepancy might even be due to real or perceived baseline differences in the incidence of celebrations between Black and White players. If Whites are perceived a celebrating less often, perhaps they are perceived as more exuberant when they do celebrate. We tested this possibility in **Study 2**. In addition, we expanded our compensation dependent variable in **Study 2**. In addition to assessing deservingness of *bonus* compensation, we also measured conferral of *baseline* salary. Finally, we extended our investigation to a non-academic sample of football fans to test the generalizability of the findings.

## Study 2

### Participants

Participants were 54 male participants gathered from an on-line sample who participated in exchange for the chance to win a \$50 gift card. The sample was drawn from a portal of nationwide participants recruited through message boards, direct emails, and advertisements around the web. As with **Study 1**, the sample consisted of non-Black U.S. citizens who could report the length of a football field. The sample was diverse with respect to age (range = 19–75;  $M = 36.89$ ;  $SD = 16.36$ ) and socioeconomic status (i.e., household income) ( $M = \$72,974$ ;  $SD = \$56,006$ ).

### Procedure

The materials and procedures were essentially identical to **Study 1** with a few notable exceptions. In addition to the “reward” and “bonus pay” questions ( $r = .76$ ), **Study 2** included a baseline measure of compensation. Specifically, we asked the question: “If the average wide receiver in the NFL makes around \$1 million, how much do you think Malik Johnson (Jake Biermann) should make?” Response options ranged from \$0 to \$2,000,000, with only these two values indicated at the endpoints of the scale. Participants indicated a salary amount by moving a slide bar to a location between the two endpoints.

We measured perceptions of exuberance, in addition to arrogance. Similar to **Study 1**, participants made three arrogance-related ratings (i.e., arrogant, cocky, self-promoting,  $\alpha = .90$ ). In addition, they made three exuberance-related ratings (i.e., happy, enthusiastic, cheerful  $\alpha = .57$ ).<sup>3</sup> All ratings used 1–7 scales.

### Results

A (Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (Celebration vs. None)  $\times$  2 (Arrogant vs. Exuberant Ratings) mixed ANOVA with the last factor within subjects yielded only a significant Celebration  $\times$  Judgment interaction,  $F(1,48) = 9.93$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ . Simple effects revealed that players who celebrated were seen as more exuberant than players who did not,  $t(51) = 2.37$ ,  $p < .03$  ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = .72$  and  $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = .56$ , respectively,  $d = .65$ ).<sup>4</sup> However, the arrogance effect was much larger in magnitude,  $t(50) = 5.21$ ,  $p < .0001$ , such that those who celebrated were seen as much more arrogant than those who did not ( $M_s = 5.49$ ,  $SD = 1.08$  and  $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ , respectively,  $d = 1.45$ ). Moreover, players in the no-celebration control condition were seen as more exuberant than arrogant,  $t(26) = 2.70$ ,  $p < .01$  ( $M_s = 4.58$  and  $3.95$ ,  $d = .75$ ),

<sup>3</sup> Given the surprisingly low reliability, we examined the alpha separately for White and Black players. They were different:  $\alpha = .71$  for Whites, and  $\alpha = .36$  for Blacks.

<sup>4</sup> Given the relatively low alpha of the exuberance index, we computed the effect separately for the three traits. The mean difference between the celebration and control condition was null for “happy”,  $p < .37$ , marginal for “cheerful”,  $p < .07$ , and significant for “enthusiastic”,  $p < .02$ .

whereas players in the celebration condition tended to be seen as more arrogant than exuberant,  $t(24) = 1.86$ ,  $p = .075$  ( $M_s = 5.49$  and  $5.00$ ,  $d = .53$ ). The three-way interaction with race did not approach significance,  $F < 1.30$ , indicating that there was no difference in perceptions of Black and White players on either of these dimensions.

Next, we performed a 2 (Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (Celebration vs. None) between-subjects ANOVA on the reward compensation index ( $r = .76$ ). Results indicate a significant main effect of celebration,  $F(1,50) = 11.06$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ , such that players who celebrated were rewarded less than players who did not celebrate ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 1.25$  and  $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ , respectively,  $d = .84$ ). This main effect was qualified by a significant Race  $\times$  Celebration interaction,  $F(1, 50) = 4.18$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ . Simple effects reveal that Black players who celebrated were rewarded significantly less than those who did not celebrate after a touchdown,  $t(21) = 4.74$ ,  $p < .0001$  ( $M = 1.69$ ,  $SD = .59$  and  $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ , respectively,  $d = 1.81$ ), whereas there was no difference in reward compensation among White players who did and did not celebrate,  $t < 1$ , ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.40$  and  $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ , respectively). In addition, Blacks who celebrated were rewarded less than Whites who celebrated,  $t(23) = 2.03$ ,  $p = .05$  ( $M_s = 1.69$  and  $2.50$ ,  $d = .75$ ), whereas Blacks who did not celebrate tended to be rewarded the same as Whites,  $t(27) = 1.45$ ,  $p = .16$  ( $M_s = 3.93$  and  $3.04$ ).

In addition to the reward compensation index included in **Study 1**, we also included a baseline measure of salary in **Study 2**. A planned contrast analysis predicting lower compensation only in the celebratory Black condition yielded a significant effect,  $t(49) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .02$ . An LSD post-hoc test revealed that the salary conferred in the Black celebration condition ( $M = \$936,250$ ,  $SD = \$175,005$ ) was significantly lower than the salary conferred in the White celebration condition,  $p = .05$ , ( $M = \$1,131,765$ ,  $SD = \$190,500$ ,  $d = 1.07$ ), the White no-celebration condition,  $p = .03$ , ( $M = \$1,166,429$ ,  $SD = \$304,014$ ,  $d = .92$ ), and the Black no-celebration condition,  $p = .02$ , ( $M = \$1,180,000$ ,  $SD = \$218,315$ ,  $d = 1.23$ ). The results also suggest an absolute, as well as relative, penalty for Black players who celebrated, given that the mean salary conferred was below the \$1,000,000 baseline. None of the other differences approached significance, all  $p_s > .56$  (See Fig. 2).

Consistent with **Study 1**, there was also a significant negative relationship between arrogance and salary,  $r(21) = -.51$ ,  $p = .02$  for Black players. However, there was a nonsignificant *positive* correlation between arrogance and salary for White players,  $r(30) = .14$ ,  $p = .47$ . Thus, being perceived as arrogant was associated with a salary penalty for Black players but not for White players. There were no significant correlations between exuberance and salary for either group.

Based on **Study 1** and **Study 2**, we established that Blacks get penalties and Whites do not. The goal of **Study 3** was to more closely examine why and under what conditions Blacks get penalties. One alternative explanation is that Blacks received penalties not for arrogance per se,

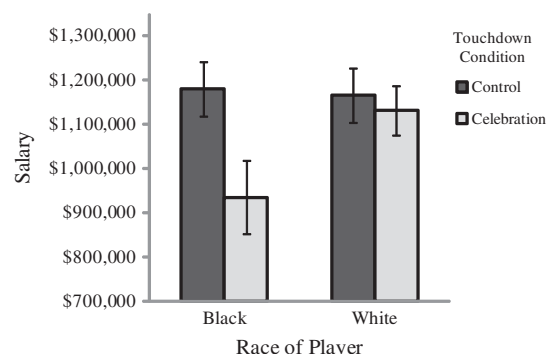


Fig. 2. Salary conferral as a function of player's race and touchdown condition (**Study 2**).



but rather for “aggression” against a White defender. Thus, we sought to examine whether: (1) the results were due to intergroup dynamics of the players rather than celebration per se, and (2) the results were driven by perceived aggression, rather than perceived arrogance. In addition, we investigated whether our “humble” condition was truly humble, and whether lack of a reward is analogous to penalty. In addition, we explored mediators of the penalty against Blacks. Because we established that Whites do not receive penalties for celebration (and if anything are rewarded), we only included Black targets in [Study 3](#).

### Study 3

#### Participants

105 White participants gathered from an on-line sample participated in exchange for the chance to win a \$50 gift card. The sample consisted of participants who could report the length of a football field. The sample was diverse with respect to age (range = 17–68;  $M = 30.86$ ;  $SD = 11.70$ ), socioeconomic status (i.e., household income) ( $M = \$44,166$ ;  $SD = \$46,901$ ), and gender (64% female). There were no significant effects of gender.

#### Procedure

We tested the competing intergroup bias versus hubris penalty hypotheses by randomly assigning participants to one of four conditions: (1) Celebration against a White player (similar to [Studies 1 and 2](#)), (2) Celebration against a “raceless” player, (3) No Celebration (similar to [Studies 1 and 2](#)), and (4) a Humble condition. In each condition, we changed the position of the player from “wide receiver” to “tight end” to rule out the possibility that a specific position could have driven the effects (given the differences in racial composition of wide receivers versus tight ends in the NFL, see [Table 1](#)).

The “raceless” condition was identical to the celebration against White player condition except that the sentence “*He immediately spiked the ball right next to defender Jake Biermann of the Sharks*” was changed to “*He immediately spiked the ball right next to the defender of the Sharks.*” In the “humble condition” participants read about a Black football player who immediately surrendered the football to the officiating referee after scoring the touchdown, as prescribed by the official playbook (see p. 5). This condition is listed below:

#### Humble condition

*It was third down and four and the Tigers had the ball at the Shark's 45 yard line. Quarterback Ryan Phillips dropped back to throw a pass. He looked to the left, and then the right, and fired a pass to tight end Malik Johnson who was open down the sideline. Johnson caught the pass with his finger tips and sprinted into the end zone for the touchdown. Johnson then jogged over to the official, handed him the ball, and jogged back to the sideline with his team.*

The other conditions were identical to those of [Studies 1 and 2](#), except for the position of the scorer (i.e., tight end vs. wide receiver) and whether the defender was White (i.e., Jake Biermann) or raceless. In all conditions, the participants were White. Therefore, if the intergroup bias hypothesis is true, then we should witness a greater penalty against Malik when he celebrates against the White player versus the raceless player. However, if the hubris penalty hypothesis is true, then we should see a greater penalty against Malik in the celebration conditions versus the control/humble conditions, with no difference in penalty between the White and raceless celebration conditions.

The dependent variables were essentially identical to [Studies 1 and 2](#), with a couple of additions and exceptions. In addition to the “reward” question (i.e. ‘reward’ and ‘bonus pay,’  $r = .86$ ), [Study 3](#) included a true “penalty” measure. Participants were asked to indicate the yardage that Malik Johnson should have been penalized for his

actions on a 1–5 Likert-type scale with 1 = No yards, 3 = Some yards, and 5 = The maximum amount of yards.<sup>5</sup>

We measured perceptions of aggression, in addition to arrogance. Similar to [Study 1](#), participants made three arrogance-related ratings (i.e., arrogant, cocky, self-promoting,  $\alpha = .86$ ). In addition, they measured perceived aggression on a 1 to 7 scale.

#### Results

An omnibus one-way ANOVA on the reward composite was significant,  $F(3,101) = 4.54$ ,  $p = .005$ . An LSD post-hoc test revealed that that the Black player in the Celebration (White player) condition ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ) was rewarded significantly less than the Black player in the control (no-celebration) or humble conditions ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .83$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .83$ , and  $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $d = .64$ , respectively). Similarly, the Black player in the Celebration (Raceless player) condition ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) was rewarded significantly less than the Black player in the control (no-celebration) ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .83$ ,  $p = .022$ ,  $d = .81$ ), and marginally less than the humble condition ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ,  $p = .058$ ).

More importantly, the results reveal no difference in compensation between the White and raceless Celebration conditions ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.62$  vs.  $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ,  $p = .521$ ), indicating that lower reward was not due to the race of the defender. Also, there was no difference in compensation between the No-Celebration and Humble condition ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .83$  vs.  $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ,  $p = .665$ ), indicating that our no-celebration “control” condition in [Studies 1 and 2](#) signaled humility. Given these null differences, we collapsed across the two Celebration conditions, as well as the Humility and No-celebration conditions, for subsequent analyses.

We conducted similar analyses using the penalty dependent variable. As the ‘hubris penalty’ effect suggests, the Black player in the collapsed Celebration condition was penalized significantly more yards than the Black player in the collapsed humble condition ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $SD = .95$  vs.  $M = 1.21$ ,  $SD = .57$ ,  $d = .52$ ),  $F(1,102) = 6.87$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ . There was also a significant positive relationship between arrogance and the magnitude of yards penalized,  $r(104) = .31$ ,  $p = .001$  for Black players.

Finally, we explored the possibility that aggression, rather than arrogance, led to the lower compensation of Black players observed in [Studies 1–3](#). After controlling for perceived aggression, partial correlations show that there was still a negative relationship between a Black player's perceived arrogance and his reward,  $r(100) = -.40$ ,  $p = .000$ , and a positive relationship between a Black player's arrogance and the amount of yards he was penalized,  $r(100) = .25$ ,  $p = .01$ .

Mediation analyses further support our proposition that arrogance, rather than aggression, drives the negative effect toward celebrating Black players. While controlling for the effect of aggression,  $B = -.02$ ,  $p = .85$ , we regressed reward on Celebration (0 = Control, 1 = Celebration), which yielded a significant effect,  $B = -.83$ ,  $p = .002$ . However, when arrogance was added to the equation, the effect of celebration on reward became nonsignificant,  $B = -.36$ ,  $p = .23$ . To assess whether arrogance mediated the effect of celebration on reward, we followed procedures developed by [Edwards and Lambert \(2007\)](#) and utilized bootstrap estimates to generate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI). If zero falls outside the confidence interval, the indirect effect is deemed significant and mediation can be said to be present ([Hayes, 2009](#); [Preacher & Hayes, 2004](#)). The total indirect effect of celebration on reward, mediated through arrogance, was significant, 95% bias-

<sup>5</sup> We used a subjective rather than objective scale of yardage because nearly all football fans know that the standard penalty is 15 yards; thus, we would not expect to get sufficient variability on objective responses. Moreover, past research has shown that biases are more likely to emerge on subjective rather than objective measures (e.g., [Birnati, Manis, & Nelson, 1991](#)).

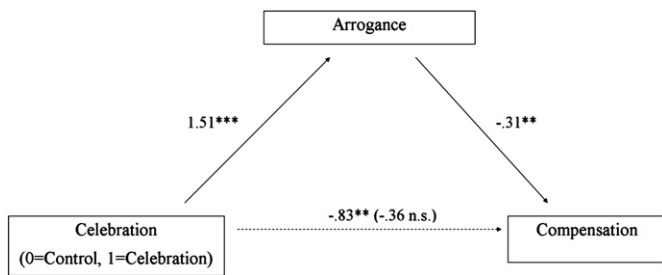


Fig. 3. Mediation of compensation for black players in the celebration vs. humble conditions (Study 3). \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence interval:  $-.8764$  to  $-.0865$  (see Fig. 3).

## General discussion

Historically speaking, Blacks who were seen by Whites as being too proud, arrogant, or “uppity” could become targets of scorn, castigation, or worse. Instead, members of subordinate groups were expected to behave in ways that reflected and reified their position in the bottom of the social hierarchy (e.g., avoiding direct eye contact, showing deference, and displaying humility and “gratitude”). The current results provide robust evidence of a “hubris penalty” against Black athletes, but no such penalty for the same behavior from White athletes. Consistent with prior literature, these results confirm that the acceptability of an act will depend, not only on the valence of the behavior, but also on who is performing it (Duncan, 1976; Sagar & Schofield, 1980). The social psychological literature has obtained similar findings for other low-status groups, suggesting a more general phenomenon of social hierarchy reversal. White women, for example, suffer penalties and backlash when they exhibit high-status behaviors, such as anger or dominance (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Glick, Zion, & Nelson, 1988; Livingston et al., in press; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). However, the current study is the first to investigate the consequences of arrogance for Black males, specifically in a sports domain.

Another recent study has shown that Blacks may suffer penalties for overperformance in academic domains, and that downplaying achievement or feigning incompetence may be a way for Blacks to avoid backlash (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). Similarly, Livingston and Pearce (2009) found that Black CEOs benefitted from features that rendered them less competent in appearance than ordinary Blacks, the assumption being that too much competence from Blacks could be seen as a threat by Whites. As noted, the sports context provides a unique domain in which Blacks might be permitted to excel and display arrogance. However, the current results suggest that Blacks are not permitted to “show-off” in any domain.

These findings have multiple implications for the persistence of structural discrimination, as punitive reactions to Blacks who behave in a high-status manner could reinforce a vicious cycle of subordination. If Blacks are conditioned (by reward) to behave in low- versus high-status ways, then these actions might have the indirect consequence of creating an intergroup behavioral script that perpetuates social inequality. Indeed, research has shown that submissive behaviors tend to elicit complementary dominant responses, and vice versa, thereby creating social hierarchy (Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). Thus, future research might fruitfully investigate the dynamics of social hierarchy

reversal and gain a more nuanced understanding of both the positive and negative consequences of high-status behaviors for members of traditionally low-status groups.

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