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“I Have a Dream” of a Colorblind Nation? Examining the Relationship between Racial Colorblindness, System Justification, and Support for Policies that Redress Inequalities

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One of Dr. Martin Luther King’s most memorable quotes came from his famous “I have a dream” speech, which arguably called for a racially colorblind society. Today, colorblindness represents a complex ideology used in education, businesses, and governments, with both positive and negative implications for intergroup relations. On the one hand, colorblindness is used to promote fairness and equality between groups by asking people to ignore group membership and treat everyone the same. On the other hand, colorblindness serves a system-justifying function by holding minority groups responsible for their current disadvantages. The present research utilizes a nationally representative sample of majority group New Zealanders (N = 8,728) to examine the implications of colorblindness on support for policies that redress inequalities between the indigenous (Māori) and majority (European) population through resource redistribution and symbolic incorporation into the nation’s identity. Additionally, we examine the indirect effect

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of system-justifying beliefs on the relationship between colorblindness and policy support. Data revealed that colorblindness predicted opposition toward both resource-based approaches to redress inequalities and symbolic policies that incorporate indigenous culture into the national identity. Importantly, there was a significant indirect effect of system-justifying beliefs on both outcomes. Taken together, these findings suggest that colorblindness can be used to undermine support for policies that redress inequalities between majority and minority groups in a post-colonial society.

Perhaps the most vividly remembered words of Dr. Martin Luther King (MLK) come from his famous '*I have a dream*' speech, where he envisioned a future where his "four young children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" (King, 1963; p. 5). Although these words represented only a small portion of a larger speech on social justice and inequality, they have been repeated—and misinterpreted—many times over the last 55 years (e.g., Berry, 1996; Cook, 1991; Turner, 1996). As legal scholars and historians have pointed out, Dr. King was not calling for colorblind policies. In fact, he was deeply aware of the challenges that lay ahead and proposed race-conscious policies that would help redress the injustices faced by the African American community. However, many have treated Dr. King's words as justification for colorblind policies, while disregarding the many other arguments made by the civil rights leader (e.g., Berry, 1996; Cook, 1991; Turner, 1996). Indeed, these words have been used both within the United States (U.S.) and abroad to argue for colorblind policies as a means of achieving social equality and justice. Today, colorblindness represents a popular ideology about diversity that is discussed within education, law, organizations, and governments (Apfelbaum, Norton & Sommers, 2012).

Fifty years after Dr. King's (1968) call to the behavioral sciences to address inequalities and promote social justice (see Pettigrew, 2018; Stewart & Sweetman, 2018), we examine the implications of colorblindness for intergroup relations and political action in a racially diverse nation. To these ends, the current work reviews the extant psychological literature on colorblindness and its implications for racial and ethnic minorities. We then present data from a nationally representative sample of majority group members in a postcolonial society on the relationship between colorblind ideology, system-justifying beliefs, and support for policies that address racial inequalities. In doing so, we examine both the implications of a colorblind ideology that has often been mistakenly associated with the words of Dr. King and also expand the scope of colorblindness to a different national context.

What is Colorblindness?

Colorblindness is an ideology about diversity that argues we can promote equality and best manage diversity if we ignore and avoid consideration of

irrelevant group categories, such as race (e.g., Plaut, 2010; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013). Colorblindness instead argues that racial harmony can best be achieved when we focus on the uniqueness of each individual and the fundamental human qualities that all people share (Plaut, 2010; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013). The logic behind this belief system is fairly simple—if people do not see differences between groups, then there is no basis for discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping of others.

Institutionally, colorblindness came into the public eye when the U.S. Supreme Court justice, John Harlan, argued that the U.S. constitution was colorblind and did not tolerate classes among its citizens (Plessy & Ferguson, 1896). However, the concept of colorblindness gained global attention after Dr. King delivered his famous “*I have a dream*” speech (King, 1963), where colorblindness was promoted as a means to achieving equality between African Americans and White Americans. At the time of this speech, colorblindness was used to fight for racial equality and antidiscrimination policies in the U.S. by putting forward the message that race should not be an *obstacle* to providing opportunities for racial minorities (Plaut, 2010). However, alongside this progressive message of colorblindness as a means to stopping discrimination and prejudice, there was a call for race-conscious policies that sought to remedy and eradicate inequalities (Plaut, 2010). For example, Dr. King himself promoted race-conscious policies that did not simply pursue present-day equality, but rather, offered restitution for centuries of inequalities and injustices. Indeed, U.S. presidents Kennedy and Johnson argued that oppression for centuries could not simply be undone by granting the same opportunities to all, but rather, additional steps were necessary to bring everyone to the same starting point (Plaut, 2010).

Despite the noble origins of the ideology, colorblindness soon began to take on a life of its own. Indeed, others started to use the ideology to argue against race-conscious policies because such policies were believed to disadvantage Whites (Plaut, 2010). Today, colorblindness represents a multi-faceted ideology that is sometimes construed as a means to achieving racial equality by ignoring group membership and focusing on each person as a unique individual, or as a means to opposing race-conscious policies that assist marginalized and racial minority groups in society. Accordingly, the following section discusses the equally varied consequences of colorblindness.

What are the Implications of Colorblindness for Intergroup Relations?

Research indicates that colorblindness can be both good and bad for intergroup relations (for reviews, see Plaut, 2010; Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013). For example, colorblindness represents a *status-attenuating* ideology that is negatively related to social dominance orientation (e.g., Guimond, Sablonniere & Nugier, 2014; Levin et al., 2012), an ideology associated with racism, sexism,

and discriminatory outcomes (e.g., Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Studies also show that both priming colorblindness and endorsing a colorblind ideology can reduce stereotyping and prejudice toward racial minority outgroups (e.g., Levin et al., 2012; Wolsko, Park, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2000). Colorblindness can be particularly effective at reducing outgroup prejudice in low-conflict situations (Correll, Park & Smith, 2008) and when such an ideology is held by people with antiegalitarian sentiments (Yogeeswaran, Davies & Sibley, 2017). A recent meta-analysis revealed that colorblindness has a small, albeit significant, attenuating effect on outgroup prejudice (Whitley & Webster, in press). Taken together, the literature indicates that colorblindness *can* be an egalitarian ideology that deemphasizes race to focus on the unique individual, which is beneficial for minority groups and intergroup relations.

Despite these benefits of colorblindness, other studies reveal that colorblindness can also be detrimental for minority groups in society. Such negative consequences may specifically emerge among high majority group identifiers (Ng Tseung & Verkuyten, 2018) and when people construe the ideology as justification for the status quo (see Knowles, Lowery, Hogan & Chow, 2009; Levy, West & Ramirez, 2005). For example, exposure to a colorblind mindset in American classrooms led elementary school children to be less likely to detect an overt instance of racial discrimination than did a value-diversity mindset (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers & Ambady, 2010). Trying to be colorblind has also been shown to lead to more unfavorable intergroup interactions compared to when no such strategy was attempted (Apfelbaum, Sommers & Norton, 2008; Vorauer, Gagnon & Sasaki, 2009). Within organizations, White Americans' endorsement of colorblindness negatively predicted racial minorities' psychological engagement within the organization (Plaut, Thomas & Goren, 2009). Relatedly, team leaders' endorsement of colorblindness predicted minority distancing within the team and greater relationship conflict within the team (Meeussen, Otten & Phalet, 2014). Integrating these diverse findings, the literature paints a rather nuanced picture of the effects of colorblindness for racial minorities—in some ways, colorblindness may be beneficial by promoting positive attitudes toward minority groups; however, it may simultaneously be bad for such groups by undermining minority engagement at the workplace and promoting negative intergroup interactions.

Present Research

Although there has been a significant amount of work on colorblindness, less is known about the relationship between colorblindness and support for public policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups. The present research expands the scope of previous research on colorblindness by addressing two important gaps in the literature.

Support for policies that redress inequalities. First, we examine the implications of colorblindness on support for policies that redress racial inequalities, an important outcome yet to be examined in the literature. Given that colorblindness can be construed in a way that legitimizes the status quo by implying that, if everyone is a unique individual, then any group's failure is the result of their own doing, colorblindness should predict decreased support for public policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups. In the present work, we test whether colorblindness predicts decreased support for public policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups.

Within this focus, we distinguish between policies that involve symbolic versus resource-based steps to redress racial inequalities. Emerging from intergroup threat theories (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2000), prior research demonstrates that people can differentially support the symbolic incorporation of minority cultures to redress inequalities (e.g., teaching of minority languages in schools, representing minority culture at national events, etc.), while simultaneously opposing policies that address those inequalities through resource based redistribution (e.g., reserving seats for racial minorities in education or government, offering reparations for past injustices, etc.; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley & Osborne, 2016). For example, while New Zealanders tend to support the symbolic incorporation of Māori (the indigenous peoples of New Zealand) culture, they simultaneously oppose policies that seek to redress inequalities through resource redistribution (Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley & Osborne, 2016). In the context of the present work, we examine the relationship between colorblind endorsement and support for both kinds of policies. It may be that colorblindness predicts decreased support for policies that redress racial inequalities through resource distribution, while having little relation to policies that symbolically incorporate minorities into the identity of the nation as the latter tend to experience high levels of support from the majority group. Alternately, colorblindness may uniformly undermine support for *any* policy that seeks to redress racial inequalities, as colorblindness involves the belief that race is irrelevant in contemporary society (see Knowles et al., 2009; Levy et al., 2005). In the current paper, we examine the relationship between colorblindness and support for both policies that address racial inequalities through symbolic and resource-based approaches.

Role of system-justifying beliefs in the relationship between colorblindness and support for policies that redress inequalities. Another major goal of the present work is to examine the mediating role of system-justifying beliefs in the relationship between colorblindness and support for policies that redress racial inequalities. System-justifying beliefs represent people's motivation to justify the status quo by ensuring that the existing social, political, and economic system is perceived as fair and legitimate (e.g., Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Previous research demonstrates that beliefs in the legitimacy

of the status quo decreases support for social policies that redress inequalities and undermine political action (e.g., Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Osborne & Sibley, 2013; Osborne, Yogeewaran & Sibley, 2015, 2017; Wakslak, Jost, Tyler & Chen, 2007). Accordingly, we expected that if endorsement of colorblindness predicts decreased support for policies that redress racial inequalities, it would be through system-justifying beliefs.

In the context of the present research, we simultaneously examine the indirect effects of colorblindness on *both* symbolic and resource-based policies to redress racial inequalities via system justification. Previous work has shed light only on the link between system justification and support for resource-based policies (e.g., Wakslak et al., 2007). Therefore, it is unclear if such a tendency would carry over into policies that redress symbolic inequalities between racial groups.

Given that colorblindness can both attenuate outgroups prejudice and be used to legitimize the status quo, the present work examines whether colorblindness predicts support for, or opposition to, both symbolic and resource-based social policies that redress inequalities. Moreover, we examine whether the relationship between colorblindness and support for policies that redress inequalities is driven by system-justifying beliefs. To examine these questions, we utilize a nationally representative sample of members from the racial majority in New Zealand (NZ).

National Context of Present Research

NZ is a small, culturally diverse, postcolonial nation in the south Pacific with a majority European population (approximately 70%), whereas Māori (the indigenous people; approximately 15%), Asians (approximately 13%), and Pasifika (approximately 8%) form the largest minority populations of the country. NZ is officially a bicultural nation with special recognition for the relationship between Māori and non-Māori (primarily Europeans) that began with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Following decades of Treaty violations by the Europeans, the country began to repair the damage caused by over a century of colonization through an official bicultural policy that incorporated Māori into governmental and institutional practices to ensure Māori representation in government and institutions around the country (Sibley, Robertson, & Kirkwood, 2005).

However, bicultural policies can take two different forms. Whereas one set of policies symbolically redresses inequalities between Māori and Europeans by promoting Māori culture at the national stage (e.g., by teaching Māori language in NZ primary schools, or singing the national anthem in Māori and English, performing the haka at international events), the other does so through the redistribution of resources (e.g., by reserving places for Māori students to study medicine, rates (tax) exemptions for Māori land, Māori ownership of the seabed and foreshore; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley et al., 2005). All these policies have

been discussed and debated in the national stage and implemented with varied levels of support. Symbolic policies generally gain relatively high levels of support from the majority European population, whereas resource-based policies are often met with opposition from the majority group (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Although NZ is officially a bicultural nation with national policies grounded in such a perspective, New Zealanders generally endorse colorblindness and believe that group membership should be disregarded so that all people are treated the same (Sibley & Duckitt, 2010; Yogeeswaran et al., 2017). Today, Māori continue to be significantly disadvantaged in many domains of social life including educational attainment, employment, health, and life expectancy (Marriott & Sim, 2014).

Our focus on a non-American sample in this special issue provides a critical extension of past research, as Dr. King broadened his appeal to the behavioral sciences to look beyond race in America and focus on the struggles faced by other people of color around the world. In this spirit, the present work examines the role of colorblindness on system justification and support for policies that redress inequalities between indigenous people (a group rarely studied in psychological research) and the descendants of their European colonizers.

Method

Sampling Procedure

We utilized data from Time 4 (2012) of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). The NZAVS is a national probability postal sample of New Zealand residents (see Sibley, 2014, for detailed information about sampling).

Participant Details

Time 4 of the NZAVS contained responses from 12,181 participants. We limited analyses to the 8,728 participants who identified solely as being of White-European heritage (a further 1,485 participants identified jointly as European and with another racial group). Of this subsample, 5,401 were women and 3,327 were men, with a mean age of 50.98 years ($SD = 14.96$).

Measures

Demographic Information. Participants provided demographic information on a range of variables including age, level of education, religiosity, employment status, parental status, relationship status, type of occupation, and regional deprivation. Education was coded on a 10-point ordinal scale ranging from 0 (none) to 10 (PhD/equivalent degree, $M = 4.87$, $SD = 2.84$). Occupational status was coded in accordance with the NZSEI ($M = 53$, $SD = 15.50$) which assigns a

value from 10 to 90 for people's socioeconomic status based on their occupation and whose weights are derived from census data (Milne, Byun & Lee, 2013). For example, people in the 10–24 range on this measure were in occupations such as: *Food Preparation Assistants, Cleaners and Laundry Workers, Packers and Produce Assemblers, and Miscellaneous Labourers*. However, those in the 71–90 range were in occupations such as: *Medical Practitioners, Education, Health and Welfare Managers, Natural and Physical Science Professionals, or Tertiary Educators*. Similarly, regional deprivation ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 2.68$) was measured by the deprivation index which is coded from 1 (most affluent regions) to 10 (most deprived regions), using census estimates for each meshblock area unit (White, Gunston, Salmond, Atkinson, & Crampton, 2008).

Endorsement of Colorblindness. Participant endorsement of colorblindness was assessed using three-items taken from previous work ($\alpha = .654$; Knowles et al., 2009). This measure captured participants' belief that we should deemphasize racial group membership and see each person as fundamentally the same or as unique individuals. Specifically, the items were: "I wish people in this society would stop obsessing so much about race," "Putting racial labels on people obscures the fact that everyone is a unique individual" and "People who become preoccupied by race are forgetting that we're all just human." Responses to all questions were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

System-justifying Beliefs. Participants completed a two-item measure of system-justifying beliefs ($r = .232$) using a measure adapted from Jost and Kay (2005). The items used were: "Everyone in New Zealand has a fair shot at wealth and happiness, regardless of their ethnicity or race" and "In general, relations between different ethnic groups in New Zealand are fair." These items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Policy Support. Participants completed two separate measures of policy support based on contemporary issues discussed in NZ, including one capturing support for resource-based policies and the other focusing on support for symbolic policies. These items were directly taken from previous work (e.g., Liu & Sibley, 2006; Sibley & Liu, 2004).

Resource-based policy support. Participants completed a four-item measure of support for resource-based policies that remedy inequalities between Māori and New Zealand Europeans ($\alpha = .774$; Liu & Sibley, 2006; Sibley & Liu, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate their support for each of the following policies using a 1 (Extremely Oppose) to 7 (Extremely Support) scale: "Māori ownership of the seabed and foreshore," "Reserving places for Māori students to

study medicine,” “Rates exemptions on Māori land,” and “Crown (government) ownership of the seabed and foreshore” (reverse coded). Higher scores on this scale reflect greater support for resource-based policies aimed at ameliorating inequality.

Symbolically-based Policy Support. Participants also completed a four-item measure of support for policies that promote the symbolic incorporation of Māori culture within the European dominated national framework ($\alpha = .788$; Liu & Sibley, 2006; Sibley & Liu, 2004). Participants were asked to indicate their support for each of the following policies using a 1 (Extremely Oppose) to 7 (Extremely Support) scale: “Performance of the Haka at international events,” “Waitangi day as a national celebration of biculturalism,” “Teaching Māori language in New Zealand primary schools,” and “Singing the national anthem in Māori and English.” Higher scores on this scale reflect greater support for the symbolic incorporation of Māori culture within New Zealand.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between the variables included in this study are presented in Table 1. Before testing our hypotheses, we estimated a measurement model for our four latent variables using *MPlus version 8.0* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). To these ends, indicators were only allowed to load onto their respective latent variable (i.e., no cross-factor loadings were specified). In order to identify each scale, each latent variable mean and variance was fixed at 0 and 1, respectively. Results indicated that our measurement model provided a good fit to these data, $\chi^2_{(59)} = 2532.659$, CFI = .922, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.069 (.067, .062; $p < .001$), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.050. As such, we use this measurement model as the basis for our structural equation model (SEM) estimated below.

Testing the Model

To test our hypothesis that the endorsement of a colorblindness would undermine support for both resource-based policies aimed at redressing inequality and symbolic policies that seek to incorporate Māori culture into the identity of the nation through system-justifying beliefs, we conducted an SEM using *MPlus version 8.0* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). To these ends, the measurement model noted above formed the basis of a structural regression in which resource-based policy support and symbolic policy support were regressed onto system-justifying beliefs and endorsement of a colorblind ideology. System justification was also regressed onto endorsement of a colorblind ideology. In order to rule out plausible alternative explanations, we also regressed the latent variables for both types of

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations Between all Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	—												
2. Sex ^a	.140 ^{***}	—											
3. Relationship ^b	.110 ^{***}	.101 ^{***}	—										
4. Parent ^c	.456 ^{***}	.055 ^{***}	.303 ^{***}	—									
5. Religious ^d	.150 ^{***}	-.049 ^{***}	.015 ^{***}	.084 ^{***}	—								
6. Employed ^e	-.325 ^{***}	.026 [*]	.057 ^{***}	-.110 ^{***}	-.071 ^{***}	—							
7. Occupational status	-.011	-.058 ^{***}	.084 ^{***}	-.003	.034 ^{**}	.103 ^{***}	—						
8. Education	-.167 ^{***}	-.061 ^{***}	.047 ^{***}	-.125 ^{***}	.001	.163 ^{***}	.561 ^{***}	—					
9. Regional deprivation	-.025	-.019 ⁺	-.174 ^{***}	-.036 ^{**}	-.008	-.061 ^{***}	-.139 ^{***}	-.139 ^{***}	—				
10. Colorblind Ideology	.066 ^{***}	.040 ^{***}	.002	.053 ^{***}	.018	-.083 ^{***}	-.131 ^{***}	-.193 ^{***}	.043 ^{***}	—			
11. Ethnic system justification	.109 ^{***}	.154 ^{***}	.061 ^{***}	.077 ^{***}	.026 [*]	-.043 ^{***}	-.134 ^{***}	-.191 ^{***}	.000	.289 ^{***}	—		
12. Resource policy support	-.145 ^{***}	-.143 ^{***}	-.072 ^{***}	-.102 ^{***}	-.022 [*]	.050 ^{***}	.163 ^{***}	.249 ^{***}	.030 ^{**}	-.389 ^{***}	-.324 ^{***}	—	
13. Symbolic policy support	-.267 ^{***}	-.261 ^{***}	-.014	-.104 ^{***}	.005	.136 ^{***}	.196 ^{***}	.274 ^{***}	-.025 [*]	-.148 ^{***}	-.185 ^{***}	.484 ^{***}	—
Mean	50.984	0.381	0.726	0.762	0.377	0.725	52.995	4.865	4.530	5.475	4.162	2.579	4.834
SD	14.960	0.486	0.446	0.426	0.485	0.446	15.492	2.814	2.678	1.147	1.314	1.310	1.430
α	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.654	—	.774	.788
N	8,722	8,728	8,679	8,524	8,592	8,616	8,518	8,103	8,543	8,021	8,726	8,695	8,698

^aSex (0 = Female, 1 = Male), ^bRelationship (0 = Single, 1 = In a relationship), ^cParent (0 = No, 1 = Yes), ^dReligious (0 = Nonreligious, 1 = Religious), and ^eEmployed(0 = Unemployed, 1 = Employed) were dummy-coded.

+ $p < .10$
 * $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
 *** $p < .001$.

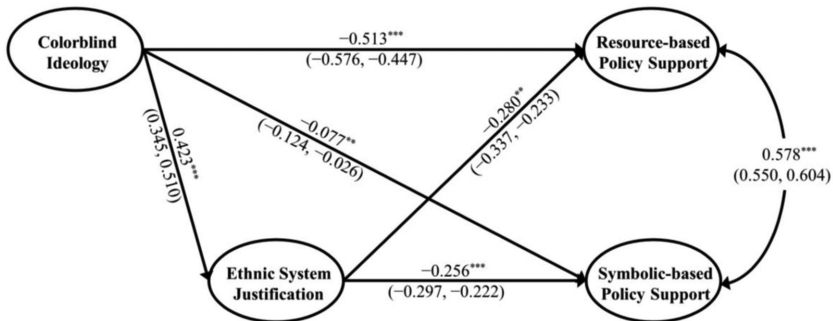


Fig. 1. Structural Equation Model testing the indirect effects of endorsement of a colorblind ideology on resource- and symbolic-based policy support through ethnic system justification, $\chi^2_{(131)} = 3652.670$, CFI = .898, RMSEA = 0.055 (.054, .057; $p < .001$), SRMR = 0.038. Estimates reflect unstandardized regression coefficients (with bias corrected 95% confidence intervals). The effects of our covariates on ethnic system justification, resource-based policy support, and symbolic-based policy support, as well as the factor loadings for all four latent variables, were estimated but excluded from the figure due to space constraints. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

policy support and system justification onto participants' gender, age, occupation, religiosity, education, parental status, relationship status, employment status, and regional deprivation (e.g., see Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). All of our covariates were allowed to covary with endorsement of a colorblind ideology. Moreover, because it is unlikely that our model will explain all of the variability in support for both types of policies, we allowed for a residual correlation between support for resource-based and symbolic-based policies. Finally, bias corrected (BC) 95% confidence intervals (CI) were estimated for all parameters (including the tests of the indirect effects of colorblind ideology on both types of policies via system justification) using 5,000 bootstrapped resamples (with replacement).

As shown in Figure 1, the model provided a good fit to these data, $\chi^2_{(131)} = 3652.670$, CFI = .898, RMSEA = 0.055 (.054, .057; $p < .001$), SRMR = 0.038. Inspection of the individual pathways shows that colorblindness has a positive direct effect on system justification ($B = 0.423$, BC 95% CI = [0.345, 0.510]; $\beta = 0.377$; $p < .001$), but negative direct effects on support for resource-based policies ($B = -0.513$, BC 95% CI = [-0.576, -0.447]; $\beta = -0.402$; $p < .001$) and symbolic policies ($B = -0.077$, BC 95% CI = [-0.124, -0.026]; $\beta = -0.066$; $p = .002$). System justification was also negatively related to both resource-based policy support ($B = -0.280$, BC 95% CI = [-0.337, -0.233]; $\beta = -0.247$; $p < .001$) and symbolic policy support ($B = -0.256$, BC 95% CI = [-0.297, -0.222]; $\beta = -0.247$, $p < .001$). Together, these data suggest that endorsement of a colorblind ideology may have a negative indirect effect on support for both types of policies via system justifying beliefs.

Testing the Indirect Effects

To formally test our hypothesis that endorsement of a colorblind ideology would be associated with less support for progressive resource-based and symbolic policies via system justification, we conducted a test of these two indirect effects using bootstrapped BC 95% CIs. As hypothesized, results indicated that colorblindness predicted decreased support for resource-based policies that redress inequalities through system justification ($B_{Indirect} = -0.119$, BC 95% CI $[-0.162, -0.084]$; $p < .001$) and accounted for 18.9% of the total effect of colorblindness on support for resource-based policies (i.e., $B_{Total} = -0.631$, BC 95% CI $[-0.691, -0.570]$; $p < .001$). Likewise, colorblindness predicted decreased support for policies that symbolically redress inequalities through system justification ($B_{Indirect} = -0.108$, BC 95% CI $[-0.142, -0.080]$; $p < .001$) and accounted for 58.4% of the total effect of colorblindness on support for symbolic policies (i.e., $B_{Total} = -0.185$, BC 95% CI $[-0.225, -0.142]$; $p < .001$). In other words, the endorsement of a colorblind ideology was indirectly (and negatively) associated with support for progressive symbolic and resource-based policies via system justification.

Discussion

The present research examines the relationship between colorblindness, an ideology sometimes mistakenly associated with Dr. Martin Luther King, and support for policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups in society. Heeding Dr. King's (1968) call to the behavioral sciences to explore and address social inequalities (see Stewart & Sweetman, 2018), we demonstrate that colorblindness predicts *decreased* support for policies that promote both resource distribution and the symbolic incorporation of minority culture into the national identity as ways of redressing inequalities between racial majority and minority groups. Moreover, we show that system-justifying beliefs mediate the negative relationship between colorblindness and support for both symbolic and resource-based policies.

These findings expand the scope of empirical research on diversity and intergroup relations by examining the relationship between colorblindness and support for policies that redress inequalities, an outcome yet to be examined in the literature. Although colorblindness has been shown to have positive effects on intergroup relations by reducing outgroup stereotyping and prejudice (Correll et al., 2008; Levin et al., 2012; Wolsko et al., 2000; Yogeewaran et al., 2017; for a meta-analysis, see Whitley & Webster, in press) and serving as a status-attenuating ideology (Levin et al., 2012), the present work shows that colorblindness predicts greater system-justification and decreased support for policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups. These findings are more in line with research suggesting that colorblindness can sometimes be construed as

a way to legitimize inequalities between groups (Knowles et al., 2009) and make people less sensitive to discrimination (Apfelbaum et al., 2010). Taken together, these findings illustrate that the impact of colorblindness for intergroup relations are far from uniform with the same ideology having both positive and negative implications for intergroup relations.

Additionally, while previous research has implied that colorblindness may negatively impact minority outcomes due to system justification, the present work empirically demonstrates that system-justifying beliefs indeed mediate the relationship between colorblindness endorsement and opposition toward public policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups. Such findings lend credence to the argument that colorblindness can be used to legitimize the status quo and undermine actions intended to redress past injustices against disadvantaged groups in society. These findings add to other research (e.g., Stewart & Tran, 2018) examining what factors promote or undermine majority group members' willingness to take action and support means to redress inequalities between majority and minority groups. Such findings have important social policy implications as they suggest that specific belief systems and ideologies can motivate or undermine the majority group's willingness to step into action on behalf of minority groups. Such knowledge can better inform policy-makers, educators, and practitioners on some of the psychological barriers to achieving racial equality.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the present work has its strengths in utilizing a nationally representative sample from a post-colonial nation to examine the implications of colorblindness on support for policies that redress injustices toward indigenous people (a population often ignored in psychological research), it is not without its limitations. One major limitation of the present work is that it involves cross-sectional data which limits our understanding of directionality. Future work would greatly benefit from examining these phenomena using longitudinal or experimental paradigms to better understand directionality of the effect. Another limitation to the present work is that it is unclear how generalizable these findings are to other national contexts. As mentioned earlier, we expanded Dr. King's call to use the behavioral sciences to promote a clearer understanding of social inequalities in a context outside of the United States, but it remains to be seen if colorblindness has similar implications for policy support and system justification in other national contexts. As Guimond et al. (2014) have highlighted, the effects of diversity ideologies on intergroup relations are far from uniform and can vary across national contexts. As such, future work would benefit from expanding these findings to other countries. Such work can potentially shed light on whether these findings are generalizable and, if not, whether differences in cultural worldviews, social structures, economic conditions, or institutional norms may help explain cross-national differences.

Another limitation of the present work is that “The conceptualization and measurement of colorblindness reflects another limitation of the present work.” Although we utilized a popular measure of colorblindness taken from previous work (i.e., Knowles et al., 2009), this measure conflates the focus on personal identities with the focus on shared human identity (i.e., “*Putting racial labels on people obscures the fact that everyone is a unique individual*” and “*People who become preoccupied by race are forgetting that we’re all just human*”). From a self-categorization perspective (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), this is problematic as it involves two different levels of self-understanding. But popular measures and manipulations in the literature (e.g., Vorauer et al., 2009; Wolsko et al., 2000) have often done so, highlighting the importance of future work to disentangle the unique meaning and implications of these different representations of colorblindness. Such work would provide both a clearer conceptualization of the nature of colorblindness and improve measures and manipulations for researchers and practitioners.

And finally, while the present work provides novel insight into the implications of colorblindness for system-justifying beliefs and support for public policies that redress inequalities between groups, it does not reconcile the mixed findings in the literature on the implications of colorblindness for intergroup relations. Specifically, it may be that the implications of colorblindness vary at different levels of analysis (i.e., at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, or societal levels). Future work would greatly benefit from systematically examining the implications of colorblindness at varying levels of analysis. Such knowledge would help provide organizations and governments with insight into where and when colorblindness can help versus hinder intergroup relations.

In closing, the present work explores the psychological literature surrounding racial colorblindness, an ideology often associated with Dr. King, and then examines its relationship to support for public policies that redress inequalities between racial majority and minority groups in a postcolonial nation. Colorblindness represents a complex ideology with multiple meanings including a more egalitarian ideal alongside a more antiegalitarian one. The present work reveals that colorblindness (at least in NZ) can be used to undermine the majority group’s support for both resource-based and symbolic policies that redress inequalities between indigenous people and the descendants of their European colonizers through system justification.

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