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Overcoming Beneficiary Race as an Impediment to Charitable Donations: Social Dominance Orientation, the Experience of Moral Elevation, and Donation Behavior

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Three studies examined the relationship between social dominance orientation (SDO), the experience of moral elevation, and Whites' donations to charitable organizations. Study 1 used video clips depicting acts of moral excellence to elicit a state of moral elevation (a distinctive feeling of warmth and expansion, which is accompanied by admiration, affection, and even love for people whose exemplary moral behavior is being observed). Results show that moral elevation increased participants' willingness to donate to a Black-oriented charity and attenuated the negative effect of the group-based dominance (GBD) component of SDO on donation behavior. Studies 2 and 3 replicate and extend these findings by using a written story to elicit a state of moral elevation and examining actual donations to a Black-oriented charity. Results show that moral elevation increased donations to the Black-oriented charity and neutralized the negative influence of GBD.

Keywords: *social dominance orientation; moral elevation; moral emotions; prosocial behavior; ethnocentrism*

White, non-Hispanic households enjoy a median level of household income (\$52,423 in 2006) that is more than 60% higher than that of Black households (\$31,969; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Thus, for many organizations devoted to helping minorities, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), the many historically Black colleges, and the Urban League, successfully attracting donations from White Americans seems to be a practical necessity. In this article, we examine a psychological variable—social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994)—that we expect to partly explain differences in White Americans' willingness to contribute to charitable organizations that benefit those outside their racial/ethnic group.

SDO is defined as “the degree to which individuals desire and support a group-based hierarchy and the domination of ‘inferior’ groups by ‘superior’ groups” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48). A growing literature links SDO to anti-Black racism, ethnocentrism, and opposition to policies that promote greater racial equality (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). We sought to extend

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these findings to the case of charitable giving by testing whether SDO predicts the willingness of Whites to support a nonprofit organization that advances educational opportunities for Blacks. We also sought to theoretically extend SDO research by testing whether the negative effect SDO should have on donation behavior can be neutralized by witnessing acts that represent examples of humanity's higher or better nature. Haidt (2000, 2001) has proposed that witnessing acts of moral excellence can elicit a state of moral elevation. Drawing from prior research (Algoe & Haidt, 2006; Silvers & Haidt, 2008) and theory (Haidt, 2000, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003) on the state of moral elevation, we examine whether triggering this experience can influence people who might not otherwise donate money to an organization that advances the interests of Blacks (i.e., Whites high in SDO) to do so.

Theoretical Development and Hypotheses

SDO is the key individual difference variable in *social dominance theory* (SDT). SDT begins with the assumption that every complex society can be characterized by the existence of a group-based hierarchy in which at least one group is dominant over others and has a disproportionate share of social assets (e.g., wealth, status, access to education, and health care), and at least one group occupies a subordinate position and experiences a disproportionate share of social liabilities (e.g., poverty, malnutrition, punitive treatment by authorities). The cognitive beliefs associated with SDO reflect the degree to which a person accepts or rejects attitudes and policy preferences that either promote or attenuate group-based inequality and are willing to use aggression to maintain the dominance hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDO cognitions have been linked to heightened ethnocentrism and intolerance (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Pratto et al., 1994), greater willingness to direct harmful action against devalued outgroups (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994), and more negative attitudes toward social programs such as Affirmative Action that advance the interests of ethnic minorities and women (e.g., Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Jost & Thompson, 2000). SDO beliefs have also been shown to predict feelings of greater social distance from outgroups (Guimond, Damburn, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003; Sidanius et al., 1994) and reduced generosity in allocating resources to outgroups (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005; Sidanius et al., 1994).

Based on this extensive collection of prior research, we propose that higher levels of SDO beliefs should be associated with greater ethnocentrism, resulting in Whites exhibiting less willingness to donate to Black-oriented

charities. Simply put, ethnocentrism should be associated with reduced concern for the welfare of outgroups relative to one's ingroup, which might be expressed by withholding donations from charities that benefit an outgroup. Interestingly, one prior study shows that a positive relationship between SDO and ingroup favoritism emerges only among high- but not low-status group members (Federico, 1999, Study 2; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998), suggesting that ethnocentric beliefs may be a more important source of positive group identity for high-SDO Whites than it is for high-SDO racial/ethnic minorities.

Group-Based Dominance (GBD) and Opposition to Equality (OEQ)

Studies of SDO have used Pratto et al.'s (1994) 16-item scale to measure this construct, and nearly all have assumed that the instrument is unidimensional. However, Jost and Thompson (2000) showed that two correlated ideological factors underlie the SDO scale. The first factor captures attitudes toward dominance, aggression, and control (GBD); the second captures opposition versus support for social inequality (OEQ). One way to conceptualize the difference between the subscales is that GBD involves the motive for one's ingroup to dominate others, whereas OEQ involves the motive to preserve social inequality in general regardless of the ingroup's position. Jost and Thompson provide evidence that these factors are empirically distinct and show different relationships to constructs such as psychological well-being, ethnocentrism, and social policy attitudes. One of Jost and Thompson's findings that has theoretical implications for our study is that GBD, but not OEQ, was significantly and positively related to ethnocentrism for European Americans in two of their studies (Studies 2 and 3). However, their fourth study failed to replicate this result, showing instead that OEQ was positively related to ethnocentrism for European Americans and not significantly related to ethnocentrism for African Americans.

Jost and Thompson (2000) hypothesized that GBD and OEQ should both be related to Whites' ethnocentrism because these beliefs justify their economic and social advantages relative to subordinate ethnic groups. They did not specify, though, which of the two dimensions of SDO should be a stronger predictor of ethnocentrism for White Americans. As there is little additional evidence on which to base a specific prediction about the relative strength of the relationships between these factors and donations to a Black-oriented charity, we examine only a general directional prediction that both OEQ and GBD should be negatively related to Whites' willingness to donate money to a

Black-oriented charity. We then examine the pattern of results to see whether the effect of one of these SDO components may be consistently stronger than the other.

Finding support for our general hypothesis that SDO predicts donation behavior would highlight an important practical challenge for Black-oriented charities. Namely, how can such charities overcome ingroup favoritism among Whites and successfully appeal to a broad spectrum of prospective donors? Indeed, members of dominant groups (such as Whites) tend to have higher SDO on average than subordinate group members (Guimond et al., 2003). To provide a conceptual basis for addressing this question, we turn to a consideration of moral elevation.

The State of Moral Elevation

Haidt (2000, 2001) proposes that witnessing acts of moral excellence can elicit a state of moral elevation. Moral elevation is the opposite of social disgust (Haidt, 2000). Whereas disgust makes people close themselves off to others, elevation makes people seek contact and draw closer to them. Haidt (2000, 2003) describes the subjective experience of moral elevation as consisting of a distinctive feeling of warmth and expansion, which is accompanied by admiration, affection, and even love for the person (or people) whose exemplary behavior is being observed. Importantly, these feelings can extend to other people as well and are associated with an increased desire on the observer's part to become a better person (Haidt, 2000, 2003). According to Haidt (2003), moral elevation possesses all of the hallmarks of a basic emotion, except for a distinct facial expression. That is, it results from an eliciting event, it produces physiological changes in the person, it is a phenomenological experience, and it motivates a certain type of action tendency (Shweder, 1994).

Moral elevation has received relatively little empirical attention. However, because it is purported to motivate people to draw closer to others it would seem to be an experience that might enable people to override cognitions, such as those associated with higher levels of SDO, that maintain or preserve social distance between groups. As mentioned earlier, one of the consequences of moral elevation is that it causes a desire to become a better person and to open one's heart not just to the person or persons who triggered the feeling but to others as well (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Silvers & Haidt, 2008). Haidt (2003) suggests that the state of moral elevation is associated with certain action tendencies that include the desire to emulate the moral exemplar and act prosocially. Algoe and Haidt (2006) provide empirical support for this hypothesis by showing that people who experience elevation are more likely to want to

help others, give money to charity, and list prosocial actions when asked to write about their life goals. These findings suggest that the experience of moral elevation that follows from witnessing acts of extraordinary moral goodness can function as a kind of "moral reset button," creating a virtuous ripple effect that can lead to changes in behavior (at least in the immediate context in which elevation is experienced).

We sought to extend Algoe and Haidt's (2006) finding that moral elevation can motivate people to give to charity by testing whether this state can neutralize the effect of SDO beliefs that would otherwise discourage such behavior when it benefits subordinate outgroups. Theoretical support for why moral elevation might lead to behavioral change can be found in the literature linking affect and social judgments. Forgas's (1995) affect infusion model suggests that affect informs cognition and judgments. He cites evidence that positive moods can have a profound impact on social judgments, which can include leading people to hold more favorable attitudes toward historically stigmatized groups (Forgas & Moylan, 1991; Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1994). The rationale for why the emotions associated with moral elevation might motivate prosocial action tendencies comes from Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and build theory. Her theory suggests that positive emotions increase behavioral repertoires and expand people's sense of self so that it includes others (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006), which can decrease racial biases (Johnson & Fredrickson, 2005).

If the experience of moral elevation leads people to draw closer to others and change their attitudes toward stigmatized groups, it may be that exposing higher SDO Whites to events that elicit moral elevation would lead them to override or even temporarily change beliefs that otherwise discourage them from providing assistance to Black-oriented organizations. If so, witnessing an act of moral excellence should weaken the negative relationship between the ideological dimensions of SDO and donations to a Black-oriented charity. Accordingly, we tested two additional hypotheses. The first is that witnessing an act of moral excellence increases Whites' willingness to donate money to a Black-oriented charity; the second is that the experience of moral elevation moderates the effect of SDO on donation behavior by attenuating the negative effects of GBD and OEQ.

Overview of Studies

We tested our hypotheses regarding SDO, moral elevation, and donation behavior in Study 1 by using video clips to elicit a state of moral elevation among participants in experimental conditions. Willingness to donate money to a Black-oriented charity served

as the key outcome variable. We conducted Studies 2 and 3 to replicate and extend Study 1 findings by using a written story to elicit a state of moral elevation. We also included a measure of actual donations to a Black-oriented charity.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

One hundred and twenty-nine undergraduate students participated in the study for course credit. All participants indicated that they were “White, Caucasian, Anglo, or European American, not Hispanic.”¹ Fifty-six percent were female. Average age was 20.2 years ($SD = 2.0$).

Participants completed study tasks at two time points, which were separated by at least 24 hrs. Participants completed an online survey that included measures of OEQ and GBD at Time 1. At Time 2, participants completed an in-lab Person Perception Survey. This portion of the study was divided into three ostensibly unrelated parts. Part I involved completing a series of items relating to personal opinions. Part II involved an experimental manipulation—watching (not watching) a video clip—and then completing a series of manipulation check items pertaining to the participant’s thoughts and feelings about the clip. Part III involved a decision-making task in which participants were asked to indicate their willingness to make a donation to a Black-oriented charity.

Experimental Manipulations

To test our hypotheses regarding the interactive influence of OEQ, GBD, and moral elevation on participants’ willingness to donate to a Black-oriented charity we used a three-group design with two experimental groups and a control group. Each of the experimental groups viewed a video clip (much like Algoe & Haidt, 2006) that was intended to elicit the state of moral elevation by presenting participants with an example of uncommon moral virtue. The clips were chosen to reflect examples of moral virtue that either did or did not depict Whites helping Blacks. This choice allowed us to test whether it was necessary for the elevating act to model an exchange between the would-be donors (Whites) and beneficiaries (Blacks) of the focal charitable organization in the study: the UNCF. We refer to these manipulations as the related and unrelated moral elevation conditions, respectively.

Related moral elevation condition (RMEC). A video clip about Amy Biehl from the television news program

60 Minutes II (Bonin & De Luca Sheh, 2000) was used to provide a morally virtuous example of Whites helping Blacks. The clip told the story about how Amy Biehl—a White, U.S. college student—was murdered by Black youths in South Africa while she was working on a Fulbright scholarship to help end apartheid. Rather than seeking vengeance, Amy’s parents responded to her death by establishing and funding the Amy Biehl Foundation to continue her work. Through the foundation, the Biehls have funded 15 programs and helped thousands of poor Black South Africans to better their lives, including two of the youths convicted of murdering Amy. The Biehls’ efforts are widely known and highly respected in South Africa. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has stated that the Biehls have *obuntu*, a South African term meaning “the essence of humanity.”

Unrelated moral elevation condition (UMEC). A video clip about Joel Sonnenberg from the television news magazine *Public Eye* (Mosely, 1998) was used to provide an example of morally virtuous behavior that was unrelated to Whites helping Blacks. The clip told the story about how, at the age of 22 months, Joel was badly burned and disfigured when a tractor trailer slammed into his family’s car. Joel lost his toes, fingers, and one hand in the accident; he was forced to endure 45 surgeries and “grow up in a world that did not welcome him.” Police suspected that the driver—Reginald Dort—was trying to hit a female acquaintance with his truck. Dort jumped bail after the accident and fled to Canada where he continued driving a truck before he was apprehended more than a decade later. The video showed what transpired in a courtroom during Dort’s sentencing when Joel and other members of the Sonnenberg family offered forgiveness. For example, Joel’s mother said: “I do forgive you Mr. Dort. . . . You will see my scarred Joel this morning. All of us have scars.” Joel was the last to speak, and he said these words to Dort: “This is my prayer for you—that you may know that grace has no limits. We will not consume our lives with hatred because hatred brings only misery. We will surround our lives with love.”

We expected that the actions of the Biehl and Sonnenberg families and their ability to show uncommon compassion, forgiveness, and understanding toward those who had caused them enormous suffering would be construed by study participants as examples of humankind’s better nature. As a result, both video clips were expected to elicit a state of moral elevation.

Control condition. In the control condition, participants did not watch a video clip; therefore, we did not expect them to experience a state of moral elevation before making their donation decision.

Measures

Donation to charity. To gauge participants' donation behavior toward a Black-oriented charity, we needed to select an organization that would be (a) unambiguously perceived by participants as Black-oriented and (b) closely associated with a cause that participants would be likely to have at least a minimal connection with (to avoid the potential for floor effects on donation behavior). Based on these criteria, the UNCF was chosen. The UNCF is well known and has a long record of supporting historically Black colleges and African American students, with whom our student participants should be able to empathize in terms of the financial costs associated with higher education.

We measured donation to charity by asking participants "to make a decision about how to allocate real money that you may win as a result of participating in today's experiment." Participants were told that a random drawing was to be conducted wherein they would have a 4% chance of winning \$25, which they could choose to keep for themselves or donate some or all of it to the UNCF. They were then provided with a detailed UNCF fact sheet that described the organization as "the nation's largest, oldest, and most comprehensive minority higher education assistance organization . . . [that] has distributed more funds to help minorities attend school than any entity outside of the government."

After reading the fact sheet, participants were asked to indicate how much of the \$25 they would like to donate to the UNCF if they were chosen as a winner of \$25. They could choose one of four allocations: (a) "\$25 to me and \$0 to the UNCF," (b) "\$15 to me and \$10 to the UNCF," (c) "\$10 to me and \$15 to the UNCF," or (d) "\$0 to me and \$25 to the UNCF." Study instructions made it clear to participants that any money allocated to the UNCF would actually be donated to the organization by the researchers. We treated this measure as a continuous variable in our analysis ranging from 1 to 4 with higher numbers indicating larger donations to the Black-oriented charity.²

GBD and OEQ. We used Pratto et al.'s (1994) 16-item measure of SDO. The instrument asks respondents to indicate their attitudes toward eight statements that reflect support for group-based hierarchies (e.g., "Superior groups should dominate inferior groups"; "It's okay if some groups have more of a chance in life than others"). These items constitute the GBD subscale (Jost & Thompson, 2000). The instrument also asks respondents to indicate their attitudes toward eight statements that reflect the endorsement of hierarchy-attenuating goals (e.g., "Group equality should be our

ideal"; "No one group should dominate society"). These items constitute the OEQ subscale (Jost & Thompson, 2000). All items were answered using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very negative*, 7 = *very positive*), and they were coded such that higher values reflect higher levels of GBD ($\alpha = .91$) and OEQ ($\alpha = .88$), respectively.

Elevating emotions, positive emotions, and elevating thoughts. We assessed whether the videos elicited a state of moral elevation by asking participants to report how much they felt three emotions after viewing a video clip: compassion, inspired, and admiration. These emotions were selected based on Haidt's (2000, 2001, 2003) description of the elevation construct. To provide a conservative test, we also wanted to show that the effect of watching the video would influence these emotions and not other positive emotions that are less likely to be elicited by witnessing morally virtuous acts. Thus, we also asked participants to report whether they experienced the following emotions: joy, pleasure, and enthusiasm.

Participants in the experimental conditions indicated the extent to which they felt each of the emotions while watching the video. In the control condition, participants were asked to indicate how they felt "right now."³ Participants responded to each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). A principal components analysis with a promax rotation was used to examine the factor structure underlying participants' responses to the emotions items. This analysis revealed two factors with initial eigenvalues >1.0 —one corresponding to the three elevating emotions (rotated item loadings ranged from .86 to .91) and one corresponding to the three nonelevating, positive emotions (rotated item loadings ranged from .82 to .84). The correlation between the rotated factors was .33, and together they explained 74% of the total variance. Based on these results, the three elevating emotions items were averaged and the three nonelevation, positive emotions items were averaged to form the respective measures (α s = .86 for the elevating emotions measure and .77 for the positive emotions measure).

In addition to emotions, we assessed whether watching the video influenced participants' views of humanity in general. According to Haidt (2000), a possible consequence of witnessing an act of moral excellence is that it can lead to changes in cognitive structures. Although we did not expect that our experimental manipulations would have such a profound effect on participants, it seemed reasonable to suspect that viewing an act of moral excellence would temporarily activate cognitions associated with positive views of humanity. To assess this possibility, participants were asked to rate the extent

TABLE 1: Study 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Variables

Variable	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Donations to UNCF	2.34	1.13	-.42***	-.36***	.25***	.30***	-.05	.12
2. OEQ	2.90	1.06		.66***	-.21**	-.28***	-.02	-.31***
3. GBD	3.00	1.15			-.09	-.19**	.17*	-.28***
4. Elevating emotions	3.44	1.19				.55***	.33**	.17*
5. Elevating thoughts	3.41	0.78					.23***	.16*
6. Positive emotions	2.09	0.90						-.14
7. Sex	0.55	0.50						

NOTE: UNCF = United Negro College Fund; OEQ = opposition to equality; GBD = group-based dominance.

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

to which they experienced four thoughts while participating in the experiment: “People are really good”; “The world is full of kindness and generosity”; “The actions of most people are admirable”; “There is still some good in the world.” Respondents answered on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*), and items were summed to form a measure of elevating thoughts ($\alpha = .76$).

Control variables. We controlled for sex because it has been argued that women are more oriented toward an ethic of care than men (Gilligan, 1982), which might make them more likely to donate to charity. Sex was dummy coded (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*).

Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are shown in Table 1. In line with our expectations, willingness to donate to the UNCF was negatively associated with OEQ and GBD and positively associated with elevating thoughts and emotions.

Manipulation Check

A MANOVA was used to gauge the success of our manipulations in eliciting morally elevating thoughts and emotions without also increasing other positive emotions. Manipulation check results show a significant main effect of experimental condition (Wilks's lambda), $F(6, 246) = 23.7, p < .01$. To explore the pattern of means underlying this result, three one-way ANOVAs were conducted on the respective measures. Results show significant effects of experimental condition for elevating thoughts, $F(2, 126) = 8.7, p < .01$, and elevating emotions, $F(2, 126) = 47.8, p < .01$. As expected, the mean levels of elevating thoughts were higher in both the RMEC ($M = 3.48, SD = .77$) and the UMEC ($M = 3.66, SD = .61$) conditions than they were in the control group ($M = 3.04, SD = .76; p < .01$ for both pairwise t tests). Similarly, the mean levels of elevating emotions

observed in the RMEC ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.07$) and UMEC ($M = 4.29, SD = .63$) conditions were both significantly higher than the mean level observed in the control group ($M = 2.41, SD = .97; p < .01$ for both pairwise t tests). In terms of positive emotions, results show a marginally significant main effect, $F(2, 126) = 2.9, p = .06$. Pairwise t tests show that this effect was attributable to the experience of higher levels of positive emotions in the control group ($M = 2.32, SD = 1.04$) compared to the RMEC group ($M = 1.86, SD = .70; p < .05$). Although members of the UMEC group ($M = 2.09, SD = .84$) also experienced fewer positive emotions than the control group, this difference was not significant ($p > .20$). Taken together, these findings suggest that the video clips succeeded in eliciting the types of thoughts and emotions believed to characterize a state of moral elevation without also prompting an increase in other positive emotions. Thus, the manipulation check results support the internal validity of study findings.

Hypothesis Tests

Hierarchical regression analysis was used for hypothesis testing. Step 1 of the analysis included sex, OEQ, GBD, and two dummy-coded experimental condition variables: one reflecting the contrast between the RMEC and the control condition and one reflecting the contrast between the UMEC and the control condition (Aiken & West, 1991). Step 2 included four mean-centered interaction terms pertaining to: OEQ \times RMEC, OEQ \times UMEC, GBD \times RMEC, and GBD \times UMEC. Results are shown in Table 2.

Consistent with our hypotheses, Step 2 results show a negative effect of OEQ on donations as well as positive effects of the RMEC and UMEC video clips (with the UMEC effect being marginally significant). The main effects for RMEC and UMEC were both qualified by significant GBD \times Moral Elevation Condition interactions. We examined the patterns underlying these interactions by regressing donation behavior on GBD in each experimental condition. The results showed that GBD was significantly and negatively related to donation

TABLE 2: Study 1 Hierarchical Regression Results for Willingness to Donate to the United Negro College Fund

Predictor Variable	Step 1		Step 2	
	B	t	B	t
Sex	-.19	-0.95	-.20	-1.02
RMEC	.48	2.12**	.55	2.49**
UMEC	.45	2.02**	.39	1.80*
OEQ	-.36	-3.13***	-.39	-3.03***
GBD	-.13	-1.20	-.04	-0.40
OEQ × RMEC			-.36	-1.40
OEQ × UMEC			-.31	-1.08
GBD × RMEC			.80	3.16***
GBD × UMEC			.57	2.25**
Model R ²		.23***		.30***
ΔR ²				.07**

NOTE: RMEC = related moral elevation condition; UMEC = unrelated moral elevation condition; OEQ = opposition to equality; GBD = group-based dominance.

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

behavior in the control condition ($B = -.58, p < .01, R^2 = .47$) but not in either the RMEC ($B = -.06, ns, R^2 < .01$) or the UMEC ($B = -.18, ns, R^2 = .04$) condition. Figure 1 illustrates these findings and shows that exposure to both of the morally elevating videos neutralized the negative effect of GBD on participants' willingness to donate to the UNCF. Moreover, this effect seems to be attributable to a decrease in ethnocentrism among participants who were higher in GBD, as indicated by the fact that lower GBD scorers appear to have exhibited nearly identical donation behaviors across conditions.

Discussion

Study 1 confirms prior observations of a positive link between SDO and outgroup discrimination (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005; Sidanius et al., 1994). It also supports our hypothesis that witnessing morally virtuous behavior can produce a state of moral elevation that neutralizes the negative effects of SDO on donations to an organization that benefits a subordinate outgroup. Moral elevation only neutralized the negative effect of the GBD component of SDO, however. This result held for two examples of morally virtuous behavior—one that involved Whites' provision of direct assistance to Blacks (RMEC) and one that was unrelated to the notion of Whites helping Blacks (UMEC). The negative effect of OEQ on donation behavior persisted even in the RMEC and UMEC conditions.

That GBD and OEQ had different effects on donation behavior supports Jost and Thompson's (2000) contention that two distinct sets of beliefs underlie the

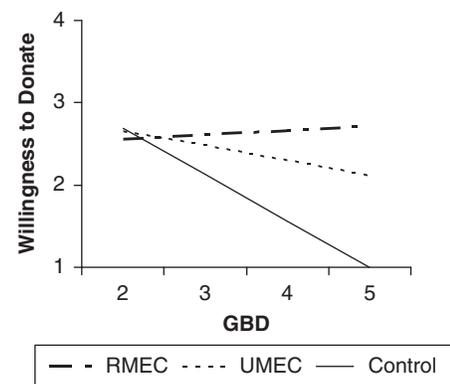


Figure 1 The related and unrelated moral elevation manipulations neutralized the negative influence of higher group-based dominance on willingness to donate to the United Negro College Fund (Study 1).

NOTE: GBD = group-based dominance; RMEC = related moral elevation condition; UMEC = unrelated moral elevation condition.

SDO instrument and is consistent with the findings from two of their studies that showed that GBD was more strongly related to ethnocentrism than OEQ. It appears from our data that witnessing a moral exemplar can lead to changes in the motivational orientation of Whites who would endorse the use of aggression to maintain control and dominance over subordinate groups more so than for those who oppose egalitarian social relations.

Although Study 1 provided strong support for our hypotheses, it was limited in three ways. First, the use of money that might be won as a measure of donation behavior may have elicited different outcomes than we would have observed if participants were asked to donate their own money. Second, although moral thoughts and emotions were positively correlated with donation behavior (see Table 1), the manipulation checks leave room for questioning the causal link between experiencing a state of moral elevation and neutralization of the effects of SDO. Third, according to Haidt (2000, 2003), the experience of moral elevation involves more than just the experience of elevating thoughts; it also involves a physiological response and a desire to be a better person. Studies 2 and 3 were conducted to address these limitations by (a) measuring the emotional, cognitive, physiological, and motivational states associated with moral elevation (Study 2) and (b) giving participants actual money that they could keep or donate as they wished (Study 3). Taken together, these studies provide evidence for the mechanism through which witnessing an act of moral excellence can influence Whites' donation behaviors.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants and Procedure

Sixty undergraduate students participated in the study for course credit. Fifty-eight percent were female. Average age was 20.2 years ($SD = 0.8$).

Participants were recruited for a study of “Consumer Perceptions and Job Performance” and told that they would be asked to give their opinions of “a story that appeared in the news.” After reading the story, participants were asked to complete a battery of five measures, including four that were related to the experience of moral elevation. They then completed several items relating to job perceptions that were not germane to the present study.

Experimental Manipulations

The study used a two-group design, with an experimental group and a control group. Participants in both groups read a one-page news story. In the control group, the story described the reactions of a couple to viewing a sunset over the ocean that was “absolutely incredible.” To ensure that the story seemed newsworthy, the couple was quoted as saying “I’ve just never seen anything like that . . . witnessing that kind of thing has the effect of changing people’s lives forever.” In the experimental group, participants read a story about the reactions of the Amish to the massacre of five young girls in a schoolhouse by Charles Roberts, a local milk truck driver, who committed suicide immediately after the massacre. Three aspects of the story made it suitable as providing an example of moral excellence. First, just hours after Roberts killed the girls and critically wounded several others, several Amish walked to the home of Roberts’s widow to express sympathy and offer forgiveness. Second, it told about how several Amish attended Roberts’s funeral and mourned with his family. Third, it mentioned that the Amish provided financial assistance to Roberts’s widow and children. One quote from the story that is particularly salient as an example of moral excellence is from the father of one of the girls who was killed when he was asked how he could be so forgiving. He said, “Can you imagine how painful it must be to be the father of a killer like this? That would be 10 times more painful than what I went through.”

Measures

A battery of five measures was used to examine the extent to which the stories resulted in the experience of moral elevation. Three of the measures—elevating emotions (three items, $\alpha = .76$), positive emotions (three

items, $\alpha = .75$), and moral thoughts (four items, $\alpha = .73$)—were identical to the measures described previously for Study 1. The two additional measures related to physical sensations and the desire to be a better person, respectively. According to Haidt (2000, 2003), the state of moral elevation is likely to involve a warm, physiological response and at least a temporary desire to be a better person. Therefore, higher levels on each of these measures should be indicative of a greater likelihood of experiencing a state of moral elevation.

Physical sensations. The physical sensations measure (Algoe & Haidt, 2006) included seven *yes* or *no* items pertaining to sensations that participants “may have experienced while reading the story (or may still be experiencing).” The sensations included: “lightness or feeling ‘bouncy,’” “increased heart rate,” “blushing,” “warmth in your chest,” “tears in your eyes,” “a lump in your throat,” and “chills or tingles.” *Yes* responses were summed for analysis.

Desire to be a better person. The measure of desire to be a better person included four items: “I wish I was a better person”; “I want to be more like the person/people in the story”; “The person/people in the story have shown me how to be a better person”; “The person/people in the story are my new role models.” Participants responded to these items by indicating how often they had (or were still having) these thoughts while reading the story on a 5-point scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). Items were averaged to form the measure ($\alpha = .87$).

Results

A MANOVA was conducted to determine whether participants’ responses on the five pertinent measures—elevating emotions, positive emotions, elevating thoughts, physical sensations, and desire to be a better person—differed by experimental condition. This test found a significant main effect (Wilks’s lambda), $F(5, 51) = 12.3, p < .01$. To explore the pattern of means underlying this finding, a series of 5 one-way ANOVAs were conducted. Results showed that the story about the Amish forgiving the man who massacred several young girls from their community generated significantly higher levels of elevating emotions ($M = 3.94, SD = .98$ vs. $M = 3.08, SD = .82$), $F(1, 58) = 12.9, p < .01$; elevating thoughts ($M = 3.43, SD = .65$ vs. $M = 2.97, SD = .79$), $F(1, 58) = 6.1, p < .05$; physical sensations ($M = 2.00, SD = 1.54$ vs. $M = 0.83, SD = 1.01$), $F(1, 58) = 10.6, p < .01$; and desire to be a better person ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.00$ vs. $M = 1.78, SD = .65$), $F(1, 58) = 26.3, p < .01$ than the control story. In addition, the Amish story

elicited significantly lower levels of other positive emotions than the control story ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .83$ vs. $M = 2.81$, $SD = .95$), $F(1, 58) = 18.7$, $p < .01$. Thus, reading the story about the Amish appears likely to elicit a state of elevation. Moreover, the control story appears to provide at least a moderately conservative standard to compare the effect of eliciting a state of moral elevation against, as positive mood has been shown to induce greater willingness to behave prosocially (George, 1991).

Discussion

The findings of Study 2 suggest that moral elevation may be elicited by the simple act of reading a story about the morally exemplary behavior of others. The findings also enable us to examine how a state of moral elevation influences Whites' donation behavior without having to measure the intervening mechanism. Specifically, it allows us to claim that moral elevation represents a plausible explanation for any observed differences in donation behavior that are associated with reading the story about the Amish as compared to the control story (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). Therefore, Study 3 was designed to examine whether reading about an act of moral excellence would neutralize the negative effect of higher GBD on Whites' willingness to donate to a Black-oriented charity.

STUDY 3

Method

Participants and Procedure

Eighty-four undergraduate students participated in the study. All participants indicated that they were White. Sixty-one percent were male. Average age was 20.4 years ($SD = 0.7$).

Participants were recruited for an experiment involving three ostensibly unrelated surveys, all of which were completed on the computer. Before beginning work on the first survey, participants were paid \$5 in cash as a "thank you" for their assistance with the studies. Survey 1 was described as focusing on "your personal perceptions, opinions, and behaviors" and included the GBD and OEQ subscales among several other measures unrelated to the present study. Survey 2 was described as a "Product Concept and News Story Opinions" study. Completion of the survey involved viewing and evaluating a product concept advertisement and reading and evaluating the quality of a news story, the latter of which was manipulated to elicit a state of moral elevation among participants in the experimental group. Survey 3

was described as a "Workplace Perceptions Survey" that involved making judgments about an employee based on a set of information about his performance. We measured donation behavior immediately after providing background information and instructions for the workplace perceptions survey. Specifically, participants were told: "Before you begin the workplace perceptions survey, we would like to know whether you would be willing to make a donation to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and/or the National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSQP), both of which are currently soliciting funds to support college scholarships."

Experimental Manipulations

The study used a two-group design, employing an experimental group and a control group. Participants in the experimental group read the story about the moral excellence of the Amish described for Study 2; participants in the control group read the story about a beautiful sunset.

Measures

Donation to charity. The procedure used to measure donations to charity differed from that used in Study 1 in three important ways. First, this study measured actual donation behavior. Specifically, participants were asked to put money into a container labeled as "donations to _____." To ensure that all participants had the means to make their donations in a desired increment, the \$5 honorarium paid to participants at the beginning of the study included five \$1 bills. Second, participants were given a choice of donating money to a Black-oriented charity (i.e., the UNCF) and/or an alternative organization (i.e., the NMSQP, which was included to help mask our interest in donations to the UNCF). Third, the donation measure differed from that used in Study 1 in terms of how much information participants were given about each organization. In this study, participants were given brief descriptions only. Specifically, both organizations were described on a single computer screen as:

The United Negro College Fund is the largest minority higher education assistance organization in the U.S. It currently supports about 65,000 students and 38 historically black colleges and universities.

The National Merit Scholarship Program provides recognition and scholarship awards based on PSAT/NMSQT scores. It currently provides letters of commendation and financial awards to 34,000 U.S. students to recognize their outstanding academic promise.

After reading these descriptions, participants were asked whether they would like to make a donation by simply putting their contribution(s) into the appropriate

TABLE 3: Study 3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Key Variables

Variable	M	SD	2	3	4
1. Donations to UNCF	\$0.51	\$0.94	-.22**	-.14	-.11
2. OEQ	3.02	0.90		.52***	-.30***
3. GBD	3.48	1.07			-.14
4. Sex	0.39	0.49			

NOTE: UNCF = United Negro College Fund; OEQ = opposition to equality; GBD = group-based dominance. ***p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

container(s) on the desk in front of them. To enhance the realism of the donation decision, each container was seeded with a few dollars. The amount of money donated to the UNCF served as the study’s key dependent variable.

GBD and OEQ. GBD ($\alpha = .86$) and OEQ ($\alpha = .82$) were measured as described in Study 1.

Control variables. We again controlled for sex (0 = male, 1 = female).

Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among key study variables are shown in Table 3. In line with our expectations, OEQ and GBD were both negatively correlated with donations to the UNCF; however, only the former relationship was statistically significant.

Hypothesis Tests

Hierarchical regression results (see Table 4) show a significant negative relationship between the OEQ dimension of SDO and donations to the UNCF. Results also show that the morally elevating story ($M = \$0.71$, $SD = \$1.16$) increased monetary donations to the UNCF relative to the control group story ($M = \$0.33$, $SD = \$0.61$); however, this effect was qualified by a significant $GBD \times$ Experimental Condition interaction. We analyzed the form of the interaction by regressing donations to the UNCF on GBD in each experimental condition. The results showed that GBD was significantly and negatively related to donations in the control condition ($B = -.29$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .25$) but not in the morally elevating story condition ($B < .01$, ns , $R^2 < .01$). A plot of these effects is presented in Figure 2. The pattern in the figure perfectly replicates the results of Study 1 and supports our hypothesis that exposure to a morally elevating act neutralizes the effect of SDO beliefs on donations to a Black-oriented charity (i.e., by temporarily

TABLE 4: Study 3 Hierarchical Regression Results for Amount Donated to the United Negro College Fund

Predictor Variable	Step 1		Step 2	
	B	t	B	t
Sex	-.37	-1.77*	-.36	-1.72*
MEC	.44	2.25**	.44	2.29**
OEQ	-.29	-2.17**	-.34	-2.56**
GBD	-.04	-0.38	-.01	-0.08
OEQ \times MEC			-.24	-0.93
GBD \times MEC			.50	2.30**
Model R^2		.14**		.19**
ΔR^2				.06*

NOTE: MEC = moral elevation condition; OEQ = opposition to equality; GBD = group-based dominance. **p* < .10. ***p* < .05.

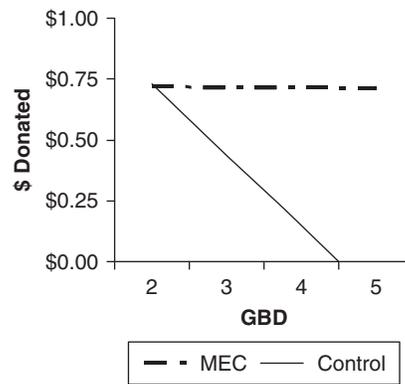


Figure 2 Reading a story about morally exemplary behavior neutralized the negative effect of higher group-based dominance on actual donations to the United Negro College Fund (Study 3).

NOTE: GBD = group-based dominance; MEC = moral elevation condition.

reducing the motivation to have one’s group dominate others, which is characteristic of White individuals who are higher in GBD).

Discussion

The results of Study 3 extend Study 1 in two ways. First, using a different experimental manipulation and a behavioral dependent variable, Study 3 replicated all hypothesis-relevant findings for donations to a Black-oriented charity. Higher levels of OEQ were again associated with less generous donations to the UNCF by Whites. In addition, reading about the morally virtuous behavior of the Amish increased donations compared to reading a control story and neutralized the negative effect of higher levels of GBD on donation behavior. Second, by separating the measurement of the intervening

mechanism—that is, the Study 2 assessment of the emotions, thoughts, and physiological responses associated with a state of moral elevation—from the measurement of donation behavior, we can conclude that the measurement of the former did not prompt donation behavior. We can also claim that Study 3 findings are consistent with the notion that witnessing an act of moral excellence can affect Whites' donations to a Black-oriented charity by eliciting a state of moral elevation (Spencer et al., 2005).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Prior research shows that SDO beliefs are associated with reduced generosity in allocating resources to outgroups and demonstrates a positive effect of moral elevation on prosocial behavior. Our studies replicate these findings and extend them in a novel way. We show that the negative influence of SDO beliefs on donations to a disadvantaged outgroup can be neutralized by witnessing or reading about moral exemplars. The mechanism shown to underlie this finding was experiencing a state of moral elevation. As Haidt and his colleagues (Algoe & Haidt, 2006; Haidt, 2000, 2001, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Silvers & Haidt, 2008) have argued, witnessing an act of moral excellence can trigger thoughts, emotions, physiological responses, and a motivational state that encourages people to draw closer to others, regardless of their status as ingroup or outgroup members. Consistent with this notion, we show that exposure to a video clip or written story about the moral excellence of others can trigger such responses and result in increased donations to a hierarchy-attenuating organization—the UNCF. In contrast to many SDO studies, which focus on attitudes or cognitions as dependent variables, the studies reported here measured willingness to donate and actual donation behaviors, respectively, which have real consequences for charitable organizations. Thus, our findings illuminate the potential impact of SDO beliefs on the life opportunities of subordinate groups.

A second important contribution of our studies involves furthering the work of Jost and Thompson (2000) by demonstrating that the GBD and OEQ subscales are differentially subject to neutralization through the experience of elevation. Although a state of elevation neutralized the unwillingness of those high in GBD to support an outgroup, a significant, negative effect of OEQ was present in both Studies 1 and 3. One possible explanation for why the effect of OEQ persisted even when people were exposed to acts of exemplary moral virtue can be found in studies of

omission biases in making moral judgments. Royzman and Baron (2002) showed that people are more tolerant of harmful omission than they are of harmful actions even when the consequences are the same. As GBD measures the endorsement of aggression to control and maintain dominance over subordinate groups, these beliefs could be construed as supporting acts of commission more so than omission. In contrast, OEQ captures opposition versus support for social inequality, which reflects a passive support for hierarchy-attenuating policies and institutions. It may be that when presented with a morally virtuous exemplar, people are more likely to change their beliefs about actions that directly cause harm to others than they are about actions that do not cause direct harm but that fail to do anything to prevent harms from occurring. If so, one theoretical implication of our findings is that the GBD and OEQ subscales may capture support for acts of commission versus omission, respectively.

Psychologists have increasingly recognized that emotions play a crucial role in regulating moral action (Eisenberg, 2000; Haidt, 2003). We showed that the emotions elicited by the videos and story were not simply positive such as joy, pleasure, or enthusiasm, but rather those that fit more closely with Haidt's (2003) definition of moral emotions. According to Haidt, moral emotions are those linked to the interests and welfare of society, or at least to persons other than the judge or agent. The three emotions that our manipulations were shown to influence—compassion, inspiration, and admiration—fall within two broader “families” of moral emotions that Haidt describes as “other-suffering” (compassion) and “other-praising” (inspiration, admiration), and we found that it was these emotions, as well as views of humanity, that were influenced by the experimental manipulation. This pattern of results is theoretically consistent with what would be expected if witnessing an example of uncommon virtue does indeed produce emotional responses and changes in cognition, thus providing evidence for the internal validity of our study.

Like all studies, each of ours is subject to some conceptual and methodological limitations. However, in combination they paint a consistent and compelling picture about how SDO and moral elevation can interact to influence Whites' donation behaviors. For example, it is reasonable to assert that social modeling can explain the effects observed for the RMEC in Study 1 because the video shows Whites helping Blacks. However, the unrelated moral elevation manipulation used in Study 1 and the story used in Studies 2 and 3 are not subject to this limitation. Thus, the preponderance of evidence favors the moral elevation explanation (over a social

modeling explanation). Similarly, in isolation, the findings for Study 3 may be assailed as being dependent on the presence of the NMSP as a second donation option for participants. However, when the findings are considered in light of the fact that they are essentially identical to those of Study 1, the weight of the evidence suggests that the presence of the NMSP had little to do with the effects observed for Whites' donations to the UNCF. Rather, elevation and its interaction with SDO again appear to represent the most plausible explanation for the findings.

A practical implication of our study is that charitable organizations may benefit from using techniques that elicit a state of moral elevation, but only if would-be beneficiaries are perceived as being needy. The notion of using elevation techniques runs counter to the fundraising strategies of many charitable organizations, which often highlight the misfortunes of would-be beneficiaries to pull the heartstrings of prospective donors and elicit guilt (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2008). For example, an appeal from World Vision asks: "How can a child who has lost his or her parents get food for an empty stomach or receive help getting to school?" (World Vision, 2006). Unfortunately, with information about human tragedy so readily available and ubiquitous, people with financial resources can experience "compassion fatigue" (Dvorkin, 2006) from these types of messages, which they cope with by avoiding stories about the needs of others or denying their existence. The use of appeals involving moral exemplars may provide an alternative way of motivating donors without having to assail them with the spectacle of human suffering. Future research should examine this possibility.

Our focus on donations to Black-oriented organizations was driven by theoretical considerations associated with the inclusion of SDO in our conceptual framework. However, it also has practical importance, as Blacks continue to lag Whites and other groups in terms of economic status, education, health and quality of life, and social justice (National Urban League, 2007). Such disparities suggest an underlying inequality of opportunity that can be addressed by nonprofit, charitable organizations, many of which are likely to be associated with specific racial/ethnic beneficiary groups. To maximize their available resources, such organizations need to attract support from individuals outside their recipients' group(s). The use of moral exemplars—situations that depict unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, and compassion—in donation solicitations promises to help accomplish this objective. By so doing, the moral elevation of individuals may elevate all Americans toward greater equality of opportunity.

NOTES

1. Data from students who did not identify themselves as White were excluded from the analyses of Study 1 and Study 3 data. Use of this selection criterion led to the exclusion of data from 24 participants in Study 1 (12 Asian, 1 Black/African American, 2 Hispanic/Latino, 1 Native American, 3 mixed ethnicity, and 5 other ethnicity) and 17 participants in Study 3 (8 Asian, 4 Black/African American, 1 Hispanic/Latino, 1 Native American, and 3 mixed ethnicity). Participants in Study 2 were not asked to identify their ethnicity.
2. We also conducted our analyses using the actual dollar amounts. The results were identical.
3. We thank a reviewer for pointing out that the wording of the manipulation check differed between the control and experimental conditions. It would have been ideal to ask all participants about their current emotions.

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