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Why Personal Values Matter: Values, Colorblindness, and Social Justice Action Orientation

Abstract

The extent to which individuals prioritize different personal values may be conceptually linked to endorsement of racial colorblindness beliefs as well as orientation toward social justice. The present study examined how personal values predicted racial colorblindness and social justice action orientation in a sample of undergraduates (N = 325; Age, M = 20.38, SD = 2.78). Results supported the hypotheses: Self-transcendence and openness to change values predicted higher social justice action orientation, mediated by lower colorblindness beliefs, whereas self-enhancement and conservation values predicted lower social justice action orientation, mediated by higher colorblindness beliefs. Hence, motives that emphasize others' well-being and openness to change may be linked to less racial colorblindness and a greater willingness to address social inequalities. To encourage social justice efforts, institutions and social networks may benefit from considering implicit and explicit messages that promote the well-being of others and the value of openness as opposed to values that prioritize individual status and prestige and maintaining the status quo.

Keywords: values; colorblindness; social justice; self-transcendence; conservation

Why Personal Values Matter: Values, Colorblindness, and Social Justice Action Orientation

Social justice can be conceptualized as a belief in and promotion of egalitarianism, wherein resources, rights, and opportunities are fairly and equitably allocated in a manner that recognizes the marginalization of certain groups due to race, ethnicity, age, physical disability, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, socioeconomic status, religion, or education level (cf. Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007; Cook, 1990; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Ivey & Collins, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2001; Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012). Efforts to promote social justice aim to affect societal change so that every member of a society enjoys similar levels of benefits, opportunities, and human rights (Tourse, Hamilton-Mason, & Wewiorski, 2018). Social justice has become a more central agenda inside and outside the field of psychology, with training curriculums showing an increased focus on multicultural training and social justice content (Paluck, 2006; Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, & Mason, 2009). There have been calls for increased research to understand the antecedents of social justice work as well as ways to promote the development of social justice orientation in individuals (e.g. Speight & Vera, 2008; Fietzer & Ponterotto, 2015). More recently, scholars and activists have called for systematic action (as opposed to talk) in social justice advocacy efforts (Hoefer, 2019). Applying the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to social justice, Torres-Harding et al. (2012) identified social cognitive predictors of social justice actions, including positive attitudes towards social justice, perceived norms of social justice, perceived control of social justice behaviors, and social justice behavioral intentions. We will refer to this collective set of predictors as *social justice action orientation*, a construct that represents likelihood toward the behavioral enactment of social justice work and has been linked to increased social justice

activism and engagement in social justice causes (Torres-Harding, Diaz, Schamberger, & Carollo, 2015).

One reason for the increased emphasis on social justice research is due to the fact that our current society lacks equitable outcomes for all individuals. Despite the reality that inequalities in education, income, ownership, and health are still pervasive across different cultural groups (e.g., Akhter, 2018; Fairlie, 2018; Riegle-Crumb, King, & Irizarry, 2019), many individuals fail to support social justice causes. One reason may be that people do not perceive injustice in the inequalities. For example, in the area of racial injustice, individuals may assert that they live in a post-racial society where individuals are "no longer judged by the color of their skin", while knowingly or unknowingly supporting the racist systemic structures and practices which do just that (i.e., colorblindness; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Doob, 2015). Personal values—which serve as guiding forces in people's lives and help explain the motivational reasons behind one's attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz, 2012)—have been used to explain individual differences in subtle forms of racism such as colorblindness and support for social justice (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Struch, 1989). Some personal values may motivate people to endorse a color-blind racial ideology, thereby deterring them from social justice action orientation. As social justice becomes a more central agenda in the field of psychology and the world at large (Rosenthal, 2016), it is important to examine theoretical models that explain social justice action orientation. Therefore, the present study examined the effects of personal values on social justice action orientation, via the mediator of color-blind racial ideology.

Values and Social Justice

Personal values have been conceptualized as "trans-situational" goals that serve as "guiding principles" in ones' life (Schwartz et al. 2012, p. 664). Values have been

conceptualized as more fundamental and abstract than attitudes and ideologies and have been used to predict and explain individuals' attitudes, ideologies, and behaviors/actions (e.g. Bardi & Schwartz, 2003) – and in the case of this study, color-blind racial ideology (CBRI) and social justice action orientation. Personal values include beliefs about preferred types of personal conduct, such as being helpful or self-indulgent, or states of existence, such as having wealth or inner harmony (Maio, 2017; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). According to a well-supported theory of basic human values (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012), "values (1) are concepts or beliefs, (2) pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance," (Schwartz, 1992, p. 4). Schwartz also contends that values differ from attitudes in that they are more general and can be ordered hierarchically by importance to an individual.

Within Schwartz's theory of human values (1992), individual values (e.g., benevolence and achievement) can be organized along two orthogonal dimensions composed of four higher-order values: the self-transcendence versus self-enhancement values, and openness to change versus conservation values (see *Figure 1*). Values at opposite ends of each of the two dimensions represent opposing motivations. While self-transcendence values promote the welfare of others (e.g., helpfulness, responsibility), self-enhancement values promote self-interest and personal status (e.g., power and achievement). Similarly, whereas openness to change values involve pursuing novel experiences (e.g. creativity and excitement) and include intellectual interests as well as readiness for change, conservation values serve to maintain the status quo and resist such change (e.g. obedience and security).

Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to the promotion of social justice may be influenced by the values that one prioritizes. In support of this, value priorities have been found

to predict attitudes toward civil rights issues as well as behaviors such as participating in anti-war protests and joining civil rights organizations (Rokeach, 1973). Indeed, proponents of social justice often describe the ethical imperative of promoting a set of values such as inclusion, affirmation, and equity (e.g., Fowers & Davidov, 2006), with the understanding that certain values may constrain beliefs about fairness and justice (Feather, 1994) while others may encourage the likelihood of engaging in behaviors that promote social justice (Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012).

Theoretically, self-transcendence and self-enhancement values may be differentially predictive of social justice action orientation. Self-transcendence values are likely to align with social justice action orientation because they are undergirded by motivations to establish interpersonal harmony and equality; in contrast, self-enhancement values reflect desire for meritocratic rewards that may clash with social justice efforts (Mayton, Ball-Rokeach, & Loges, 1994; Schwartz, 2012). Although the associations between values and social justice action orientation have not been examined directly, prior research provides evidence for the direction of these relationships. Along the self-transcendence/self-enhancement axis, social attitudes associated with fairness and care for others have been shown to share a motivational foundation with self-transcendence values (Boer & Fischer, 2013). Other research has shown that people who attach importance to self-transcendence values hold positive views of and are generally more accepting of immigrants (e.g., Davidov, Meuleman, Billiet, & Schmidt, 2008; Schwartz, 2007; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010; Vecchione et al., 2012; Wolf, Weinstein, & Maio, 2019), while people who attach importance to self-enhancement values tend to have less favorable views of immigrants (Leong & Ward, 2006; Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Van Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009; Wolf et al., 2019). Other research has shown that those who prioritize self-

enhancement values are more likely to endorse “blind patriotism” or the “uncritical acceptance and support” for one’s country regardless of the country’s policies towards humans who are outside the nation’s “in-group”, suggesting that people with high self-enhancement values may be motivated to ignore social injustice in favor of their in-group’s welfare (Livi, Leone, Falgares, & Lombardo, 2014, p. 141). Prioritizing self-transcendence values is also related to more “macro” worrying, or having worries about the world as well as individuals outside of one’s in-groups, while prioritizing self-enhancement values predicts more “micro” worries, or worrying about one’s self or immediate extensions of oneself (Schwartz, Sagiv, & Boehnke, 2000). Therefore, we would expect differential associations, wherein prioritizing self-transcendence values predicts a greater orientation toward social justice whereas prioritizing self-enhancement values would predict an orientation away from social justice.

On the other hand, people with high openness to change values may show higher social justice action orientation because those values represent prioritization of an individual’s autonomy and agency, whereas people with high conservation values may show lower social justice action orientation because those values prioritize principles related to maintaining the status quo (Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2010). In fact, some studies have found indirect support for this speculation. People who hold higher openness to change values have more favorable attitudes toward immigrants and are more willing to engage in close contact with ethnic outgroups, whereas those who hold higher conservation values hold less favorable views and are less willing to engage in close contact with immigrants (e.g., Davidov et al., 2008; Roccas & Amit, 2011; Sagiv & Schwartz, 1995; Schwartz et al., 2010; Vecchione et al., 2012). These observed patterns of relationships between values and attitudes towards immigrants hold up across different marginalized groups such as with Jews, homeless people, women, those

identifying as gay, and foreigners (Beierlein, Kuntz, & Davidov, 2016). Other research has shown that those who prioritize openness to change values show a stronger commitment to their work organization when they perceive more procedural justice within the organization, compared to those higher in conservation values for whom justice was not as important to their degree of commitment to their organization (Fischer & Smith, 2006). These results suggest that openness to change values may motivate people to acknowledge disadvantages from social injustice more willingly, whereas conservation values may motivate people to dismiss its existence or the need to work for social justice to conserve the current status quo. Therefore, we would again expect differential associations, wherein prioritizing openness to change values would predict greater endorsement of social justice while prioritizing conservation values would predict less endorsement, perhaps by either acknowledging or not acknowledging the existence of social injustice.

Values, Colorblindness, and Social Justice

Such a lack of acknowledgement of social injustice in the context of race can be summarized by color-blind racial ideology (CBRI). Ideologies have been defined as "systems" of beliefs (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008) which are influenced by values and may contain several "value priority associations" (Rohan, 2000, p.267). In addition to their alignment with personal and larger social-group value priorities (Rohan, 2000), ideologies are theorized to be used to make more complex decisions, such as taking social justice-related actions. Thus, CBRI could be a link between personal values and social justice action orientation. In other words, because of certain values a person may hold, they may be more likely to see/notice a problem (i.e., low CBRI), and therefore will be oriented towards working to solve the problem (i.e., high social justice action orientation). Or conversely, because of some values an individual holds, they will

be less likely to see/notice a problem (i.e., high CBRI), and therefore, from their perspective, there is no work to be done (i.e., low social justice action orientation). Our proposed direction of these relationships is supported by CBRI theory which states that CBRI is an ideology that is used to "validate ideas and actions" (Neville, et al., 2013; p.460) that maintain the status quo of inequality. Previous research has also examined the relationship between racial colorblindness and interest in social justice activities, showing that colorblindness is a negative predictor of the latter (Garrett-Walker et al., 2018; Lewis, Neville, & Spanierman, 2012). Thus, we propose that CBRI could be one mediating mechanism to explain how personal values predict social justice action orientation.

Race scholars have proposed different theories of racism over the years to explain the ideologies and institutional practices that perpetuate racial inequality at different points in history (Neville, Awad, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Scholars in psychology have proposed the color-blind racial ideology (CBRI) as the most salient racial ideology of modern time (e.g. Neville et al., 2013). The concept of colorblindness was first proposed in the field of law (e.g. Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison; Gotanda, 1991) and surfaced within the field of psychology when the American Psychological Association (APA, 1997) published a pamphlet on color-blind racial attitudes citing that "research conducted for more than two decades strongly supports the view that we cannot, nor should we be, color-blind" (p.3). In 2000, Neville and colleagues published the first psychometrically sound measure of color-blind racial attitudes called the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). In a more recent review of the construct, Neville and colleagues (2013) contend that CBRI is still the newest articulation of racism currently in the U.S. The authors, borrowing from Frankenberg's (1993) formulation of colorblindness, propose that colorblindness is comprised of two related dimensions of *color-evasion* and *power-evasion.*

Color-evasion is the dimension of colorblindness that is defined by the intent to "not see race" and to view people as individuals, ignoring interracial divisions (Neville et al., 2013).

More closely related to social justice action orientation would be the *power-evasion* dimension of colorblindness--the denial of power differences in society across racial lines (Neville et al., 2013). Neville and colleagues (2013) contend that the power-evasion dimension of CBRI is related to the *ultramodern* form of racism in which current social norms of political correctness preclude people from demonstrating blatant displays of prejudice. The endorsement of power-evasion is related to the denial of systemic and structural barriers to equal outcomes that exist for different groups of people. This, therefore, places the blame of differential outcomes in health, education, wealth, etc. on the individual or group of people themselves, creating the narrative that if certain groups of people (i.e. people of color) have consistently poorer outcomes than other groups (i.e. White individuals), it is due to shortcomings and negative qualities within this group, and not to larger structural obstacles that unfairly impact this group. By perpetuating meritocratic beliefs, power-evasion CBRI provides a rationale for denying White privilege and the existence of social injustice against people of color. This dimension directly relates to social justice because, power differentials are at the core of inequitable distribution of resources, rights and opportunities. This is also the dimension of CBRI that is measured by the CoBRAS developed by Neville and colleagues twenty years ago (Neville et al., 2000; Neville et al., 2013). Given the theoretical and conceptual relevance of this dimension of CBRI to social justice, it is the one we choose to focus on in this study.

Different underlying motivations or values may be related to the degree to which an individual endorses the power-evasion CBRI and thus uses this ideology as a rationale or explanation for their support, or lack thereof, for social justice causes. For example, individuals

high in self-transcendence values may endorse lower power-evasion CBRI because, of their motivation to care for others who are disadvantaged, while those individuals who are high in openness to change values may endorse lower power-evasion CBRI because of their motivation to acknowledge need for change and growth. Conversely, people high in self-enhancement values may endorse power-evasion CBRI as an ideology that provides a narrative or explanation that supports their status and power in society. Individuals high in conservation values may also endorse power-evasion CBRI because, of the rationale it provides for maintaining the status-quo and traditional societal norms. Thus, the outcome of diminished social justice action orientation and the rationalizing ideology (e.g. power-evasion CBRI) may look the same for individuals high in conservation and self-enhancement values, but the underlying values and motivations from which the endorsement of this ideology stems, may be different.

The Present Study

The present study examined how one's personal values relate to endorsement of power-evasion CBRI and subsequent social justice action orientation. Specifically, we propose that people will endorse different levels of social justice action orientation based on their value priorities, and that the relationship between one's values and social justice action orientation will be at least partly, and in some cases fully, explained by the endorsement of power-evasion CBRI. Specifically, the two higher order values—self-transcendence and openness to change will be positively associated with social justice action orientation given these values' underlying motivations of care for others and growth. The association between these two values and social justice action orientation will be partly (in the case of self-transcendence) or fully (in the case of openness to change) explained by an individual's acknowledgement of social injustice in the racial domain - in other words, by lower levels of power-evasion CBRI. On the other hand, self-

enhancement and conservation values will be negatively associated with social justice action orientation given these values' underlying motivations for self-protection and anxiety avoidance (see *Figure 1*). This association will be either partly (in the case of self-enhancement) or fully (in the case of conservation) explained by the denial of social injustice in the racial domain: i.e. higher levels of power-evasion CBRI. We propose a partial mediation between the self-transcendence and self-enhancement values to social justice action orientation given that CBRI is an ideology specific to race, not general cultural dimensions or groups, like the construct of social justice action orientation. Given the motivational focus of self-transcendence values for equality and harmony for others, and not just those marginalized by racism, theoretically, CBRI should not fully explain the relationship between self-transcendence values and social justice action orientation. Similarly, given the motivational foundation of self-enhancement values to maintain one's power and prestige, individuals who prioritize this value may be low in social justice action orientation for the self-serving purpose of maintaining their power in society, and not just because they fail to recognize systemic racism.

Method

Participants

The present convenience sample included 325 undergraduate students (75.7% women; Age, *M* = 20.4, *SD* = 2.78, Range: 18-49; Race/Ethnicity: 73.5% White/European American, 10.5% Latinx/Hispanic American, 7.1% Black/African American, 3.4% Multiracial, 2.8% Asian/Asian American, 1.5% self-identify, and 1.2% who did not report) at a large Midwestern university in the United States with a predominantly White or European American student body (8.3% African American, 2.1% Asian American, 10.3% Hispanic, .16% American Indian or

Alaskan Native). Participants who reported being a first-generation college student made up 18.7% of the sample.

Measures

Personal values. The Portrait Values-Questionnaire Revised (PVQ-RR) was used to assess personal values (Schwartz et al., 2012). The PVQ-RR is a 57-item scale that measures each of 19 individual values and four higher-order values. The PVQ-RR describes a person in terms of values that are important to them (e.g., "It is important for him/her to protect his/her public image" and "It is important for him/her that every person in the world has equal opportunities in life"). Typically, participants are provided with a version of the scale that corresponds to their gender; however, we adapted the PVQ-RR so that gender-specific pronouns (e.g., him/his) were replaced with gender-inclusive pronouns (they, their) so that participants would not need to choose a binary-gender. Participants were asked to respond to the prompt, "How much is this person like you?" by rating items on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not like me at all*) to 6 (*Very much like me*). Higher scores reflect greater importance of a value. Providing evidence for validity, individual and higher-order values correlate with theoretically consistent attitudes and demographic variables, such as age, education, and gender (Schwartz et al., 2012). Four higher-order value subscales can be calculated from the PVQ-RR. In the current study internal consistency of the subscales were: self-transcendence, $\alpha = .89$; conservation, $\alpha = .86$; self-enhancement, $\alpha = .79$; and openness to change, $\alpha = .88$.

Color-Blind Racial Ideology. The Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) was used to assess color-blind racial ideology (CBRI; Neville et al., 2000). The CoBRAS is a 20-item instrument measuring three different types of power-evasion CBRI: Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination and Blatant Racial Issues. The items are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 7 (*strongly agree).* An example item is, "Everyone who

works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich," (Neville, et al. 2000, p. 62). The total score was used for this study because we did not develop any theoretically justified hypotheses for differential associations between values and different types of power-evasion CBRI. The authors of the scale reported an internal consistency of the total scale of .91. The present sample demonstrated similar internal consistency, α =.89.

Social Justice Action Orientation. The Social Justice Scale (SJS; Torres-Harding et al., 2012) was used to assess social justice action orientation. The SJS is a 24-item scale that operationalizes social justice based on Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. It is composed of four subscales including: attitudes toward social justice, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions. The four subscales are theorized to predict whether an individual engages in social justice behaviors. A sample item is, "In the future, I intend to engage in activities that will promote social justice." Evidence for validity includes positive correlations with motivation to perform public service and negative correlations with just-world beliefs (people get what they deserve). The scale also demonstrated predictive validity in its ability to predict social justice related behaviors, with internal consistency ranging from .84 to .95 (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). We used the total score because we focused on the general tendency for social justice actions as an outcome rather than developing specific hypotheses for differential association between values, power-evasion CBRI and different components of social justice action orientation. This choice also followed work done by previous researchers (e.g. Henderson & Wright, 2015; Vincent & Marmo, 2018). Internal consistency for the current sample was, α = .95.

Procedures

Participants who were at least 18 years of age and signed up for the present online study via SONA, an online platform used to recruit undergraduate students for research projects. After providing informed consent, participants completed an online survey using Qualtrics software in exchange for course credit. The average time to complete the survey was 22 minutes. The order in which the measures were presented to participants was randomized. All participants completed questionnaires assessing personal values, power-evasion CBRI, social justice action orientation, and demographic information. All study procedures were approved by the university's institutional review board.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Missing data for individual scale items ranged from 0.0% to 2.8%. Little's (1998) Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test was non-significant, χ^2 (6146) = 6291.08, p = .096. The means presented in the results reflect *value priorities*, i.e., the relative importance of each value to each person; these centered means were calculated by centering each person's higher order value score on each individual's mean score for all values (cf. Schwartz et al., 2012). *Table 1* presents descriptive data and correlations between higher-order values and outcome variables; *Figure 2* displays correlations between individual values and outcome variables. The figure displays a "sinusoidal pattern" as predicted by Schwartz's theory of values in which peaks and valleys occur for values on opposite sides of the circumplex (see *Figure* 1) and in which the constructs of power-evasion CBRI and social justice action orientation present mirror images of one another relating to the values in the predicted directions.

Main Analyses

To test hypotheses, path analyses were conducted in which the four higher-order personal values—self-transcendence, self-enhancement, openness to change, and conservation—indirectly and directly (in the case of self-transcendence and self-enhancement) predicted social justice action orientation as well as power-evasion CBRI, which in turn predicted social justice action orientation. Path analysis was chosen as the analysis given the correlational nature of the data. It was also chosen given our desire to examine the unique contributions of the constructs as well as our intent to test how well the data fit our theoretical model. We utilized full information maximum likelihood method in MPLUS 7, which estimates a likelihood function for each participant based on all available variables (Muthén, Kaplan, & Hollis, 1987). As shown in *Table 1*, the correlations between self-transcendence and self-enhancement and between openness to change and conservation values were sufficiently high to suggest multicollinearity concerns; this aligns with Schwartz, Verkasalo, Antonovsky, & Sagiv's (1997) observation that when all values are entered as predictors in regression analyses, individual regression coefficients may not be meaningful. Therefore, we specified two models: Model 1included self-transcendence and openness to change higher-order values as predictors, whereas Model 2 included self-enhancement and conservation higher-order values as predictors. Chi-square and the following indices were utilized to assess each model's goodness of fit to the data: Comparative Fit Index (CFI; values of .95 or greater), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI; values of .95 or greater), and standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR; values close to .08 or less; Hu & Bentler, 1999).[1]

[1] Because gender has been associated with differing prioritization of personal values we conducted additional analyses that utilized gender as a covariate. Accounting for gender did not improve model fit or change the magnitude, direction, or statistical significance of paths in all models.

Model 1: Self-Transcendence and Openness to Change. The hypothesized mediation model (with both indirect and direct mediation as described above), χ^2 (*df* = 1) = 0.01, *p* = .945, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.03, SRMR = 0.00 demonstrated a good fit to the data. However, to test whether other models fit the data even better, we tested two alternative models. The first alternative model (Model 1A) included a direct path from openness to change to social justice action orientation (and an indirect path from self-transcendence to social justice action orientation). This model did not demonstrate adequate fit or an improvement over the hypothesized model, χ^2 (*df* = 1) = 19.14, *p* < .001, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.55, SRMR = 0.05 (i.e., CFI and TLI). The second alternative model we tested (Model 1B) was a fully mediated model, because it is possible that power-evasion CBRI may have fully mediated the relationship between values and social justice action orientation. The model also did not provide an adequate fit to the data, χ^2 (*df* = 2) = 19.14, *p* < .001, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.79, SRMR = 0.05. We then tested a set of alternative causality models to further test the proposed direction of our model, given that it is possible that values could directly predict social justice action orientation, the latter of which may influence power-evasion CBRI. Alternative Model 1 was specified so self-transcendence and openness to change values predicted social justice action orientation, which in turn predicted power-evasion CBRI. Model fit was poor, χ^2 (*df* = 2) = 45.05, *p* < .001, CFI = 0.79, TLI = 0.46, SRMR = 0.08. Adding a path from self-transcendence to power-evasion CBRI (Alternative Model 1A), χ^2 (*df* = 1) = 3.64, *p* = .056, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.02, improved model fit, but it was still not adequate (e.g., TLI). Next, we added a path to Alternative Model 1 from openness to change values to power-evasion CBRI (Alternative Model 1B), and model fit was poor, χ^2 (*df* = 1) = 41.43, *p* < .001, CFI = 0.80, TLI = –0.01, SRMR = 0.07. Therefore, we opted to keep the hypothesized model as our final model (see *Figure 3*).

Model 2: Self-Enhancement and Conservation. The hypothesized model, χ^2 (df = 1) = 2.56, p =.110, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.02, again demonstrated a good fit to the data. As before, to ensure that there was not a better solution than the one we predicted, we tested two alternative models. The first model (Model 2A) included a direct path from conservation to social justice action orientation and no direct path from self-enhancement to social justice action orientation. This model did not demonstrate an adequate fit to the data, χ^2 (df = 1) = 9.84, p = .002, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.74, SRMR = 0.04 (i.e., TLI). We next tested a fully mediated model (Model 2B) given that it is possible that power-evasion CBRI fully mediated the relationship between self-enhancement and conservation and social justice action orientation. This model also did not demonstrate a good fit to the data, χ^2 (df = 2) = 10.58, p = .005, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.87, SRMR = 0.04. As described above, we then tested a set of alternative causality models. Alternative Model 2 was specified so self-enhancement and conservation values predicted social justice action orientation, which in turn predicted power-evasion CBRI. Model fit was poor, χ^2 (df = 2) = 36.49, p < .001, CFI = 0.80, TLI = 0.49, SRMR = 0.07. Adding a path from self-enhancement to power-evasion CBRI (Alternative Model 2A), χ^2 (df = 1) = 26.40, p < .001, CFI = 0.85, TLI = 0.25, SRMR = 0.06, also resulted in poor model fit. Next, we added a path to Alternative Model 2 from conservation values to power-evasion CBRI (Alternative Model 2B), and model fit was also poor, χ^2 (df = 1) = 18.53, p < .001, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.49, SRMR = 0.05. Therefore, we opted to keep the original hypothesized model as our final model (see *Figure 3*).

To test the significance of the indirect effects of the higher-order personal values on social justice action orientation within the final models, we utilized a bootstrapping procedure. MPLUS 7 generated 10,000 bootstrap samples of the data, creating bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Results indicated that

self-transcendence values had a positive total effect (β = 0.43, 95% CI = [0.33, 0.52]) and indirect effect on social justice action orientation via power-evasion CBRI (β = 0.19, 95% CI = [0.14, 0.25]). Openness to change also had a statistically significant indirect effect on social justice action orientation via power-evasion CBRI (β = 0.04, 95% CI = [0.003, 0.08]). Self-Enhancement exhibited a negative total effect (β = −0.30, 95% CI = [−0.40, −0.19] and indirect effect via power-evasion CBRI (β = −0.16, 95% CI = [−0.22, −0.10]) on social justice action orientation. Conservation also had a statistically significant indirect effect on social justice action orientation via power-evasion CBRI (β = −0.16, 95% CI = [−0.22, −0.11]).

Discussion

In the present study we investigated how four higher-order personal values—self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness to change, and conservation—relate to the endorsement of color-blind racial ideology, and how this in turn predicts social justice action orientation. In support of the theory of basic human values (Schwartz et al., 2012), we hypothesized that higher order values on opposite poles of the values circumplex would differentially predict power-evasion CBRI. Supporting this hypothesis, self-transcendence was negatively correlated with power-evasion CBRI whereas self-enhancement was positively correlated. This aligns with previous findings that have linked self-transcendence and self-enhancement values to respectively positive and negative attitudes toward outgroups (e.g., Vecchione et al., 2012; Leong & Ward, 2006). Specifically, those who orient themselves toward caring about others' wellbeing (i.e., self-transcendence) tend to also acknowledge that racism exists and should be addressed whereas those who orient themselves toward their own status, power, and recognition (i.e., self-enhancement) tend to assert that racism *should not* and *does not* matter (Neville et al., 2016), which at least partially explains why they are therefore not likely to

engage in or endorse social justice causes. Overall, this suggests that, for at least some of the population, power-evasion colorblindness reflects and aligns with more self-serving values, which would of course, undercut the idea that colorblindness is a benevolent approach to race relations (Neville et al., 2016).

Also supporting our hypotheses, openness to change was negatively correlated with power-evasion CBRI, whereas conservation was positively correlated. This aligns with previous research that has found differential associations between openness to change and conservation values on attitudes toward marginalized/non-dominant groups (Beierlein et al., 2016). Specifically, the results suggest that people prioritizing security, social norms, and maintaining the status quo rather than seeking self-direction and novel stimuli are more likely to not hold a social justice action orientation because they endorse a power-evasion colorblind ideology that denies the existence of racial inequality. They may therefore knowingly or unknowingly discriminate against others based on race while simultaneously denying their own racism (e.g. Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Overall, this finding implies that adherence to a power-evasion colorblind ideology may reflect deeper motivations to “keep things the way they are”, even if this comes at the expense of the well-being of those who have been marginalized (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Evidence for power-evasion CBRI as a partial mediator between the higher-order values of self-transcendence and self-enhancement and social justice action orientation was supported. These findings supported our prediction that the relationship between both these values and social justice action orientation would only partially be explained by power-evasion CBRI, given that there are likely other mediators that also explain the connection between these values and social justice action orientation. On the other hand, as predicted, openness to change and

conservation values on social justice orientation were fully mediated by colorblindness. This suggests that the main reason someone who highly endorses these two values would rate highly on social justice action orientation is because of their endorsement (or lack thereof) of a color-blind racial ideology.

These results align with a robust literature that suggests values influence behaviors due to their influence on beliefs and attitudes (Maio, 2017). Endorsement of colorblind beliefs—such as the notion that systemic racism does not exist—may be a more proximal predictor of social justice action orientation than personal values along the openness to change vs. conservation dimension. Importantly, this suggests that the motivation underlying conservation values, such as a desire to maintain the status quo, facilitates the adoption of an ideology that denies the reality of racial inequality (thus maintaining the status quo). The adoption of this power-evasion colorblind ideology in those who prioritize conservation values may explain these individuals' lower endorsement of social justice beliefs and behaviors. In short, those who prioritize conservation values may not engage in social justice behaviors because they deny the existence of racial inequality. Conversely, the motivation underlying openness to change, which includes a desire for autonomy and novelty, may help facilitate less prejudiced ideologies, which may in turn enable greater willingness to support social justice. In other words, those who prioritize openness to change values, may be more likely to engage in social justice behaviors because they value independence of thought and action and may therefore not accept the social norm of colorblindness, and be open to the fact that racial differences do exist.

Prior to the present study, there was little empirical knowledge as to the underlying mechanisms that explain the relationship of the higher-order personal values to social-justice related constructs. The predicted presence of direct effects from values to social justice action

orientation suggest that values along the self-transcendence/self-enhancement dimension may directly explain variance in social justice action orientation, in addition to their influence on colorblind beliefs. This supports the idea that self-transcendence values, which include lower-order values such as universalism, that reflect concern with the well-being of all people and nature (Schwartz, 2012)—may be indicative of a larger prioritization of social justice for all marginalized groups, not just those impacted by racial injustice (Schwartz, 1992). Conversely, self-enhancement values—and particularly power, which reflects a desire to be socially dominant (Schwartz, 2012)—may reflect a desire to avoid sharing resources with marginalized others, not because the person lacks awareness or denies systemic inequalities, but because doing so might decrease one's own relative status. Therefore, a lack of awareness or denial of racial inequality would not fully explain the negative relationship between self-enhancement values and social justice beliefs. Although, power-evasion CBRI is specific to race (vs. general identity blind ideology), it acted as a full mediator of the relationship between openness to change and conservation values to social justice action orientation. Perhaps, because power-evasion CBRI (vs. identity blind ideology regarding other identity groups such as sexual orientation or social class) has prevailed public discourses on social justice issues, it is possible that the lack of endorsement of social justice initiatives among individuals who highly endorse conservation values comes from a more naïve colorblind ideology that supports their view of a "just" world (e.g. Neville et al., 2000) as opposed to a desire to have and maintain power over others. In contrast, those who prioritize openness to change values may be less concerned with fighting for equality for all individuals and more open to the notion that systemic structures in the U.S. are racist and therefore should be adjusted.

Implications

Efforts to develop multicultural competencies using diversity trainings in the fields of business, education, and counseling have continued to rise in the United States (e.g. Fox & Gay, 1995; Paluck, 2006; Sue, 2008; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The desired aims of such efforts overlap with some of the basic tenets of social justice action orientation, namely to provide an equitable allocation of resources and power among members of society, based on the acknowledgement of inequitable experiences of marginalized individuals such as people of color, women, and sexual minorities (Prilleltensky, 2001). The findings in this study may have important implications for the development of diversity trainings and multicultural interventions. First, the present study expands upon previous research by demonstrating the relationship between personal values and beliefs about the relevance of racism as well as one's support for social justice. Facilitators of diversity trainings may consider exploring and assessing participants' values prior to administering interventions. Facilitating discussions about personal values may also be beneficial because, unlike attitudes which are often conceptualized as reflecting agreement or disagreement with a particular belief, values are conceptualized as reflecting different levels of prioritization (Schwartz et al., 2012). That is, participants may be less likely to disagree that a particular value is important, and be able to discuss how they prioritize values to different degrees.

Another important implication of the present research regarding diversity training involves a "bleed-over" effect; when a set of values is temporarily "engaged" a person is likely to prioritize motivationally consistent values and engage in motivationally consistent behaviors (Maio, 2017; Maio, Pakizeh, Cheung, & Rees, 2009). The value of benevolence—defined as caring for the well-being of others in one's in-group—may be a value that serves as a bridge between self-transcendence and conservation values. Benevolence is also a value that people

across different cultures prioritize as important (Schwartz et al., 2012). Discussing and priming the importance of benevolence, may strengthen the underlying motivational processes of the self-transcendence values (Maio et al., 2009), which would in turn have positive effects on social justice action orientation. Such "priming" interventions could involve having participants reflect upon individuals who are important to them. Interventions could also be done to expand participants' conception of who is in their in-group by having them think of other in-groups they belong to aside from their family and friends such as work teams, clubs, college affiliations, communities of residence, etc. By expanding one's conception of an in-group or "who one's neighbor is", the positive feelings of care and connection that are constrained to one's in-group may be extended to other individuals that have been marginalized (Stephens, 2014).

Other research suggests that coming up with good reasons to prioritize a value for which an individual lacks cognitive support, can strengthen that value's importance (Schuster, Pinkowski, and Fischer, 2019). Therefore, a relevant intervention could involve assessing individuals' cognitive support for the different values. Those who are low in prioritizing self-transcendence and openness to change values could be targeted specifically for an intervention in which they are encouraged to identify cognitive support for these values as a way to increase their prioritization. Schwartz has also proposed the idea that power and security values become more important to individuals when the values appear at risk or difficult to attain, while self-transcendence and openness to change values increase in prioritization to the extent that there are more opportunities to engage them. Therefore, an intervention could involve increasing an individuals' feeling of security in regards to their social status and financial security, while making them aware of the various ways to be involved in social justice work. An intervention that targets these mechanisms may be a way to increase individuals' self-transcendence and

openness to change values while decreasing the prioritization of their conservation and self-enhancement values (Schwartz, 2010).

The finding that power-evasion colorblindness may either fully or partially mediate the links between higher-order values and social justice action orientation also has implications. Providing education about the existence and negative impact of colorblindness as an ideology, as well as the fallacy that someone can actually attain colorblindness, may be effective in increasing some individuals' orientation toward social-justice. Schwartz (2010) contends that individuals will reduce their internal conflict of choosing not to act in pro-social ways by reinterpreting a situation so as to "deactivate" their self-transcendence values. For example, an individual may reinterpret the situation to decide the perceived need is not as serious as they originally thought or to decide that they are less responsible for a situation than originally believed (Schwartz, 2010, p. 234). The ideology of colorblindness may function in this way for individuals high in conservation and self-enhancement values. The color-blind racial ideology gives the individual a rationale for not engaging in social justice behaviors because the problem may not exist (i.e. there are no racial inequalities) or the individual decides it's not their fault or responsibility to fix the problem (i.e. denial of privilege and systematic racism). Debunking the rationale behind colorblindness may re-engage an individual's self-transcendence values by poking holes through their interpretation of the situation. For example, it may be useful to present information regarding the robust finding that race affects perceptions of others, despite best intentions, which then has an impact on how the individual is treated (e.g. Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). However, other research has suggested that encouraging social justice behaviors as a logical expression of one's values may be more effective than providing negative, guilt-inducing information (Green & Shapiro, 1994; Pfeffer, 1994).

Strengths and Limitations

The present research has strengths, including its focus on testing clinical applications of a well-established psychological theory, though it also has limitations. Although the present study provides preliminary results for a theoretical model connecting personal values and social justice action orientation, future research is needed to provide empirical verification of our proposed model by utilizing study designs that allow for testing causal models. Data was cross-sectional, which means that the evidence of causal relationships is inconclusive, and would benefit from longitudinal and experimental designs to eliminate additional variables that could be responsible for the present study's observed relationships. Future research should also investigate whether manipulating participants' personal values effects their endorsement of power-evasion CBRI and social justice action orientation to further test the direction of causality of the proposed model. The study also used a sample of predominantly White college students from a predominantly White university in the Midwest. The results therefore should be replicated with a more diverse sample in terms of ethnic/racial identity, age, geographic location, and education level before any generalizations to a broader adult population can be made. College education and the university culture may have an effect on individuals' endorsement of power evasion CBRI and social justice action orientation. Geographical location may also have an impact on these variables due to different cultural norms in different parts of the country and differing levels of cultural and racial diversity across the U.S. This study also used a racial-domain specific CBRI as a mediator in predicting general social justice action orientation. Future studies could test our proposed model using general identity blind ideology or ideologies specific to other cultural dimensions as mediators. Finally, the variables in this study were all self-report measures. Self-report measures cannot serve as replacements for behavioral measures. Although an individual may endorse

social justice values and intent to engage in social justice behaviors, their behavior in real-life may be quite different from what their reported beliefs and intentions suggest. Self-reported measures, such as those used in this study are also vulnerable to socially desirable responding, which may affect the accuracy of the results. Therefore, future studies should also consider controlling for social desirability.

Conclusion

Overall, the present study provides insight into the mechanisms by which values motivate an action orientation toward social justice. Self-transcendence and openness to change values are positively associated with social justice action orientation, suggesting that underlying motivations for growth and self-expression may facilitate social justice efforts. In contrast, self-enhancement and conservation values have the opposite pattern of results, suggesting that underlying motivations for self-protection and anxiety avoidance may be barriers to adopting a social justice action orientation. Results also suggest that power-evasion color-blind racial ideology mediates these relationships between the higher-order values—self-enhancement, self-transcendence, openness to change, conservation—and social justice action orientation. The way one prioritizes values may influence their racial ideology—which in turn may influence their willingness to work in service of social justice. The results also provide insight into the types of values that institutions, organizations, and social justice movements could emphasize in service of their larger social justice goals. Increasing insight into how values influence orientation toward social justice may be an important first step in designing and employing strategic efforts to achieve a more equitable society.

Conflict of Interest Statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Table 1. Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables ($N = 325$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-Transcendence	—						
2. Openness to Change	0.03	—					
3. Self-Enhancement	−0.64***	−0.02	—				
4. Conservation	−0.40***	−0.64***	−0.15**	—			
5. COBRAS	−0.49***	−0.12*	0.28***	0.29***	—		
6. Social Justice	0.43***	0.06	−0.28***	−0.18**	−0.51***	—	
7. Gender	0.11*	−0.03	−0.20***	0.04	−0.16**	0.21***	—
Mean (SD)	0.38 (0.43)	0.32 (0.42)	−0.63 (0.60)	−0.21 (0.42)	2.78 (0.81)	5.78 (0.84)	77% women

Note. All personal values variables were mean-centered across all values; For values variables, a mean of zero corresponds to the average score of all values, a negative mean reflects that the value that was rated as less important than average, and a positive mean reflect that the value was rated as more important. Gender is coded such that 1 = *man* and 2 = *woman.*

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