

Resistant versus Acquiescent Responses to Ingroup Inferiority as a Function of Social Dominance Orientation in the USA and Italy

Jennifer R. Overbeck

Stanford University

John T. Jost

Stanford University and Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

Cristina O. Mosso

University of Turin

Agnieszka Flizik

Stanford University

Social identity theory typically emphasizes how low status group members resist and challenge imputations of inferiority (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), whereas system justification theory emphasizes the tendency to accept and justify status hierarchies (Jost & Banaji, 1994). On the theoretical assumption that responses to ingroup inferiority would vary according to individual differences in social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), we predicted and found in two studies that low SDO members of low status groups engage in resistance and social competition, as social identity theory would predict, whereas high SDO members follow system justifying patterns of acquiescence and even active bolstering of the status quo. The fact that the studies were conducted in two cultures (USA and Italy) that differ with regard to hierarchical traditions and beliefs about social mobility increases the generalizability of the results and strengthens the conclusion that SDO predicts acquiescent vs. resistant responses to ingroup inferiority.

KEYWORDS inferiority, intergroup relations, outgroup favoritism, power, social dominance, social identity, status, system justification

How DO members of low status groups respond, socially and psychologically, to imputations of inferiority? This is an enduring and fundamental question for the psychology of intergroup relations (e.g. Allport, 1954; Bobo &

Author's note

John T. Jost, Department of Psychology, New York University, New York, NY 10003, USA
[email: john.jost@nyu.edu]

Hutchings, 1996; Brewer, 1979; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Jackman, 1994; Major et al., 2002; Ridgeway, Diekema, & Johnson, 1995; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel, 1981). It is fairly easy to see why low status group members would seek to resist and challenge the status hierarchy, even in subtle and indirect ways, in order to preserve self-esteem and positive group identification (e.g. Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hornsey, Spears, Cremers, & Hogg, 2003; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Indeed, the research literature on intergroup relations has examined this issue in considerable detail (e.g. Brewer & Miller, 1996).

Less intuitive perhaps is the idea that members of low status groups might accept and even actively and willingly support the very hierarchical system that places them at a disadvantage (e.g. Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002). Although it may seem surprising from the standpoint of theories that stress self-interest and the drive for positive group distinctiveness, the acquiescent response has been widely observed in human society (e.g. Biko, 1978; Della Fave, 1980; Elster, 1982; Fanon, 1963; Glazer, 2002; Jost, 1995; MacKinnon, 1989; Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). Many women, for example, accept and perpetuate gender inequality, internalize a diminished sense of self-worth, and subscribe to stereotypes that justify sexism against women (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jackman, 1994; Major, 1994). Many low-income workers defend and justify conservative economic policies that maintain the status quo while rejecting proposed changes that would directly benefit them (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Lane, 1959; Stacey & Green, 1971). In an even more extreme example, many Jews in Germany, Hungary, and elsewhere apparently urged one another to be quiet and go along with anti-Semitic policies before and during World War II (Klemperer, 1995). For some, manifestations of acquiescence also included Jewish 'self-hatred' (Allport, 1954; Lewin, 1941).

In general, resistance and acquiescence need not be conceived of as mutually exclusive responses. Most members of low status groups probably engage in some resistance to the

status quo and some acceptance of it, possibly even at the same time (e.g. Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jackman, 1994). One intrapersonal consequence of being faced with a conflict between whether to resist or acquiesce is attitudinal ambivalence about one's own group membership (Jost & Burgess, 2000). It also seems likely that internal conflicts will be resolved differently by different people, so that some individuals will resist imputations of inferiority, whereas others will acquiesce and even bolster the status quo. Recent research suggests that social dominance orientation is a personality variable that may help to predict divergent responses to being in a low status position (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In this article, we focus on individual differences in predicting different strategies for expressing resistant vs. acquiescent responses to group disadvantage.

Social identity theory and responses to ingroup inferiority

According to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, members of low status groups may accept their alleged inferiority, but only under certain circumstances. Specifically, they are expected to engage in outgroup favoritism when the system is perceived to be legitimate and stable (Turner & Brown, 1978), when intergroup comparisons are made on status relevant dimensions (van Knippenberg, 1978), and when ingroup identification is very low (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). By and large, narrative and meta-analytic reviews have supported the notion that these variables moderate the effect of low status on ingroup vs. outgroup favoritism (Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001; Hinkle & Brown, 1990; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992).

Identity management strategies

The main question addressed by social identity theory in relation to low status groups is how they respond to 'negative or threatened identities' arising from their position in the hierarchy. Tajfel and Turner (1979) described three main possibilities. The first strategy for improving one's social identity is to exit one's

group and attempt to join a higher status group. Obviously, this option—which reflects *resistance* to the imputation of individual (but not necessarily group) inferiority through exit—is only available when group boundaries are permeable and social mobility is possible (Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994). The second strategy is called ‘social competition’, and it refers to direct challenges made by members of the low status group against the alleged superiority of a higher status outgroup; thus, it most clearly reflects resistance to allegations of inferiority (e.g. Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999). This strategy, it has been suggested, is most likely when status relations are ‘insecure’, that is, when the *status quo* is perceived as both illegitimate and unstable (Caddick, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Brown, 1978).

The third strategy mentioned by Tajfel and Turner is referred to as ‘social creativity’, and it describes the tendency to seek out opportunities for social comparisons that are favorable toward the ingroup. One example occurs when members of low status groups acknowledge their inferiority on status relevant dimensions like competence and intelligence but compensate for it by expressing ingroup favoritism on other, status irrelevant dimensions like warmth and friendliness (Ellemers & Van Rijswijk, 1997; Spears & Manstead, 1989; van Knippenberg, 1978). This strategy could be seen as involving either resistance *or* acquiescence to the status quo, insofar as it allows members of low status groups to affirm positive group distinctiveness without challenging in any way the original basis for inequality (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jackman, 1994; Jost, 2001). Given that members of low status groups typically exhibit strong ingroup favoritism on status ‘irrelevant’ or communal traits, evidence of *outgroup* favoritism on such traits would suggest the kind of generalized inferiority associated with system justifying responses.¹ Thus, in the current research we focused especially on status irrelevant traits in seeking to understand individual differences in acquiescence and resistance.

Social mobility belief structures

The choice of which identity-enhancing strategy (individual mobility, social competition, or social creativity) members of disadvantaged groups follow is said to depend upon several things, including whether or not there are social mobility beliefs that are prevalent in society (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). According to social identity theory, low status group members are more likely to engage in the strategy of individual mobility and less likely to engage in social competition in societies that stress the possibility of social mobility than in societies that do not (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The USA is widely seen as possessing a cultural belief system that strongly emphasizes prospects for upward mobility (e.g. Ho, Sanbonmatsu, & Akimoto, 2002), especially in comparison with European countries (e.g. Glazer, 2002). In the current research program, we conducted similar studies in the USA and Italy in part to compare responses to ingroup inferiority in cultures that differed significantly with respect to beliefs about social mobility.

System justification theory and responses to ingroup inferiority

System justification theory acknowledges the strength and operation of *ego justification* motives to protect and enhance individual self-esteem and *group justification* motives to protect and enhance positive group distinctiveness (Jost & Banaji, 1994). However, its unique focus is on the relatively neglected phenomenon of *system justification*, defined as the tendency to protect and enhance the perceived legitimacy of the status quo (e.g. Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost, 2001; Jost et al., 2002; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003). From this perspective, members of low status groups often exhibit outgroup favoritism because they, like members of high status groups, are motivated to justify and rationalize the status quo, at least to some degree.

System justification and social identity theorists are in agreement that sociostructural variables such as legitimacy and stability play an important role in determining the responses of

low status groups. Specifically, both theories generally imply that as the perceived legitimacy of the system increases, so, too, does outgroup favoritism among low status groups (see Ellemers et al., 1993; Hornsey et al., 2003; Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Mummendey et al., 1999).² However, the two theoretical perspectives differ in a number of other ways. Whereas social identity theory emphasizes resistance by suggesting that members of disadvantaged groups will seek to challenge the *status quo* and assert their own positive distinctiveness whenever possible (Spears et al., 2001), system justification theory emphasizes acquiescence by asserting that (to some degree) members of low status groups will seek to preserve the legitimacy and stability of the system by endorsing stereotypes and other social judgments that justify status differences (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Perceived magnitude of the status gap

If it is the case that people use stereotypes and other evaluations to explain and justify perceived status differences between groups (e.g. Jost, 2001), then it follows that *larger* status differences should be accompanied by greater outgroup favoritism on the part of low status group members, in comparison with smaller status differences. This suggests the relevance of an additional sociostructural variable not previously investigated by social identity theorists, namely the perceived *magnitude* of status differences between groups. Whereas an acquiescent response pattern would entail that low status group members would exhibit stronger outgroup favoritism as the magnitude of the alleged status gap increases, a pattern of resistance would mean the opposite. To the extent that they challenge inequality, as social identity theory would predict, then they should exhibit stronger ingroup favoritism as the magnitude of the status gap increases.

Threats to the status quo

According to social identity theory, members of low status groups should be expected to take advantage of threats to the perceived stability (or security) of the status quo and use the opportunity to advance their own cause and challenge

the inequality by engaging in social competition and ingroup favoritism (e.g. Turner & Brown, 1978). System justification theory, by contrast, suggests that a threat to the stability of the status quo should (at least under some conditions) induce a defensive response whereby members of low status groups should express increased outgroup favoritism in order to bolster the waning legitimacy and/or stability of the system (e.g. Jost & Hunyady, 2002). In other words, at least some members of disadvantaged groups are expected to reject opportunities for social change in favor of maintaining and enhancing the *status quo* (see also Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost et al., 2002, 2003). The individual difference variable of social dominance orientation may help to predict and explain which members of a low status group will acquiesce and which will tend to resist their alleged inferiority (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), thereby reconciling diverging accounts derived from theories of social identification and system justification.

Social dominance theory and responses to ingroup inferiority

According to social dominance theory, there are important individual differences in the ways in which people respond to group-based systems of inequality (e.g. Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Specifically, Pratto et al. (1994) developed and validated a measure of social dominance orientation (SDO) that included items such as the following: 'Inferior groups should stay in their place', 'To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups', and 'We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally' (reverse-scored). Jost and Thompson (2000) argued that the SDO scale contained items that captured group justification and system justification, making it difficult to determine whether high SDO members of low status groups would engage in resistance or acquiescence to the status quo.

Alternative interpretations of SDO

The interpretation of SDO favored by Altemeyer (1998) is much closer to group

justification (and, in the context of low status groups, *resistance*) than it is to system justification (and acquiescence). He argued, for instance, that ‘High SDO’s . . . see life as “dog eat dog” and—compared with most people—are determined to do the eating’ (p. 75). According to Altemeyer, SDO predicts aggressive desires to punish and humiliate outgroup members and to ‘become the alpha animal’ (p. 87). This account differs considerably from recent interpretations offered by social dominance theorists, who now stress system justification (and acquiescence to the status quo) rather than group justification. For example, Sidanius, Levin, Federico, and Pratto (2001) clarified that:

While SDO has been conceptualized previously as a desire for ingroup domination over outgroups (e.g. Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), more recent work conceptually and operationally defines SDO in terms of a more *general desire for unequal relations among social groups, regardless of whether this means ingroup domination or ingroup subordination*. (p. 312, emphasis added)

This interpretation is also consistent with the work of Jost and Burgess (2000), who argued that SDO is an individual difference variable that measures variation in system justification tendencies.

Theoretically, then, adopting an individual difference perspective should help to predict which people will choose resistance and which will choose acquiescence. More specifically, the SDO scale should identify which group members will respond to a position of inferiority by accepting and perpetuating status differences through the use of stereotypes and evaluations, and which group members will challenge and defy those differences. On the assumption that SDO (as a single, general factor) is closer to system justification than group justification, we hypothesized that, compared with those who are low in SDO, members of low status groups who score high on SDO should be more responsive to the magnitude of status differences between their group and others, and therefore show stronger outgroup favoritism as the status gap widens. In addition, they may express outgroup favoritism

as a way of enhancing the legitimacy and/or stability of the system when either of these are threatened or in doubt. In other words, low SDO respondents were expected to resist the status quo, whereas high SDO respondents were expected to evince patterns of acquiescence and even bolstering.

Past research on SDO and ingroup inferiority

Some previous studies support the hypothesis that members of low status groups who are high in SDO would be more sensitive to the perceived legitimacy and stability of the status differences in comparison with group members who are low in SDO (e.g. Federico, 1999). Rabinowitz (1999), for instance, found that members of racial and ethnic minority groups in the US were most likely to oppose hierarchy-attenuating social policies (i.e. to accept inequality) when they were both high in SDO and low in perceived injustice against their own group (i.e. high in perceived system legitimacy). Similarly, Levin, Federico, Sidanius, and Rabinowitz (2002) found that for members of two very different disadvantaged groups (Arabs living in Israel and Latinos living in the US) SDO interacted with perceived legitimacy to predict levels of outgroup favoritism. Whereas low status group members who were high in SDO tended to show more outgroup favoritism when perceived legitimacy was high than when it was low, group members who were low in SDO did not. None of these studies investigated the perceived magnitude of status differences, and none demonstrated conclusively that low SDO group members actively resist imputations of inferiority or that high SDO group members embrace them, but the results of past research are at least consistent with these possibilities.

Overview of research

In two studies reported here, high and low SDO scorers were required to draw comparisons between their own group and a higher status outgroup. In the first study, students at the University of California at Santa Barbara were pre-selected on the basis of their SDO scores and recruited to participate in an experiment in

which they evaluated their own group in comparison with students at Stanford University, which is a higher status private university. In the second study, respondents from Sicily, in the south of Italy, completed a translated version of the SDO scale in addition to questionnaires about the characteristics of Southern Italians and Northern Italians, the latter of whom enjoy higher social and economic status (e.g. Capozza, Bonaldo, & DiMaggio, 1982). By investigating these two different social and cultural contexts, we were able to compare results from a country that strongly emphasizes social mobility (USA) and one that does not (Italy).

Because past research indicates that members of low status groups frequently exhibit outgroup favoritism on status relevant characteristics and ingroup favoritism on status irrelevant characteristics (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Mullen et al., 1992), research participants were given the opportunity to draw intergroup comparisons on both relevant (competence-related) and irrelevant (communal) dimensions. However, we expected that there would be a wider range of responses for the latter comparisons and that such responses would be more theoretically interesting. Specifically, we focused on communal (status irrelevant) traits on the assumption that outgroup favoritism on such traits would indicate generalized inferiority associated with system justifying responses, whereas outgroup favoritism on status relevant or competence traits would not necessarily do so.

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the magnitude of the status differences, the legitimacy and stability of the status differences, and the degree to which they identified with their own group, because these variables have been found to predict levels of ingroup and outgroup favoritism on the part of low status groups (e.g. Ellemers et al., 1993; Turner & Brown, 1978), and because there are theoretical reasons to think that high SDO people would be more sensitive than low SDO people to the magnitude, legitimacy, and stability of status differences between groups.

Study 1

Method

Pre-selection procedure In group prescreening sessions lasting approximately one hour, 156 undergraduate students at the University of California at Santa Barbara completed the 16-item 'social dominance orientation' scale validated by Pratto et al. (1994), along with batteries of measures that were used by other researchers.

Sampling procedure Several weeks later, experimental research participants were sampled from the quartile that scored highest and the quartile that scored lowest on the SDO scale. Potential research participants were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in an experiment in exchange for partial fulfillment of a course requirement. No mention was made of the SDO scale administered during the prescreening sessions. Approximately half of those people contacted actually participated in follow-up sessions, resulting in a sample of 19 high SDO scorers and 19 low SDO scorers.

Experimental procedure During the actual experimental sessions, which occurred at least 6 weeks after the initial prescreening sessions, UCSB students were first asked to evaluate a series of ingroup and outgroup thought-lists; this task reinforced the cover story (that the study was about abstract verbal reasoning) and has been used in prior research (e.g. Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000). Following the thought-list evaluation task, research participants were asked to evaluate their ingroup and an outgroup (Stanford University students) on a series of status relevant and status irrelevant dimensions of comparison. Finally, they were asked to estimate the magnitude of social status differences between UCSB and Stanford students, to assess the legitimacy of those differences, and to indicate their level of identification with the ingroup of UCSB. students.

Materials

Ingroup and outgroup ratings In order to assess ingroup and outgroup evaluations, the

students were asked to complete a series of Likert-type scales that have been used in prior research (Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000). The items of interest for this paper were six attributes considered status irrelevant (honest, dishonest, interesting, uninteresting, friendly, unfriendly). For balance, and in order to demonstrate a lack of contingent response on the items, six attributes considered status relevant (intelligent, unintelligent, hard-working, lazy, and skilled and unskilled at verbal reasoning) were also included. Each rating was made on a scale ranging from 0 (labeled 'Not at all') to 9 ('Extremely'), and respondents evaluated the ingroup and the outgroup on each trait independently. Ingroup/outgroup favoritism scores were calculated separately for status-irrelevant and status-relevant traits by subtracting outgroup ratings from ingroup ratings for each cluster.

Perceived magnitude of status differences

Immediately following the stereotyping task, respondents were asked about the extent to which they believed that there is a status difference between UCSB and Stanford University students. Specifically, the item read: 'Some people think that Stanford and UCSB differ in terms of social status. We are interested in your opinion. How much greater or less do you think Stanford students' social status is compared to that of UCSB students?' Responses were made by circling a number on a 15-point scale with labels ranging from 'Much less' (1–3) to 'Somewhat less' (4–6) to 'Neither greater nor less' (7–9) to 'Somewhat greater' (10–12) to 'Much greater' (13–15).

Perceived legitimacy of status differences To keep the questionnaire brief and to avoid arousing suspicion and reactance on the part of research participants, we used a single-item indicator of perceived legitimacy. Specifically, participants were asked: 'In general, how legitimate or illegitimate do you think the status differences are between UCSB and Stanford?' Responses were made on a 15-point scale labeled from 'Extremely illegitimate' (1–3) to 'Extremely legitimate' (13–15).

Because methodological questions can be raised about the validity of a single-item measure, we conducted a pretest using an independent sample of 127 students who responded to multiple items assessing the legitimacy and stability of socioeconomic differences between Northerners and Southerners in the USA. Legitimacy items included: 'Overall, how fair or unfair do you think it is that there are differences between Northerners and Southerners in terms of socioeconomic success?'; 'How strongly do you agree or disagree that Northerners are entitled to be better off than Southerners?'; and 'How justifiable or unjustifiable do you think the differences are between Northerners and Southerners in terms of socioeconomic success?' Items were drawn from several sources, including Mummendey et al. (1999), Jost and Burgess (2000), and Schmader, Major, Eccleston, and McCoy (2001). The seven legitimacy items formed a very reliable scale, $\alpha = .80$. The item we used in the main study ('In general, how legitimate or illegitimate do you think the status differences are . . .') was highly correlated with the overall scale, item-whole $r(126) = .62$, $p < .01$. These results from the pretest suggest that our choice of a single legitimacy item was an appropriate one.

Perceived identification with the ingroup

Finally, respondents were asked 'How strongly do you think you identify with the group of UCSB students?' Responses again were made on a 15-point scale labeled from 'Not at all' (1–3) to 'Very strongly' (13–15).

Results

Check on perceived status difference As expected, UCSB students perceived their university to be lower in social status than Stanford University. The mean rating of Stanford's status relative to UCSB's for the sample was 9.00, which differed significantly from 8, the neutral midpoint of the scale ($t(37) = 1.94$, $p < .03$, one-tailed). Thus, it appears that the experiment did involve a situation in which the ingroup subjectively occupied a position of relative inferiority.

Individual and structural effects on ingroup and outgroup favoritism A general linear model was constructed in which ingroup/outgroup favoritism (calculated as ratings of the ingroup minus ratings of the outgroup) on status irrelevant traits³ was predicted by one categorical variable, SDO level (high vs. low); three continuous variables, perceived magnitude of status differences, perceived system legitimacy, and ingroup identification; and all resulting 2-way and 3-way interactions. Variables were centered at 0 prior to conducting regression analyses.

In order to interpret interaction effects, we graphed the regression functions by identifying simple effects of one predictor variable on ingroup favoritism at various specific levels of the interacting predictor variables. These levels were defined either by group (for SDO) or as ± 1 standard deviation from the grand mean of the predictor (for continuous variables). These graphs should be seen as illustrative of how interactive relationships differ at various levels of the predictor variables, but not as comprehensively depicting all simple relationships.

The main prediction for this study was that SDO, legitimacy, and magnitude of the status gap would interact in predicting ingroup favoritism. Specifically, high SDO group members were expected to acquiesce to allegations of inferiority by showing strong *outgroup* favoritism (even on status irrelevant traits), especially when status differences were perceived to be large in magnitude and legitimate. This is because a wide status gap implies that there is more inequality to justify, and legitimacy implies that the system is just and should be supported. Low SDO participants, on the other hand, were expected to resist their state of disadvantage by showing strong *ingroup* favoritism, particularly when status differences are large and illegitimate. From the perspective of resistance (as opposed to acquiescence), large status differences and illegitimate status differences are especially in need of being contested.

These predictions were generally supported. Consistent with past research, a main effect of legitimacy indicated that participants showed more outgroup favoritism (on status-irrelevant

traits) as perceived legitimacy increased ($F(1, 24) = 9.00, p < .01$). In addition, a significant main effect of identification demonstrated that more highly identified UCSB students showed more ingroup favoritism ($F(1, 23) = 10.05, p < .01$). The analysis also yielded a 3-way interaction among SDO, legitimacy, and magnitude in predicting ingroup/outgroup favoritism ($F(1, 24) = 7.84, p < .02$). To interpret the interaction, we examined separately the 2-way interactions between legitimacy and magnitude within each of the two levels of SDO. The overall pattern is depicted in Figure 1.

For those high SDO participants who perceived a larger status gap, outgroup favoritism was *inversely* related to legitimacy (simple $F(1, 24) = 7.40, p = .01$). That is, high SDO group members seem to have bolstered the sagging legitimacy of the status quo by expressing outgroup favoritism when status differences were perceived as large. For low SDO participants, the simple 2-way interaction of legitimacy and magnitude failed to attain significance ($F(1, 24) = 2.02, p = .17$). Nevertheless, larger perceived status differences were associated with stronger ingroup favoritism for this group when legitimacy was low ($F(1, 24) = 3.10, p = .09$) (tested at -1 SD on legitimacy). These results suggest that people who are low in SDO are more likely to exhibit the pattern of resistance expected on the basis of social identity theory.

We also conducted an analysis that included the 4-way interaction of SDO, legitimacy, magnitude, and group identification to determine whether the observed effects depended on participants' levels of identification with the group of UCSB students. The 4-way interaction was nonsignificant ($F(1, 23) = 0.03, p = .88$). Identification did not interact with any of the variables in predicting ingroup/outgroup favoritism.

Discussion

In the first study, we obtained some support for predictions derived from social identity, system justification, and social dominance theories. Ingroup identification was associated with ingroup favoritism on irrelevant traits.

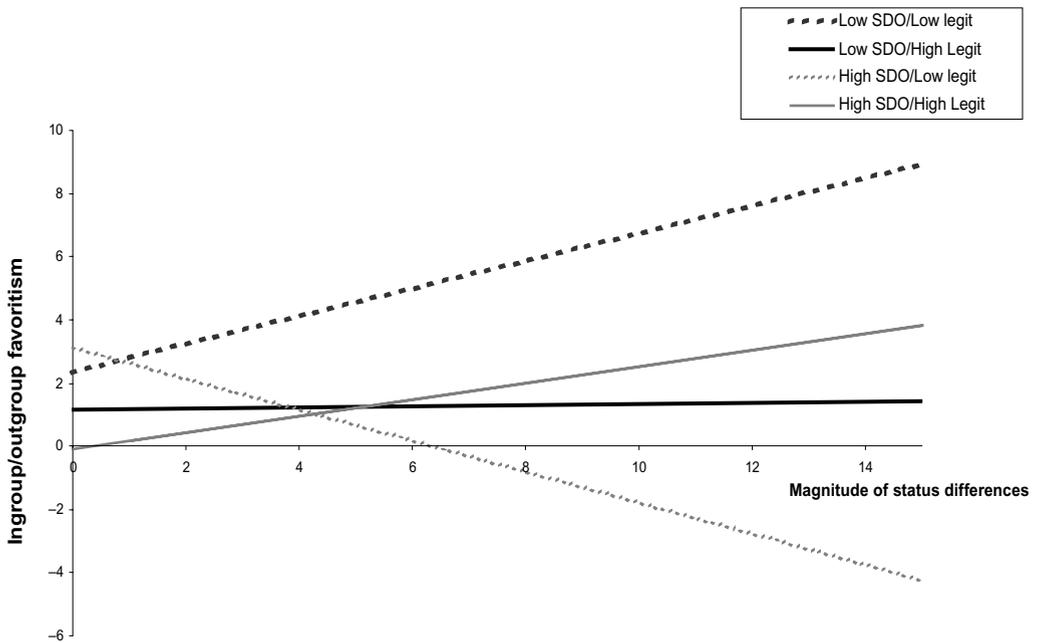


Figure 1. Study 1: Ingroup/outgroup favoritism as a function of SDO, perceived legitimacy, and perceived magnitude.

Perceived legitimacy was associated with outgroup favoritism on both relevant and irrelevant traits. These findings are consistent with established research on social identity theory (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 2001).

At the same time, additional findings suggest that the 'story' of low status group members' responses to inferiority is somewhat more complex. When participants' individual differences in SDO were taken into account, it was clear that low status group members did not all respond the same. The most provocative finding from the first study was that the effects of structural variables (perceived magnitude and perceived legitimacy) on ingroup favoritism depended on SDO. Specifically, people who scored high on SDO manifested an increase in outgroup favoritism as the perceived magnitude of the status differences increased and perceived legitimacy decreased. That is, they appear to have bolstered the waning legitimacy of large (but not small) status differences by asserting the superiority of

the outgroup even on status irrelevant dimensions.

A second study was conducted in Italy to further examine the possibility that SDO is associated with system justifying patterns of response, most especially the tendency to use ingroup and outgroup ratings in a manner that accepts and perpetuates status differences between groups. The opportunity to compare data from two different cultural contexts was particularly appealing given that the USA is widely assumed to possess a strong social mobility belief structure, especially in comparison with Europe (e.g. Ho et al., 2002; Hofstede, 1997). The playwright David Mamet (2001) observed that American 'national culture is founded very much on the idea of strive and succeed. . . . Instead of rising with the masses, one should rise from the masses'. Glazer (2002) reviewed findings from the World Values Survey, including the fact that 71% of Americans surveyed believed that the poor have a good chance to work their way out of poverty,

whereas only 40% of European respondents shared this belief.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) influential analysis suggests that these two different societal contexts might elicit different types of responses, given the different assumptions about upward mobility. According to social identity theory, members of disadvantaged groups in societies that emphasize social mobility are more likely to resist the consequences of inequality through individual mobility, whereas people in societies that de-emphasize social mobility are more likely to engage in direct social competition. On the other hand, obtaining consistent results across quite different cultures would augment the generalizability of any conclusions drawn about the role of SDO in predicting differential responses to ingroup inferiority.

Three additional changes to the basic procedure were made in designing Study 2. First, we dropped the identification variable, because it did not qualify any of the effects of interest. Second, in order to facilitate comparisons with previous studies assessing social identity theory (e.g. Turner & Brown, 1978), we added a measure of perceived stability of the system. Finally, we also increased the sample size to maximize our chances of detecting reliable differences.

Study 2

Method

Research participants Eighty-eight students enrolled at the University of Catania on the Southern Italian island of Sicily participated in the study.

Materials and procedure All research participants completed (1) evaluations of Northern Italians and Southern Italians on a series of status irrelevant and status relevant traits, (2) items measuring the perceived magnitude of social and economic status differences between Northern Italians and Southern Italians, the legitimacy of those differences, and the likelihood that these differences would change in the future, and (3) an Italian translation of the

16-item SDO scale. The order in which (1) and (2) were administered was counterbalanced. The SDO scale in (3) was translated and back-translated by bilingual Italian-English speakers, and the resulting scale exhibited sufficiently high reliability ($\alpha = .79$). Because the SDO scale was administered along with the other measures, we were able to retain the continuous scale values for analysis.

Ingroup and outgroup ratings Research participants again completed a series of stereotyping scales. In this study, four status-irrelevant (honest, interesting, friendly, happy) traits were examined. We also included four status-relevant traits (intelligent, hard-working, productive, efficient). Each rating was made on a scale ranging from 0 (labeled 'Not at all') to 9 ('Extremely'), and respondents evaluated the ingroup and the outgroup on each trait independently.

Perceived magnitude and legitimacy of status differences These items were identical to those used in Study 1, except that they were rephrased to apply to perceptions of status differences between Northerners and Southerners in Italy.

Perceived stability of the status differences As in Study 1, we used single-item indicators to keep the questionnaire brief and to avoid suspicion. On a 15-point scale labeled from 'Extremely unlikely to change' (1-3) to 'Extremely likely to change' (13-15) respondents indicated how stable they perceived the status differences between the two groups to be.

To assess the validity of using a single-item indicator, we administered a five-item scale of perceived stability to the same pre-test sample of 127 students described in the first study. Some items were drawn from Mummendey et al. (1999), and the scale included items such as: 'How strongly do you agree or disagree that the relationship between Northerners and Southerners will remain stable for the next several years?' and 'How strongly do you agree or disagree that the current relationship between Northerners and Southerners is just

temporary?’ The five stability items formed an adequately reliable scale ($\alpha = .63$). The item selected for use in the main study was highly correlated with the overall scale (item-whole $r(126) = .45, p < .01$).

Results

Check on perceived status difference Consistent with expectations, Southern Italians perceived their group to be lower in social status in comparison with Northern Italians. The mean rating of Southern Italy’s status relative to the North for the sample was 5.89, which differed significantly from 8, the neutral midpoint of the scale ($t(87) = -8.55, p < .001$, two-tailed). Thus, it appears that the experiment did involve a situation in which the ingroup subjectively occupied a position of relative inferiority.

Individual and structural effects on ingroup and outgroup favoritism A general linear model was constructed in which ingroup/outgroup favoritism was predicted by continuous variables of SDO, perceived magnitude, perceived legitimacy, and perceived stability.⁴ The model also included all 2-way, 3-way, and 4-way interactions. Variables were again recentered prior to analyses. The analysis yielded a number of interesting effects.

As in the previous study, Southern Italians showed less ingroup favoritism (i.e. greater outgroup favoritism) as perceived legitimacy increased ($F(1, 68) = 5.15, p = .03$). In the present study, we also found that ingroup favoritism increased on average as participants’ SDO scores increased ($F(1, 68) = 4.24, p = .04$). This finding seems to reopen the question raised by Jost and Thompson (2000) of whether SDO is better conceptualized as group justification (Altemeyer, 1998) or system justification (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Sidanius et al., 2001).

A 2-way interaction between SDO and perceived legitimacy ($F(1,68) = 10.56, p < .01$) indicated that the participants higher in SDO tended to show greater outgroup favoritism as system legitimacy increased, whereas those lower in SDO tended to show greater ingroup favoritism. These findings replicate patterns observed by Levin et al. (2002).

A 2-way interaction between SDO and perceived stability was also obtained ($F(1,68) = 9.00, p < .01$). For people who scored lower on SDO, greater instability was associated with increased ingroup favoritism. This is consistent with the notion offered by social identity theorists that low status groups might take the opportunity to engage in ‘social competition’ against higher status groups when status relations are ‘insecure’ (e.g. Caddick, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Brown, 1978). For people who scored higher on SDO, however, instability was associated with decreased ingroup favoritism (or increased outgroup favoritism). This finding is in contradiction to a result reported by Federico (1999), but it is consistent with the system justification argument that at least some members of low status groups would rather *maintain* than challenge the existing hierarchy in the face of a threat to the stability of the system.

The analysis yielded a 2-way interaction involving perceived legitimacy and the magnitude of status differences ($F(1,68) = 6.86, p = .01$). Increased legitimacy was associated with decreased ingroup favoritism (or increased outgroup favoritism) on irrelevant traits when the status gap was perceived as small in magnitude but not when it was perceived as large. Finally, we also observed a significant 2-way interaction between SDO and the magnitude of status differences ($F(1, 68) = 5.34, p = .02$), such that increasing status differences led to greater ingroup favoritism on the part of lower-SDO respondents and greater outgroup favoritism on the part of higher-SDO respondents. This finding also suggests that low SDO scores are associated with resistance, whereas high SDO scores are associated with acquiescent response patterns.

As in Study 1, a 3-way interaction involving SDO, legitimacy, and magnitude was found to predict ingroup/outgroup favoritism. The degree of ingroup favoritism (on status-irrelevant traits) was strongly affected by respondents’ SDO levels and their perceptions of the legitimacy and magnitude of status differences ($F(1, 68) = 9.30, p < .01$). The overall pattern of results is illustrated in Figure 2.

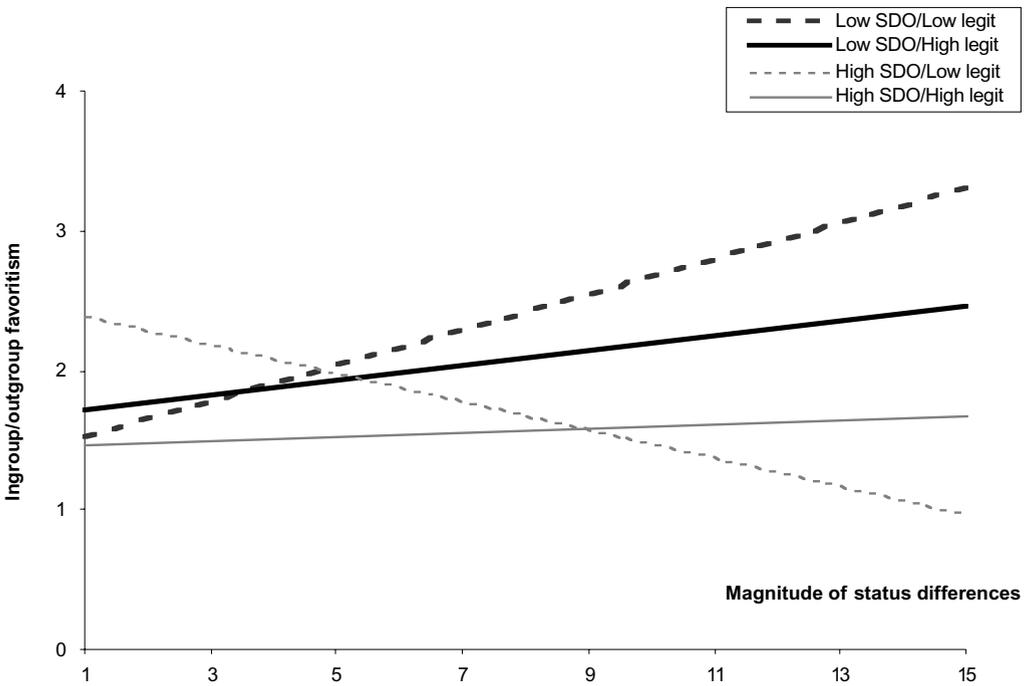


Figure 2. Study 2: Ingroup/outgroup favoritism as a function of SDO, perceived legitimacy, and perceived magnitude.

Across SDO levels, increases in the perceived status gap did not change ingroup favoritism for those who saw the system as highly legitimate. Among lower-SDO respondents who saw the system as less legitimate, such increases led to greater ingroup favoritism. Among high SDO scorers, however, this pattern was reversed: increases in the perceived magnitude of the status differences was associated with decreased ingroup favoritism for those who saw the system as low in legitimacy. Thus, as in Study 1, people who were low on SDO accepted their low status position when the system was perceived as legitimate, but they challenged it (on status irrelevant traits) when the system was perceived as illegitimate, as predicted by social identity theory (Caddick, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Brown, 1978). People who were high on SDO once again exhibited strong outgroup favoritism (again on irrelevant

traits) when status differences were perceived as large in magnitude and yet lacking in clear legitimacy. Thus, it appears that they drew intergroup comparisons that would actually *bolster* the waning legitimacy of large (but not small) status differences; this bolstering strategy is a counterintuitive possibility suggested by system justification theory (e.g. Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost et al., 2003).

Finally, the complex 4-way interaction among SDO, legitimacy, stability, and magnitude was also significant ($F(1, 68) = 5.20, p = .03$). The pattern of results is illustrated in Figure 3 by presenting the above 3-way interaction of SDO, legitimacy, and magnitude at ± 1 SD of stability. The 4-way interaction appears to be driven by the responses of higher-SDO participants when the social system is both unstable and highly legitimate. As the magnitude of status differences increases, these participants do express

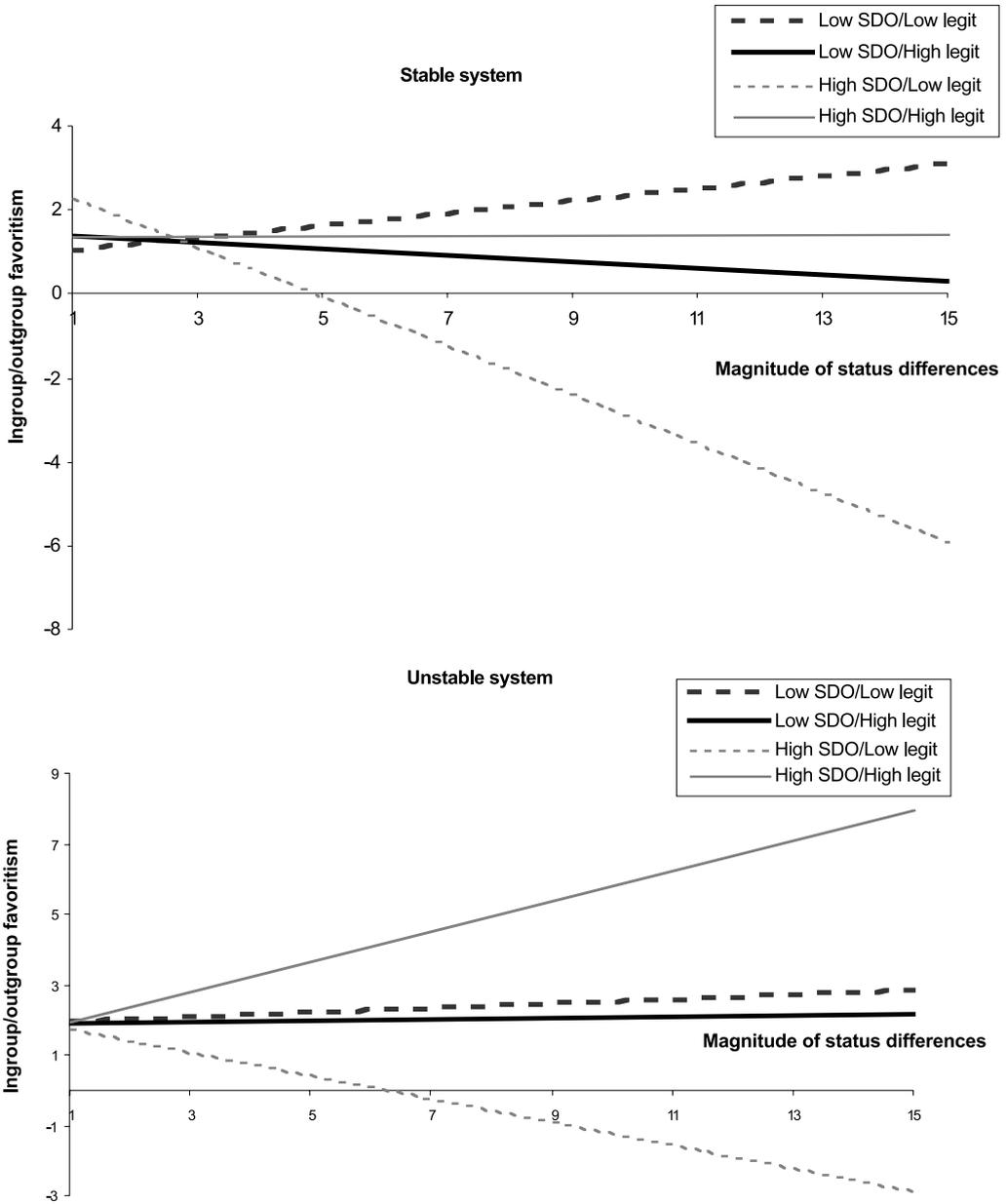


Figure 3. Ingroup/outgroup favoritism as a function of stability, SDO, perceived legitimacy, and perceived magnitude.

more ingroup favoritism, which is consistent with a social competition response. However, collapsing across levels of stability, high SDO participants who see the system as illegitimate are consistent in bolstering the system by favoring the outgroup more as the magnitude of the inequality grows.

It is worth noting in passing that none of the above effects included the legitimacy \times stability interaction hypothesized by social identity theorists to account for responses to ingroup inferiority (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Brown, 1978). Rather, SDO interacted with legitimacy, and it also interacted with stability and with magnitude.

Discussion

A number of differences between high and low SDO members of a disadvantaged group (Southern Italians) emerged in Study 2. Perceived legitimacy was associated with outgroup favoritism to a significant degree as SDO increased, but not at lower levels of SDO. The perceived stability of the system had opposite effects, depending upon SDO levels. Instability was associated with increased ingroup favoritism among those with lower SDO scores, as social identity theory would predict, and with increased outgroup favoritism among those with higher SDO scores, as system justification theory would predict.

The 3-way interaction obtained in Study 1 was replicated in Study 2. Once again, perceived magnitude had opposite effects on ingroup favoritism as a function of SDO when perceived legitimacy was low. Consistent with a strategy of bolstering the status quo, higher-SDO scorers showed increased outgroup favoritism as the perceived magnitude of the status differences increased when perceived legitimacy was low (but not high). Lower-SDO scorers, by contrast, showed increased ingroup favoritism as the perceived magnitude of the status differences increased under low legitimacy (but not high), consistent with a pattern of resistance. Thus, SDO was again found to moderate the responses of low status group members to their position of assumed inferiority.

Conclusions

In two studies carried out in the US and Italy, we found that scores on Pratto et al.'s (1994) SDO scale predicted which members of a low status group would acquiesce to and which would rebel against the status quo. Compared to low SDO group members, high SDO group members were more sensitive in general to the perceived magnitude and legitimacy of status differences between groups, and they were more likely to engage in outgroup favoring comparisons, even on status-'irrelevant' dimensions of comparison that are assumed to be employed in identity-enhancing social creativity strategies (e.g. Brewer & Miller, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People who were high in SDO appeared to accept and even bolster status differences by defending the status quo against waning legitimacy and/or stability, whereas people who were low in SDO appeared to challenge the status differences whenever the opportunity arose. These findings have direct relevance to the question raised by Jost and Thompson (2000) of whether SDO is better conceptualized as a desire for ingroup dominance—as suggested by Altemeyer (1998) and others—or system justification, as suggested by Jost and Burgess (2000) and Sidanius et al. (2001). Our results generally support the latter interpretation.

It is theoretically relevant that almost all differences emerged on status-irrelevant dimensions of comparison, on which low status group members are expected to 'compensate' for identity threats on status-relevant dimensions (e.g. Mullen et al., 1992; Spears & Manstead, 1989; van Knippenberg, 1978). Outgroup favoritism among members of low status groups on irrelevant dimensions therefore satisfies a relatively strict criterion for being considered a *bias* against the ingroup (Brewer & Miller, 1996, p. 95). The fact that most of our effects of interest occurred on irrelevant traits is also consistent with the results of a meta-analysis by Bettencourt et al. (2001), who found that sociostructural variables such as legitimacy were more likely to affect intergroup comparisons on irrelevant

traits. Specifically, they concluded that: 'when status differences were perceived as illegitimate, low-status groups asserted the positivity of their in-group by means of comparisons on the irrelevant dimensions' (p. 533). Our studies suggest that this is an apt description of low but not high SDO group members. Because status-irrelevant traits are less consensually defined and therefore more open to flexible and strategic use, it appears that they can be used in conjunction with a variety of motives, whether those are group-serving, as social identity theory suggests, or system-serving, as theories of system justification and social dominance would suggest. As expected, our evidence confirms that responses to a position of inferiority are complexly determined.

It seems, therefore, that members of low status groups are more likely to engage in social competition against higher status groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) when they are low rather than high in SDO. Conversely, they are more likely to adopt acquiescent response patterns, as suggested by system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), when they are high rather than low in SDO. Thus, the individual difference variable of social dominance orientation helps to integrate theoretical predictions that emphasize resistance to inequality with those that emphasize acquiescence. This suggests that although the three theories of social identification, system justification, and social dominance differ in important ways, they are to a considerable degree compatible, complementary, and mutually informative, as has been argued recently by proponents of each (e.g. Jost & Burgess, 2000; Levin et al., 2002; Sidanius et al., 2001; Spears et al., 2001).

In distinguishing our findings from previous research on social identity theory, it is important to note how contingent the effects of many sociostructural variables are on intergroup behavior. For example, social identity theory has long predicted that group members who are more identified with their groups will show stronger resistance to inferiority (e.g. Ellemers et al., 1997). Here, although we find that identification does predict ingroup favoritism on average, it fails to affect favoritism once

SDO, legitimacy, and the magnitude of disadvantage are taken into account. Social identity theory emphasizes that more legitimate systems will lead to greater acquiescence, particularly when these systems are stable (e.g. Turner & Brown, 1978). Here, we find that individuals who vary in SDO respond differently to inferiority, even when they share perceptions of the system as legitimate and stable. That is, these two structural variables, while important and informative, do not provide an account of low status perceivers' responses that is as clean or complete as is often assumed (e.g. Brewer & Miller, 1996). Indeed, we found no hint of an interaction between perceived legitimacy and stability in predicting ingroup and outgroup favoritism, although this prediction is seen as almost axiomatic in social identity theory (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 2001; Ellemers et al., 1993; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In sum, the current findings suggest that a much more complex picture of resistance and acquiescence—including one that takes into account individual differences in the motivation to defend and justify the social system—is necessary to account fully for responses to low status. Such complexity is also consistent with recent findings obtained by Mummendey et al. (1999).

That an individual difference variable such as SDO could be an important determinant of intergroup behavior is in some ways antithetical to traditional assumptions of social identity theory (and its successor, self-categorization theory) that patterns of ingroup and outgroup bias follow not from personality characteristics but from the structure of intergroup relations and social conformity to prototypical ingroup norms (e.g. Billig, 1976; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Nevertheless, it does seem that there are personality and individual difference dimensions such as SDO and right-wing authoritarianism that play a major role in determining intergroup attitudes and behavior as well as reactions to social systems and their authorities (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The studies presented here suggest that individual differences may help to

explain why all group members do not respond in the same way to a situation of relative inferiority. This prospect should certainly receive much greater attention in future work.

A fairly obvious methodological limitation of the two studies reported here is that all of the findings involving SDO, legitimacy, stability, and magnitude are correlational in nature. Consequently, the direction of causality among variables is unclear. Future research would do well to manipulate the variables of interest in experimental settings. Our results suggest that a particularly promising candidate for a variable worthy of experimental manipulation is that of the perceived magnitude of status differences, insofar as it was found here to have opposite effects on ingroup favoritism for high and low SDO respondents under certain circumstances.

An additional theoretical perspective that may help to shed light on how low status group members respond to inferiority is Hogg's (2000) uncertainty reduction model, which holds that individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty because it creates psychological discomfort. Strategies for reducing uncertainty, according to Hogg, include seeking out social support and group identification and perceiving others in rigid terms that reinforce group boundaries. This approach suggests that when confronted with information confirming the low status of their group, people may respond differently according to the strategies they choose for reducing uncertainty. One option may be to recategorize the self as separate from the low status group and to seek individual mobility and the opportunity to join a higher status group. Another option would be for the group member to reduce uncertainty by perceiving the social environment in strongly group-based terms, aligning the self with the low status group, and then resisting the status quo by working to change the group's standing (the social competition strategy). Thus, Hogg's (2000) model is generally consistent with the identity management strategies suggested by Tajfel and Turner (1979), but the reduction of uncertainty is seen as the driving motivational force.

There are two related points that seem relevant to a discussion of these issues. One is that important individual differences in the need to reduce uncertainty certainly do exist, and the second is that these individual differences in uncertainty reduction are predictive of politically conservative and authoritarian attitudes (e.g. Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Sorrentino & Roney, 2000; Wilson, 1973). With regard to the results of studies reported here, it is possible that people who are high on SDO are also more likely to find uncertainty to be aversive and therefore more eager to impose structure on the social world by clinging to hierarchy, order, and rigid classification. Thus, the desire to manage uncertainty may be one underlying factor that leads to acquiescent, system justifying patterns of behavior. Future research is needed to examine this possibility more directly.

In conclusion, we have argued that membership in a low status group leads different people to adopt different types of intergroup behavior. Specifically, some group members challenge the *status quo*, while others accept and perpetuate it. Social identity theory is especially well-suited to account for social competition and resistance to status inequality (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979), whereas system justification theory has focused more on addressing patterns of acquiescence and bolstering (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Consistent with a perspectivist philosophy of social science (McGuire, 1997), the present research suggests that both theories are right, despite their different emphases. Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) concept of social dominance orientation, it seems, helps us to understand which low status group members will follow the identity-enhancing strategies described so well by social identity theory and which individuals will instead opt for maintaining the legitimacy and stability of the status quo, as emphasized by system justification theory.

Notes

1. Brewer and Miller (1996) have argued that outgroup favoritism among members of low status

- groups 'should probably not be labeled a "bias" at all', because 'this effect is found to occur almost exclusively on status-relevant dimensions of evaluation' (p. 95). By demonstrating that some members of low status groups exhibit outgroup favoritism on *irrelevant* dimensions, then, we are showing that their behavior satisfies Brewer and Miller's criterion for being *biased* against their own group.
- Social identity and system justification theories do differ, however, with respect to the effects of perceived (il)legitimacy on high status or high power groups. According to social identity theory, members of advantaged groups should express more ingroup favoritism when intergroup relations are seen as illegitimate and therefore insecure than when they are seen as legitimate and secure (Caddick, 1982; Hornsey et al., 2003; Turner & Brown, 1978). By contrast, system justification theory suggests that members of advantaged groups should express more ingroup favoritism when their position is seen as legitimate (and therefore justified and ideologically defensible) than when it is seen as illegitimate and unjustified (Chen & Tyler, 2001; Jost, 2001; Jost & Hunyady, 2002).
 - We also included trait type as a factor in a GLM analysis in order to confirm that status relevant and irrelevant traits did indeed produce different patterns of favoritism. Because virtually all effects occur only among irrelevant traits, we report only these results. The four-way interaction of SDO \times magnitude \times legitimacy \times trait type was significant ($F(1, 24) = 4.28, p < .05$), confirming that results were significantly different for the two types of traits. The sole reliable finding for relevant traits was a simple effect of legitimacy: on average, participants showed greater outgroup favoritism on relevant traits when they perceived status differences to be more legitimate ($F(1, 24) = 4.93, p = .04$).
 - As in Study 1, we also conducted analyses that included trait type as a factor. No significant effects of the predictors were found on relevant traits. The 4-way interaction of SDO \times magnitude \times legitimacy \times trait type was significant ($F(1, 68) = 6.25, p = .01$), confirming that results were different for the two types of traits.
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Biographical notes

JENNIFER R. OVERBECK completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University and is now assistant professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business. Her research focuses on effects of (and beliefs about) social power and status.

JOHN T. JOST is currently associate professor of psychology at New York University. Until recently, he was associate professor of organizational behavior at Stanford University. His research interests include stereotyping, prejudice, intergroup relations, social justice, ideology, political psychology, and the theory of system justification.

CRISTINA O. MOSSO is a researcher in social psychology at the University of Turin, Italy. Her work addresses issues of stereotype transmission, the dynamics between personal and social identity, and, more broadly, psychological and structural factors in intergroup relations.

AGNIESZKA FLIZIK is pursuing a doctorate in organizational behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Her interests lie in status and power influences on intergroup relations and the perception of time in organizational functioning.