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Majority group opposition to minority political entitlements: The Social Dominance Paradox^{☆,☆☆}



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ABSTRACT

We propose and test the Social Dominance Paradox of majority opposition to minority political entitlement in a national sample of the European majority group in New Zealand ($N=4628$). The paradox arises because for the majority ethnic group, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) should simultaneously and differentially predict support for, and resistance to, minority political interests through opposing ideological mechanisms: Color-Blind Ideology (subjectively egalitarian ideology which functions to maintain inequality by de-emphasising group membership) and Ethnic System Justification (which recognises ethnicity and asserts that ethnic relations are fair). We argue that for the majority group, SDO should predict increased ethnic group salience, and should thus predict decreased Color-Blindness. However, SDO should also lead people to view existing hierarchical arrangements between ethnic groups as legitimate, leading to increased Ethnic System Justification. These dual ideologies should in turn both predict opposition to minority political entitlements. Predictions were supported, and occurred in addition to the strong direct effect of SDO on opposition to minority political entitlement. These findings provide an important, and theoretically predicted, paradox evident for those high in SDO; and emphasise the subtlety and explanatory power of Social Dominance Theory for understanding support for minority political entitlement.

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1. Introduction

The politics of intergroup relations in New Zealand is marked by a history of injustice perpetrated by European settler-colonists against the indigenous Māori, including the forcible appropriation of Māori land and resources, and the violation of Māori rights (Belich, 1986). The on-going legacy of this injustice is reflected in the well-documented gap in resource distribution and political representation between Maori and New Zealand Europeans (The Social Report, 2010). On the other hand, Māori culture is promoted by contemporary New Zealanders, particularly the NZ Europeans, as a means of enhancing the distinctiveness of New Zealand's national identity, on the international stage (Sibley & Liu, 2007). Thus, while the members of the majority group support intergroup equality in principle, *objective* inequality between Māori and NZ Europeans persists. Within this context of symbolic biculturalism and objective disadvantage, Māori Political Entitlements,

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^{☆☆} Mplus syntax for the models reported here, including full syntax documenting the model constraint commands we implemented in our analysis is posted on the NZAVS website. <http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/new-zealand-attitudes-and-values-study>.

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both in terms of reparative redistribution of resources, and political empowerment, are some of the most contentious issues in New Zealand politics.

Research on interracial attitudes and prejudice suggests that while there has been a considerable historical decrease in support for intergroup inequality, the support for reparative policies and programs intended to benefit minority groups remains persistently low (Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997; Tuch & Hughes, 1996). In fact, despite general optimism depicting decreases in discrimination, evidence suggests that the political power of racial discrimination remains unhindered in its influence on support for political entitlement of minority groups (Kinder & Drake, 2009). This opposition of the majority groups to racial policies differs across domains, however. While the symbolic propositions tend to receive general support, programs and policies that directly benefit minority groups through resource distribution and political empowerment, are consistently rejected by the dominant majority (Tuch & Hughes, 1996). The implementation of such policies that increase the competitive potential of minority groups tend to be resisted and opposed by the majority groups (Tuch & Hughes, 1996).

Theorists seeking to explain this disparity have suggested that it results from a motivation for people, especially members of advantaged groups, to maintain their group's privilege and status within the social structure. This motivation can exist even in the contexts of relatively positive and seemingly egalitarian intergroup attitudes (Jackman & Crane, 1986). Consistent with this perspective, Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) asserts that humans are motivated to maintain group-based dominance and hierarchy, and that individual differences in this motivation can be assessed by the construct of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This motivation is expressed via Hierarchy Enhancing Legitimising Myths (HE-LMs), which are ideologies that enable unequal social arrangements marked by group-based hierarchies to be justified. SDO predicts support for a range of hierarchy enhancing ideologies including meritocracy and racism, as well as specific support for military programs and policies (Pratto et al., 1994; Pratto, Stallworth, & Lanz, 1998). However, the analysis of the effects of SDO on subscription to HE-LMs usually involves a consideration of the *function* served by these ideologies in fulfilling the motivations indexed by SDO. Here, we argue that both the content and the function of hierarchy-enhancing ideologies are relevant to an understanding of how SDO operates.

In advancing this argument, we contrast two important ideologies in the domain of ethnic-group relations: Ethnic System Justification and Color-Blind Ideology. Ethnic System Justification is an HE-LM that can be seen as hierarchy enhancing in both content and function. This ideology indexes the belief that relations between ethnic groups are fair and just. By making group boundaries salient, while legitimising group-based differences in status, Ethnic System Justification satisfies the motivation for group-based dominance without threatening the importance of distinctions between groups. On the other hand, Color-Blindness is a Hierarchy Enhancing legitimising myth that is seemingly egalitarian (Hierarchy Attenuating) in content. This ideology de-emphasises ethnic-group membership and prescribes that people should be treated as individuals regardless of the historical disadvantages suffered by the groups to which they belong (Brown et al., 2003). By shifting the focus away from group-based privilege and disadvantage, Color-Blindness functions to perpetuate systemic inequality between groups and maintain group-based hierarchies.

We argue that although both Color-blind Ideology and Ethnic System Justification enhance group-based hierarchy, SDO should have subtle *opposing* effects on subscription to these ideologies arising from their differential content. On the one hand, the content of Ethnic System Justification is *logically consistent* with the motivations for hierarchy indexed by SDO. Therefore, we can expect SDO to be positively related to levels of subscription to this ideology, which should in turn predict opposition to Minority Political entitlements. This hierarchy-enhancing effect is in line with past research on the ideological mechanisms through which SDO bolsters group-based inequality. On the other, in de-emphasising group membership the content of the Color-Blind Ideology is *logically inconsistent* with the motivation for group-based dominance. If intergroup hierarchies are to be perpetuated, distinctions between groups matter. Maintaining logical consistency between one's motivations and ideological content of one's beliefs, should lead people higher on SDO to subscribe *less strongly* to the Color-Blind Ideology. As a result, SDO should have a subtle *hierarchy-attenuating* effect on Minority Political Entitlements, via reduced subscription to Color-Blindness. We call this the Social Dominance Paradox.

We present a Structural Equation Model assessing this paradox using a large, nationally representative sample of New Zealand Europeans (the dominant ethnic group). Specifically, we test the hypothesis that SDO has opposing indirect effects on support for minority political interests in New Zealand, via the dual ideologies of Color-Blindness and Ethnic System Justification. We expect that the hierarchy attenuating effect of SDO via Color-Blindness should counteract its hierarchy enhancing effect via Ethnic System Justification, with the combined indirect effects summing to zero. What would remain is the strong *direct* link between SDO opposition to political entitlements for minority groups, already identified in the literature. These processes, being very subtle, would normally go undetected in research. In fact, it is their very subtlety which tests the prediction derived from the logic of Social Dominance Theory, that SDO can sometimes engender *opposition* to an HE-LM if the content of that ideology is egalitarian and thus conflicts with the group-dominance motive.

1.1. Differential ideological content

Ethnic System Justification is a domain-specific form of system-justification, analogous to the construct of Gender-Specific System Justification developed by Jost and Kay (2005). It indexes the degree to which people believe that the distribution of social value among ethnic groups is fair and that the social positions occupied by each of those groups are justified (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Kay, 2005). This ideology bolsters the legitimacy of the existing ethnic hierarchy, and promotes the

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