

Does racial resentment motivate confidence in false beliefs?

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A new study in *Social Science Quarterly* found that racial resentment plays a strong role in leading Americans to express confidence in misinformed beliefs about policy issues associated with race or evaluated

through racial lenses—such as human-caused climate change or the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic—but not on less racialized issues—such as the safety of childhood vaccines.

COVID-19 can be considered a racialized issue on various levels, from prejudiced and xenophobic behavior towards Asians and Asian-Americans in social and online contexts to Black communities and other minorities reporting greater COVID-related discrimination when taking pandemic-related precautions. Concerning climate change, the social, economic, and public health impacts of [climate change](#) have disproportionately impacted non-white and less affluent communities both within the United States and globally. In contrast, concerning childhood vaccines and the misperception that these are associated with autism, there is little evidence that the issue is a racialized one.

When investigators studied [survey data](#) from the 2020 American National Election Study (a nationally representative survey of the US population), they examined more than 7,000 respondents' endorsement of misinformation on these different scientific issues and their reported confidence in these views: that childhood vaccines cause autism; that [global temperatures](#) have not been increasing; that COVID-19 was intentionally developed in a lab in China; and that COVID-19 can be safely and effectively treated using hydroxychloroquine.

For the racialized issues, racial prejudice (or [racial resentment](#)) was associated with both misinformation acceptance and high levels of confidence in misinformed beliefs.

"Our work shows how the uptake of misinformation may not only be the result of knowledge and partisan identities but may also be affected by intergroup prejudices for certain issues that are viewed through racial lenses," said corresponding author Salil Benegal, Ph.D., of DePauw University. "While this paper only studies misinformation about a few

scientific issues given the limitations of the dataset, we hope subsequent work examining the relationship between racial prejudice and misinformation may look at how [racial prejudice](#) may both contribute to misinformation uptake about other issues, and also make such misinformation more difficult to correct given the deep-rooted nature of such prejudices."

More information: Overconfident, Resentful, and Misinformed: How Racial Animus Motivates Confidence in False Beliefs, *Social Science Quarterly* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/ssqu.13224](https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13224)

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