



# Examining how Pain Perception is Impacted by Race of the Aggressor

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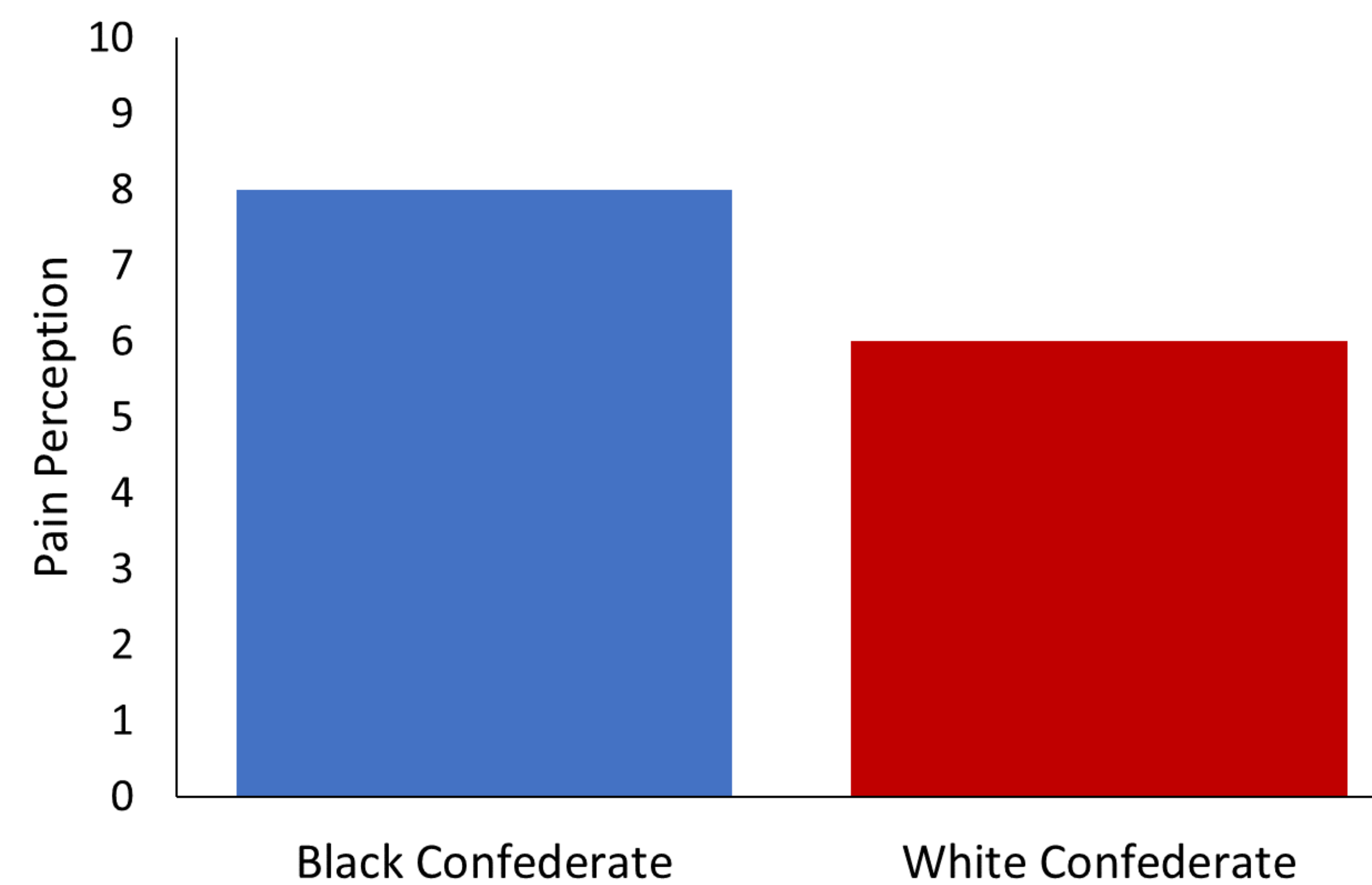
## Introduction

Research illustrates that both Black and White people perceive Black males as more threatening (March, 2022), which may contribute to the perception that Black men are more masculine and muscular than White men (Wong et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2017). Consequent of this misperception, it is possible that people perceive harm caused by Black versus White agents as more harmful (i.e., more painful). The current work will examine whether the experience of aggression from a Black or White agent is perceived as more painful.

## Methods

Black and White participants will be randomly paired with a gender-matched White or Black confederate. Participants will engage in several computer games and “play” against the confederate, who will “play” the games in another room. The winner of each game will administer an electric shock to the loser. Once shocked, participants will be asked to rate the level of pain they experienced.

Pain Perception Based on Confederate's Race



## Results

We expect that participants will perceive shocks as more painful when administered by a Black than White confederate. As previous work found both Black and White people evaluate Black than White aggressors as more violent (Duncan, 1976, 1979) and as more associated with threat (March, 2022), we do not expect participant race to impact these results.

## Discussion & Implications

We expect both White and Black participants to perceive shocks administered by gender-matched Black confederates as more painful than shocks administered by White confederates. These expected results imply that, for example, among interracial interactions, ranging from everyday social interactions to police-civilian interactions, Black individuals' behaviors may be scrutinized more and perceived as more harmful at a lower threshold than White individuals' behaviors. Additionally, these anticipated results may speak to the criminal justice sentencing disparities that indicate Black males are sentenced harsher than White males when committing a violent crime (Lehmann, 2020). This may be due to people perceiving Black criminals as inflicting greater pain.

## References

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