


Group Status Modulates the Associative Strength Between Status Quo Supporting Beliefs and Anti-Black Attitudes

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Abstract

What belief systems are associated with negative attitudes toward lower status groups? Does the relationship differ across higher and lower status groups? We examined the extent to which status quo supporting beliefs (social dominance orientation and conservatism) were associated with negative attitudes toward African Americans and whether the strength of the relationship varied between members of higher and lower status racial groups. On explicit and implicit measures, status quo supporting beliefs were associated with negative attitudes toward African Americans among members of higher (White) and lower status (Black, Hispanic, and Asian) racial groups. The association was stronger among Whites than racial minorities and was stronger among Asians and Latinos than Blacks. Status quo supporting beliefs are associated with negative attitudes toward lower status groups regardless of one's group status, but the strength of the association is greatest among the societally advantaged.

Keywords

social dominance orientation, conservatism, anti-Black attitudes, group status

In response to the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American youth, conservative commentator Bill O'Reilly (2013) argued that Martin may have been profiled as a criminal because "young black American men are so often involved in crime" and that this criminality comes from the "disintegration of the African American family." O'Reilly's comments were criticized as prejudiced (Huffington Post, 2013). However, Don Lemon, an African American journalist, argued that "[O'Reilly's] got a point. In fact, he's got more than a point . . . In my estimation, he doesn't go far enough" (Fung, 2013). Here, a White and African American individual appeared to embrace beliefs that stigmatize Black individuals and legitimize racial inequality. This example makes salient that, in some situations, members of both higher and lower status groups adopt attitudes that stigmatize members of lower status groups. More importantly, however, this example raises the question of what psychological factors are related to these attitudes?

The present research addressed three questions: (1) whether belief systems grounded in supporting the status quo were associated with negative attitudes toward African Americans among members of *both* higher and lower status racial groups, (2) whether the strength of this relationship differed between members of higher and lower status racial groups, and (3) whether status quo supporting beliefs were associated with both explicit and implicit anti-Black attitudes.

Group Enhancement and Intergroup Attitudes

Group status concerns the extent to which people give prestige to a group (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). People are generally motivated to enhance the status of their group, a point on which multiple theoretical traditions converge (Abrams, 1992; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Members of lower status groups (e.g., women, racial minorities) frequently experience feelings of injustice concerning the treatment of their group (Crosby, 1984; Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Perceived injustice can lead to challenging the status quo and advocating for change that would benefit one's group (Grant & Brown, 1995; Gurr, 1970; Klandermans, 1997). For example, members of lower (vs. higher) status groups are more supportive of policies that benefit lower status groups (e.g., affirmative action) and hold more positive attitudes toward

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lower status groups (Diekmann, Eagly, & Kulesa, 2002; Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000). However, while members of lower and higher status groups differ in attitudes toward lower status groups, there is considerable heterogeneity in these attitudes. Determining the factors that are associated with the attitudes that members of higher and lower status groups hold toward lower status groups is a key question in understanding intergroup relations and inequality.

Status Quo Supporting Beliefs and Intergroup Attitudes

People also possess varying degrees of motivation to defend the status quo of the system in which they live (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay & Friesen, 2011). People who most strongly possess status quo supporting beliefs (e.g., political conservatism) hold attitudes that reinforce the current state of affairs and uphold extant group hierarchy (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Ho et al., 2015). For example, greater conservatism is associated with stronger opposition to policies that would reduce group status differences (e.g., universal health care) and more negative attitudes toward lower status groups (Cunningham, Nezlek, & Banaji, 2004; Hennes, Nam, Stern, & Jost, 2012; Jost et al., 2004).

Previous research has generally examined the association between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes toward lower status groups among *higher status groups* (e.g., Feldman & Huddy, 2005; Ho et al., 2012) or has not compared the strength of the relationship among members of higher and lower status groups (e.g., Hodson, & Busseri, 2012; Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009; Terrizzi, Shook, & Ventis, 2010). An important question concerns the factors related to the attitudes that members of lower status groups hold about their own groups. This question is highly relevant for many theories in intergroup relations, as research suggests that members of lower status groups can contribute to upholding status hierarchies. For example, Sidanius and Pratto (2004, p. 429) emphasized that “subordinates *actively* participate in and contribute to their own subordination” and that “*group oppression is very much a cooperative game.*”

Consistent with this perspective, some members of lower status groups embrace status quo supporting beliefs, and these beliefs can be related to negative attitudes toward their own groups. For example, African Americans scoring higher on social dominance orientation (SDO) were more weakly identified with their race (Ho et al., 2015), and sexual minorities holding more conservative beliefs were less supportive of same-sex marriage (Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; Pacilli, Taurino, Jost, & van der Toorn, 2011). These findings suggest that belief systems favoring the status quo will be associated with attitudes that disadvantage lower status groups, even among members of lower status groups.

Previous research examining the beliefs associated with attitudes toward lower status groups has several limitations. First, previous research has used a small number of measures to

assess attitudes, meaning that observed results could be constrained to the specific measure being utilized. Second, these measures have mainly been explicit (i.e., self-reported). Assessing both explicit and implicit measures is informative because status quo supporting beliefs are theoretically expected to be associated with both explicit and implicit attitudes (Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; Jost et al., 2004; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). Third, previous research has not compared members of higher and lower status groups in the strength of the association between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes toward lower status groups. In the present research, we seek to address these limitations by employing a variety of measures examining both explicit and implicit attitudes toward African Americans and utilizing responses from a large sample of higher and lower status racial groups.

Conflict of Group Enhancement and Status Quo Defense Motives

Will status quo supporting beliefs be associated with negative attitudes toward lower status groups to a similar extent for members of higher and lower status groups? The motivations to enhance one’s group and, separately, provide support for the status quo are simultaneously related to how people perceive and form attitudes about the world (Stern, Balcells, Cole, West, & Caruso, 2016). Importantly, motivations to defend the current structure of society and to enhance one’s group sometimes conflict, depending on the status of one’s group (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003). These motivations are concordant for members of higher status groups: Whites who express negative attitudes toward African Americans simultaneously defend extant racial hierarchy and enhance their group. In contrast, these motivations conflict for members of lower status groups: African Americans who express negative attitudes toward African Americans satisfy the motivation to uphold the status quo while simultaneously holding an attitude that does not benefit their group.

What are the implications of possessing conflicting (vs. concordant) goals for attitudes? When people hold competing goals, the strength of one goal can attenuate the impact of the other. For example, the strength of self-protective versus self-evaluative goals determines whether people prefer to hear information that confirms positive beliefs about themselves or information about their weaknesses, respectively (Sedikides & Hepper, 2009; Trope, 1986). Similarly, individuals who possess a strong goal of academic achievement avoid the pull of competing goals and more readily approach information consistent with the academic goal (Fishbach & Shah, 2006). Thus, we expected that motivation to enhance one’s group might impact the extent to which status quo supporting beliefs are associated with attitudes toward lower status groups. Because these motivations conflict for members of lower status groups, we hypothesized that status quo supporting beliefs would be less strongly associated with negative

attitudes toward lower status groups among members of lower (vs. higher) status groups.

Relations Among Lower Status Groups

Will the motivation to enhance one's group temper the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes toward lower status groups for members of all lower status groups or only for individuals whose group is the attitude object in question? In particular, to what extent would status quo supporting beliefs be associated with anti-Black attitudes among Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals? We propose that there are two theoretically plausible outcomes.

There is a high degree of consensus in perceptions of status across racial groups, such that Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals are systematically perceived as lower status than White individuals (Kahn, Ho, Sidanius, & Pratto, 2009). Members of lower status groups sometimes identify as belonging to a larger group (e.g., Hispanic and Black Americans identifying as "disadvantaged racial minorities"), which can lead to feelings of solidarity and adopting shared goals (Craig & Richeson, 2012; Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, & Snider, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014). Thus, lower status racial subgroups (e.g., Hispanics) might view themselves as being connected to another racial subgroup (e.g., African Americans). In turn, the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and anti-Black attitudes would be similar among Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals. Alternatively, group enhancement motives might most strongly attenuate the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes toward one's immediate group, meaning status quo supporting beliefs would be less strongly associated with anti-Black attitudes among African Americans than among Hispanic and Asian individuals.

The Present Research

We examined the extent to which status quo supporting beliefs were associated with anti-Black attitudes. Researchers have been interested in understanding attitudes toward racial minorities, and African Americans in particular, for decades (e.g., Allport, 1954; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986) and have constructed measures to capture anti-Black attitudes. We utilize a variety of these scales to ensure that any observed differences between the groups are not attributable to the influence of a single scale. Additionally, given that inequality among racial groups in the United States continues to rise (Wilson & Rodgers, 2016), understanding the belief systems associated with anti-Black attitudes and whether the strength of the association is similar for members of higher and lower status racial groups remains an important issue for empirical inquiry. Consistent with previous research, we assess status quo supporting beliefs with measures of SDO and political conservatism (e.g., Day & Fiske, 2017; Ho et al., 2015; Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; van der Toorn, Jost, Packer, Noorbaloochi, & Van Bavel, 2017).

Method

Participants

Participants were volunteers who selected the Race Implicit Association Test (IAT) at Project Implicit (implicit.harvard.edu) between October 23, 2014, and September 27, 2016. The end date for data collection occurred when the study was updated and participants no longer completed two self-report scales. This data set was used previously to examine a separate question concerning the relation between implicit and explicit racial attitude measures (Axt, 2018).

Analyses using SDO were limited to U.S. citizens ($N = 25,198$, $M_{\text{age}} = 28.4$, $SD = 12.7$; 60.7% female) who completed the SDO measure and reported their ethnicity as Hispanic ($n = 3,504$) or reported not being Hispanic and their race as White ($n = 18,233$), East Asian ($n = 895$), or Black ($n = 3,504$). Analyses using political conservatism used the same criteria ($N = 634,368$, $M_{\text{age}} = 28.3$, $SD = 12.7$; 60.7% female; White $n = 459,424$, Black $n = 65,667$; Asian $n = 20,817$, Hispanic $n = 88,460$). Sample sizes are larger for conservatism analyses because all participants were assigned the conservatism item, whereas SDO was one of several scales randomly assigned to participants. Across analyses, sample sizes vary due to missing data. The analysis with the smallest sample size provided 94% power to detect a Cohen d as small as .15.

Procedure and Materials

Participants completed the following measures in a randomized order.

SDO. Participants completed the 16-item SDO-6 Scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) response scale ($\alpha = .88$; sample item: "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups").

Political conservatism. Participants reported political orientation on a 7-point scale ($-3 = \textit{very conservative}$, $0 = \textit{neutral}$, $+3 = \textit{very liberal}$; $M = 0.76$, $SD = 1.67$). A single item is commonly used to assess political ideology (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Jost, 2006; Nosek, Banaji, & Jost, 2009). For ease of interpretation, analyses focusing on conservatism are reverse-scored such that higher values indicate greater conservatism.

Racial attitudes. Participants were assigned two of a possible 34 self-report scales assessing racial attitudes. Thirty-one scales were adapted from previous research, taken primarily from Biernat and Crandall (1999) and Christie (1991), and three were developed for data collection. See Axt (2018) for a full list of scales, wording or response changes, and scoring details.

Of primary interest were the 18 scales or subscales concerning personally endorsed attitudes or beliefs about Black people, such as attitudes towards Blacks (Brigham, 1993), racial resentment (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), and modern racism (McConahay, 1986). See Table 1 for the list of scales used in

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Explicit Racial Attitude Scales.

Scale (Abbreviation)	Source	Responses	Items	Reliability (α)
ANES Race (ANES)	Payne et al. (2010)	24,801	6	.76
Anti-Black Attitudes (ABA) ^a	Katz and Haas (1988)	24,964	10	.84
Pro-Black Attitudes (PBA) ^a	Katz and Haas (1988)	25,013	10	.83
Attitudes Towards Blacks (ATB)	Brigham (1993)	24,719	20	.87
Blatant Prejudice (BP) ^b	Pettigrew and Meertens (1995)	24,851	10	.77
Subtle Prejudice (SP) ^b	Pettigrew and Meertens (1995)	24,459	10	.83
GSS: Perceptions of Opportunity (GSS: Opp)	Davis and Smith (1991)	25,470	9	.80
GSS: Racial Attitudes (GSS: Race)	Davis and Smith (1991)	23,730	22	.82
Modern Racism (MR)	McConahay (1986)	25,876	7	.85
New Racism (NR)	Jacobson (1985)	24,517	7	.56
Prejudice Index (PI)	Bobo and Kluegel (1993)	24,885	10	.63
Racial Ambivalence: Anti-Black (RA-ABA) ^c	Katz and Haas (1988)	24,768	10	.85
Racial Ambivalence: Pro-Black (RA-PBA) ^c	Katz and Haas (1988)	24,830	10	.84
Racial Arguments (RaceArg)	Saucier & Miller (2003)	22,967	13	.75
Racial Attitudes (RA)	Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, and Stallworth (1991)	25,233	14	.87
Racial Resentment (RR)	Kinder and Sanders (1996)	25,946	6	.83
Racial Stereotypes Measure (RSM)	Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman (1997)	25,041	6	.82
Symbolic Racism 2000(SR2000)	Henry and Sears (2002)	24,964	8	.83

Note. Scales sharing a superscript were administered within the same questionnaire. ANES = American National Election Survey; GSS = General Social Survey.

analyses as well as number of items, internal reliability, and respondents per scale.

Explicit racial preferences. All participants completed an explicit racial preference item before or after the first racial attitude scale, which asked, “Which statement best describes you?” ($-3 = I$ strongly prefer Black people to White people, $0 = I$ like Black people and White people equally, $+3 = I$ strongly prefer White people to Black people). Previous research has utilized a similar item as a measure of intergroup attitudes (e.g., Nosek et al., 2007; Nosek, Bar-Anan, Sriram, Axt & Greenwald, 2014).

Implicit racial associations. To assess implicit racial associations, participants completed a seven-block Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz., 1998) assessing associations between the concepts “good” and “bad” and categories “African Americans” and “European Americans.” Each racial category was represented by six gray-scale images of faces (three male, three female). The IAT followed the procedure outlined in Nosek, Greenwald, and Banaji (2007) and was scored by the D algorithm (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). Positive IAT D scores reflected greater association strength between positive and European American versus African American. Participants with more than 10% of critical trials faster than 300 ms (1.1% of the total sample) were excluded from analyses involving the IAT (Nosek et al., 2007).

Importantly, we conceptualize the Black–White IAT as more readily reflecting anti-Black than pro-White attitudes. Supporting this, a recent meta-analysis indicates that the IAT is more strongly associated with behaviors toward members of stigmatized than nonstigmatized groups (Kurdi et al., in press). Additionally, in the present data set, the IAT was more strongly associated with the Attitudes Toward Blacks scale and

a feeling thermometer toward Blacks than the parallel Attitudes Toward Whites scale and a feeling thermometer toward Whites, respectively (see Online Supplemental Material).

Demographics. Participants who completed the study before March 2, 2015, responded to a 15-item demographics survey, and participants who completed the study afterward responded to a 28-item demographics survey.

Data, materials, analysis syntax, and Online Supplement Material are available at <https://osf.io/6kyqp/>.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Mean-Level Differences

See Table 2 for means and standard deviations of IAT D scores, the relative racial preference item, SDO, and conservatism for each racial group, and notation on which groups reliably differed from Whites on these measures. On the IAT, White participants had more negative associations toward African Americans than Black participants ($d = .92$) and moderately more negative associations than Asian and Hispanic participants (average $d = .16$). The same was true for explicit racial preferences: White participants had greater explicit preferences for White versus Black people than Black participants ($d = 1.26$) and moderately greater preferences for White versus Black people than Asian and Hispanic participants (average $d = .25$). White participants had slightly higher levels of SDO than Black participants ($d = .18$), lower levels of SDO than Asian participants ($d = .16$), and did not reliably differ in SDO from Hispanic participants ($d = .01$).¹ White participants were slightly more conservative (or less liberal) than Asian, Hispanic, and Black participants (average $d = .08$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Conservatism, Social Dominance Orientation, Explicit Racial Preferences, and IAT D Scores.

Measure	White <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Black <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Asian <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Hispanic <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Conservatism	−0.73 (1.74)	−0.87 (1.42)	−0.93 (1.38)	−0.78 (1.49)
SDO	1.94 (0.92) ^a	1.79 (0.74)	2.08 (0.89)	1.93 (0.83) ^a
Explicit racial preferences	0.42 (0.81)	−0.81 (1.12)	0.37 (0.98)	0.03 (0.99)
IAT <i>D</i> scores	0.34 (0.42)	−0.06 (.44)	0.31 (0.43)	0.24 (0.43)

Note. In rows without superscripts, groups differ at $p < .001$. In rows with superscripts, groups with shared superscripts do not reliably differ, while all other groups differ at $p < .001$. SDO = social dominance orientation; IAT *D* = Implicit Association Test.

Table 3. Correlations (Pearson's *r*) Between SDO, Conservatism, Explicit Racial Preferences, and IAT *D* Scores.

Correlation	Participant Racial Group			
	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
SDO-Conservatism	.472	.240	.430	.352
SDO-Exp. preference	.347	.059	.227	.195
SDO-IAT <i>D</i>	.155	.035*	.119	.149
Conservatism-Exp. preference	.208	.148	.175	.182
Conservatism-IAT <i>D</i>	.122	.027	.128	.124
Exp. Preference-IAT <i>D</i>	.200	.172	.268	.261

Note. All correlations without a "*" are significant at $p < .003$. Exp. Preference = explicit racial preference item. SDO = Social dominance orientation; IAT *D* = Implicit Association Test *D*.

Associations Between SDO and Racial Attitudes

We examined the association between SDO and anti-Black attitudes across racial groups by comparing whether Whites differed from racial and ethnic minorities in the association between SDO and (1) implicit racial attitudes, (2) the single item measuring relative racial preferences, (3) the 18 scales measuring racial attitudes toward Black people. See Table 3 for correlations between SDO and conservatism with IAT *D* scores and the explicit racial preference item. See Table 4 for differences in correlation strength and 95% confidence intervals of those differences.

Implicit racial associations. SDO was related to anti-Black associations among White, Hispanic, and Asian participants. SDO was more strongly related to implicit anti-Black associations among White than Black participants (Fisher's $Z = 5.34$, $p < .001$). However, Whites' SDO-IAT correlation did not differ from the association among Asian (Fisher's $Z = 1.00$, $p = .317$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = 0.31$, $p = .757$). Black participants' SDO-IAT correlation was weaker than that of Asian (Fisher's $Z = -2.03$, $p = .042$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = -4.12$, $p < .001$), meaning SDO was least strongly related to implicit anti-Black associations among Black participants.

Explicit racial preferences. SDO was associated with explicit anti-Black preferences among all racial groups. SDO was more strongly associated with explicit anti-Black preferences for White than Black (Fisher's $Z = 14.18$, $p < .001$), Asian

(Fisher's $Z = 3.77$, $p < .001$), and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = 8.80$, $p < .001$). Black participants' association between SDO and explicit racial preferences was weaker than that of Asian (Fisher's $Z = -4.36$, $p < .001$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = -5.26$, $p < .001$), meaning SDO was least strongly associated with explicit anti-Black preferences among Black participants.

Racial attitude scales. We used the R metafor package (Viechtbauer, 2010) to estimate the meta-analytic correlation between SDO² and the 18 measures of racial attitudes. See Table 5 for meta-analytic estimates of the correlation between SDO and the racial attitude scales (see Online Supplemental Material for forest plots).³ SDO was associated with explicit anti-Black attitudes among all racial groups. Wald-type tests (Viechtbauer, 2007) comparing estimates from independent meta-analyses found that SDO was more strongly associated with anti-Black attitudes among White than Black ($Z = 4.52$, $p < .001$) and Hispanic participants ($Z = 2.47$, $p = .014$). However, the SDO-racial attitude association did not differ between White and Asian participants ($Z = .98$, $p = .325$). Black participants did not differ in SDO-racial attitude associations compared to Asian ($Z = -1.55$, $p = .121$) or Hispanic participants ($Z = -1.74$, $p = .082$).⁴

Associations Between Conservatism and Racial Attitudes

Implicit racial attitudes. Conservatism was related to implicit anti-Black associations among all racial groups. Conservatism was more strongly related to implicit anti-Black associations among White than among Black participants (Fisher's $Z = 19.49$, $p < .001$). However, Whites' conservatism-implicit association relationship did not differ from Asian (Fisher's $Z = -0.75$, $p = .453$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = -.47$, $p = .638$). Black participants' conservatism-IAT association was weaker than that of Asian (Fisher's $Z = -11.02$, $p < .001$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = -16.09$, $p < .001$), meaning conservatism was least strongly related to implicit anti-Black associations among Black participants.

Explicit racial preferences. Conservatism was associated with explicit anti-Black preferences among all racial groups. Conservatism was more strongly associated with explicit anti-Black preferences among White than among Black (Fisher's $Z = 13.36$, $p < .001$), Asian (Fisher's $Z = 4.35$, $p < .001$), and

Table 4. Difference in Correlation (Pearson's r) and 95% Confidence Interval in Comparisons Among Racial and Ethnic Groups.

Correlation	Racial/Ethnic Group Contrast				
	White-Black	White Asian	White Hispanic	Black Asian	Black Hispanic
SDO-Exp. preference	.288 [.247, .329]	.120 [.056, .185]	.152 [.117, .187]	-.168 [-.241, -.093]	-.136 [-.187, -.085]
SDO-IAT D	.120 [.076, .164]	.036 [-.034, .107]	.006 [-.032, .044]	-.084 [-.164, -.003]	-.114 [-.168, -.060]
Conservatism-Exp. preference	.060 [.051, .069]	.033 [.018, .048]	.026 [.018, .034]	-.027 [-.044, -.010]	-.034 [-.045, -.023]
Conservatism-IAT D	.095 [.081, .109]	-.006 [-.025, .013]	-.002 [-.015, .011]	-.101 [-.119, -.083]	-.097 [-.109, -.085]

Note. Positive values mean stronger correlations among the group listed first in the comparison. Exp. Preference = explicit racial preference item; IAT D = Implicit Association Test D ; SDO = social dominance orientation.

Table 5. Estimate of Meta-Analytic Correlation and 95% Confidence Interval for SDO and Conservatism With Explicit Racial Attitude Scales.

Measure	Participant Group			
	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
SDO	.579 [.539, .619]	.395 [.326, .464]	.511 [.382, .640]	.480 [.413, .547]
Conservatism	.503 [.459, .546]	.263 [.230, .297]	.388 [.346, .431]	.392 [.354, .430]

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$. Exp. Preference = explicit racial preference item; SDO = social dominance orientation.

Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = 6.62, p < .001$). However, Black participants' association between conservatism and explicit racial preferences was weaker than that of Asian (Fisher's $Z = -3.14, p = .002$) and Hispanic participants (Fisher's $Z = -6.09, p < .001$), meaning conservatism was least strongly associated with explicit anti-Black preferences among Black participants.

Racial attitude scales. See Table 5 for meta-analytic estimates of the correlation between conservatism and the racial attitude scales (see Online Supplemental Material for forest plots). Conservatism was associated with explicit anti-Black attitudes among all racial groups. Conservatism was more strongly associated with explicit anti-Black attitudes among White participants than among Black ($Z = 8.58, p < .001$), Asian ($Z = 3.68, p < .001$), and Hispanic participants ($Z = 3.78, p < .001$). Black participants had lower conservatism-racial attitude associations compared to Asian ($Z = -4.52, p < .001$) and Hispanic participants ($Z = -4.99, p < .001$), meaning conservatism was least strongly associated with explicit anti-Black attitudes among Black participants.⁵

General Discussion

We examined the extent to which status quo supporting beliefs were associated with anti-Black attitudes and whether the strength of this relationship varied for members of higher and lower status racial groups. Two assessments of status quo supporting beliefs (SDO and political conservatism) were more strongly related to implicit anti-Black associations and explicit anti-Black attitudes among Whites than among Blacks. Status quo supporting beliefs generally were less strongly associated with *explicit* anti-Black attitudes among Asians and Hispanics than among Whites, but generally were more strongly associated than among Blacks. Interestingly, however, status quo

supporting beliefs were similarly related to *implicit* anti-Black associations among Asians and Hispanics as among Whites but were more strongly related than among Blacks. These findings shed light on the relationship between belief systems and attitudes, the role of competing motives in intergroup attitudes, and how group status impacts attitudes.

Belief Systems and Intergroup Attitudes

The present research contributes to debates surrounding the attitudes that members of lower status groups hold toward their own group. Previous research conducted within the frameworks of system justification theory (e.g., Hoffarth & Jost, 2017; Pacilli et al., 2011) and social dominance theory (e.g., Ho et al., 2015) tested whether status quo supporting beliefs are related to the extent to which the members of lower status group hold negative attitudes toward their own groups. The present research extends this work through finding that multiple assessments of status quo supporting beliefs were associated with anti-Black attitudes among racial minorities on a variety of direct measures (self-reported racial attitudes and preferences) and an indirect measure (an IAT). This finding strongly supports the perspective that status quo supporting beliefs held by members of lower status groups are related to negative attitudes toward lower status groups.

Interestingly, status quo supporting beliefs were more strongly related to explicit than implicit attitudes. While it is difficult to identify the exact cause for why relationships were smaller with the IAT than self-report variables, there are several plausible explanations. One is that the conservatism, SDO, and explicit attitude measures have shared psychological properties, such as that they each assess responses that are more controlled than responses on implicit attitude measures (De Houwer, Teige-Mocigemba, Spruyt, & Moors, 2009). Relatedly, these explicit measures share a common method of

self-report, and this shared methodological variance might increase associations (e.g., Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Lee, 2003). While identifying the specific reason(s) for relationship strength differences across explicit and implicit measures is beyond the scope of the present research, further examining this question would be an exciting avenue for future work.

Highlighting the Importance of Relationship Strength

The present research advances beyond the question of *whether* status quo supporting beliefs are associated with negative attitudes toward lower status groups and additionally examines the relative *strength* of the relationship among members of higher and lower status groups. While our findings are consistent with the argument that group oppression is a “cooperative game” (Sidanius & Pratto, 2004, p. 429) to which members of higher and lower status groups contribute, these findings also indicate that status quo supporting beliefs are not equally associated with attitudes across groups but instead most potently relate to negative attitudes toward the disadvantaged among those who are most societally advantaged.

Relatedly, some scholars have highlighted the importance of examining attitudes toward members of both lower and higher status groups (Dasgupta, 2004). In the present research, status quo supporting beliefs were much more weakly related to attitudes toward Whites than Blacks, and the relationships of status quo supporting beliefs with attitudes toward Whites varied in very small magnitude across racial groups (see Online Supplemental Material). Thus, conflicts between group enhancement and system defense appear to most readily modulate the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes toward lower status groups.

It is important to note that group status is situated in a given context and can change. If a group’s status were to change, we would theoretically anticipate that the strength of the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes would correspondingly change. At the same time, many scholars argue that changes in status occur very slowly for group memberships in which there is entrenched structural inequality (e.g., race, gender, religion; Jost et al., 2004; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Thus, in addition to our findings making a conceptual point about the relationship between status quo supporting beliefs and attitudes, we anticipate that the pattern of effects observed here is unlikely to change in the near future.

Competing Motivations in the Construction of Intergroup Attitudes

Consistent with previous theoretical proposals (Jost et al., 2003; Stern et al., 2016), we argue that African Americans experience conflict between motivation to defend the status quo and motivation to enhance the standing of their group. In turn, these competing motivations temper the extent to which status quo supporting beliefs are associated with anti-Black attitudes. People can hold conflicting goals in a variety of domains, including intergroup domains (Dixon, Durrheim, &

Tredoux, 2007; Kugler, Cooper, Nosek, 2010), yet this theoretical possibility is not frequently considered to generate research questions. Researchers often assess the motivational mechanisms that are most readily hypothesized within their theoretical approach without considering alternative mechanisms or whether various motivational mechanisms might compete (Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007).

When researchers do consider conflicting goals in intergroup relations research, they typically do so in a *between-person* manner, such as examining the conflicting goals of Whites and Blacks during interracial interactions (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000; Vorauer, Main, & O’Connell, 1998). However, considering how distinct motivations *within a person* align or conflict holds the potential to generate informative and nuanced theoretical questions in intergroup domains.

Relations Among Lower Status Groups

Recently, researchers have taken increased interest in relations among lower status groups (Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2014, 2016, 2017). Of greatest relevance to the present research, scholars have proposed that racial minorities might experience a common identity of being a “disadvantaged racial minority” (Craig & Richeson, 2012). Here, Asians and Hispanics did not differ from Whites in how strongly status quo supporting beliefs related to *implicit* anti-Black associations, but they did generally differ in the relationship with *explicit* attitudes. These findings suggest that on an explicit level, members of lower status groups might regulate attitudes toward lower status groups to which they do not belong. However, given that Asians and Hispanics are likely exposed to the same cultural influences that produce anti-Black attitudes as Whites, shared disadvantage might less readily modulate implicit associations. Examining additional motivational factors that impact relations among lower status groups, such as strength of identification with one’s immediate racial group, would be an interesting step for future research.

Conclusion

In the present research, the extent to which a person embraced status quo supporting beliefs was related to more negative attitudes toward African Americans, regardless of whether they belonged to a higher or lower status racial group. We additionally found that this association was strongest among those who were most societally advantaged, and that the relationship was attenuated among people in a lower status group even when negative attitudes were not directly targeted at their group. Overall, the present research contributes to understanding the persistent challenges of overcoming group-based inequality.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

Notes

1. Social dominance orientation (SDO) scores were right-skewed. However, skewness did not vary considerably across racial groups (White = 1.40, $SE = 0.02$; Black = 1.45, $SE = 0.05$; Asian = 1.03, $SE = 0.08$; Hispanic = 1.27, $SE = 0.04$), suggesting that relative differences in correlation strength cannot be attributed solely to differences in SDO skewness.
2. Analyses included six subscales embedded within three larger scales, meaning not all observations were independent. To address this issue, we conducted the same analysis, excluding the subscale in each scale that was less related to the explicit racial preference item. No conclusions change from the primary analysis (see Online Supplemental Material).
3. To be expected from using large sample sizes and multiple measures, each meta-analysis showed heterogeneity (see Online Supplemental Material). While these scales likely vary in their ability to assess racial attitudes, each has appealing face validity (i.e., rated by coders as measuring attitudes or beliefs about Black people; Axt, 2018) and each correlated with the explicit racial preference item (minimum $r = .23$, median $r = .35$; see Online Supplemental Material).
4. These analyses treated SDO as a single construct. However, recent research (Ho et al., 2012) posited two dimensions for SDO: SDO-Dominance (SDO-D) and SDO-Egalitarianism (SDO-E). To examine the robustness of these results, we repeated the above analyses for SDO-D and SDO-E separately. Results were generally the same, though differences in correlations with the racial attitude scales were slightly stronger for SDO-E than SDO-D (see Online Supplemental Material).
5. As with SDO, we reran analyses removing the subscale less related to relative explicit racial preferences. No conclusions change from the primary analysis (see Online Supplemental Material).

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