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Perceptions of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Modern racism, benefit finding, and moral obligations for descendants of residential school survivors

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

The victimization of Canada's Indigenous peoples is becoming increasingly salient, due to greater focus on the Indian Residential Schools (IRS). Four studies investigated how this salience might impact Canadians' expectations of Indigenous peoples. Our research follows up on moral obligations research in the Canadian context, in which observers are members of the historical perpetrator group, and in which accumulated effects of the victimization are ongoing. After being presented with information about the IRS, participants completed a meaning-making task, followed by a survey assessing victim moral obligations, and other measures, such as modern racism and perceived benefit finding. Manipulation occurred either in the group for whom meaning was to be made or in the framing of Indigenous peoples. These manipulations were to test the effect of focusing on the implications of the IRS for Canadians or for Indigenous peoples, and to recreate the varied portrayals of Indigenous peoples in Canadian media.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who made the completion of this master's thesis possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my fiancée, Emma, for her unwavering support and for being a constant source of happiness throughout the stressful times. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Kim Matheson, for her assistance throughout my first major foray into large-scale research, and for being available and accommodating whenever any complications arose. I would like to thank Dr. Nyla Branscombe at the University of Kansas for her expertise in the area of moral obligations research, and her readiness to meet via Skype on a regular basis. I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for the assistance this year in the form of the Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. I would like to thank my family for their constant encouragement in the face of stress, and I would like to thank my friends for offering me a chance to unwind and laugh whenever I needed a break. I have come to love Carleton over the past 2 years, and I look forward to continuing my research in the coming years in the PhD program. I will be the first in my immediate family to graduate with a university degree of any level, and pursuing doctoral-level studies was not something I would have considered possible just a few short years ago. Thank you to everyone who has made this dream a possibility.

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Perceptions of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Modern racism, benefit finding, and moral obligations for descendants of residential school survivors

In recent years, the Canadian government has made a considerable effort at opening the door to reconciliation, building on the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). However, negative attitudes that Canadians hold toward Indigenous peoples do not seem to be changing as one would expect following the revelations of the TRC. The way Indigenous peoples are portrayed in Canadian news media varies considerably, based on many factors, such as the political leanings of the content creators. We are therefore at a point in Canada's history that necessitates an understanding of how Indigenous peoples in Canada are perceived more broadly, and how such preconceptions and expectations may create barriers to the long process of reconciliation. The aim of the following series of studies was to develop an understanding of non-Indigenous Canadians' expectations of how Indigenous peoples "ought" to behave, given their victimization history. In light of research demonstrating that victimized individuals or groups are often held to a higher standard of conduct (by virtue of being expected to learn from their experience, and hence to be better for it), it is possible that the current emphasis on the impacts of IRSs on Indigenous peoples is having unanticipated consequences on the perceptions and expectations of Canadians. The holding of Indigenous peoples to a higher standard of conduct is potentially damaging to the process of reconciliation, given that the legacy of the IRS system has resulted in negative life conditions that increase the likelihood of Indigenous peoples engaging in self-harming coping behaviours. This, in turn, has the potential to lead to the perception that the conditions Indigenous peoples face is a result of their own doing.

The Indian Residential Schools in Canada

In 1996, the Canadian government closed the doors on the last remaining Indian Residential School (IRS). The Indigenous children at these institutions faced multiple forms of

maltreatment, ranging from the enforced belief on the part of staff that the children's Indigenous cultures and heritage were inferior to that of the dominant white culture, to more explicit maltreatment in the form of neglect, as well as physical, psychological and sexual abuse (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], 2015). Children were often forcibly removed from their home communities to attend IRSs, and an estimated 6,000 of those children would never return to their home communities alive. The deaths of IRS students are likely attributable to a number of causes, such as inadequate response to infectious diseases, poor nutritional standards, and fatal accidents. The true number and causes of Indigenous child deaths in the IRS system will likely never be known for sure, since documents were often destroyed. For example, from 1936 to 1944, the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs destroyed an estimated 200,000 documents, including student death records (TRC, 2015).

While attending the schools, cultural practices and use of Indigenous languages were often heavily discouraged by school staff, typically under threat of harsh punishment. As a result, IRS survivors often returned to their home communities having lost their cultural identity and their language, rendering them outsiders in their own communities. While at the schools, students' education was focused primarily on providing training for low-skilled manual labour jobs. Thus, IRS survivors were stripped of their own culture, and their place within the culture they were forced to adopt was very narrowly delineated. This nearly 150-year effort to eradicate Indigenous culture while also denying full acceptance of Indigenous peoples within Canadian society has resulted in a myriad of intergenerational issues that continue to create negative life conditions for IRS survivors and their descendants. These life conditions include an increased risk of suicide, greater incidence of depression, learning difficulties, socioeconomic issues, greater chance of experiencing parental abuse, increased severity of drug use, an increase in perceived discrimination, and increased psychological and biological sensitization to stressors (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011, 2013, 2014).

Perceptions of Indigenous Moral Obligations

In Canada, perceived moral transgressions (namely, behaviour that causes any form of harm to other individuals or groups) on the part of Indigenous peoples are routinely subjected to more scrutiny than transgressions committed by the majority group. An exceedingly common example relates to accountability for federal government funds among Indigenous governing councils. When Indigenous governing councils appear to be mismanaging government funds (and therefore causing financial harm to their communities), these actions receive elevated attention in comparison to the mismanagement of funds that occurs in other governing councils (e.g., municipalities) does not receive. This increased scrutiny, paired with the unjust conditions that Indigenous peoples face, reinforces racial imbalance: the behaviour of Indigenous peoples is highly scrutinized, their relative disadvantage impedes them from meeting the disproportionate expectations imposed on them, and as a result, the differential scrutiny is regarded as justified.

This disparity does not simply manifest in an imbalance in the appraisals of behaviours of victimized groups versus non-victimized groups. Fernandez et al. (2013) found that observers extend these expectations to include the belief that members of victimized minorities (individuals with dwarfism) ought to be more tolerant of other persecuted minorities (namely gay people, immigrants). This is especially true if the victim group is perceived as having persevered to overcome a history of maltreatment. This expectation of greater prosocial behaviour toward members of other victimized minorities extends to victimized individuals as well. It has been demonstrated that third-party observers believe that individuals who have experienced victimization (adult victims of child abuse) are morally obligated to help others, and to not cause harm (Warner & Branscombe, 2010). This suggests that the imposition of moral obligations onto victimized others occurs at both intergroup and interpersonal levels.

The violation of these moral expectations can come at a very high social cost for the victims. For example, Branscombe et al. (2015) found that when members of a *historically* victimized group (the descendants of holocaust survivors) violated these perceived moral obligations by harming others, they were viewed more negatively than were non-victims (or even the historical perpetrators of the victimization of the focus group) who engaged in the same harmful behaviour. Similarly, when individual victims (childhood abuse survivors) violated moral expectations by harming others, observers viewed these individuals as comparatively less competent (measured in terms of expected job performance) and desired greater social distance than they expressed toward the original perpetrators (i.e., the abusers) who engaged in the same harm-doing behaviour (Warner, Branscombe, Garczynski, & Solomon, 2011).

These negative evaluations of the victim are even more likely if observers are asked to consider the meaning of the victim's traumatic history. For example, Warner and Branscombe (2010) found that when observers were asked to reflect on the meaning of the past experiences of the victims (including historically victimized groups), when the victim subsequently did something harmful, the observers held the victim to a higher moral standard of behaviour and desired more social distance from the harm-doing victim than controls, or in comparison to when observers were asked to reflect on the meaning of the actions of the original perpetrator (see also Branscombe et al., 2015). In addition, when observers reflected on the meaning of victims' past, they did not believe that victims were more morally entitled to the right to harm others, even if it was to protect themselves.

It is apparent that both individual victims and members of historically victimized groups can be held to moral standards that are incommensurate with the personal consequences of their traumatic experiences. One commonly noted factor contributing to the perception of greater moral obligations of victims and victimized groups is the expectation of

“benefit finding”, or post-traumatic growth, following their victim experience (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). When observers reflect on the meaning victims derived from their past experience, they are more likely to perceive that such benefits should have been realized. In turn, the degree to which an observer expects that an individual's or a group's victimization should have yielded positive benefits (e.g., improvements to their strength of character) is predictive of the degree to which the observer imposes moral obligations onto the victim or victim group (Warner & Branscombe, 2010). It has been suggested that if an observer believes that the victimization of a person or group has yielded positive consequences, these benefits are expected to manifest themselves in greater morality, and greater social distance from victims who fail to meet that greater moral bar is desired (Warner et al., 2011).

A key underlying motivation for observers' belief that the victim(s) should have derived benefits from their past experience is the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980). In this regard, when forced to consider the historical victimization of a group, beliefs in an orderly and just world may be called into question. In response to this uncomfortable state, observers attempt to justify the way the system functions to restore their sense of justice. This system justification has been shown to result in both derogation of victim groups on dimensions related to success, and elevation on dimensions that are not related to success. For example, an observer might be of the opinion that members of a disadvantaged group are less intelligent, but that they are generally happier or kinder than the majority population (Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). In this way, observers are able to simultaneously justify a group's relative disadvantage, while positing benefits that are part and parcel of this disadvantage. The need to believe in a just world has been shown to predict the degree to which individuals attribute meaning and enjoyment to the later lives of victims of tragedy (Anderson, Kay, & Fitzsimmons, 2010). In effect, the derogation of victims, and the simultaneous searching for potentially positive consequences of their disadvantage, is a product of an observer's need to

view the world as just, and to maintain the belief that people get what they deserve. Thus, when the behaviours of victims are not suggestive of benefits obtained via their suffering, observers are likely to resort to a negative appraisals of the victims' moral characters.

Perceptions of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Over the past couple of years, Canadians have become more aware of the nature and extent of the historical suffering of Indigenous peoples. Following release of the TRC's findings, there has been a surge in academic, journalistic, and artistic expressions of the legacy of the IRS system. This has the effect of increasing the salience of the IRS experience among Canadians. Many Canadians are becoming aware of these events for the first time, and others are beginning to understand the full extent of the impact of the IRS. While this increased salience is undoubtedly important for the process of reconciliation, the way Indigenous people are portrayed differs greatly, and this differential portrayal may have unintended negative consequences.

Following the TRC findings, the media portrayal of Indigenous peoples has oscillated between a framing of Indigenous peoples as strong and resilient in spite of their victimization history, and as vulnerable because of these experiences. Both of these frames have implications for the way Indigenous peoples are perceived. When the media uses a strength-based frame, public perceptions of Indigenous peoples likely benefit, as Canadians come to view Indigenous peoples as having the strength of character to overcome their situation, to advocate on behalf of their rights, and as deserving of equal treatment. The unintended consequence of this frame is an increased sense that equality between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians has, in fact, been achieved (Matheson, 2017). While this understanding of Indigenous peoples may enhance intergroup respect (Hettinger & Vandello, 2014), it may also lead to a diminishment in the perceived severity of the struggles that continue to be faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada. In light of previous research

demonstrating that when observers believe that victims have derived benefit from their past experiences, they perceive greater moral obligations for that victim group (Warner & Branscombe, 2010), a strength-based framework might result in non-Indigenous Canadians holding Indigenous peoples to a higher standard of conduct.

In contrast, when the media presents a vulnerability-based frame, this may lead Canadians to believe that Indigenous peoples are inherently vulnerable. This is an understandable way of framing the issue, as it ostensibly serves to engage Canadians' sympathies. However, there is a risk in this type of framing when Indigenous peoples' need for assistance is overemphasized. This overemphasis may cause observers to endorse a more paternalistic relationship, and to diminish perceptions that Indigenous peoples are 'ready' to be treated as equals. The portrayal of Indigenous peoples using this vulnerability frame, when combined with knowledge of the types of social assistance that Indigenous peoples receive, only serves to reinforce the belief that Indigenous peoples are not yet ready to exist as a group that is independent from the assistance of the Canadian government, and by extension, taxpaying Canadians (Matheson, 2017). In contrast to the discourse of strength, when a discourse of vulnerability has been encountered by observers, observers might expect less of Indigenous peoples in terms of their moral character. This poverty of expectations may serve to advance paternalistic attitudes, and thereby reinforce a sense of justified inequality, and bolster racist attitudes. While this paternalistic attitude toward Indigenous peoples can result in overt racist attitudes, its covert expressions might be more difficult to remedy.

Modern Racism

When expressed overtly, racism is made available for scrutiny by others. However, the resultant attitudes of an unexpressed racism are far less detectable, and therefore of considerable importance in a country with an emerging awareness of its past wrongdoings, and which is attempting to make amends. Modern racism (McConahey, 1982, 1986)—much

like its close relative, symbolic racism (McConahay & Hough, 1976)—contrasts with ‘old-fashioned’ racism that entails overt characteristics of bias against members of another racial group (i.e., hatred, explicit claims of inferiority, etc.). Instead, modern racism is expressed in terms of the values and attitudes resulting from racial bias. These attitudes occur along four (4) dimensions:

1. “Work ethic and responsibility for outcomes”, which refers to a belief in the individual responsibility of members of an aggrieved racial group for the betterment of themselves and their group members, and a belief that a lack of hard work and initiative lie at the heart of racial differences;
2. “Excessive demands”, which refers to a belief in the exaggeration of claims made by members of an aggrieved racial group to restitution or compensation for past injustices;
3. “Denial of continuing racial discrimination”, which refers to the assertion that racism is no longer a problem in the society in question;
4. “Undeserved advantage”, which refers to a belief that members of an aggrieved racial group are now offered advantages above and beyond those of members of the majority group, and that these advantages are incommensurate with their degree of historical suffering (Henry & Sears, 2002, p. 256).

Modern racism provides a useful measure in the assessment of the potential behavioural outcomes of holding unexpressed racial biases. Since participants are unlikely to report blatant racist attitudes toward Indigenous peoples, measuring racism using a measure of more covert forms of racism was deemed useful in assessing the effect of racial biases on perceptions of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Modern racism, like more overt forms of racism, is corrosive to intergroup relations, but is far more difficult to counter. Modern racist attitudes are expressed or acted upon in manners that can be explained using justification that

is not race-based (e.g., political or economic arguments), and an admission of the underlying biases does not occur. These attitudes have very clear application to the area of victim moral obligations in the Canadian context, since they can very easily translate into an increase in perceived benefit finding, and in perceived moral obligations for Indigenous peoples.

Observers' modern racist attitudes also have the potential to affect the way observers are impacted by experimental manipulations as well. Participants who score high on modern racism are likely to be less affected by manipulations of the way meaning is made of the legacy of the IRS system. Since greater modern racism will likely lead to greater benefit finding and Indigenous moral obligations, the impacts of the experimental manipulations on these dependent measures will likely be less noticeable.

The Present Research Program

Unique to this research is the assessment of the intergroup dynamics in a country with an emerging public understanding of the past (and continued) mistreatment of a marginalized group by its government and citizens. Studying these processes in the Canadian context will shed light on the way these processes occur when observers are themselves members of the perpetrator group, and when the aggrieved group continues to suffer repeated injustices. To date, research has focused on the perceptions of third-party observers whose group identity does not overlap with the group identity of the perpetrator group (Warner & Branscombe, 2010; Fernandez, Branscombe, Saguy, Gomez, & Morales, 2013; Branscombe, Warner, Klar, & Fernandez, 2015). The inability of Canadian participants to fully detach themselves from the emerging discussion about the IRS system provides the opportunity to broaden moral obligation research by understanding how the aforementioned contextual factors can impact the mechanism by which victim moral obligations are formed.

The goal of the present research was to assess the whether the salience of the IRS system and its legacy influences the moral obligations that non-Indigenous Canadians

perceive for Indigenous peoples today. Canadians, as both observer and historical perpetrator, are unlikely to mimic third party observers in their appraisals of Indigenous peoples' moral obligations. As such, meaning-making tasks, such as those found in Warner & Branscombe (2010), and Branscombe et al. (2015), might not yield the same results in the Canadian context. This is because when reflecting on the meaning of the transgression for the perpetrator, Canadian participants are simultaneously cognizant of the past actions of members of their own ingroup. Portrayals of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian media may also be of considerable importance in this assessment, as Canadians are encountering contradictory, but equally vivid representations of Indigenous peoples as vulnerable and continuing to suffer, and as strong and persevering in spite of their victimization. This series of studies aimed to develop an understanding of perceived Indigenous moral obligations in Canada, and of factors that might influence these behavioural prescriptions. The studies addressed this inquiry in the following ways:

- 1) *Study 1* assessed the effects of making meaning of the IRS system for both Indigenous peoples (victim group) and Canadians (observer-perpetrator) on benefit-finding and Indigenous moral obligations.
- 2) *Study 2* assessed the differential effects of an explicit vulnerability- vs. strength-based framing of Indigenous peoples in light of the IRS experience on benefit-finding and Indigenous moral obligations.
- 3) *Study 3* compared the perceptions of a Canadians versus Americans, to assess the predictors of benefit-finding and moral obligation in an observer-perpetrator group compared to a third-party observer group.
- 4) *Study 4* assessed whether Canadians' reactions to Indigenous peoples differed from their reactions to another recently victimized group, namely, Syrian refugees. This study further addressed the question of how victim moral obligations are affected by

varying discourses by framing the actions of the perpetrator groups as globally-relevant atrocities.

Study 1

Past research has consistently demonstrated that observers' perceptions of the extent to which benefit was derived from the victims' past (or historical) experience was enhanced when they reflected on the meaning of the victims' experience, resulting in holding victims to a higher moral standard of behaviour (Branscombe et al., 2015). However, this research has been conducted with third party observers, as opposed to members of the group that perpetrated the harm. Study 1 aimed to replicate the findings of Branscombe et al. (2015), in relation to non-Indigenous Canadians' perceptions of Indigenous peoples, in light of the salience of the IRS experience. It was hypothesized that when presented with information regarding the IRS system and asked to make meaning of this past suffering for Indigenous peoples (vs. meaning for Canadians vs. a control group that was not asked to reflect on meaning), Canadians would perceive Indigenous peoples as deriving greater benefit and having greater moral obligations than members of the majority population in Canada (Hypothesis 1). We also expected to find that greater perceived benefit finding would mediate the relation between meaning-making condition and perceived Indigenous moral obligations (Hypothesis 2) (Warner & Branscombe, 2010). Finally, given that Canadians collectively represent the perpetrator group in the harm perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, we assessed whether modern racist attitudes moderated these effects. It was hypothesized that when racist attitudes were stronger, there would be no difference between the processes elicited by the experimental conditions. Rather, racial attitudes would elicit greater benefit-finding, which in turn would predict greater perceived moral obligation (Hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants

University student participants ($N = 119$; 78 females, 41 males) were recruited via Carleton University's SONA recruitment system to participate for partial credit in either an introductory psychology or introductory neuroscience course. They were told that they would be completing a study on their opinions regarding the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, particularly in regard to the IRS system. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 52 years ($M = 20.27$, $SD = 5.34$). Most ($n = 108$) participants were Canadian citizens, along with 4 who self-reported as landed immigrants, and 7 as visitors on a student visa. Six of the students identified as Indigenous (2 First Nations (Status), 3 Métis, 1 Inuit). There were no differences in the mean scores on the dependent measures with or without the Indigenous participants in the data set. Therefore, all participants were included in the analyses.

Participants' mean score on the measure of awareness of the IRS system and its legacy was 2.06 ($SD = .58$). This mean score was not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (somewhat aware), $t(118) = 1.16$, $p = .25$. This study was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (#10-5303).

Procedure

The experiment was a one-way (Meaning of IRS for Indigenous peoples vs. Canadians vs. Control) between-subjects design. Participants were run in the lab in small groups, with each responding individually to an online survey administered on lab laptops. They completed a consent form (Appendix A) and were then randomly assigned to one of the three survey conditions using the randomizer feature in Qualtrics. After participants read a brief passage about the IRS system (Appendix B), they were asked to write about either the meaning of the events for Indigenous peoples, for Canadians, or they were not asked to reflect on the meaning (Control). Participants then completed the questionnaire in one of two

randomized orders: either items assessing perceptions of Canadians were presented first, followed by items assessing perceptions of Indigenous peoples, or vice-versa. Participants were measured on several scales that were expected to elucidate the mechanisms by which Indigenous moral obligations are construed (Appendix B). Following their completion of the questionnaire, participants were presented with a debriefing page on their screen. This debriefing page described the full nature of the study and provided relevant contact information (Appendix C).

Measures

All of the dependent measures in Study 1 involved reported agreement with a series of statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). However, the measure of awareness about the IRS system and its legacy was on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = not at all aware; 3 = very aware) (see Appendix B). The measures that were used in the analyses of this thesis were as follows:

- 1) *Indigenous moral obligations* (5 items, $\alpha = .81$): items measured participants' perceived moral obligations for Indigenous peoples in light of their historical victimization (e.g., "A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples must take care not to inflict suffering upon other people").
- 2) *Benefit finding* (5 items, $\alpha = .87$): items measured participants' level of benefit finding for victims of the IRS system and their descendants (e.g., "Because of their victimization history, Indigenous peoples should appreciate their lives more").
- 3) *Modern racism* (14 items, $\alpha = .91$): items measured participants level of negative racial attitudes (e.g., "Indigenous peoples should stop complaining about the way they are treated, and simply get on with their lives").
- 4) *Awareness of the Indian Residential School system* (3 items, $\alpha = .78$): items measured participants level of knowledge about three aspects of the IRS system and its legacy

(“how aware are you of the following?”): the Indian Residential School system, Canada’s *Statement of Apology*, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Statistical Analyses

The statistical analyses include the descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations between the outcome variables, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to determine the effects of meaning focus on benefit finding and Indigenous moral obligations, as well as regression analyses (including simple mediation analyses) to assess the effects of meaning focus on Indigenous moral obligations as a function of participants’ self-reported racism, and to assess the possible role of benefit finding in mediating the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

All measures ranged in value from 1 to 7 (midpoint of 4). One-sample t-tests indicated the following regarding each of the dependent measures: the sample mean for Indigenous moral obligations ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.09$) was significantly higher than the midpoint of the measure, $t(118) = 10.99$, $p < .001$, the sample mean for benefit finding ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.26$) was also significantly higher than the midpoint of the measure, $t(118) = 3.80$, $p < .001$, and the sample mean for modern racism ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.08$) was significantly lower than the midpoint of the measure $t(118) = -10.05$, $p < .001$. Thus, it appears that on the whole, participants held Indigenous peoples to a moderately high bar of moral obligation and perceived only a minimal to moderate level of benefit derived from the IRS experience. Levels of modern racism, on the whole, were also low to moderate, falling on average just below the midpoint (see Table 1). Mean scores on the Indigenous moral obligations measure were 5.14 ($SD = 1.04$) for men and 5.08 ($SD = 1.12$) for women. Mean

scores on the measure of benefit finding were 4.71 ($SD = 1.23$) for men and 4.29 ($SD = 1.27$) for women. Finally, mean scores on the modern racism measure were 3.42 ($SD = .99$) for men and 2.79 ($SD = 1.06$) for women.

Table 1. *M and SD for all DVs by meaning-making condition*

| Condition: | Control ($n = 40$) | | Canadian ($n = 40$) | | Indigenous ($n = 39$) | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | 5.18 | .95 | 5.20 | 1.16 | 4.91 | 1.14 |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | 4.49 | 1.04 | 4.48 | 1.59 | 4.35 | 1.11 |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | 3.05 | .96 | 3.24 | 1.21 | 2.73 | .99 |

Bivariate Correlations

As seen in Table 2, all three of the dependent measures were positively correlated with one another. With the exception of the control condition, perceptions of Indigenous moral obligations were significantly positively correlated with both benefit finding and modern racism. Unexpectedly, modern racism was significantly correlated with lower benefit finding and greater Indigenous moral obligation when participants reflected on the meaning of the IRS system for Canadians, whereas it was positively related to benefit finding and not significantly related to perceptions of Indigenous moral obligation among participants in the meaning for Indigenous peoples or control conditions (see table in Appendix D).

Table 2. *Bivariate correlations for dependent measures*

| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .37* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .18* | .43* | – |

* $p < .05$

Main Analyses

A series of univariate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with three levels (meaning for Indigenous peoples vs. Canadians vs. Control) indicated that, contrary to expectations, there were no significant main effects of meaning focus on perceived

Indigenous moral obligations, $F(2, 116) = .87, p = .42$, or benefit finding, $F(2, 116) = .14, p = .87$.

To assess whether the effects of meaning on Indigenous moral obligations and benefit finding varied as a function of self-reported racism, hierarchical linear regressions were conducted wherein modern racism was entered on the first step, followed by two effect coded variables for condition on the second (one variable with Canadian meaning participants coded as 1 and Indigenous meaning participants coded as 0, and the second with Canadian meaning coded as 0 and Indigenous meaning coded as 1, with the control group held constant at -1 in both groups), and the interactions between racism and the meaning-making variables on the third step. Modern racism was a significant predictor of greater perceived Indigenous moral obligations, $b = .19, SE = .09, p = .044$, and benefit finding, $b = .51, SE = .09, p < .001$. However, the introduction of the interaction term on the third step indicated that modern racism did not moderate the relationship between meaning-making focus and Indigenous moral obligations, $\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(2, 113) = 1.09, p = .34$, nor did it moderate the relationship between meaning-making focus and benefit finding, $\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(2, 113) = 1.21, p = .30$.

As benefit finding was highly correlated with perceived Indigenous moral obligations, mediation analysis was conducted in SPSS using the PROCESS macro using a bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (see Hayes, 2012) to determine whether benefit finding mediated the relation between racism and perceived moral obligation. The total effect of racism on Indigenous moral obligations was significant, $b = .19, SE = .09, 95\% CI [.0053, .37]$. However, after controlling for benefit finding, the direct effect was no longer significant (i.e., 95% CI contains 0), $b = .03, SE = .10, 95\% CI [-.16, .22]$. The indirect effect of racism on Indigenous moral obligations through benefit finding was significant, $b = .15, SE = .05, BCa CI [.07, .27]$, suggesting a full mediation effect of benefit finding on the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations.

Discussion

Study 1 did not replicate the findings of Warner and Branscombe (2010) or Branscombe et. al (2015) regarding the greater benefit finding derived (along with greater perceived moral obligation) for Indigenous peoples when participants reflected on the meaning of the IRS experience for the victim group (relative to the meaning for the perpetrator group and control condition). It is possible that the current conditions of Indigenous peoples are so salient to the Canadian public that their interpretation of events was not altered by this manipulation. In addition, it has been suggested that if the victim is still suffering, they are less likely to be held to a higher standard (Fernandez et al., 2013). Thus, the present media coverage of the inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples might have further attenuated the expected differences in perceptions. Nonetheless, Study 1 replicated the role of benefit finding in predicting holding Indigenous peoples to a higher moral standard (Warner & Branscombe, 2010), and this accounted for the relation between racism and greater moral expectations of Indigenous peoples.

Study 2

As it is possible that media coverage of Indigenous peoples in Canada has resulted in a relatively homogenous understanding of their current status, Study 2 made explicitly salient either a strength-based discourse (wherein Indigenous peoples persevered despite the IRSs) vs. a vulnerability-based framework (Indigenous peoples continue to suffer). It was hypothesized that among Canadians who were reminded of the legacy of the IRS system, focusing on the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples would result in greater benefit-finding, as well as perceived moral obligations when compared to a focus on Indigenous peoples' vulnerability (Hypothesis 1). We further expected to find that greater benefit finding would mediate the differences between these two meaning-making conditions and perceived Indigenous moral obligations (Hypothesis 2) (Warner & Branscombe, 2010). Finally, it was

hypothesized that when racist attitudes were stronger, there would be no difference between the processes elicited by the experimental conditions. Rather racial attitudes would elicit greater benefit-finding, which in turn would predict greater perceived moral obligation (Hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants

Recruitment procedures were identical to those described in Study 1. Participants ($n = 41$) were recruited via Carleton University's SONA recruitment system to participate for credit in either an introductory psychology or introductory neuroscience course (29 were female, and 12 were male). The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 59 years ($M = 21.24$, $SD = 6.78$). 38 of the 41 participants were Canadian citizens, and the remaining 3 participants were in Canada on a student visa. All participants were included in the analysis. Participants' mean score on the measure of awareness of the IRS system and its legacy was 2.30 ($SD = .63$). This mean score was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, and therefore fell between "somewhat aware" and "very aware", $t(40) = 3.07$, $p < .01$. This study was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (#10-5303).

Procedure

Study 2 was a one-way between-subjects design (salience of Indigenous strength vs. vulnerability). Participants were seated in the laboratory in groups of three. Each of the participants completed the pre-loaded survey on the laboratory laptops. Each participant provided informed consent, and were randomly assigned to one of two conditions using the randomizer feature in Qualtrics. The two conditions were identical except for the final sentences, which differed in terms of whether the information about the legacy of the IRS system focused on a strength-based discourse ("Despite this historical collective trauma, many Indigenous peoples and communities have demonstrated considerable strength and

resilience. They have shown that they have the fortitude to experience such trauma, and continue to survive and reclaim their core identity. They have been strong advocates for the recognition of their rights.”) or a vulnerability-based discourse (“As a result of this historical collective trauma, many Indigenous peoples and communities continue to suffer. The cultural trauma experienced by generations has resulted in a loss of their core identity, resulting in many social and personal problems. Indigenous peoples continue to be in a process of healing.”). After reading this passage, participants completed the same survey as in Study 1.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

All measures ranged in value from 1 to 7 (midpoint of 4). One-sample t-tests indicated the following regarding each of the dependent measures: the sample mean for Indigenous moral obligations ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.25$) was not significantly different than the midpoint of the measure, $t(40) = .39$, $p = .70$, the sample mean for benefit finding ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.29$) was also not significantly different than the midpoint of the measure, $t(40) = .86$, $p = .39$, and the sample mean for modern racism ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .94$) was significantly lower than the midpoint of the measure $t(40) = -9.19$, $p < .001$. The means and standard deviations were very similar across the two conditions. Similar to Study 1, across both conditions, means for modern racism were on the low end, whereas benefit finding and Indigenous moral obligations were moderate (see Table 3). Mean scores on the Indigenous moral obligations measure were 4.39 ($SD = 1.01$) for men and 3.94 ($SD = 1.33$) for women. Mean scores on the measure of benefit finding were 4.68 ($SD = 1.20$) for men and 3.96 ($SD = 1.29$) for women. Finally, mean scores on the modern racism measure were 3.03 ($SD = 1.01$) for men and 2.48 ($SD = .88$) for women.

Table 3. *M and SD for all DVs by discourse condition*

| Condition: | Strength (<i>n</i> = 23) | | Vulnerability (<i>n</i> = 18) | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| <i>Moral Obligations</i> | 4.06 | 1.25 | 4.10 | 1.29 |
| <i>Benefit Finding</i> | 4.33 | 1.21 | 3.98 | 1.41 |
| <i>Modern Racism</i> | 2.56 | .90 | 2.74 | 1.02 |

Bivariate Correlations

As seen in Table 4, all three of the dependent measures were significantly correlated with one another. Perceptions of Indigenous moral obligations were significantly correlated with both benefit finding and modern racism in both conditions. In the vulnerability condition, perceived severity was positively correlated with perceived harm, and perceived harm was negatively correlated with modern racism (see table in Appendix D).

Table 4. *Bivariate correlations for dependent measures*

| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .53* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .47* | .46* | – |

**p* < .05

Main Analyses

A series of univariate ANOVAs with two levels (strength vs. vulnerability) indicated that, contrary to expectations, there were no main effects of condition on Indigenous moral obligations, $F(1, 39) = .01, p = .91$, or benefit finding, $F(1, 39) = .75, p = .39$.

To assess whether the effects of discourse condition varied as a function of participants' self-reported racism, hierarchical linear regressions were conducted wherein modern racism was entered on the first step, followed by condition on the second (strength-based discourse coded as -1 and vulnerability-based discourse coded as 1), and the interaction between racism and discourse condition on the third step. Racism was a significant predictor of Indigenous moral obligations, $b = .63, SE = .19, p < .01$, and benefit finding, $b = .64, SE = .19, p < .01$. However, the introduction of the interaction term on the third step indicated that

modern racism did not moderate the relationship between discourse condition and Indigenous moral obligations, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $\Delta F(1, 37) = .00$, $p = .99$, nor did it moderate the relationship between discourse condition and benefit finding, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 37) = 1.64$, $p = .21$.

When the mediating role of benefit finding in the relationship between racism and Indigenous moral obligations was assessed, racism was a significant predictor of benefit finding, $b = .21$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI [.08, .34], and benefit finding was a significant predictor of Indigenous moral obligations, $b = .38$, $SE = .14$, 95% CI [.08, .66]. The total effect of racism on Indigenous moral obligations was significant, $b = .21$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI [.08, .33]. After controlling for benefit finding, the direct effect of racism was not significant (i.e., the 95% CI contained zero), $b = .13$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI [-.004, .26]. The indirect mediated effect was significant, $b = .08$, $SE = .04$, BCa CI [.01, .19], suggesting a full mediation effect of benefit finding on the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations.

Discussion

In both Studies 1 and 2, finding benefit for Indigenous peoples emanating from the IRS experience was found to be strongly associated with holding them to a higher moral obligation. In addition, in both instances, benefit finding mediated the relation between greater self-reported racism and holding Indigenous peoples to a higher moral standard. However, contrary to past research (Warner & Branscombe, 2010; Branscombe et al., 2015), manipulations of the meaning of the IRS experience did not influence levels of perceived benefit finding or moral obligation.

It is unclear why the manipulation of meaning explicitly in terms of strength vs. vulnerability was not effective. One possibility is that in the present research, participants are members of the group (Canadians) that perpetrated the historical and continuing harms against Indigenous peoples, and so their motivations to protect their group identity make them more resistant to such manipulations. Additionally, relying on university student

samples might have accounted for a lack of sensitivity to the manipulations, since they represent a population that is ostensibly more informed about Indigenous issues than the majority population (although past research has largely relied on this population of participants).

Study 3

To assess whether the lack of differences associated with the manipulations of meaning in Studies 1 and 2 emanated from Canadians' perpetrator status, the responses of Americans (compared to Canadians) were considered in Study 3. Although Americans' treatment of their Indigenous population has also been rife with racism, asking about their reactions as third-party observers to the Canadian IRS policy might be sufficiently distant from their own actions that they would be more responsive to the manipulations that vary the salience of the strength versus vulnerability of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In Study 3, we expected to see an interaction between nationality (American vs. Canadian) and the strength- vs. vulnerability-based discourse among a non-student population. Specifically, we expected that Canadians would advocate a greater degree of Indigenous moral obligation than Americans overall, as the scenario was deemed likely to lead to more reactionary system justification on the part of Canadians (Hypothesis 1). Furthermore, among Americans, it was hypothesized that those in the strength-based condition would perceive greater Indigenous moral obligations and benefit finding than those in the vulnerability-based discourse condition, whereas among Canadians, participants in these two conditions would not differ (Hypothesis 2). We also expected that modern racism would moderate the expected relations from the previous hypothesis (Hypothesis 3). Finally, in the absence of a moderating effect on discourse conditions, we expected that modern racism would be predictive of Indigenous moral obligations, and benefit finding would mediate this relationship (Hypothesis 4).

Methods

Participants

For Study 3, 239 participants were recruited via Amazon's MTurk platform. The experiment was listed as a human information task (HIT) that MTurk workers could complete in exchange for payment. Participants were offered \$5.00 CAD in exchange for their participation in the study and were told that they would have an hour to complete the task, but that it does not take the average person much longer than 30 minutes. Rate of pay was based on an amount roughly approximating minimum wage. In the analyses, participants in a control condition were omitted from the analysis in order to test the differences between the two discourse conditions specifically, as in Study 2. This left 147 participants in the study. Of those 147, 70 participants were female, and 76 were male. The remaining participant opted to not disclose their gender identity. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 64 years ($M = 33.16$, $SD = 9.68$). 72 participants lived in Canada, with the vast majority ($n = 69$) being Canadian citizens, and the remaining 3 participants reporting that they were Canadian landed immigrants. 75 participants lived in the United States, with 71 participants being American citizens, and the remaining 4 participants reporting that they were either an American landed immigrant ($n = 3$), or a refugee in the United States ($n = 1$). Americans' mean score on the three-item, three-point Likert scale measure of awareness of the IRS system ($M = 1.46$, $SD = .45$) was significantly lower than the mean score of IRS awareness reported by Canadians ($M = 2.14$, $SD = .63$), $t(145) = -7.49$, $p < .001$. This study was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (#10-5303).

Procedure

The study was a 2 (Nationality: American, Canadian) \times 2 (Discourse: Strength, Vulnerability) between-subjects design. Unlike Study 2, wherein the strength- or vulnerability-based discourse of the descriptive text about the IRS system was simply read by

participants, in Study 3, we attempted to strengthen the effect of this manipulation by having participants engage in meaning-making of the IRS events by writing about the implications of the IRS for Indigenous peoples after reading the scenario (meaning-making task identical to this condition in Study 1). After providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two discourse conditions (Strength: $n = 75$, Vulnerability: $n = 72$), and completed the same survey items as in Studies 1 and 2.

One notable difference was the order of the items for Study 3. As modern racism was a consistently strong predictor of both benefit finding and Indigenous moral obligations, it was included at the beginning of the survey before experimental manipulations, and benefit finding was the first scale presented, following the experimental manipulations.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

All measures ranged in value from 1 to 7 (midpoint of 4). One-sample t-tests indicated the following regarding each of the dependent measures: for Americans, the sample mean for Indigenous moral obligations ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.28$) was significantly higher than the midpoint of the measure, $t(74) = 6.24$, $p < .001$, the sample mean for benefit finding ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.33$) was also significantly higher than the midpoint of the measure, $t(74) = 6.97$, $p < .001$, and the sample mean for modern racism ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.20$) was significantly lower than the midpoint of the measure $t(74) = -5.79$, $p < .001$; for Canadians, the sample mean for Indigenous moral obligations ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.54$) was not significantly different than the midpoint of the measure, $t(71) = 1.30$, $p = .20$, the sample mean for benefit finding ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.35$) was also not significantly different than the midpoint of the measure, $t(71) = 1.87$, $p = .06$, and the sample mean for modern racism ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.25$) was significantly lower than the midpoint of the measure $t(71) = -6.52$, $p < .001$. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, means for modern racism were generally at the low end, whereas benefit

finding and Indigenous moral obligations were moderate to high (see Table 5). Mean scores on the Indigenous moral obligations measure were 4.98 ($SD = .93$) for men and 4.50 ($SD = 1.53$) for women. Mean scores on the measure of benefit finding were 4.99 ($SD = 1.32$) for men and 4.56 ($SD = 1.36$) for women. Finally, mean scores on the modern racism measure were 3.89 ($SD = 1.23$) for men and 2.81 ($SD = 1.05$) for women.

Table 5. *M and SD for all DVs by Nationality and Discourse Condition*

| Nationality: Discourse Condition: | American | | | | Canadian | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| | Strength | | Vulnerability | | Strength | | Vulnerability | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| <i>Moral Obligations</i> | 4.97 | 1.09 | 4.88 | 1.46 | 4.33 | 1.52 | 4.13 | 1.58 |
| <i>Benefit Finding</i> | 5.34 | 1.17 | 4.81 | 1.44 | 4.32 | 1.41 | 4.28 | 1.29 |
| <i>Modern Racism</i> | 3.09 | 1.09 | 3.30 | 1.30 | 3.23 | 1.41 | 2.83 | 1.01 |

Bivariate Correlations

As seen in Table 6, all of the dependent measures were significantly correlated with one another, as in previous studies. In the strength-based discourse condition and among Canadian participants, Indigenous moral obligations were significantly correlated with benefit finding and racism. Across all conditions and nationalities, modern racism was significantly correlated with Indigenous moral obligations and benefit finding. (see table in Appendix D).

Table 6. *Bivariate correlations for dependent measures*

| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .72* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .27* | .29* | – |

* $p < .05$

Main Analyses

A 2 (nationality) \times 2 (meaning condition) ANOVA indicated no main effect of discourse condition on Indigenous moral obligations. However, there was a significant main effect of nationality indicating that Americans attributed significantly higher Indigenous moral obligations (see Table 5) than did Canadians, $F(1, 143) = 8.75, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .06$. This

same lack of main effect of discourse condition was also true of benefit finding, as was the significant main effect of nationality, $F(1, 143) = 12.48, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$. Thus, these findings are contrary to the hypothesis that Canadians would perceive greater moral obligations than Americans. The interaction effect of discourse condition and nationality was not significant for Indigenous moral obligations, nor for benefit finding.

In order to test whether the effects of nationality and discourse condition on Indigenous moral obligations and benefit finding were moderated by modern racism, hierarchical linear regressions were conducted wherein modern racism was entered on the first step, followed by 2 effect coded variables for nationality and condition on the second step (Canadian participants coded as 1 and Americans as -1; strength discourse coded as 1 and vulnerability as -1), the three two-way interaction terms (cross-products) entered on the third step, and the three-way interaction term on the fourth step. As suggested in the correlations, modern racism was a significant predictor of higher levels of perceived Indigenous moral obligations, $b = .32, SE = .09, p = .001$, and benefit finding, $b = .33, SE = .09, p < .001$. None of the two-way or three-way interactions were significant predictors of Indigenous moral obligations, but this was not the case for benefit finding. For benefit finding, the interaction between the discourse condition and nationality was not a significant predictor upon its introduction in step 3 but was significant in the final model in step 4 with the three-way interaction included, $b = -.87, SE = .29, p < .01$. The three-way interaction between racism, discourse condition, and nationality itself was also a significant predictor of greater benefit finding, $b = .23, SE = .09, p < .05$. The introduction of the three-way interaction term suggested that racism did in fact moderate the effects of nationality and discourse condition on benefit finding, $\Delta R^2 = .03, \Delta F(1, 139) = 6.20, p < .05$.

Simple slopes analyses were conducted to elucidate the two- and three-way interaction effects on benefit finding. Consistent with hypotheses, these analyses indicated

that discourse condition had a noticeable effect on benefit finding among American participants who scored higher on the modern racism measure, but that this effect was not present for Canadians. For American participants one standard deviation below the mean score for modern racism, discourse condition was a significant predictor of benefit finding, $b = .41, SE = .19, p = .03$. For American participants with modern racism scores at the mean, discourse condition was again a significant predictor of benefit finding, but the significance level decreased, $b = .30, SE = .15, p = .04$. When American participants' modern racism scores were one standard deviation above the mean, the effect of discourse condition was no longer significant, $b = .19, SE = .18, p = .27$. It appears that Canadian participants' benefit finding scores were less sensitive to the discourse manipulations than Americans in general, and that among Americans, sensitivity to the discourse manipulations decreased when Americans scored higher on modern racism (see Figure 1).

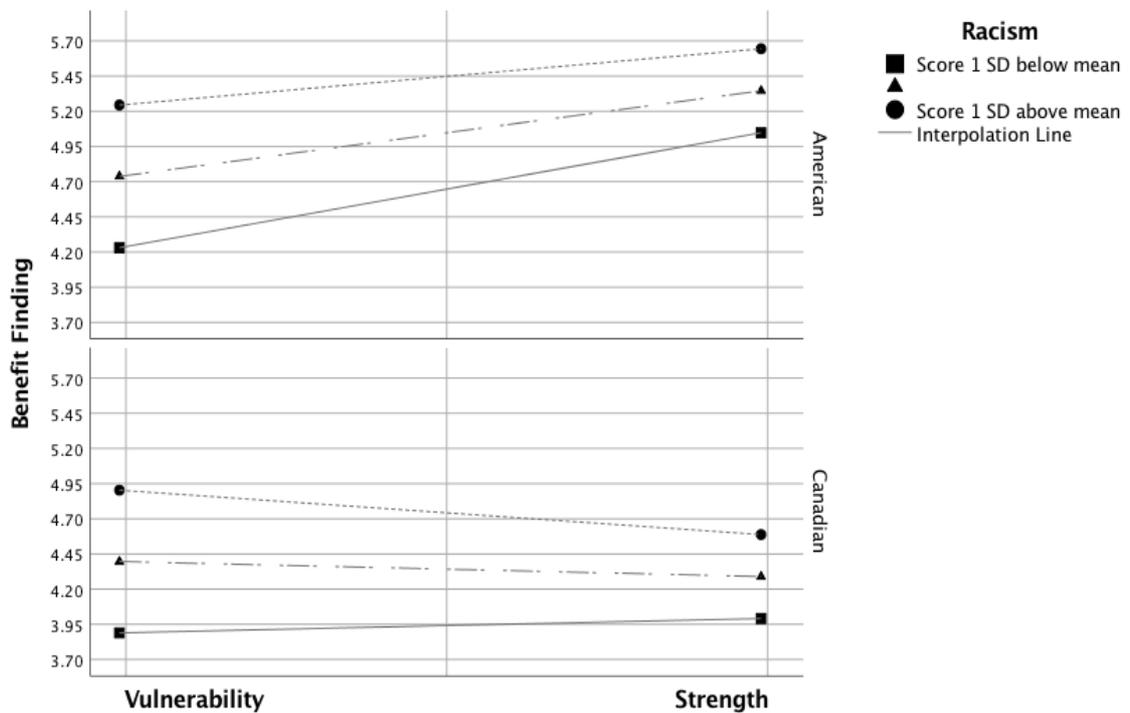


Figure 1. Benefit finding by nationality, condition, and racism score.

Mediation analysis was conducted to assess whether the relation between racism and Indigenous moral obligation was mediated by benefit finding. Results indicated that racism was a significant predictor of benefit finding, $b = .43$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, and that benefit finding was a significant predictor of Indigenous moral obligations, $b = .66$, $SE = .48$, $p < .001$. The total effect of racism on Indigenous moral obligations was significant, $b = .33$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$. After controlling for benefit finding, the direct effect was no longer significant, $b = .05$, $SE = .05$, $p = .35$, whereas the indirect effect of racism on Indigenous moral obligations through benefit finding was significant, $b = .28$, $SE = .05$, $BCa\ CI [.19, .38]$, suggested a full mediation effect of benefit finding on the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations.

Discussion

Throughout Studies 1–3, modern racism was a consistent predictor of perceiving greater Indigenous moral obligations, and perceptions of greater benefit finding consistently mediated this relationship. However, what continued to be puzzling in the present study was the lack of sensitivity to the manipulated meaning of the IRS system for Indigenous peoples, and in particular, variations in the salience of their strengths versus their vulnerability, wherein highlighting their strengths ought to exacerbate the tendency to perceive benefits and subsequent expectations of moral obligation. Canadian participants were not at all sensitive to these discourse manipulations, whereas American participants (presumably observers) did exhibit the expected increase in benefit finding when asked to consider Indigenous peoples' strengths, but only to the extent that those American participants scored lower on a measure of modern racism.

This raises the possibility that the current salience of the IRS experience and its negative consequences might limit the extent to which Canadians would be easily manipulated by a change in the discourse surrounding the IRS experience and its legacy.

American participants might have been aware of their own history in relation to Indian Boarding Schools, but there is a relative paucity of media coverage surrounding these events. Among less racist American participants, this difference in exposure to Indigenous issues might have accounted for the sensitivity to the discourse manipulation. However, there was a general lack of sensitivity to manipulations among American participants as a whole. Given the shared history of the poor treatment of Indigenous peoples between these two countries, it would seem that considering the responses of Americans to the victimization of Indigenous peoples in Canada might not have been entirely effective in untying variations as a function of third-party observer versus perpetrator-observer status.

Study 4

Past research has consistently demonstrated that observers tend to hold victims to a higher moral obligation, particularly under conditions in which they reflect on the meaning of the victimization experience (Warner & Branscombe, 2010; Branscombe et al., 2015). It was the goal of Study 4 to assess whether Canadians' lack of sensitivity to such reflection conditions was a function of Canadians' unique reactions to victims, or whether their reactions were specific to the evident continuity in the suffering of Indigenous peoples (Fernandez et al., 2013). To do this, it was deemed necessary to expose Canadians to the victimization of another population for which Canadians were not the perpetrators of the harm, and who has been able to move beyond their suffering.

Study 4 was designed to address whether Canadians' perceptions of Indigenous peoples differed from how they evaluated another victimized group in Canada, namely Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees were displaced from their home country due to the danger of becoming entangled in the violent actions between the Assad government and terrorist groups. There have been hundreds of thousands of deaths to date, and millions of Syrians are in need of refuge and/or humanitarian aid. Several countries have denied entry to Syrian

refugees, but Canada opened its doors to a great number of those in need. This was a useful comparison group for Study 4, because Canada was not complicit in the continued injustices befalling Syrian refugees, and has actively assisted in resettling them.

In addition to assessing whether Canadians respond differently to Indigenous peoples versus Syrian refugees in Canada, it was considered whether reflecting on the meaning of their respective historical traumas would vary depending on whose meaning was considered: meaning for the victim group vs. the perpetrator group (as in Study 1) or meaning for all of humanity. By asking participants to consider the meaning of these injustices for humanity as a whole, we are invoking a superordinate identity that is not related to national identity. What this invocation does is place the injustices being described not only on the backs of those groups who have committed them, but on the world stage. By asking participants what they believe the human race can learn from these injustices (perpetrated against Indigenous peoples vs. Syrian refugees), we are effectively placing these transgressions in the same category as other globally-relevant atrocities that have given humanity pause. By framing the IRS system in the same category as other globally recognized atrocities, we expected that the ability for Canadians to detach themselves from harm done to Indigenous peoples would be amplified. Effectively, this was thought to represent an opportunity to render Canadians as third-party observers, since their superordinate, rather than national, ingroup identity is being invoked.

Taken together, it was hypothesized that the interaction between the presented victim group and meaning-making condition would have a significant effect on victim moral obligations and benefit finding. Specifically, it was expected that Syrian refugees would be held to a comparatively higher standard of moral conduct in the condition focusing on the implications of the refugee crisis for the victims themselves (compared to implications for the perpetrators), but that such an effect will not be the case in the condition focusing on the

implications of the IRS system for Indigenous peoples (Hypothesis 1). However, we expected a notable difference in the implications for the humanity condition such that, we expected that Indigenous peoples will be held to a higher moral standard than in the other two conditions, since identification with a superordinate identity (human) was being primed (Hypothesis 2). It was also expected that, as in past studies, benefit finding would be a significant predictor of Indigenous moral obligations, as would modern racism (Hypothesis 3), and that the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations would again be mediated by benefit finding (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants

For Study 4, 455 participants were recruited via Amazon's MTurk platform, and the recruitment procedure was identical to that employed in Study 3. 249 participants identified as male, and 191 participants identified as female. The remaining ($n = 15$) participants either chose not to disclose their gender. Participant ages ranged from 15 to 63 years ($M = 29.94$, $SD = 8.29$). All participants lived in Canada, with the vast majority ($n = 412$) being Canadian citizens, and 36 participants identifying as immigrants. The remaining participants ($n = 7$) did not disclose their citizenship status. Participants' mean score on the measure of awareness of the IRS system and its legacy was 2.09 ($SD = .55$). This mean score was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale, and therefore fell between "somewhat aware" and "very aware", $t(222) = 2.56$, $p = .01$. A similar 3-item measure of awareness was adapted for participants who focused on Syrian refugees, measuring instead their awareness of the refugee crisis, Canada's response to the refugee crisis, and Canada's commitment to Syrian refugees ($\alpha = .77$). Participants' mean score on the measure of awareness of the Syrian refugee crisis ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .45$) was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale,

and therefore fell between “somewhat aware” and “very aware”, $t(225) = 7.76, p < .001$. This study was approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (#10-5303).

Procedure

The study was a 2 (Victim group: Syrian refugees, Indigenous peoples) \times 3 (Meaning making: for victim group vs. perpetrator group vs. humankind) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the 6 conditions using the randomizer feature in Qualtrics, and were asked to write a meaning-making piece based on the implications of injustices suffered by one of two victim groups (Syrian, Indigenous) for either the victim group, perpetrator group (Canadians, non-admitting countries) or for humanity as a whole. Following this writing task, participants completed the same questionnaire as in the previous three studies.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Mean responses on each of the dependent measures did not differ significantly between self-identified male and female participants for most variables. However, as seen in Table 7, men scored slightly higher on the modern racism scale, $t(434) = 4.81, p < .001$. The mean score for victim moral obligations across all experimental conditions ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.37$) was significantly greater than the midpoint of the measure, $t(448) = 11.23, p < .001$. The mean score for benefit finding across all experimental conditions ($M = 4.50, SD = 1.35$) was significantly greater than the midpoint of the measure, $t(446) = 7.85, p < .001$. Finally, the mean score for modern racism across all experimental conditions ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.14$) was significantly lower than the midpoint of the measure, $t(448) = -11.76, p < .001$. Similar to Studies 1 through 3, means for modern racism were generally at the low end, whereas benefit finding and Indigenous moral obligations were moderate to high (see Table 7).

Table 7. *M and SD for DVs by demographic categories*

| Between-Subjects Factor: | Gender | | | | Canadian Citizenship | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| | Men | | Women | | Citizen | | Immigrant | |
| | <i>(n = 249)</i> | | <i>(n = 191)</i> | | <i>(n = 412)</i> | | <i>(n = 36)</i> | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| Moral Obligations | 4.76 | 1.35 | 4.69 | 1.37 | 4.66 | 1.39 | 5.46 | .90 |
| Benefit Finding | 4.55 | 1.33 | 4.44 | 1.37 | 4.45 | 1.32 | 5.14 | 1.45 |
| Modern Racism | 3.57 | 1.08 | 3.12 | 1.13 | 3.35 | 1.16 | 3.65 | .82 |

Bivariate Correlations

As seen in Table 8, correlations between the three dependent measures were significant. As in the previous studies, perceived victim moral obligations, benefit finding, and modern racism were correlated with each other in all conditions. Also, as expected, modern racism was strongly correlated with all other measures (see table in Appendix D).

Table 8. *Bivariate correlations for dependent measures*

| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .63* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .31* | .36* | – |

* $p < .05$

Main Analyses

A 2 (victim group: Syrian, Indigenous) \times 3 (meaning condition: for victims, for perpetrators, for humanity) ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of victim group on victim moral obligations, with perceived moral obligations being greater for Syrian refugees, compared to Indigenous peoples, $F(1, 443) = 18.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$. However, the main effect of meaning-making focus on victim moral obligations was not significant, $F(2, 443) = 1.01, p = .36, \eta_p^2 = .005$. A 2 \times 3 ANOVA on benefit finding also indicated a significant main effect of victim group, $F(1, 443) = 29.87, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$, with Syrian refugees being seen as benefiting more from their victim experience than did Indigenous peoples. In addition, there was a significant main effect of meaning-making focus on benefit finding, $F(2, 443) = 4.48, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$. Post-hoc comparisons using Fisher's Least Significant

Difference (LSD) suggested that this main effect of meaning-making focus appeared to be driven primarily by the difference in benefit finding when focusing on the implications of the injustice for the victim ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.33$), relative to the focus on humanity ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.26$). There were no significant two-way interactions.

In order to test whether the effects of meaning-making focus on victim moral obligations and benefit finding were moderated by modern racism scores, hierarchical linear regressions were conducted wherein modern racism was entered on the first step, followed by three effect-coded variables on the second step: two variables for meaning-making focus (victim focus coded as 1, and perpetrator focus coded as 0 and vice-versa, with humanity focus held constant at -1 across both variables), and one for victim group (Syrian coded as 0 and Indigenous coded as 1); the four two-way interaction terms (cross-products) on the third step; and the three three-way interaction terms on the fourth step.

As expected, modern racism was a significant predictor of victim moral obligations, $b = .38$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, as was victim group (controlling racism), $b = -.40$, $SE = .12$, $p = .001$, and modern racism was a significant predictor of benefit finding, $b = .43$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, as was victim group (controlling racism), $b = -.52$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$. Introduction of interaction terms indicated that modern racism did not significantly moderate the effects of the experimental manipulations on victim moral obligations, nor benefit finding.

Mediation analysis, collapsed across conditions, was conducted to assess whether the relation between modern racism and victim moral obligations was mediated by benefit finding. Results indicated that racism was a significant predictor of benefit finding, $b = .43$, $SE = .05$, BCa CI [.33, .53], and that benefit finding was a significant predictor of victim moral obligations, $b = .60$, $SE = .04$, BCa CI [.53, .68]. The total effect of modern racism on victim moral obligations was significant, $b = .38$, $SE = .05$, BCa CI [.27, .49]. After controlling for the effect of benefit finding, the direct effect of modern racism remained

significant, $b = .12$, $SE = .05$, BCa CI [.03, .21]. The indirect effect of modern racism on victim moral obligations through benefit finding was significant, $b = .26$, $SE = .04$, BCa CI [.19, .34], suggesting a partial mediation effect of benefit finding.

In order to determine whether the mediation effect from the earlier studies assessing reactions to Indigenous peoples replication, this analysis was conducted separately for the two victim groups. Results indicated that the total effect of modern racism on Indigenous moral obligations was significant, $b = .39$, $SE = .07$, BCa CI [.25, .54]. After controlling for the effect of benefit finding, the direct effect of modern racism on Indigenous moral obligations was no longer significant, $b = .11$, $SE = .06$, BCa CI [-.02, .24], whereas the indirect effect was significant, $b = .29$, $SE = .05$, BCa CI [.18, .40] suggesting full mediation of benefit finding in the relationship between modern racism and Indigenous moral obligations. Results of the mediation analysis only for participants asked to consider the implications of the Syrian refugee crisis indicated that the total effect of modern racism on Syrian moral obligations was significant, $b = .29$, $SE = .08$, BCa CI [.13, .44]. After controlling for the effect of benefit finding, the direct effect of modern racism on Syrian moral obligations was no longer significant, $b = .11$, $SE = .07$, BCa CI [-.02, .25], whereas the indirect effect was significant, $b = .18$, $SE = .05$, BCa CI [.08, .28] suggesting full mediation of benefit finding in the relationship between modern racism and Syrian moral obligations.

Discussion

Study 4 was designed to address whether Canadians' perceptions of Indigenous peoples differed from how they evaluated another victimized group in Canada, and to assess how the inclusion of a meaning-making task designed to invoke a superordinate identity (human) would impact the perceptions of the two victim groups. Syrian refugees were used as a comparison group since, like Indigenous peoples, their suffering is ongoing, and they are

ostensibly not a group whose suffering leads to any feelings of collective responsibility on the part of Canadians. Study 4 reintroduced the meaning-making task from Study 1, whereby participants completed a written meaning-making task during which they were asked to consider either the implications of the injustices for the perpetrator group, for the victim group, or for humanity as a whole.

In Study 4, no significant main effect of meaning-making focus on victim moral obligations was found, but there was a significant main effect of victim group on victim moral obligations and benefit finding, with moral obligations and benefit finding being greater in response to Syrian refugees. These findings are consistent with the notion that Canadians possess a dampened willingness to perceive moral obligations for Indigenous peoples, relative to another group for whom they are third-party observers.

In addition, in Study 4 there was a significant main effect of meaning-making focus on benefit finding, with those in the victim-focus condition showing greater benefit finding than those in the perpetrator- and humanity-focused conditions, irrespective of whether they were responding in relation to Indigenous peoples or Syrian refugees. When explored, this main effect was found to be driven primarily by the difference between participants making meaning of the suffering for the victim group, compared to humanity as a whole. Although the mean score for benefit finding among participants focusing on the implications of the suffering for the perpetrator group was still lower than for the victim-focused group, this difference was not statistically significant.

The mediated relation between modern racism and moral obligation through benefit finding that was found in Studies 1–3 was replicated in Study 4. This mediation model was replicated for both of the victim groups individually, suggesting that the model is not specific to the perceived moral obligations of Indigenous peoples on the part of Canadians, but of perceived moral obligations for victim groups more generally.

Study 4 found that the victim group that Canadians considered did in fact have an impact on their perceiving of moral obligations for the victim group, in that Canadians focusing on the plight of Syrian refugees perceived greater moral obligations and exhibited a greater degree of benefit finding for the victims, compared to Canadians focusing on the plight of Indigenous peoples. However, the impact of invoking a superordinate identity was only apparent on the measure of benefit finding, and not on the measure of victim moral obligations. When explored further, this effect was found to only be statistically significant in the comparison between the victim-focused group and the humanity-focused group. In short, it appears that the effect of focusing on the implications of the suffering for the victim group on benefit finding (Branscombe et al., 2015) is only apparent in contrast to the effect of focusing on the implications of the suffering for a superordinate group. This suggests that focusing on the meaning for the victim group does in fact produce greater moral obligations in Canadian participants, but only in comparison to focusing on the meaning for their superordinate ingroup.

General Discussion

Across all four studies, support was found for the hypotheses that modern racism (McConahey, 1982, 1986) would predict greater victim moral obligations and greater benefit finding for the victims, and that benefit finding would predict greater moral obligations for the victim (Warner & Branscombe, 2010). There was also consistent support across the studies for the hypothesis that the effect of modern racism on victim moral obligations would be mediated by benefit finding (i.e., the more racist a participant is, the more they believe the victim group should have benefited from their victimization, which in turn predicts a stronger perception of moral obligations for the victim group). These consistent effects have opened the door to a potentially fruitful new area of inquiry into victim moral obligations. However, it is worth noting that these results should be interpreted cautiously, as it is difficult to say for

sure whether the directionality of the effects has been fully explained by this mediation model. However, the effects of the experimental manipulations (meaning-making focus; discourse conditions) remained tough to replicate in the Canadian context. The studies attempted to address these issues in succession as they arose.

In Study 1, it was expected that Canadians in the victim-focused meaning-making condition would perceive greater moral obligations and would find greater benefits for Indigenous peoples than those in the perpetrator-focused meaning making condition, as demonstrated in previous research (Branscombe et al., 2015). However, there was in fact no main effect of the focus of meaning-making for the IRS system on Indigenous moral obligations or benefit finding. This was thought to be the likely result of two potential confounds: the salience of the IRS system in the Canadian media leading to a lack of sensitivity to the experimental manipulations (i.e., the focus of the meaning-making task was an ineffective manipulation, since Canadians might already have made meaning of the IRS system extensively), and the fact that Indigenous peoples are continuing to suffer, which has been shown to render null the effects of meaning-making focus on victim moral obligations (Fernandez et al., 2013). Study 2 attempted to address the latter of these two potential confounds by manipulating the discourse surrounding Indigenous peoples explicitly, either by presenting them as strong and perseverant, or vulnerable and continuing to suffer. There was no effect of discourse condition on Indigenous moral obligations, nor benefit finding. The possibility was then considered that this lack of replication to both types of experimental manipulations might be more the result of the salience of the IRS system in Canada. It was also considered that the lack of replication could be explained by Canadians' place as perpetrator-observers, and their possible impulse to preserve perceptions of their ingroup by not presume moral obligations for Indigenous peoples.

Study 3 attempted to address this lack of replication by including a third-party group (American participants), in order to compare the perceptions of Indigenous peoples on the part of Canadians to a group that is not composed of perpetrator-observers. There was once again no significant main effect of discourse condition on Indigenous moral obligations or benefit finding. However, there was a significant main effect of nationality on both Indigenous moral obligations and benefit finding, in that Americans perceived greater moral obligations and found greater benefit for Indigenous peoples in Canada than Canadians. Being in the strength-based discourse condition also predicted greater benefit finding in American participants, provided they did not score high in modern racism. These findings were consistent with the idea that Canadians' media exposure to information about the IRS system and its legacy, as well as their place as perpetrator-observer, could be contributing to their lack of sensitivity to experimental manipulations. However, it was considered that since Americans were only sensitive to manipulations insofar as they did not score high on modern racism, that the source of Canadians' lack of sensitivity to experimental manipulations was not fully being addressed. Because of their shared history of mistreatment of Indigenous peoples, Americans were determined to be an inadequate third-party comparison group.

Finally, Study 4 attempted to address the lack of sensitivity to experimental manipulations by narrowing the potential confounds down to one: Canadians' status as perpetrator-observer. This was accomplished by including an additional victim group as a comparison group. In order to effectively narrow the confounds down to only the effect of Canadians' perpetrator-observer status on their willingness to perceive moral obligations for Indigenous peoples, it was essential that the additional victim group was continuing to suffer, and that Canadians were not at all complicit in their suffering. For this reason, Syrian refugees were chosen as the comparison group, since any difference in moral obligations perceived by Canadians for Syrian refugees versus Indigenous peoples could be interpreted as

the result of Canadians' comparative distance from the suffering of Syrian refugees. There was a significant main effect of victim group on victim moral obligations and benefit finding, in that those participants in the condition focusing on Syrian refugees perceived greater victim moral obligations and found greater benefit than those in the Indigenous-focused condition, suggesting that Canadians' perpetrator-observer status might be accounting for their relative unwillingness to perceive moral obligations for Indigenous peoples.

What remained puzzling in Study 4 was that meaning-making focus (victim group, perpetrator group, humanity) did have a significant main effect on benefit finding as in Warner & Branscombe (2010), in spite of showing the same lack main effect on victim moral obligations that was seen in previous studies. However, upon further examination, it was found that this effect was not the result of the difference between the victim-focused condition and the perpetrator-focused condition, but rather the difference between the victim-focused condition and the humanity-focused condition. Benefit finding for the victim group was significantly greater in the victim-focused condition than in the humanity-focused condition. While these effects could be the result of a contextual difference between Canadians and Americans (used in previous research), it is far more likely that this is an incidental finding, and that the lack of direct replication is accounted for by the influence of the perception of continued suffering seen in Fernandez et al. (2013). The scenarios that were used in this series of studies made the suffering of the victim groups far more salient than in similar research. It is possible that by altering the language to avoid undue focus on the victim groups' continued suffering, the lack of consistency with previous research could be rectified.

One finding that was in fact consistent with previous research (Warner & Branscombe, 2010) is the notable role of benefit finding for victims in explaining variance in victim moral obligations. While the findings across all 4 studies suggest that the difference in

the perceived benefits of Indigenous peoples' suffering translates to greater moral expectations, engaging in benefit finding of this kind may actually have a profoundly positive impact on the state of intergroup relations in Canada. In 2015, Rotella, Richeson, and McAdams asked members of a perpetrator group to consider the suffering of the victim group, and to engage in "redemption narratives", a form of benefit finding focused on considering how the aggrieved group is redeeming themselves collectively. Perpetrators who engaged in this form of benefit finding exhibited greater collective guilt about their group's transgression, and a greater willingness to reconcile with the aggrieved outgroup. Furthermore, when members of the historically victimized group were themselves informed that members of the perpetrator group had engaged in this form of benefit finding, they were more willing to reconcile with the perpetrator group. Although the implications of engaging in benefit finding in terms of its propensity for increasing victim moral obligations is potentially damaging, taken alone, an increase in benefit finding is not necessarily a negative phenomenon for Indigenous relations in Canada. Given the effectiveness of benefit finding in increasing willingness to reconcile, asking Canadians to repeatedly consider the implications of the IRS system for Indigenous peoples and their continued growth may in fact be a worthwhile effort. However, it is very difficult to offer a one-size-fits-all prognosis of Indigenous moral obligations in Canada with a small number of factors, since the views held by Canadians about Indigenous peoples is incredibly varied. An understanding of the differences in perspective that Canadians hold coming into the experimental setting might serve to elucidate some of the effects found in this thesis.

A 2016 report released by the Environics Institute contributed to the understanding of perspective differences by identifying a typology of non-Indigenous perspectives concerning Indigenous peoples. Researchers posited 5 separate groups of non-Indigenous Canadians in terms of their perceptions of Indigenous peoples:

1. “Connected Advocates”, a group that is well-informed when it comes to Indigenous issues, and that is motivated by this sophisticated understanding to advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples;
2. “Young Idealists”, a group that is not particularly well-informed when it comes to Indigenous issues, but is nevertheless motivated to advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples due to their feelings of empathy and their sense of idealism;
3. “Dismissive Naysayers”, a group that is generally well-informed about Indigenous issues, but is nevertheless dismissive about strategies to rectify the situation or to reconcile with Indigenous peoples, and for whom attitudes toward Indigenous peoples is generally negative;
4. “Disconnected Skeptics”, a group that is both uninformed and disengaged when it comes to Indigenous issues and Indigenous relations, and for whom attitudes toward Indigenous peoples is generally negative;
5. “Informed Critics”, a group that includes some of the most informed non-Indigenous Canadians when it comes to Indigenous issues, and for whom attitudes toward Indigenous peoples are more ambivalent than the other groups. Informed critics possess some of the more nuanced opinions when it comes to the state of Indigenous relations in Canada.

A 2018 report by the Angus Reid Institute further exemplified the diversity of non-Indigenous opinions of Indigenous peoples in Canada. One finding that is particularly relevant to the construct of modern racism is that just over half of Canadians (53%) do not believe that Indigenous peoples should have a special status in Canada, and that same percentage of Canadians believes that it is time to move on from the IRS and to stop apologizing for past injustices. 33% of Canadians polled were also of the belief that too much money was being allocated to Indigenous issues. However, overall, the majority of Canadians believe that it is Canada’s moral and legal responsibility to assist Indigenous peoples, and over 60% of Canadians are optimistic about the future of Indigenous relations in Canada. In

spite of the diversity of opinions that is apparent in public opinion polling, the Angus Reid Institute also found that one in three Canadians reported never having come into contact with Indigenous peoples at all in their lives. The breadth of public opinion and contact with Indigenous peoples made evident in these two reports makes a general inquiry into intergroup dynamics in Canada rather difficult. In future, it would be wise to ensure that pre-study opinions and pre-study contact are assessed, in order to address the possible obfuscation of results that this diversity presents.

Limitations

Apart from the salience of the continued suffering of the victim groups in experimental scenarios and in the media, and the lack of controlling for previously held perceptions of Indigenous peoples, there were several other limiting or complicating factors that might have impeded the ability of this thesis research to fully illustrate the mechanism of perceiving moral obligations for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Results could have been limited by the samples that were used, as university students might be more informed about the IRS system than members of the general population, and since MTurk workers self-selected for participation in the studies, which might itself imply that they are more informed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a limiting factor to this research could have been the timing of the research. Since the IRS system's legacy and Indigenous issues in Canada is in a period of unprecedented ubiquity, there might be a more unwavering perspective on Indigenous issues in Canada than if the study were to be conducted at a time where Canadians are not constantly being presented with information concerning these matters.

Conclusion

The aim of the following series of studies was to develop an understanding of non-Indigenous Canadians' expectations of how Indigenous peoples "ought" to behave, given their history of victimization at the hands of the Canadian government and religious

institutions. In light of research demonstrating that victimized individuals or groups are often held to a higher standard of conduct (by virtue of being expected to learn from their experience, and hence to be better for it), the current emphasis on the impacts of the IRS system on Indigenous peoples in the media and in popular culture was thought to have potential unanticipated consequences on the perceptions and expectations of Indigenous peoples on the part of Canadians. This is an important area of inquiry, since the holding of Indigenous peoples to a higher standard of conduct is potentially damaging to the process of reconciliation, given that the legacy of the IRS system has resulted in negative life conditions that increase the likelihood of Indigenous peoples engaging in self-harming coping behaviours. These perceptions have the potential to lead to the perception that the conditions Indigenous peoples have faced and continue to face are a result of their own doing. Four studies found that Canadians were not susceptible to the experimental manipulation of meaning-making for the IRS system, nor to the experimental manipulation of the discourse surrounding Indigenous peoples. However, comparisons of Canadians perceptions of Indigenous moral obligations to both another observer group (American participants) and to another victim group (Syrian refugees) indicated that Canadians are comparatively less willing to perceive victim moral obligations for Indigenous peoples. While there is still a long way to go, and more exploration is needed to determine whether these differential effects are the result of unrecognized confounds, these initial findings have suggested that the media and popular culture emphasis on the legacy of the IRS system is having somewhat of a positive impact on intergroup relations in Canada, at least in terms of temporarily mitigating the negative effects of holding Indigenous peoples to high moral standard.

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Appendix A

Study 1 Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

Title: Perceptions of the Treatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Date of ethics clearance: September 22, 2016

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: September 30, 2017

I _____, choose to participate in a study on perceptions of the treatment of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. This study aims to assess my perceptions of their treatment, the meaning it has for Indigenous peoples, and the implications for Canadians and the Canadian government. **The researchers running this study are Mackenzie Doiron in the Department of Psychology and Mary Sedrak in the Department of Neuroscience.** They are working under the supervision of Dr. Kim Matheson in the Department of Psychology.

This study involves completion of a 30 minute questionnaire. This questionnaire asks you about your demographic background, along with your opinions regarding the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada, particularly in relation to the Indian Residential Schools.

All responses are anonymous. Other than completing this consent form, you should not put any identifying information on the survey.

You have the right to end your participation during the study at any time using the link at the bottom of the survey page. You can choose not to answer particular questions. If you withdraw from the study, all information you have provided will be immediately destroyed. You can only withdraw during the study as all submitted data will not contain identifiers.

As a token of appreciation, you will receive a 0.5% credit toward your Psychology course for your participation.

All research data will be kept in a locked cabinet at Carleton University. Research data will only be accessible by the researchers involved in the project and the research supervisor.

Once the project is completed, all research data will be kept for five years and potentially used for other research projects on this same topic. At the end of five years, all research data will be securely destroyed. (Electronic data will be erased and hard copies will be shredded.)

These data may be used for teaching and research publications, presentations, and theses. If you would like a copy of the finished research project, you are invited to contact the researcher to request an electronic copy, which will be provided to you.

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (10-5303), which provided clearance to carry out the research. Should you have questions or concerns related to your involvement in this research, please contact:

REB contact information:

Dr. Andy Adler,
Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B
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Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix B

Study 1 Materials and Measures

Materials and Measures

Please read the following scenario carefully, as the remaining questions are based on this information.

Indigenous populations have been the target of repeated and intense actions aimed at achieving their subordination. It is generally recognized that the effects of the Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) were especially profound. In partnership with the church, 130 residential schools operated through much of Canada from the mid-1800s until the last school closed in the 1990s. By the 1930s, approximately 75% of First Nations children attended these schools, as did many Métis and Inuit children. Not only did they endure the trauma of being torn from their communities, but these children were often subjected to neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Although it was known by government officials that such abuse occurred, remarkably, media reports of abuse did not surface until the 1980s. The majority of IRSs were closed soon afterward. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recently released its report documenting the abusive conditions in which children in the residential schools lived, the impacts on survivors, and the intergenerational implications of this early life suffering for descendants of survivors.

For the next 10 minutes, we would like you to write your thoughts about the Indian Residential Schools.

In particular we would like you to consider the implications or lessons derived from the Indian Residential Schools that you see for *Indigenous peoples in Canada* [Canadians]. In your opinion, given this experience, what values should *Indigenous peoples* [Canadians] hold today. What rights do *Indigenous peoples* [Canadians] deserve, what obligations do they have, and what are the implications of the Indian Residential Schools for the way that *Indigenous peoples* [Canadians] should act toward others today.

THERE ARE 3 WRITING CONDITIONS

- 1) FOCUS ON MEANING TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES,
- 2) FOCUS ON MEANING FOR CANADIANS,
- 3) NO WRITING TASK – JUST READ SCENARIO AND COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRES

THE QUESTIONS BELOW WERE TAKEN FROM VARIOUS PUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS ON THE ISSUE OF MORAL OBLIGATION BY BRANSCOMBE AND COLLEAGUES, AND ADAPTED TO REFER TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CANADIANS. THEY ARE ORGANIZED IN ORDER OF WHAT THEY MEASURE FOR ETHICS REVIEW, BUT IN THE ACTUAL QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE ORDERED TO ASSESS VICTIM PERCEPTIONS TOGETHER, PERCEPTIONS OF CANADIANS (WITH THESE TWO SETS COUNTER-ORDERED ACROSS PARTICIPANTS), FOLLOWED BY DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS.

All questions will be answered using the following rating scale:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | Moderately Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neither | Mildly Agree | Moderately Agree | Strongly Agree |

Perceptions of the Indian Residential Schools

Perceived Injustice

- 1) Indigenous people's experience of the Indian Residential Schools was unfair.
- 2) Indigenous people's experience of the Indian Residential Schools was unjust.
- 3) Indigenous peoples continue to encounter discrimination as a result of the policies of the Canadian government.

The Indian Residential Schools....

Perceived Severity

- 1) victimized the Indigenous peoples of Canada.
- 2) caused suffering among Indigenous peoples.

Perceived Harm

- 1) made Indigenous peoples less able to deal with stress as adults.
- 2) made Indigenous peoples trust others less.
- 3) made Indigenous peoples more likely to hurt other people.
- 4) made Indigenous peoples more likely to hurt themselves.

Victim Blame

- 1) I believe that Indigenous peoples were responsible for the situation they were in.
- 2) The situation of Indigenous peoples in the past was, to a great extent, due to the behavior of their own people
- 3) Indigenous peoples had the situation they deserved given the times.
- 4) Indigenous peoples bring on their own problems.

Benefit Finding

Because of their victimization history, Indigenous peoples should:

- 1) be stronger as a people

- 2) be kinder to one another
- 3) appreciate their lives more
- 4) be better people in terms of their moral qualities
- 5) be motivated to succeed

Perceptions of Indigenous Peoples Today

Indigenous Moral Obligations

- 1) When people have been victimized as a group, they are morally obligated to ensure that they never act toward others in the same way
- 2) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples must take care not to inflict suffering upon other people.
- 3) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples should assist weak and persecuted peoples.
- 4) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples should have a better understanding of other people who are suffering.
- 5) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples must take care not to inflict suffering upon one another.

Indigenous Moral Rights

- 1) When people have been victimized as a group, they are morally entitled to do whatever is necessary to survive.
- 2) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples are entitled to do everything in their power to survive.
- 3) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that in order to protect themselves, Indigenous peoples can do things that harm other groups that threaten them.
- 4) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Indigenous peoples should immediately respond with force to any threat to their existence.
- 5) Because of their own past suffering, Indigenous peoples should be forgiven if they harm others.
- 6) Given the severity of their suffering, Indigenous peoples should be granted leeway to harm others if it is necessary to their survival.
- 7) Because of their own past suffering, Indigenous peoples should be forgiven if they hurt one another.

Perceptions of Canadians Today

Canadian Moral Obligations

- 1) When people have perpetrated harm against a group, they are morally obligated to ensure that they never act toward others in the same way.
- 2) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that the Canadians must take care not to inflict suffering upon other groups.
- 3) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Canadians should assist weak and persecuted peoples around the world.
- 4) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that Canadians should have a better understanding of other people who are suffering.
- 5) A central lesson from the Indian Residential School experience is that the Canadians must take care not to inflict suffering upon other Canadians.

Canadian Collective Guilt

- 1) If the Canadian government does something that harms members of a group, then all Canadians should feel guilty.
- 2) All Canadians ought to be held responsible for the actions of their government.
- 3) I can see holding all Canadians responsible for the harmful things their government has done.
- 4) Society, like individuals, ought to be held accountable for their actions.
- 5) I think that all Canadians are accountable for what their government does.

Perceptions of Indigenous Peoples in Canada

Modern Racism

1. Indigenous peoples should stop complaining about the way they are treated, and simply get on with their lives.
2. Canada needs to stop apologizing for events that happened to Indigenous peoples many years ago.
3. Non-Indigenous Canadians need to become more sensitive to the needs of Indigenous peoples.
4. Indigenous peoples seem to use their cultural traditions to secure special rights denied to non-Indigenous Canadians.
5. Indigenous peoples should pay taxes like everyone else. The government should support programmes designed to place Indigenous peoples in positions of power.
6. It is now unnecessary to honour treaties established long ago with Indigenous peoples.

7. Special places in academic programmes should not be set aside for Indigenous students.
8. Indigenous peoples still need to protest for equal rights.
9. Indigenous peoples should simply get over past generations' experiences at residential schools.
10. Many of the requests made by Indigenous peoples to the Canadian government are excessive.
11. Indigenous peoples should be satisfied with what the government has given them.
12. Indigenous peoples should not have reserved placements in universities unless they are qualified.
13. Government agencies should make every effort to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples.
14. No matter what the government does to settle Indigenous land claims, Indigenous peoples will always demand more.

Background Information

Gender: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Other

Age: _____

What is your citizenship status?

_____ Canadian citizen

_____ Landed immigrant Since what year? _____ Country of origin

_____ Student visa Since what year? _____ Country of origin

_____ Refugee Since what year? _____ Country of origin

What is your ethnic/racial background? *Please select the one that best applies to you.*

- Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
 South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Tamil, Sri Lankan)
 South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian)
 Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
 Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
 Latin American/Hispanic
 Aboriginal; If yes, which Aboriginal group do you belong to? (check one)
 Status Indian (First Nations) _____; Non-Status Indian (First Nations) _____;
 Métis _____; Inuit/Inuk _____; Other (please
 specify): _____
 White/Euro-Caucasian
 Other (please specify): _____

Which federal Canadian political party do you feel best represents your values?

- Conservatives
 Liberals
 NDP
 Bloc Québécois
 Green Party
 Other (please specify): _____

How aware are you of each of the following?

- 1) The Indian Residential School system in Canada
- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all aware | Somewhat aware | Very aware |
- 2) The Canadian government's *Statement of Apology* to former students of Indian Residential Schools?
- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all aware | Somewhat aware | Very aware |
- 3) The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada?
- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not at all aware | Somewhat aware | Very aware |

Appendix C

Study 1 Debriefing Page

Debriefing

What are we trying to learn in this research?

This research examines how greater awareness of the effects of the Indian Residential Schools on Indigenous peoples in Canada influences our expectations of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. We asked you to think about the lessons that could be learned from the experiences Indigenous peoples had for generations while attending the Indian Residential Schools. These lessons varied across 3 conditions: 1) meaning derived by Indigenous Peoples; 2) meaning derived by Canadians, or 3) we didn't ask you to write about what meaning could be derived from the Indian Residential Schools. Based on the meaning that was made salient to you, we were interested in whether there would be differences in your opinions regarding how this experience continues to affect Indigenous peoples, and what rights and responsibilities you attribute to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians as a result of these experiences.

Why is this important to scientists or the general public?

Previous research suggests victims' experiences are often viewed as something that victims can grow from and derive personal strength. However, when this is the case, victims can be held to a high standard of moral conduct. This may have implications as Indigenous peoples' victim status is salient, and they advocate for equality and social rights. As a result, it is important for us to understand how non-Indigenous Canadians perceive Indigenous peoples and their efforts to achieve change.

What are our hypotheses and predictions?

We predict that when participants focus on the lessons learned from the Indian Residential School experience by Indigenous peoples (in comparison to the lessons learned by Canadians, or when participants aren't asked to think about lessons learned), they will be more likely to focus on the strengths and personal growth of Indigenous peoples, and to expect them to play an active leading role in improving conditions for all people.

Where can I learn more?

If you are interested in knowing more about the Indian Residential School experience for Indigenous peoples in Canada, you can go to the website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at www.trc.ca

This study is based on research that has been conducted in the United States regarding the moral obligations we expect of members of victimized groups. An example of this research can be seen in Branscombe, N. R., Warner, R. H., Klar, Y., & Fernández, S. (2015). Historical group victimization entails moral obligations for descendants. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 59, 118-129.

Is there anything I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally upsetting? Yes. If you feel any distress or anxiety after participating in this study, please feel free to contact the Carleton University Health and Counseling Services at: 613-520-6674, or the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region at 613-238-3311 (<http://www.dcottawa.on.ca>).

What if I have questions later?

If you have any remaining concerns, questions, or comments about the experiment, please feel free to contact Mackenzie Doiron at: Mackenzie.Doiron@carleton.ca (613-520-2600, ext. 7513); or Dr. Kim Matheson (Faculty Sponsor) at: kim.matheson@carleton.ca (613-520-2600, ext. 2652).

This research has been cleared by Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (##-###). Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact: Dr. Andy Adler, Chair CUREB-B, Research Compliance Office, 511 Tory, Carleton University, 613-520-2600 ext. 4085, ethics@carleton.ca

If you would like a hard copy of this debriefing form, do not hesitate to let the researcher know before you leave the room.

Thank you for participating in this research!

Appendix D

Study 1 bivariate correlations by condition

| Control Condition | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .19 | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | -.04 | .37* | -.37* |
| Canadian-Focused Condition | | | |
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .47* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .31* | .53* | -.26 |
| Indigenous-Focused Condition | | | |
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .38* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .17 | .32* | -.44* |

Note. * $p < .05$

Study 2 bivariate correlations by condition

| Strength Condition | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .48* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .45* | .31 | -.41 |
| Vulnerability Condition | | | |
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .59* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .49* | .65* | -.40 |

Note. * $p < .05$

Study 3 bivariate correlations by condition

| Strength Condition | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .73* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .34* | .20 | -.55* |
| Vulnerability Condition | | | |
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .72* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .19 | .38* | -.54* |
| Canadian Participants | | | |
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .69* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .36* | .49* | -.54* |

| American Participants | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .71* | – | |
| 3) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .26* | .28* | -.45* |

Note. * $p < .05$

Study 4 bivariate correlations by condition

| Syrian Victims | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .57* | – | |
| 5) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .23* | .27* | -.54* |

| Indigenous Victims | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .65* | – | |
| 5) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .34* | .39* | -.55* |

| Meaning for Victims | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .64* | – | |
| 5) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .26* | .31* | -.52* |

| Meaning for Perpetrators | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .59* | – | |
| 5) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .37* | .42* | -.63* |

| Meaning for Humanity | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <u>1)</u> | <u>2)</u> | <u>3)</u> |
| 1) <i>Moral Obligations</i> | – | | |
| 2) <i>Benefit Finding</i> | .65* | – | |
| 5) <i>Modern Racism</i> | .33* | .35* | -.53* |

Note. * $p < .05$