

CURRENT RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Volume 5, Number 8

Submitted: February 1, 2000

Resubmitted: March 12, 2000

Accepted: March 27, 2000

Publication date: March 31, 2000

WHITES' EXPLANATIONS OF BLACKS' SOCIOECONOMIC UNDERACHIEVEMENT: INDIVIDUALISM, STRUCTURALISM, AND STATUS INCONSISTENCY

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to determine whether different status consistency and inconsistency types are systematically associated with whites' acceptance of individual and structural factors in explaining blacks' low socioeconomic status. Employing data from the General Social Surveys 1985-1994, I explore this question, separately for males and females, using logistic regression analysis. I find that, compared to status consistent individuals, status inconsistent overachievers are more likely to hold "individualist" explanations while status inconsistent underachievers are more likely to hold "structuralist" explanations. Additionally, although there is a faint suggestion that white females are a bit more sympathetic toward blacks' crippled status than white males, it nevertheless fails to surpass conventional levels of statistical significance. The overall absence of such effects, given the fact that white females have been the subject of sexism themselves, raises a question of dual nature of "whiteness," i.e., white females as both oppressors and oppressed.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades social scientists have spent much time seeking to measure, describe, and interpret the nature of whites' public opinion on racial matters (e.g., Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Hochschild, 1995; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Carmines & Stimpson, 1989; Sniderman & Hagan, 1985; Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985). Despite this extraordinary effort, as Bobo (1997) states, we have few consensually accepted theoretical models. No doubt that the most striking dissensus has been how emphatically authors disagree with one another on how important race and racism are in driving whites' opinion on racial matters. On the one hand, it has been argued that what dominates white's opinion on racial matters is not racism but their strong commitment to fundamental American values: diligence, hard work, and self-reliance

(Sniderman & Kuklinski, 1998; D'Souza, 1995; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Carmines & Merriman, 1993; Carmines & Stimson, 1989). On the other hand, it has also been argued that it is "new" racism hidden in their strong commitment to fundamental American values (Yancey, 1999; Krysan, 1998; Sears et al., 1997; Shaefer, 1996; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985).

The present research contributes to this debate by analyzing whites' explanations of blacks' low socioeconomic status (SES) in terms of the association between vertical status inconsistencies within individuals and the images of stratification system that they hold. I focus here on the process that status inconsistent whites come to distinguish how the stratification system should work from how it does work. The present research argues that such process has a significant influence on how whites accept or reject various explanations of blacks' low SES.

The second main objective of this research is to examine possible differences between white males and females in explaining blacks' low SES. It is somewhat surprising to see that while the literature on sexism, gender stereotyping, and gender role attitudes is extensive, there has been relatively sparse research on possible differences in attitudes on racial issues between men and women. That is, much research makes the implicit assumption that the determinants of whites' racial attitudes are more or less the same across the sexes.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Changing opinions on racial issues

Much research has documented how the white American public opinions on racial issues have changed for the past two decades. On the one hand, there has been a steady decline of support among whites for racial discrimination and racial segregation of jobs, schools, and residential settings (Schuman & Steeh, 1996). Most whites at least in public opinion surveys endorse principles of racial equality (Schuman et al., 1997) and reject the notion of old-fashioned racism such as genetic inferiority of blacks (McConahay, 1986). On the other hand, most whites question about affirmative action's fairness (Lipset, 1992), strongly oppose particular policies like busing, racial preferences in hiring, and racial quotas (Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985), and oppose significantly more to race-targeted public policies than to comparable policies targeted for the poor (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993).

Some see these changes as a declining importance of race and racism. For example, Sniderman and Piazza (1993) claim that the problem of racial prejudice no longer dominates whites' attitudes about racial issues. Carmines and Stimson (1989) argue that "racial conservatism" must not be confused with racism because the former is the application of conservative principles to racial issues. Carmines and Merriman (1993) argue that non-racial ideology such as individualism plays a significant role in determining whites' attitudes on racial issues. Sniderman and Kuklinski (1998) argue that whites' opposition to affirmative action stems from a commitment to individual achievement and self-reliance rather than from a lack of concern with racial equality. And ultimately, D'Souza (1995) claims "the end of racism."

Others still see these changes as a continuing importance of race and racism. Schuman, Steech, and Bobo, (1985) argue that there is a "principle-implementation gap," i.e., a paradox between whites' support for principles of equality and whites' opposition to implement such principles. Krysan (1998) reports that this gap has not shown marked changes over time. Kinder and Sanders (1996) argue that while most whites now reject the notion of genetic inferiority and embrace equal rights and opportunities, racial resentments continue to shape whites' opinion powerfully. Sears (1993) and Sears et al. (1997) argue old-fashioned racism has been reformulated as new racism, i.e., old-fashioned racism in disguise. Yancey (1999) and Shaefer (1996) claim that supporting an egalitarian ideology can be a convenient tool to hide racial prejudices, especially among "educated" whites.

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Without taking sides in this particular dispute, we see that these two perspectives generally reflect two broadly defined intellectual traditions in social sciences: "individualist" approach in which characteristics of individuals are used to explain socioeconomic achievement and "structuralist" approach in which the larger structural constraints are seen as the cause socioeconomic underachievement. Those who follow individualist approach would argue that declining old-fashioned racism is an indicative of moving toward an open and merit-based system, and the legitimacy of the distribution of socioeconomic rewards should be influenced by the ideology of individualism which essentially posits a strong causal link between individual effort and success (Hochschild, 1995; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Kluegel & Smith, 1983). In that sense, it is not surprising to see that most whites tend to believe that the poor are "deserving" because they violate commonly cherished values such as hard work, self-discipline, and industriousness (Kluegel, 1990). Furthermore, since such white public beliefs center on perceived personal deficiencies of the poor, not of blacks or any other minorities, it can be conveniently argued, "it's not race, it's class." In other words, as Sniderman and Piazza (1993) and Sniderman et al. (1991) argue, condemning the violation of commonly cherished American values has little to do with expressions of racial hostility.

By contrast, those who follow structuralist approach would argue that structural constraints are still alive and well in present-day race relations because old fashion racism has not merely disappeared, but reincarnated as new forms of racism, such as "aversive racism" and "symbolic racism." Aversive racism assumes that most whites have dual consciousness: feelings of superiority stemming from the historically racist culture of the United States and convictions of racial fairness and equality. Under these conflicting feelings, covert racism rather than overt racism is more likely to emerge by rationalizing racist attitudes and behaviors on the basis of non-racial factors (Dovidio et al., 1989; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Similarly, symbolic racism is also a covert expression in terms of abstract and ideological symbols that blacks are violating cherished traditional American values or making illegitimate demands for changes in the racial status quo (Sears et al., 1997; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976).

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The Status Inconsistency Thesis

As a way of deepening our understanding of the nature of white public opinion, the present research attempts to analyze the nature of white public opinion by examining the association between vertical status inconsistencies within individuals and the images of stratification system that they hold. Stemming from Lenski's (1954, 1956) pioneering work, research on the theory of status inconsistency has received a great deal of attention. What do we mean by status inconsistency? Conceptualizing social status as a composite of multiple vertical dimensions, such as occupation, education, prestige, and income, this theory posits that individuals who are inconsistent among those measured dimensions are more likely to have different attitudes and behaviors than those who are consistent.

Empirical testing of this theory has generated a number of possible status inconsistency effects on various social behaviors and attitudes, such as political liberalism (Levey, 1996), psychological stress (Burke, 1996; Lange et al., 1991; Ashford, 1990), marital dissatisfaction (Chan & Smith, 1995; Creighton & Williams, 1992; Campbell, 1992), racial separatism (Holmes & Butler, 1987), spouse abuse (Hornung, McCullough, & Sugimoto, 1981) and occupational stress (Levine, 1993; Mannheim, 1993; Bacharach et al., 1993), to name only a few. The common finding for these different empirical studies has been that as a result of inconsistencies in socioeconomic statuses individuals experience strain and respond by showing attitudes and behaviors toward societal "change" as a way of coping such strain.

For example, let us consider an individual whose high achieved educational status met with low achieved income status. The theory posits that this inconsistency will shape how she reacts to her judgments about the distribution of monetary rewards. She is more likely to feel that inequity exists by comparing her qualification (i.e., education) and outcome (i.e., pay) to those of others (i.e., status consistency). The conceptual ground of this theory is based on the notion of relative deprivation. As Stouffer et al. (1949) argues, feelings of deprivation are relative, based less in objective condition and more in social comparison. Following this, we would expect that individuals develop differing images of the same stratification system based on a stock of different perceptions, experiences, and evaluations resulting from differing status inconsistency.

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Socially observable characteristics (such as sex, race) are differentially evaluated in social interaction (Berger, Norman, Balkwell, & Smith, 1992; Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972). Such differential evaluation, in turn, generates a status hierarchy and forms differential performance expectations based on social characteristics that are a key factor in social interaction (Troyer & Younts, 1997). This is how social characteristics contribute to the social construction of a status order (Ridgeway, Johnson, & Diekema, 1994; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Then, what would be the possible relationship between status inconsistency and the social construction of status order? The status inconsistency theory posits that status inconsistent individuals are more likely to go against such social order that is thought to be responsible for their status discrepancy. Such individuals are also more likely to perceive blacks as the victims of social force rather than the victims of a self-inflicted injury.

When status inconsistency is conceptualized as differences between two vertical dimensions, then it is necessary to distinguish different patterns of inconsistency, such as contrasts between two dimensions in which the signs of differences are retained (Hope, 1975). In other words, if we consider an individual whose low educational status met with high-income status, we would expect quite different status inconsistency effects compared to the earlier example. For example, Hornung, McCullough, and Sugimoto (1981) report that underachieved husbands are more likely to commit spouse abuse while overachieved ones are less likely to use abusive behavior. Similarly, Holmes and Butler (1987) report that underachieved military personnel are more likely to express racial separatism than overachieved ones.

In sum, the present research contributes to the literature in two major ways. First, by exploring the possibility of status inconsistency effects in analyzing whites' public opinion on racial matters, we may shed further light on the nature of white racial attitudes under prevailing theories of individualism and new racism. Second, by exploring the possibility of gendered effects in analyzing whites' explanations of blacks' low SES, we may examine the existence of dual nature of "whiteness," i.e., conceiving white females as both oppressors and oppressed.

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DATA

The data used in this study are from the General Social Surveys (GSS) for 1985-1994 (Davis, 1995). The GSS was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, and each survey provides data on a representative sample of English-speaking persons, 18 years of age and older, and residing in the 48 contiguous states of the United States. All analyses are performed on the pooled data, and analyses run year by year do not substantively differ from those presented in this paper. I restrict attention to whites only. I have further excluded respondents with missing data on variables needed for the analyses to be presented here, doing so on an analysis-by-analysis basis in order to maximize the sample size available for each analysis. The final sample size is about 2,800 white males and 2,700 white females.¹

Measures of Whites' Explanations of Blacks' Low SES

Four dichotomous variables are selected to measure whites' explanations of blacks' low SES. They are based on the following interview questions:

On the average blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people do. Do you think these differences are: 1) mainly due to discrimination? 2) because most blacks don't have the chance for education it takes to rise out of poverty? 3) because most blacks have less in-born ability to learn? 4) because most blacks just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty?

These four variables were dummy coded 1 if agree, and 0 otherwise.

Measures of Status Inconsistency

To measure status inconsistency effects, I utilize a modified version of Hornung's (1977)

Under Achievers	41% (758)	42% (1388)	55% (770)	58% (1421)	10% (768)	9% (1415)	51% (747)	51% (1388)
Over Achievers	28% (697)	33% (255)	42% (696)	44% (260)	24% (686)	23% (256)	72% (678)	71% (255)
Status Consistency	34% (1399)	40% (1037)	51% (1408)	52% (1056)	14% (1400)	16% (1061)	57% (1370)	57% (1046)
Total	35% (2854)	40% (2680)	50% (2874)	54% (2737)	15% (2854)	12% (2732)	59% (2795)	56% (2689)
χ^2	27***	7*	26***	20***	57***	47***	73***	35***

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

Note: Numbers in parentheses are bases of percentages.

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Table 1 presents a simple cross-tabulation of four dependent variables and status inconsistency types, by sex. Several important patterns emerge. First, as one would expect, most whites do not endorse that blacks are disadvantageous because of their inborn disability. On the other hand, slightly less than 60 percent of whites believe it is due to lack of motivation among blacks. Second, whites are more likely to see unequal chance for education than discrimination as a major cause. That is, they tend to see that lack of resources rather than differential evaluation of such resources is more important in determining blacks' crippled position. Third, it indicates that underachievers are far more likely than overachievers to see that discrimination and unequal chance for education are the reasons for blacks' underachievement. Similarly, overachievers are far more likely than underachievers to believe that inborn disability and lack of motivation are the reasons. Fourth, while percentages fluctuate, inspecting responses by each sex yields that there is no substantial gender difference either across four dependent variables or across status inconsistency types. The analysis that follows examines whether these relationships hold net of other determinants of whites' racial attitudes.

Acceptance of Discrimination

Table 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Effects of Independent Variables on Whites' Acceptance of Discrimination

Independent Variable	Male (β)	e^β	Female (β)	e^β	Diff. (β)	e^β
Under Achievers	.33*** (.10)	1.39	.05 (.09)	1.05	.28* (.13)	1.21
Over Achievers	-.29** (.11)	.75	-.22 (.16)	.80	-.07 (.19)	.93
Age	.00 (.00)	1.00	-.01 (.00)	.99	.01 (.00)	1.01
Working Class	-.07 (.09)	.93	-.22** (.08)	.81	.15 (.12)	1.16

Married	-.11 (.09)	.90	-.17* (.08)	.84	.06 (.12)	1.07
South	-.53*** (.09)	.59	-.49*** (.09)	.61	-.04 (.13)	.96
SMSA	-.03 (.08)	.97	-.17* (.08)	.84	.14 (.12)	1.15
Time	-.05*** (.01)	.96	-.01 (.01)	.99	-.04* (.02)	.96
Constant	3.26** (1.18)		.57 (1.15)		2.69 (1.64)	

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

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases is 5,215 (2,682 white males and 2,533 white females).

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Table 2 presents logistic regression coefficients for the effects of status inconsistency net of other selected independent variables on whether whites accept discrimination as a major cause of blacks' low SES.⁶ The estimates for South for both white males and females indicate that southerners are far less likely than northerners to believe discrimination as a major cause.⁷ It comes as no surprise because southern whites have historically shown high degree of racial prejudice and this is consistent with previous research (e.g., Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens 1997; Glaser & Gilens, 1997; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Ransford & Palisi, 1992). Time also has an effect. In particular, belief on discrimination as a major cause has decreased significantly among white males, but not among white females. This implies a growing belief among white males that discrimination is a thing of the past.

The effects of status inconsistency are clearly more pronounced among white males than among white females. Within white males, acceptance of discrimination occurs 1.39 times as frequent among underachievers and .75 times among overachievers than among status consistent individuals. Why then status inconsistent individuals are substantially different from status consistent individuals in recognition of how racial discrimination has limited blacks' opportunity? One possible answer is that status inconsistency has created perceived differences between how distributive justice system should work and how it in fact does work. That is, while most whites ideologically believe that relative position in stratification hierarchy should be based on individual ability and effort, those who are underachievers feel more sensitivity than status consistent whites to the socioeconomic disadvantage of blacks.

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Acceptance of Unequal Chance for Education

Table 3. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Effects of Independent Variables on Whites' Acceptance of Unequal Chance for Education

Independent Variable	Male (β)	e^β	Female (β)	e^β	Diff. (β)	e^β
Under Achievers	.22* (.10)	1.25	.22** (.08)	1.24	.00 (.13)	1.01
Over Achievers	-.25** (.10)	.78	-.30* (.15)	.74	.05 (.18)	1.05
Age	.00 (.00)	1.00	-.00 (.00)	1.00	.00 (.00)	1.00
Working Class	-.60*** (.08)	.55	-.61*** (.08)	.55	.01 (.12)	1.01
Married	-.04 (.09)	.96	-.11 (.08)	.90	.07 (.12)	1.07
South	-.71*** (.08)	.49	-.78*** (.09)	.46	.07 (.12)	1.07
SMSA	.01 (.08)	1.01	.14 (.08)	1.15	-.13 (.12)	.87
Time	-.03** (.01)	.97	.00 (.01)	1.00	-.03 (.02)	.97
Constant	2.59* (1.13)		-.20 (1.14)		2.79 (1.61)	

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

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases is 5,290 (2,701 white males and 2,589 white females).

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Table 3 presents logistic regression coefficients on whether whites accept unequal chance for education as a major cause of black's low SES. As expected, the estimate for South continues to be significant for both males and females. It is interesting to see that both white working class males and females are far less likely than middle class to believe unequal chance for education as a major cause. What is the implication of this? One interpretation might be that stemming from relative deprivation working class whites are more likely to have racial hostility than middle class whites (Kluegel & Smith, 1983). Similarly, following Bobo's (1988) realistic group conflict theory, racial attitudes might reflect perceived competition between racial groups over limited resources (see also Bonacini, 1976). In other words, working class whites are more likely to take "a loser for every winner" approach, meaning economic gain by blacks (e.g., government intervention) inevitably weakens their economic status.

With regard to the effects of status inconsistency, acceptance of unequal educational opportunity occurs 1.25 times as frequent among underachievers and .78 times among overachievers than among status consistent individuals within white males. Similarly, it occurs 1.24 times among underachievers and .74 times among overachievers than among status consistent individuals within white females. While there is no significant sex interaction, status inconsistent individuals are substantially different from status consistent individuals in recognition of how unequal educational opportunity has limited blacks' opportunity.

Acceptance of Inborn Disability

Table 4. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Effects of Independent Variables on Whites' Acceptance of Inborn Disability

Independent Variable	Male (β)	e^{β}	Female (β)	e^{β}	Diff. (β)	e^{β}
Under Achievers	-.28 (.15)	.75	-.57*** (.13)	.56	.29 (.20)	1.34
Over Achievers	.52*** (.13)	1.68	.25 (.18)	1.28	.27 (.22)	1.31
Age	.03*** (.00)	1.03	.04*** (.00)	1.04	-.01 (.01)	1.00
Working Class	.53*** (.12)	1.70	.31** (.12)	1.36	.22 (.17)	1.24
Married	-.19 (.12)	.83	-.07 (.12)	.93	-.12 (.17)	.89
South	.80*** (.11)	2.23	.59*** (.12)	1.80	.22 (.17)	1.24
SMSA	-.19 (.12)	.83	-.08 (.12)	.93	-.11 (.17)	.89
Time	-.06** (.02)	.94	-.09*** (.02)	.92	.04 (.03)	1.04
Constant	2.05 (1.60)		5.08** (1.70)		-3.03 (2.33)	

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

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases is 5,263 (2,681 white males and 2,582 white females).

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Table 4 presents logistic regression coefficients for effects of status inconsistency on whether respondents believe inborn disability as a major cause of black's underachievement. What is measured here is the belief that blacks are responsible for their own misfortune that stems from their innate inferiority. No matter how unpopular this view is nowadays, we still see systematic associations between the perception of genetic inferiority and selected independent variables. The table indicates that acceptance of inborn disability occurs 1.70 times as frequent among working class white males than among middle class white males. This relationship again supports Bobo's (1988) realistic group conflict theory. In addition to continued significance of South and Working Class, the effect of Age is highly significant for both males and females for the first time. In particular, one-year change in age increased the odds of acceptance of inborn disability by 3 percent for males and 4 percent for females. This is consistent with previous research that has shown that younger people typically are less prejudiced than are older people (Firebaugh & Davis 1988; Schuman & Bobo 1988; Smith 1981; Tuch 1987).

With regard to the effects of status inconsistency, acceptance of inborn disability occurs 1.68 times as frequent among overachievers than among status consistent individuals within white males. Similarly, it occurs .56 times among underachievers than among status consistent individuals within white females. Again, there is no significant sex interaction.

Acceptance of Lack of Motivation

Table 5. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Effects of Independent Variables on Whites' Acceptance of Lack of Motivation

Independent Variable	Male (β)	e^β	Female (β)	e^β	Diff. (β)	e^β
Under Achievers	-.20* (.10)	.82	-.23** (.09)	.80	.03 (.13)	.81
Over Achievers	.58*** (.11)	1.79	.42** (.16)	1.53	.16 (.19)	1.18
Age	.01** (.00)	1.01	.01*** (.00)	1.02	-.00 (.00)	.99
Working Class	.51*** (.09)	1.66	.35*** (.08)	1.42	.16 (.12)	1.17
Married	.24** (.09)	1.28	.08 (.08)	1.09	.16 (.12)	1.17
South	.72*** (.09)	2.04	.45*** (.09)	1.57	.27* (.13)	1.30
SMSA	.05 (.08)	1.06	.04 (.08)	1.04	.01 (.12)	1.01
Time	-.02 (.01)	.98	-.06*** (.01)	.94	.04* (.02)	1.04
Constant	1.96** (1.17)		5.24*** (1.14)		-3.28* (1.64)	

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

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; number of cases is 5,168 (2,624 white males and 2,544 white females).

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Table 5 presents logistic regression coefficients on whether respondents see lack of motivation as a major cause of black's low SES. As note earlier, the dependent variable measures the perception of whites that blacks are contributing to the problems that plague them by not having necessary motivation and will power. And, as shown previously, acceptance of this is very popular for both sexes (59 percent for white males and 56 percent for white females). Again, Southerners are about 100 percent more likely than Northerners, and Southern white males are about 30 percent more likely than Southern white females, to subscribe to this explanation.

One unit change in Time decreased the odds of acceptance by 6 percent for white females. On the other hand, the effect of time is not significant among white males. Accordingly, the interaction effect between Time and Sex is statistically significant. What does this pattern of results signify? There is, perhaps, an implication that white females are becoming more sympathetic toward blacks than white males.

As far as the effects of status inconsistency concern, acceptance of lack of motivation occurs .82 times as frequent among underachievers and 1.79 times among overachievers than among status consistent white males. Among white females, it occurs about .80 times among underachievers and 1.53 times among overachievers. Again, there is no significant sex interaction.

DISCUSSION

Combining the 1985-1994 GSS data, I estimated, separately for white males and females, a set of logistic equations for analyzing whites' explanations of blacks' low SES. The analyses suggest the presence of strong status inconsistency effects. Regardless of sex, status inconsistent underachievers are far more likely to hold structural explanations, while status inconsistent overachievers are far more likely to hold individualistic explanations.⁸ Furthermore, the strongest aspect of the status inconsistency effects is their stability. I found status inconsistency effects to be implicated in whites' views on all four dependent measures.

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As discussed earlier, individualist perspective dictates that whites' opinions on racial matters are an expression of strong endorsement of nonracial ideologies: individualism, conservatism, and American credo and values. On the other hand, new racism perspective dictates that white's opinions use such non-racial ideologies to express their racist attitudes prevalent among adult whites due to racist socialization and culture. Our major finding that whites' opinions are strongly conditioned by status inconsistency supports neither of these perspectives, and indeed casts doubts on the validity of these two perspectives. Despite overwhelming endorsement of individual factors by whites in obtaining socioeconomic rewards, status inconsistent whites deviate from such endorsement by over-endorsing either individual or structural factors. That is, whites manifest an acute awareness of the conflicting character of two vertical status dimensions they hold, and such awareness cannot be viewed in terms of a single overarching ideology, such as individualism.

The hallmark of new racism perspective has been the notion of long-standing predisposition of racist attitudes among whites due to racist socialization and culture. It follows that such predisposition should be fairly inflexible and difficult to change over lifetime. If this assumption is correct, then how can we explain the presence of status inconsistency effects? There is no compelling reason to believe that status inconsistent individuals are significantly more or less racially prejudiced than status consistent individuals. Hence, we come to the conclusion that "hidden" racism plays at best a weak central part in the denial of importance of structural causes of blacks' status.

Previous research (e.g., Johnson, 1992) indicates that since women have been the subject of long term inequalities themselves, that they would be more sympathetic towards minorities. While this sounds very plausible, this was not supported by this research. There is a faint suggestion that white females are a bit more sympathetic toward blacks' crippled status than white males, but it fails to surpass conventional levels of statistical significance. This overall absence of the interaction effects between independent variables and gender on all four dependent measures raises a question of white female racism, a relatively new term because gender differences on racial issues have been by and large ignored in previous research. There is little doubt that white males and females hold fairly similar views on racial issues. What is less certain is why this similarity exists given the fact that women have been oppressed historically. One possible answer is that, as Joseph (1981) argues, white females might be both tools and benefactors of racism. Therefore, we must recognize white females' social position as both oppressors and oppressed. That is, given the extensive privileges of whiteness, white females' immediate economic self-interest might be to maintain racism (Alcoff, 1999).

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Finally, the current analysis and its limitations suggest a number of implications for future research. First, an investigation using different status dimensions would benefit the examination of status inconsistency effects on whites' racial attitudes. For example, the effects of status inconsistency measured by income and occupational prestige (or any other evaluative measures) differences may be quite different from the effects used in this analysis. Another venue might be investigating the effects of status inconsistency on whites' racial attitudes due to intergenerational social mobility, including both upward and downward movements as well as immobility. Second, further empirical research and theoretical underpinning on gender differences on racial attitudes are needed. Why are white females who have been the subject of sexism themselves not more sympathetic towards minorities? Should we acknowledge the significance of white women's racism? Hence, is "white female supremacy" as much important as "white male supremacy" in studies of race relations? Can white female supremacy be attributed to "false" consciousness? These questions remain to be answered. Third, differences in opinion between blacks and whites on blacks' underachievement are simply staggering. We need to answer why this is so. One way of investigating this matter might be examining the contrast between the beliefs blacks hold for themselves (first-order beliefs) and the beliefs blacks believe whites hold for them (second-order beliefs), as formulated by Troyer and Younts (1997).

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FOOTNOTES

1. The actual sample size ranges from 2,795 to 2,874 for white males and from 2,680 to 2,737 for white females depending upon the dependent variable under analysis.

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2. Before describing the results, it is necessary to discuss a methodological problem implicit in any test of the status inconsistency hypothesis. The issue is reminiscent of the methodological problem in the analysis of social mobility: how to separate the interaction effects (exchange mobility) from the main effects (structural mobility). Assuming that we have two status measures, A and B, both a linear additive model ($A + B + (A - B)$) and a square additive model ($A + B + AB$) are intuitively appealing. But the issue is not that simple because multicollinearity may bias the estimates observed in these models (see Hope, 1975; Whitt, 1983). Yet, a model that includes the interaction effects ($(A - B)$ or AB) only may produce estimates that are confounded by the main effects, as suggested by anonymous reviewer. The approach presented in this paper not only addresses the interaction effects (overachievers and underachievers) directly but also substantially controls the main effects by adopting a set of design matrix variables. See footnote 4 for further information.

3. Southern states from the sample include South Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida), East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi), and West South Central (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas).

4. In analysis of variance or linear regression designs, the partial or marginal coding method is popularly used. That is, one can specify a set of design variables so that each category of given independent variable can be compared to the overall mean. The present research follows the reference cell coding method which one specifies a set of design variables so that each category

can be compared to the reference category (i.e., omitted category). The primary reason for the use of this method is the interest in estimating how status inconsistency types are different from status consistency type.

5. The effects of males and females, and the differences in the effects, can be estimated with a single equation. They are identical to what presented here. The decision to provide three separate columns in our tables is simply based on ease of exposition.

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6. The easiest way of interpreting these estimates is to look at the effects of independent variables on the odds of the dependent variable or on the percentage change in the odds. For example, the logistic regression coefficient (β) for time is -.05 as shown in Table 2. The effect of a one-unit change in time on the odds of agreeing discrimination as a major cause is e^β or .95. The odds ratio, e^β , is sometimes called a partial odds ratio because it is the odds ratio holding all other variables in the equation at the same level. The percentage change in the odds associated with that one-unit change in time is $100(e^\beta - 1)$ or -5%. For ease of exposition, I sometimes discuss the effects of independent variables on the odds of an outcome (provided in Tables) or on the percentage change in the odds (not provided in Tables).

7. One would expect a stronger contrast if we use Deep South (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina) instead of South specified in this analysis. Unfortunately, the GSS do not measure detailed state-level information.

8. Are these effects of status inconsistency unique to whites only? Although this question is beyond the scope of this research, I nevertheless explored race differences. In short, I found that the effects of status inconsistency were virtually nonexistent among blacks across all four dependent variables. There were no sex differences either.

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