CAN MINDFULNESS MEDITATION REDUCE THE TENDENCY TO JUSTIFY THE STATUS QUO?

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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TENDENCY TO JUSTIFY THE STATUS QUO?

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a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Ann Bettencourt

Professor Jamie Arndt

Professor Edgar Merkle

Professor Richard Reuben

…….In dedication to my parents and husband.

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Abstract

System justification theory suggests that advantaged groups in society frequently express ingroup favoritism and outgroup bias, whereas disadvantaged groups express outgroup favoritism. These tendencies are likely to occur when individuals are motivated to perceive the system as legitimate. This motivation is driven by uncertainty regarding unstable systems. Mindfulness practices emphasize open acceptance and awareness of thoughts and experiences. Participation in mindfulness can engender, among other things, greater acceptance of outgroup members. The current study examined whether mindful-compassion practice reduced system justification, and whether system threat undermined this influence. Unexpectedly, the results suggest that mindful-compassion lead to more favorable intergroup attitudes under high system threat (i.e., lower race-system justification, lower negative attitudes, and higher othergroup orientation). In addition, interactions for negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation were qualified by internal motivation to control prejudice. This study was the first to experimentally test the impact of mindfulness on system justification. In addition, it is the first to examine empirically whether compassion meditation is associated with assessments of unjust social systems and attitudes toward ethnic outgroup members, and the extent to which system threat undermines this effect.

Key words: mindfulness, compassion meditation, system justification, system threat, intergroup relations, outgroup attitudes

Can Mindfulness Meditation Reduce the Tendency to Justify the Status Quo?

The University of Missouri experienced a Fall 2015 semester unlike any other (Weinberg & Blatchford, 2015). Among other events, the University experienced racial tensions that culminated into an eight-day hunger strike, the halt of football activities by the athletes themselves, and ultimately the resignation of University officials. Racial tensions between White and African Americans, in particular, have been salient on MU campus during the past few semesters. The University of Missouri is a microcosm of current race relations in the United States, and representative of other interethnic and racial tensions around the country. Clearly, it is evident that our country and the University of Missouri continues to face challenges regarding racial equality, racism, and racial attitudes.

It is important to understand the precursors of racism and the means by which racism may be reduced. Researchers (Kaiser, Eccleston, & Hagiwara, 2008; Kaiser & Miller, 2001) have shown that justification for inequitable social systems is associated with racist attitudes. System justification refers to this advocating for one's social system (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The theory posits that individuals are motivated to perceive the society in which they live as fair, legitimate, and justified. The advantaged majority profits from this defense of the social system. However, there are numerous disadvantages associated with system justification, including that members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., African Americans and Hispanic Americans) who perceive inequitable social systems as just experience diminished ingroup pride and reduced well-being (i.e., O'Brien & Major, 2005). The purpose of the current study was to understand whether the tendency for individuals to endorse unjust social systems is reduced by

mindfulness practices, known to influence intergroup attitudes. In addition, the study examined whether threatening the legitimacy of the social system would undermine the positive effects of mindfulness practices. The following literature reviews theory and research relevant to system justification, system threat, and mindfulness practices.

Social Identity Theory

As a consequence of their membership in social groups, individuals experience many cognitive and psychological benefits (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009): group membership contributes to one's sense of self-concept and social identification, engenders support and security, improves and maintains psychological well-being and self-esteem, and fosters learning and creativity (Bettencourt & Dorr, 1997; Haslam et al, 2009; Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007; Molix & Bettencourt, 2010; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group membership can be based on many different social categories, such as race, class, gender, political ideology, religious beliefs, athletic teams, age, academic discipline, and many others. Group identification can shape the ways in which individuals perceive themselves, others, and events within society.

Social identity theory (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Haslam et al., 2009; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) purports that humans are motivated to, not only define themselves as members of their ingroups, but also distinguish themselves from relevant outgroups (Blanton, 2001; Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon, & Seron, 2002; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Haslam et al., 2009; Hogg et al., 2007; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Members of groups distinguish themselves from other groups through social comparison; they compare their own group's position with relevant outgroups on relevant status-relevant dimensions. The theory suggests that, when individuals are made aware of group discrepancies, they show bias in favor of their ingroup and are motivated to perceive their groups as more favorable (i.e., ingroup bias). However, research also shows that this tendency typically holds only for members of advantaged, high-status

groups (Bettencourt & Bartholow, 1998; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). By comparison, members of disadvantaged groups often show favoritism toward the advantaged outgroup. Though social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) does not directly explain this persistent finding, system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), which is derived from social identity theory, illustrates why members of disadvantaged groups do favor high-status outgroups in certain circumstances.

System Justification

System justification refers to the tendency for individuals to perceive the discrepancies between groups in society as fair, legitimate, and justified, and to endorse their social systems even at the expense of their own group memberships (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost & Kay, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Kay, Gaucher, Peach, Laurin, Friesen, et al., 2009; Livitan & Jost, 2014). That is, individuals of high and low status groups endorse the current social system, motivated to maintain it. Jost and Banaji (1994) argue that, under various social contexts, individuals will choose behavior consistent with different motives: either group justifying or system justifying. Following directly from social identity theory, Jost and Banaji suggest that group justifying tendencies occur when group members are motivated to preserve a positive image of the ingroup, which typically leads to a negative evaluation of the outgroup. Group justification serves as a means to enhance and foster favorable evaluations of the ingroup and its members. Though these perspectives certainly explain conditions under which members of high status groups (such as White Americans) are motivated to maintain the status quo, group justification perspectives fail to explain why members of disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans) favor high status outgroups and negatively evaluate their own ingroup. System justification theory explains why, under certain circumstances, members of disadvantaged groups favor high status outgroups and seek to maintain the status quo, even at the expense of their personal and group identities. Following from this theorizing, members of disadvantaged groups endorse the very social systems that perpetuate their disadvantage, leading to greater endorsement of system-justifying stereotypes and

reduced ingroup favoritism and self-esteem (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost et al., 2003; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kay, Jimenez, and Jost, 2002; Laurin, Kay, & Shepherd, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

One of the foundational reasons that members of both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups justify a status-stratified system is because the status quo is perceived as rational and favorable, presumably because it has been stable and persistent. People tend to have esteem for traditions and ideologies that have been in existence for an extended period of time. According to system justification research, individuals are motivated to support unfair social systems when they have been long-standing, because long-standing systems are perceived as inherently good and justified (Blanchar & Eidelman, 2013; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012; Eidelman, Crandall, & Pattershall, 2009; Eidelman, Pattershall, & Crandall, 2010; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Kay, Gaucher, et al., 2009; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Livitan & Jost, 2014). That is, when individuals justify the social system, they reassure themselves that the current structure of the system is legitimate and necessary because it has been persistent. Indeed, its existence and stability leads to the perception that it should be, because it always has been.

Under some circumstances, members of both high-status and low-status groups will use system-justifying strategies, and in other circumstances, these groups will engage in ingroup favoritism. System justification theory argues that whether an individual is motivated to satisfy a group or system justifying objective, it will differentially determine subsequent evaluations of and behavior toward the social system. It is important to highlight that for members of advantaged groups, these motives are complementary. High

status within society allows the behaviors of the advantaged to be consistent with favorable evaluations of themselves as a member of their group and as members of the overarching social system. Members of disadvantaged groups, however, are faced with dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1957), because they must choose to satisfy the need for a fair and legitimate social system (at the expense of group esteem), the need to perceive the ingroup as equal to that of the advantaged outgroup (at the expense of the perception of a just social system), or the need to maintain self-worth (which can sometimes lead to disassociation from the ingroup, or a direct rejection of the social system). Jost, Banaji, & Nosek (2004) suggest that disadvantaged group members must choose, within different social contexts, which of these opposing social objectives it is best to support. It is only when the group motive supersedes the system justification motive that individuals will behave consistently with the group justifying motive. As forthcoming literature suggests, it is not always easy for members of disadvantaged groups to overcome the motive to justify the system.

Though the research is scarce, a few studies have examined the impact of system justification among the disadvantaged, minority group within society, which suggest an inverse relationship between ingroup favoritism and system justification (e.g., Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kaiser, Eccleston, & Hagiwara, 2008; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sengupta et al., 2015). For example, O'Brien & Major (2005) examined the influence of system justification among an ethnically diverse sample of college students. The researchers found that disadvantaged ethnic group members (i.e., Hispanic & African Americans) had decreased well-being following system justification when they were highly identified with their ethnic group, but those

that were not highly identified with their group showed no negative impact on well-being (see also Sengupta et al., 2015). Jost & Thompson (2000) also examined differences among ethnic groups, and found that opposition to equality was negatively related to self-esteem for African Americans, but positively related to self-esteem for White/European Americans. However, this relationship for African Americans was only supported in one of the three studies.

System Threat

It stands to reason that, because the longevity of the social system maintains its credibility, challenge to the social system would lead to distress and motivation (from the advantaged group) to ensure its necessity and credibility. Threatening the social system is highly aversive: stress occurs when individuals are made aware of the unfairness of their social system. Because of the aversive feeling that occurs from exposing illegitimacy, high status individuals are motivated to perpetuate the structure of the system (e.g., Rucker, Polifroni, Tetlock, & Scott, 2004). Individuals most benefitted by the system are motivated to defend the status quo; when the system is threatened, an increase in stress leads to a greater tendency to justify the system (Livitan & Jost, 2014; Proulx, 2012). Exposure to system threat, therefore, typically leads to an increase in system justification and political conservatism among high-status individuals, which in turn decreases arousal (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005; Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Livitan & Jost, 2014; Proulx, 2012; Landau, Solomon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Arndt, Miller, et al., 2004). However, the theory suggests that low status group members will show less system justification when the illegitimacy of the system has been made salient (Kaiser, et al., 2008; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

For example, Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer (2011) exposed high school seniors to either a system threat paradigm related to the American political system, their high school social hierarchy, or they read no paradigm. All participants then completed two measures of system justification: one general to the American political system, and one specific to their high school social hierarchy. The researchers found that students indicated higher

system justification for both systems under system threat as compared to the control. In this study, all high school students were presumably of equal status.

In addition, Kaiser, Eccleston, and Hagiwara (2008) provided White and African American participants with video footage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and framed the reasoning for slow responding from government to victims of the hurricane as either a race issue (i.e., the government responded slowly because many victims were African American), or framed as a government incompetence issue (i.e., the government was slow to respond because it was ineffective at working together at the state and federal level). The researchers found that for White American participants, positive attitudes toward their ethnic group were higher in the race blaming condition, consistent with the hypothesis that system threat leads to greater system justification among advantaged groups. African American participants also showed higher positive attitudes toward their ethnic group, but also showed lower positive attitudes toward White Americans, irrespective of blame condition. This suggests that African Americans respond to illegitimacy of the system by supporting their social group (at the expense of advocating for their system).

Indeed, the relationship between system threat and increased system justification suggests that this tendency is due to increased stress and arousal in response to system threat. Relatedly, research has shown that individuals, motivated to perceive the social system as fair, perceive greater stress when societal discrimination is salient (Eliezer, Townsend, Sawyer, Major, & Mendes, 2011). Therefore, it would be advantageous to determine if individuals can learn mechanisms to reduce the tendency to advocate for

unjust social systems, and whether these mechanisms would be undermined when the legitimacy of the social system is threatened.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness refers to nonjudgmental, conscious attention and awareness of present thoughts, events, and experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000; Zainal, Booth, & Huppert, 2013). It stresses an open acceptance of thoughts and emotions as they occur, and emphasizes and adaptive, positive responses to internal and external stimuli. The practice originates from Buddhist spiritual practices, but has since been introduced to Western society, and its effects have been studied in various clinical and general populations (Baer, 2003; Brown et al., 2007; Chiesa, 2013; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011; Rapgay & Bystrisky, 2009; Walsh & Sharpio, 2006).

Research shows that mindfulness is associated with positive benefits among non-clinical populations; these benefits include decreased stress and anxiety as well as increased coping strategies, positive affect, and well-being, among others (Baer, Lykins, & Peters, 2012; Brown, Goodman, & Inzlicht, 2013; Brown et al., 2007; Fredrickson et al., 2008; Keng et al., 2011; Kiken & Shook, 2014; Niemiec et al., 2010; Weinstein, Brown, & Ryan, 2009). For example, Weinstein, Brown, & Ryan (2009) found that individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness perceived less stress during threatening situations, and indicated greater levels of coping, as compared to those low in trait mindfulness. Fredrickson et al. (2008) found that participants engaged in a nine-week MBSR intervention that focused on lovingkindness meditation reported an increase in positive emotions, which was associated with a wealth of beneficial health outcomes, positive relationships with others, and self-acceptance. Baer, Lykins, and Peters (2012)

showed that people who reported a greater frequency of mindfulness practices reported higher levels of psychological well-being, and that trait mindfulness and self-compassion meditated this relationship. Relatedly, Kiken and Shook (2011) found that individuals that who engaged in mindful breathing, as compared to a control condition, demonstrated less negativity bias and reported greater optimism. This research suggests that trait mindfulness and mindfulness practices have positive influences on psychological functioning.

Compassion Meditation

Compassion mediation, one type of mindfulness meditation, involves techniques to cultivate compassion, the development of affective empathy, or deep, genuine sympathy for those stricken by misfortune, together with a desire to relieve others' suffering (Hofmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011; Lutz, Greischar, Perlman, & Davidson, 2009; Shonin, van Gordon, Compare, Zangeneh & Griffiths, 2015). Compassion-based meditation has been associated with increased empathy and altruistic behavior (Mascaro, Darcher, Negi, & Raison, 2015; Weng et al., 2013). For example, Weng et al., (2013) found that individuals trained in compassion for two weeks were more altruistic toward a victim after witnessing an unfair social interaction, when compared to two control groups. Furthermore, activation of the inferior parietal cortex predicted greater prosocial behavior among these compassion meditators. Relatedly, research has examined the effects of general mindfulness practices on compassion. For example, Condon, Desbordes, Miller, and DeSteno (2013) found that participants that engaged in either a compassion-based meditation or a general mindfulness intervention showed greater compassion (i.e., giving one's seat to someone with crutches) than individuals in a control intervention.

To my knowledge, only one prior study has examined the effects of compassion on assessments toward outgroup members. Hunsinger, Livingston, and Isbell (2014) examined the relationship between long-term meditation experience (specifically focused on both compassion meditation and lovingkindness meditation), empathy, and explicit racial prejudice toward African Americans. The researchers found that individuals with greater self-reported meditation practice reported less racial prejudice toward African

Americans, compared to non-meditators. Furthermore, self-reported empathy was greater among meditators than among non-meditators, and empathy significantly mediated the relationship between meditation and racial prejudice. It is important to note that this study examined compassion meditation as an individual difference measure: no prior literature has manipulated compassion meditation to examine its effects on attitudes toward ethnic outgroups. In addition, the effects of compassion meditation have not been examined in previous system justification research. Although individuals are naturally motivated justify the social system, it might be the case that motivating these individuals to practice compassion could lead to changes in advocating for unjust social systems, and changes in assessments of ethnic outgroups.

Novice Meditators

Several mindfulness studies have been conducted with novice (or non-meditators), and this research has shown that mindfulness practices and trait mindfulness are associated with decreased bias and prejudice towards outgroup members (Djikic, Langer, & Stapleton, 2008; Gervais & Hoffman, 2013; Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2013; Kang, Gruber, & Gray, 2013; Lillis & Hayes, 2007; Lueke & Gibson, 2014; Masuda, Hill, Morgan, & Cohen, 2012; Niemiec et al., 2010). For example, Gervais & Hoffman (2013) measured dispositional mindfulness and sexist attitudes towards feminists, and found that men who were dispositionally more mindful reported less sexist motivations and more beliefs about feminists, as compared to those less dispositionally mindful. Lueke and Gibson (2014) found that participants listened to a brief body-scan meditation showed less implicit bias towards the elderly and African Americans as compared to control participants. Hick and Furlotte (2010) found that economically disadvantaged participants that completed an adapted radical mindfulness training (RMT) course showed increased life satisfaction and decreased self-judgment. Similarly, other research has demonstrated that disadvantaged groups exposed to mindfulness-based interventions express greater ingroup identification and experience more favorable outcomes (Brown-Iannuzzi, Adair, Payne, Richman, & Fredrickson, 2014; Hick & Furlotte, 2010; Keng et al., 2011; Lillis, Hayes, Bunting, & Masuda, 2009).

In addition, Kang, Gray, & Dovidio (2013) found that a six-week lovingkindness meditation course decreased implicit bias, among white participants, towards African Americans and homeless individuals, compared to a lovingkindness discussion intervention and a waitlist control condition. Stell and Farsides (2015) found that,

compared to an imagery control group, participants who listened to a brief lovingkindness guided meditation expressed less implicit bias toward African Americans (i.e., the target outgroup) but not toward Asian Americans (i.e., a peripheral outgroup); and this effect was mediated by positive other-regarding emotion, automatic processing, and controlled processing. Parks, Birtel, and Crisp (2014) showed that, compared to a control condition, participants who listened to a brief audiotape focused on either lovingkindness toward a homeless person or lovingkindness toward a stranger reported lower intergroup anxiety and more future contact intentions toward homeless individuals.

Most of these studies have implemented a "lovingkindness" meditation intervention with novice meditators. Lovingkindness meditation focuses on developing unconditional kindness, warmth, and caring first toward the self, then extending to other beings, and involves directing one's emotions toward warm feelings in an open-hearted way (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hofmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011; Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2014). Though lovingkindness meditation and compassion meditation are closely connected (Galante, Galante, Bekkers, & Gallacher, 2014; Hofmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011) and though prior literature suggests that lovingkindness meditation can be associated with increased compassion (i.e., Bankard, 2015; Lippelt et al., 2014), the practices are distinct in focus. Whereas lovingkindness meditation focuses on developing unconditional kindness toward all individuals, compassion meditation focuses on the development of deep, genuine sympathy for those stricken by misfortune (Hofmann, Grossman, & Hinton, 2011). Taken together, research on mindfulness and intergroup relations suggests that mindfulness may have the capacity to improve both outgroup attitudes among the advantaged and ingroup attitudes among the disadvantaged. In

addition, compassion meditation and its relationship to ethnic outgroup attitudes has yet to be examined with novice meditators. The current study examined whether compassion meditation among novice meditators reduced system justification among high-status and low-status groups.

The Current Study

System justification theory suggests that individuals are motivated to endorse their social system, and that justifying the system serves as a means to reduce uncertainty and stress that would result from perceiving the social system as illegitimate. Mindfulness practices emphasize open acceptance and awareness of current thoughts and experiences, and mindfulness interventions have led to greater acceptance of outgroups (for those that are advantaged in society) as well as increased acceptance of one's current experiences (for those that are often the targets of discrimination). Little research has examined the relationship between compassion-based meditation on explicit attitudes and bias toward ethnic outgroup members. The current study was designed to understand whether a brief mindfulness intervention, focused on compassion, would reduce the tendency for White and African Americans to justify a socially stratified system, and to further understand how system threat modifies this effect.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

It was predicted that, among White Americans in the low threat condition, those that engaged in a brief mindful-compassion meditation would report lower levels of system justification, compared to the mind-wandering condition (Hypothesis I). By contrast, it was predicted that White Americans in the high threat condition would justify the system equally, regardless of mindfulness condition (Hypothesis II). For African Americans in the low threat condition, it was predicted that those that engaged in a brief mindful-compassion meditation would report lower levels of system justification, compared to the mind-wandering condition (Hypothesis III). Among African Americans in both the high and low threat conditions, this same pattern was expected, but it was also

predicted that overall, those in the high threat condition would report lower levels of system justification (i.e., two main effects; Hypothesis IV).

In addition, I proposed several research questions. The first research question was: does internal motivation to control prejudice further moderate the effects of mindfulness and threat conditions on system justification (Research Question I)? Second, would the interaction between mindfulness and threat affect negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation (Research Question II)? In addition, would internal motivation further moderate the relationships for negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation (Research Question III)?

Method

Participants

Participants were 256 students recruited from the University of Missouri's Psychology 1000 participant pool, and were compensated with research credit. Participants were excluded from data analyses if they failed to answer all 5 attention checks correctly[1] (e.g., select strongly disagree to ensure you're a human responder, N = 53), if they failed one or both manipulation checks[2] (N = 14), or if they failed both attention and manipulation checks (N = 8). Thus, the resulting N for the study was 181 participants. Participants were White American (N = 152) or African American (N = 29). Gender was approximately equal (i.e., males = 73; females = 108) and the average age was 19.0 years (range of 18 to 42 years)[3].

[1] When these participants were left in the dataset, the analyses remained the same, with the exception that the negative racial attitudes three-way interaction no longer remained significant (p = .32).

[2] When these participants were left in the dataset, analyses remained the same, with the exception that the three-way interaction with negative racial attitudes no longer remained significant (p = .16).

Procedure

The study utilized a 2 (mindful-compassion meditation vs. mind-wandering) × 2 (system threat: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Before arriving to the lab, participants were randomly assigned to listen to either a mindful-compassion meditation audio or a mind-wandering audio, and randomly assigned to read a passage low or high in racial system threat. Participants were brought in to the lab one at a time were greeted by an experimenter of the same ethnicity. Experimenters told the participants that the study was designed to understand the ways in which meditation influence their beliefs about the University of Missouri and other people. Study materials were presented and read on electronic Android tablets. Experimenters instructed participants on how to use the tablet to listen to the meditation audio, then started one of the two audiotapes and left the room. Participants listened to the tape using headphones. After approximately 20 minutes, experimenters reentered the room and provided participants with a 2-page stapled piece of paper, and told them they would read a passage about the University of Missouri. The front page was an instruction sheet telling them to turn the page over, and the second page provided the system threat manipulation. Half of participants read a vignette designed to induce low threat, and the other half read a vignette designed to induce high threat. After reading the passage, participants answered survey questions assessing system justification, self-reported compassion, and outgroup attitudes. Participants were then verbally debriefed, probed for suspicion, and thanked for their participation.

Materials

[3] One participant was excluded from data analyses because they reported their age as 17; analyses were similar regardless of whether their data were included or excluded. In addition, a second participant misreported their age as 198. Their data were included, and their age was recoded as 19.

Meditation audios. Both audiotapes were recorded by the same practitioner with 20+ years of experience as a meditation instructor. Tape instructions in both conditions began by asking participants to close their eyes, relax, and take deep breaths. Then, participants' focus of instruction varied depending on condition. The mindful-compassion meditation (adapted from Stell & Farsides, 2015; Weng, 2015), guided participants to bring to mind a particular target. Targets included the following: a mentor, a loved one, an acquaintance, a difficult person, the participant herself or himself, and a group that the participant didn't know well. Participants were asked to think of the target, imagine being with the target, reflect on their positive qualities, think of a difficult time the target had gone through, and wish for the alleviation of suffering for that target. They then heard the same instructions repeated for the subsequent targets. The mind-wandering audiotape (adapted from Kiken & Shook, 2011) instructed the participants to focus on any thought they had, allowing themselves to bring it to mind, and guided them to follow any new thought that came along, allowing their mind to wander freely. Prior research has suggested that brief mindfulness exposure produces the positive benefits of traditional mindfulness-based interventions, and furthermore suggests that mind-wandering is a suitable control condition because it is the conceptual opposite of mindfulness (Arch & Craske, 2006; Kiken & Shook, 2011, Lillis & Hayes, 2007; Lueke & Gibson, 2014). Scripts for the meditation audios are provided in the appendix.

System threat. To induce system threat, half of the participants read a vignette high in racial system threat (adapted from Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). The vignette described racial tensions on the University of Missouri campus during the Fall 2015 semester. Specifically, the vignette described the MU graduate student that went on an

eight-day hunger strike, the resignation of University officials, and the mandating of diversity training for all faculty and incoming students, among other events that occurred. In comparison, the other half of participants read a vignette about the students' vote from the Fall 2015 semester to not increase University of Missouri library fees students pay each semester. This vignette was written to induce a general threat, essentially equal to the high threat vignette, but importantly, the low threat condition did not refer to race on campus. This passage is referred to as a "low threat" passage because it was low in racial system threat. Pretesting with ten independent raters (i.e., 1 = extremely, 6 = not at all) showed that the passages were not perceived as different in threat to MU in general ($p >$ .19) and to MU students in particular ($p >$ .20). Nevertheless, the high threat passage (M = 1.78, SD = .97) was perceived as significantly more threatening to the racial climate at MU than the low threat passage (M = 4.67, SD =1.00), $t(8) = 5.12$, $p <$ .001, 95% CI [1.59, 4.19]. Prior research has shown that system threat vignettes are an effective method for inducing feelings of uncertainty about a current social structure (Kay et al., 2009; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005; Rucker, Polifroni, Tetlock, & Scott, 2004). The low and high threat vignettes are provided in the appendix.

Outcome Measures

System justification (α = .83) was assessed using an adapted version of Kay & Jost's (2003) measure of perceptions of the current social system. Research has shown that these items, which measure general (i.e., "diffuse") justification of the social system, can be adapted to measure justification of specific social systems (Blanchar & Eidelman, 2013; Jost & Kay, 2005; Kay, Czapliński, & Jost, 2009). For the current study, items

measured race-specific system justification (i.e., endorsement of racial differences within the United States). An example of an item in this measure was "In general, relations between African Americans and White/European Americans are fair" (1= strongly disagree, 9= strongly agree).

The negative racial attitudes scale (i.e., Stephan et al., 1993, 2002, α = .86) assessed negative evaluations participants held toward their ethnic outgroup, using six negative items (i.e., *hostility, dislike, superiority, disdain, hatred,* and *rejection*) and six positive items (i.e., *admiration, acceptance, affection, approval, sympathy,* and *warmth*). Positive items were reverse-coded, and all items were assessed on a 0 to 9 scale (i.e., 0 = none at all, 9 = extremely).

The othergroup orientation subscale (α = .70) of the multigroup ethnic identity measure (Phinney, 1992) was used to measure willingness to interact with members of other ethnic groups generally. This measure consisted of five items (e.g., "I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own", 1= strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree).

Control Measures

Individual differences in compassion (α = .90) were assessed using the Santa Clara Brief Compassion scale (Hwang, Plante, & Lackey, 2008). The scale consisted of five items (e.g., "I would rather engage in actions that help others, even though they are strangers, than engage in actions that would help me"; 1 = not at all true of me, 7 = very true of me).

The internal motivation subscale (α = .83) of the motivation to control prejudice scale (Plant & Devine, 1998) was used to assess internal motivations to respond without

prejudice. The subscale consisted of five items (e.g., "I attempt to act in nonprejudiced ways toward Black people because it is personally important to me"; *1 = strongly disagree, 9 = strongly agree*).

Results

The guideline of ± 1.5 for skewness and kurtosis was used to determine if the measures were normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The skewness (absolute value range= .16 to .90), and kurtosis statistics (absolute value range= .02 to .33) revealed that no variable appreciably deviated from the normal distribution. In addition, the data were examined for the presence of multivariate outliers (Aiken & West, 1991); outliers were excluded only in the analysis in which the outlier was identified (outliers comprised 1.10% to 2.76% of the data). To test the primary hypotheses, in each regression analysis, the mindfulness condition (0 = Mindful-compassion; 1 = Mind-wandering), the threat-vignette condition (0 = Low Threat; 1 = High Threat), and their interaction was entered as predictors of system justification. To examine the first research question, the z-score of internal motivation to respond without prejudice was added to the regression model, as well as its products with the mindfulness and threat-vignette conditions, to test two-way and the three-way interactions predicting system justification. In addition, to examine the second and third research questions, these same series of analyses for negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation were examined. Analyses were run separately for White and African Americans, and counter to hypotheses, the pattern of results were similar regardless of ethnic group membership.[4] As such, in all analyses, ethnic group

[4] White Americans had significantly higher system justification than African Americans, and African Americans had significantly higher negative attitudes than White Americans, when examining interactions between the experimental conditions. These relationships remained significant when incorporating internal motivation to control prejudice in the analyses.

identity (0 = African Americans; 1 = White Americans) and compassion[5] were included as control variables. Table 1 shows the zero-order correlations, means, and standard deviations for the primary variables.

System Justification

The analyses revealed a significant 2-way interaction between mindfulness tape and threat-vignette condition, $t(172) = 2.73$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .87$, 95% CI [.24, 1.50]. Interestingly but contrary to Hypothesis I, in the high threat condition, participants in the mindful-compassion condition ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.42$) reported lower justification for the stratified system than those that in the mind-wandering condition ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.39$), $t(94) = -2.24$, $p < .03$, 95% CI [-1.21, -.07]. By contrast, for participants in the low threat condition, participants that engaged in the mindful-compassion meditation ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.35$) and the mind-wandering condition ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.47$) reported similar levels of system justification, $t(83) = .48$, $p = .63$, 95% CI = [-.46, .76]. This relationship is displayed in Figure 1. Neither the three-way interaction between the experimental conditions and internal motivation to control prejudice, $p = .17$, nor the two-way interaction between mindfulness conditions and internal motivation, $p > .20$, were significant. The threat-vignette by internal motivation interaction was significant $t(168) = -2.44$, $p < .02$, 95% CI [-.97, -.10]; the pattern generally showed no differences in system justification among those with low levels of internal motivation, but for those with high internal motivation, participants in the high threat condition showed less system

[5] Higher self-reported compassion was associated with significantly less system justification and negative racial attitudes, and significantly more othergroup orientation. When incorporating internal motivation to control prejudice, the relationships for system justification and othergroup orientation remained significant, and the interaction for negative racial attitudes was no longer significant.

justification than those in the low threat condition. Importantly, in this analysis, the two-way interaction between mindfulness and threat-vignette conditions remained significant, $t(168) = 2.64$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.21, 1.47].

Hypotheses I-III were not supported. In addition, the pattern of results were consistent with Hypothesis IV (for African Americans in the high threat condition), although results combined White and African Americans in the same analyses. In addition, there was no evidence that internal motivation to control prejudice was associated with system justification (i.e., Research Question I).

Negative Racial Attitudes

The two-way interaction between mindful-compassion and threat-vignette conditions was not significant, $p = .13$ (i.e., Research Question II). Instead, when exploring the interaction between the conditions and internal motivation to control prejudice, the analyses revealed a significant three-way interaction between mindful-compassion, threat-vignette, and internal motivation to control prejudice, $t(165) = 2.31$, $p < .03$, $\beta = .71$, 95% CI [.10, 1.30], (i.e., Research Question III). As shown in Figure 2, in the low threat condition, the interaction between mindfulness conditions and internal motivation was not significant, $p = .67$. Instead, in both mindfulness conditions, participants higher in internal motivation to control prejudice showed lower negative racial attitudes than participants low in internal motivation. The slopes of the lines were not different, $z = -0.56$, $p = .58$. For those in the high threat condition, however, there was a significant two-way interaction between the mindfulness condition and internal motivation, $t(89) = 2.86$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .61$, 95% CI [.19, 1.02]. As shown in Figure 3, for participants that listened to the mindful-compassion audio, those with high internal

motivation reported less negative racial attitudes than those with low motivation to control prejudice. For those that listened to the mind-wandering audio, this relationship was not as strong. The magnitude of the slopes of the two lines were different, $z = 3.03$, $p < .002$.

Othergroup Orientation

The two-way interaction between mindfulness and threat-vignette conditions was not significant, $p = .63$ (i.e., Research Question II). Instead there was a significant mindfulness × threat-vignette × internal motivation to control prejudice interaction, $t(168) = -2.86$, $p < .01$, $\beta = -.30$, 95% CI [-.51, -.09], (i.e., Research Question III). As shown in Figure 4, for participants in the low threat condition, the interaction between mindfulness condition and internal motivation was not significant, $p = .37$. The slopes of the lines were not different, $z = 0.82$, $p = .21$. By contrast, for those in the high threat condition, there was a significant two-way interaction between mindfulness conditions and internal motivation to control prejudice, $t(91) = -2.73$, $p < .01$, $\beta = -.18$, 95% CI [-.32, -.05]. As shown in Figure 5, the pattern mirrored that that for negative racial attitudes, and showed that differences in internal motivation did not influence othergroup orientation among those that listened to the mind-wandering audio. However, participants high in internal motivation showed higher othergroup orientation than those low in motivation to control prejudice among those that listened to the mindful-compassion audio. The magnitude of the slopes between the two lines were different, $z = -3.28$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

Though prior research has shown that mindfulness interventions reduce prejudice and increase positive evaluations of outgroup members, no previous research has studied the relationship between mindful-compassion and race-specific system justification. The results of the current study suggested that a mindful-compassion meditation was most influential for those exposed to high racial threat, for system justification, negative racial attitudes, and othergroup orientation. Although counter to the original hypotheses, participants in the high system threat condition justified the system less after engaging in mindful-compassion practice than those in the control condition (i.e., mind-wandering). This finding suggests that although participants were induced to feel that the racial hierarchy on the University of Missouri campus was threatened, mindful-compassion meditation was associated with less endorsement of the racial hierarchy in the U.S., as compared to those in the mind-wandering condition. When system threat was low, there was no differences between the two mindfulness conditions.

Although the results for negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation showed that the combination of system threat and mindful-compassion meditation had positive influences, the results also showed that the outcomes were qualified by individual differences in internal motivation to control prejudice. Among participants who engaged in the mindful-compassion meditation and who were exposed to system threat, those who reported higher levels of internal motivation to control prejudice reported lower negative racial attitudes. For participants in the mind-wandering condition, there was less of an association between internal motivation to control prejudice and negative racial attitudes. By contrast, for participants in the low threat condition, higher internal motivation to control prejudice was negatively associated with

negative racial attitudes, regardless of whether participants engaged in mindful-compassion or not. This pattern of findings suggests that the combination of mindful-compassion and internal motivation to control prejudice produced the least negative intergroup attitudes. In general, the results suggest that mindful-compassion was most beneficial for the attitudes of participants reporting higher motivation to control prejudice.

For participants who engaged in the mindful-compassion meditation and were exposed to system threat, those who reported higher levels of internal motivation to control prejudice reported higher othergroup orientation. Specifically, participants with higher levels of internal motivation who engaged in mindful-compassion meditation indicated more willingness to interact with other ethnic groups. By comparison, for participants in the mind-wandering condition exposed to system threat, there was less of a positive association between internal motivation to control prejudice and othergroup orientation. For participants in the low threat condition, regardless of mindfulness condition, internal motivation to control prejudice was positively associated with othergroup orientation. Again, it appears that the benefit of the mindful-compassion was largely present for those with high internal motivation to control prejudice, as compared to those low in internal motivation.

That internal motivation to control prejudice did not influence system justification but did influence negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation is not surprising. That is, internal motivation to control prejudice may have stronger influences on evaluations of outgroups than on justification of stratified systems, because the evaluations are indices of relative prejudice toward outgroups. System justification, by

contrast is specific to beliefs about the *fairness* of the relative status of groups in the United States. The current findings for system justification were somewhat consistent with prior research (Price-Blackshear & Bettencourt, under review), and showed little association between system justification and attitudes toward ethnic outgroups, suggesting that internal motivation to control prejudice may have little to do with endorsement of the racial hierarchy.

System justification theory predicts that threatening a social system leads to greater endorsement for that system (Kay, Jost, and Young, 2005). Somewhat contrary to system justification literature, the results of the current study did not show that system threat alone necessarily increased system justification. Instead, the results showed that high system threat induced the lowest levels of system justification when participants engaged in a mindful-compassion. Also, the levels of system justification were similar in the high threat and low threat conditions when participants were instructed to engage in mind-wandering. Previous studies typically involve system threat manipulations incorporating a low threat passage that describes the same social system, but that is low in system threat (see Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). In contrast, the current study incorporated a control passage equivalent in threat to campus and students, but was not relevant to the racial hierarchy. This decision was made because the content of the high threat passage involved true events on campus that were genuinely offensive and perceptibly negative (e.g., racial slurs yelled at the Legion of Black Collegian's homecoming court). I did not believe that these events could be described in a nonthreatening way. Furthermore, I did not believe that participants would agree with the argument that relations between White and African Americans were untroubled, after

reading evidence to suggest they clearly were. As such, the low threat passage was designed to be irrelevant to the racial hierarchy, but nevertheless posing some threat relevant campus. Related to the method of the current study, Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer (2011) incorporated between-subjects manipulations of two high threat passages (threatening the high school and American hierarchy), compared to a control (no passage) condition. The researchers measured system justification toward the high school and toward America in all conditions (within-subjects measurement). The results showed no differences in system justification between the two high threat conditions and that both types of threat induced equally high levels of endorsement for the American and high school hierarchies. Nevertheless, there were significant differences between the control condition and the two system threat conditions. In the current study, pretesting showed that the low threat and high threat conditions were equally threatening to MU and MU students, and therefore, this more general threat might have induced endorsement of the racial hierarchy even though it had nothing to do with the system, much like the results of Wakslak et al. Still, it is interesting that the mindful compassion condition was able to undermine the effect of system threat on system justification, a finding that is novel in the literature.

A small set of studies suggest that mindfulness practices improve intergroup attitudes. The results of the current study were somewhat consistent with the mindfulness and intergroup literature, because the mindful-compassion condition was associated with lower negative racial attitudes and greater othergroup orientation. In the current study, this was only the case when internal motivation to control prejudice was high. Less consistent with the prior literature, the results of the current study suggested that mindful-

compassion did not influence negative racial attitudes and othergroup orientation over and above internal motivation to control prejudice. The disparity between the current results and prior literature may be due to the difference in the measures used to assess outgroup attitudes. Mainly, the present study used explicit measures of outgroup attitudes, whereas the prior literature has revealed effects of mindfulness practices primarily on implicit measures of outgroup attitudes (e.g., Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2014; Lueke & Gibson, 2014; Stell & Farsides, 2015).

Very little research has examined the role of mindfulness on the tendency for people to endorse a stratified social system (but see Price-Blackshear & Bettencourt, under review). The current research suggests that at least some types of mindfulness practices may mitigate the effect of system threat on system justification. It is interesting to speculate why the results were counter to predictions. As suggested previously, it may be the case that differences in system justification were not shown between the vignette passages (except under mindful-compassion) because the passages were equally threatening. In addition, whereas mindful-compassion was expected to matter most for participants in the low threat condition, it was for participants in the high threat condition that mindful-compassion appeared most influential. It may be the case that the mindful-compassion meditation served as a buffer against the system threat-vignette. For these participants, the mindful-compassion allowed participants to develop feelings of compassion toward several targets. When then asked about attitudes toward the racial hierarchy, perhaps these individuals became more open to recognizing the existence of this hierarchy.

The pattern for less negative racial attitudes and more othergroup orientation corroborate prior literature, but only with respect to internal motivation to control prejudice. Specifically, for participants with high internal motivation, compassion meditation had a greater influence on favorable outgroup attitudes than for those with low internal motivation. Participants who reported lower internal motivation to control prejudice seemed not to benefit from the mindful-compassion. In fact, these participants tended to show the highest negative attitudes, and lowest othergroup orientation, toward outgroup members. It may be important for researchers studying mindfulness and intergroup attitudes consider individual differences in internal motivation to control prejudice and the ways in which internal motivation to control prejudice may differentially influence implicit and explicit attitudes measures.

The study is not without its limitations. For example, although differences were found between the low and high threat conditions on the outcome measures, a potential alternative explanation could be that differences between conditions emerged because the high threat passage refers to race explicitly, whereas the low threat passage made no mention of race. In other words, perhaps the salience of race in the high threat passage lead to differences on the measures of racial system justification and racial outgroup attitudes. A follow up study has been developed to rule out this alternative explanation, by incorporating a "race salience" passage, which explicitly refers to race but does not threaten the racial hierarchy in the United States.

A second limitation of the current study design involves individual differences: that is, this study does not allow for conclusions about the changes in system justification across time, nor does it rule out the influence of dispositional mindfulness for the

hypothetical results. As an alternative explanation, if mindfulness does lead to reduced system justification, it might be because these individuals were dispositionally more mindful, and/or less likely to system justify, prior to the experimental manipulations. A potential follow-up study could measure dispositional mindfulness using the five facet mindfulness questionnaire (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006) and system justification tendencies (Kay & Jost, 2003) prior to the experimental manipulation, to determine change over time and the potential influences of individual differences.

In addition, the system justification measure is a survey assessment of attitudes towards racial differences within the social system. Although participants in the mindful-compassion condition showed reduced system justification as compared to individuals in the control condition, this does not necessarily mean that these individuals would be less likely to endorse these aspects of the system using other methods of assessment. Perhaps conceptually replicating the study using additional methods to assess system justification tendencies would create a more complete picture of the relationship between system justification and mindfulness practices.

In addition, the current study provided insufficient evidence for testing differences between different ethnic groups. White and African Americans were recruited from the Psychology 1000 undergraduate pool, but African Americans in the overall pool were small, and therefore lead to a small number of participants in this study. Although differences were hypothesized, in this study, results were identical for both ethnic groups. As a result, analyses were collapsed across ethnic groups, and a dummy code for ethnicity was included in all analyses. Though results were similar, the small sample size

for African Americans in this study warrants caution about interpretation of this finding. Increasing the sample size for the minority group would improve the ability to draw conclusions about similarities and differences in patterns between these ethnic groups.

Conclusion

The current study is the first to examine whether mindfulness (specifically, mindful-compassion meditation) has the potential to reduce system justification, and further examined the effects of compassion meditation on racial outgroup attitudes. This study enhances literature on mindfulness and intergroup relations and expands the literature involving brief mindfulness interventions. In addition, the current study was the first to examine the effects of compassion meditation on assessments of unjust social systems and ethnic outgroup attitudes. It also informs literature on system justification and system threat, allowing for a more defined explanation of when system threat will or will not lead to higher system justification.

The University of Missouri provided a unique location for understanding perceptions of racial hierarchy due to the high salience of racial controversies during the Fall 2015 semester. The consequences of justifying status-stratified systems can be harmful, especially to African Americans. It is important to understand means by which both White and African Americans may consider the illegitimacy of inequalities within society. Likely, participants in the current study held authentic opinions about the fairness of the relations among ethnic groups within society, and they might have endorsed (or opposed) this social system to various degrees. More generally, these results suggest that the adaptive strategies of mindfulness affect relations in daily life (i.e., endorsement of social systems and attitudes toward racial outgroups). These results reveal the possible

positive implications of mindfulness practices for advantaged and disadvantaged group members alike.

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Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations among Relevant Variables

Measure	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1. System Justification	_				
2. Negative Racial Attitudes	-.20**				
3. Othergroup Orientation	-.004	-.35**			
4. Motivation to Control Prejudice	.05	-.54**	.44**		
5. Compassion	-.27**	-.18*	.36**	.45**	
	M = 4.94	*M* = 2.24	*M* = 3.39	*M* = 7.53	*M* = 5.32
	SD = 1.43	*SD* = 1.43	*SD* = 0.41	*SD* = 1.39	*SD* = 1.19

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$.

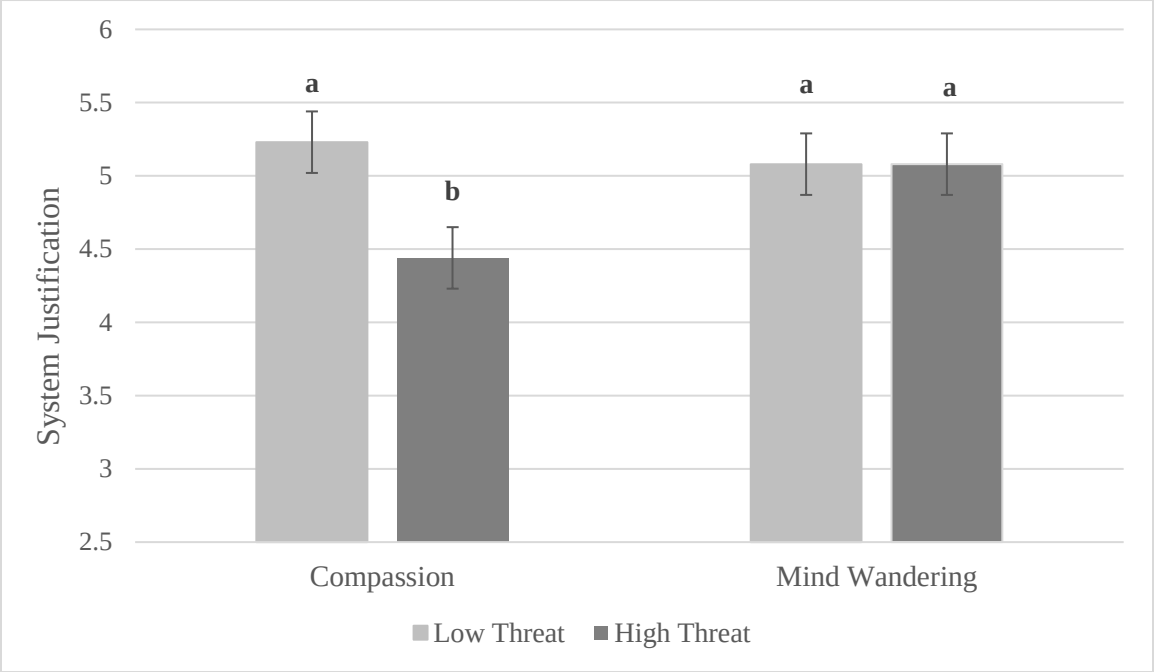


Figure 1. Results for mindfulness × threat-vignette interaction. Conditions with common letter subscripts indicate no significant differences between the means.

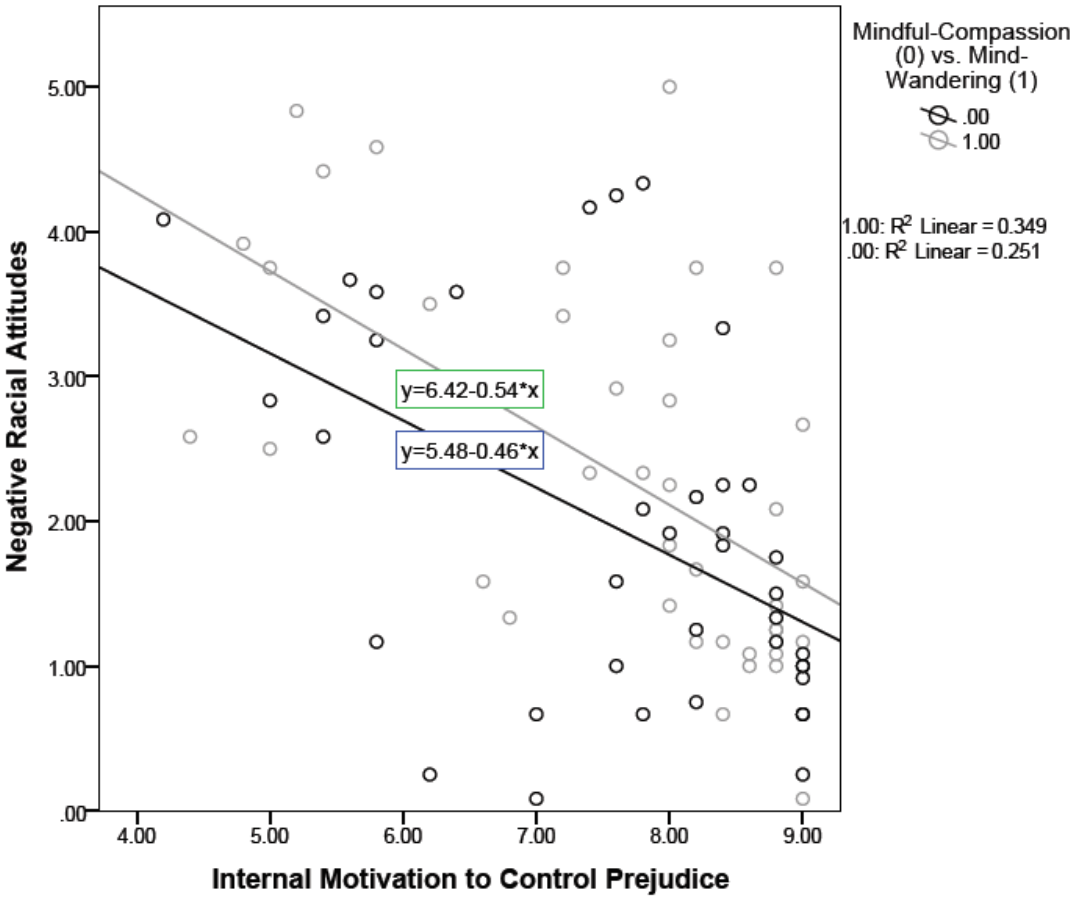


Figure 2. Results for internal motivation to control prejudice × negative racial attitudes interaction, for the low threat condition.

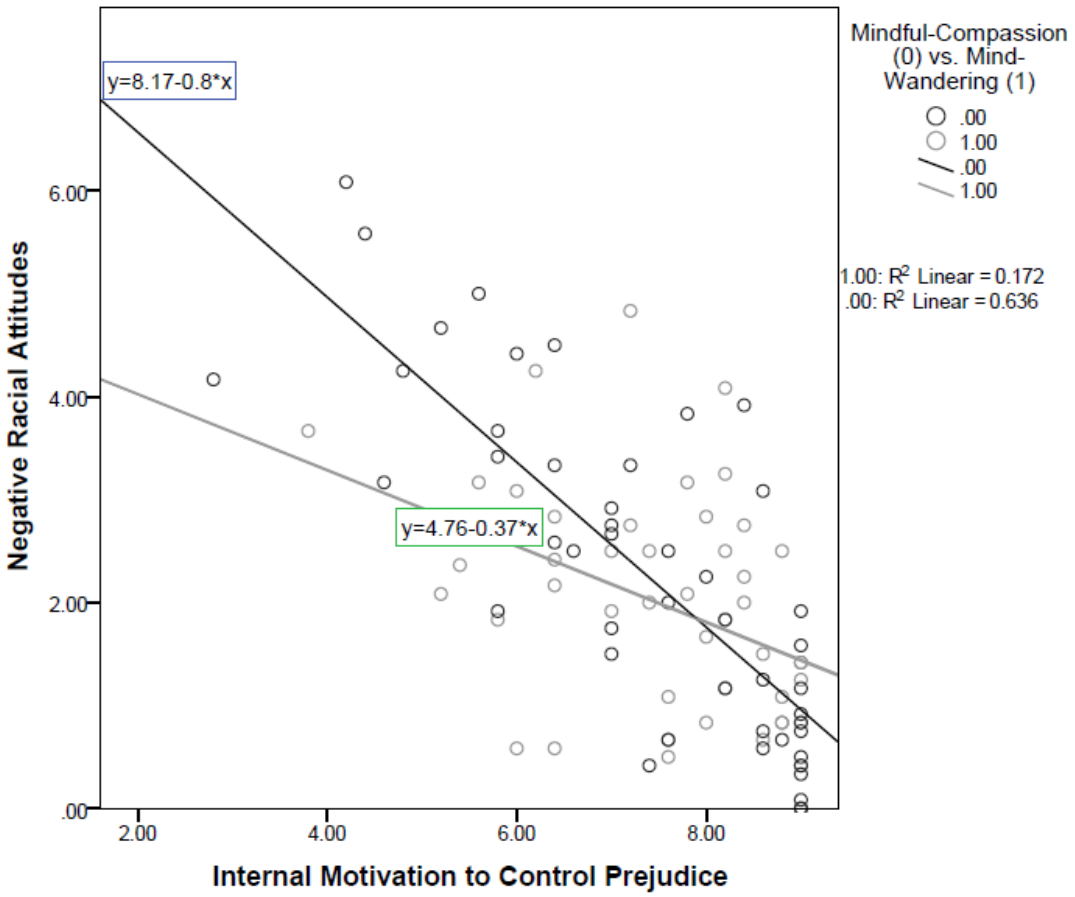


Figure 3. Results for internal motivation to control prejudice × negative racial attitudes interaction, for the high threat condition.

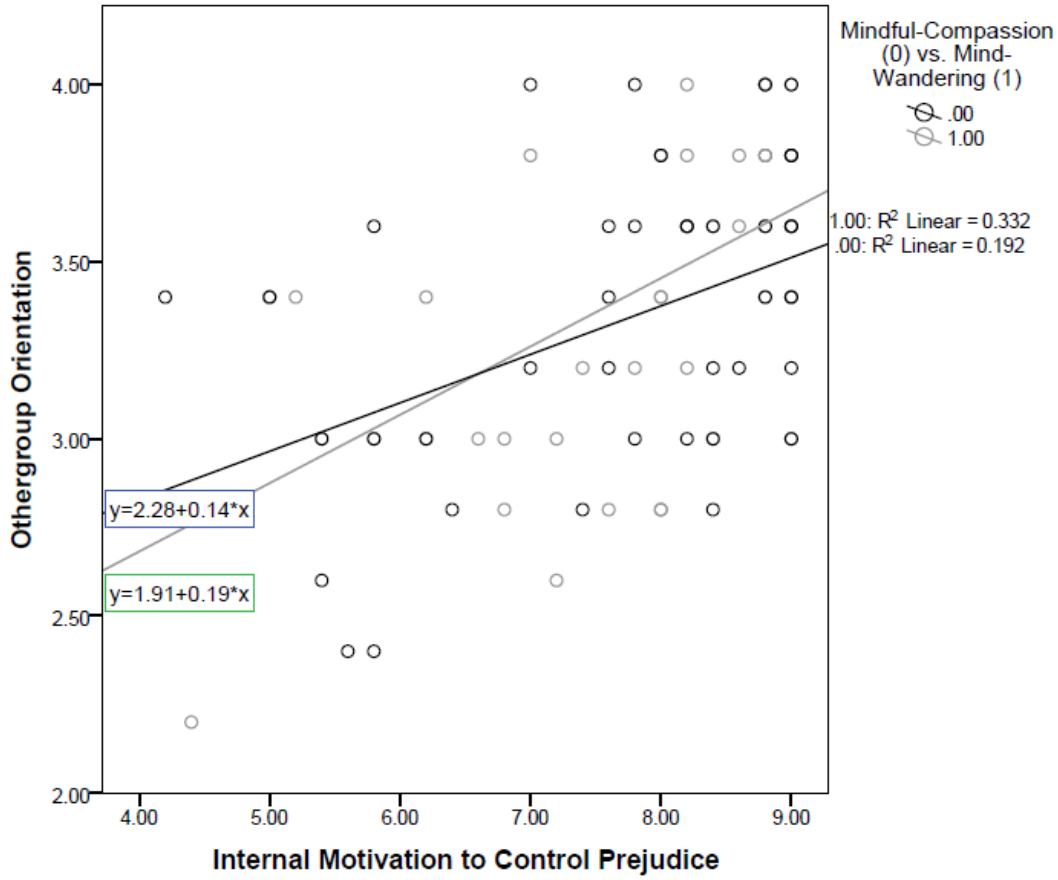


Figure 4. Results for internal motivation to control prejudice × othergroup orientation interaction, for the low threat condition.

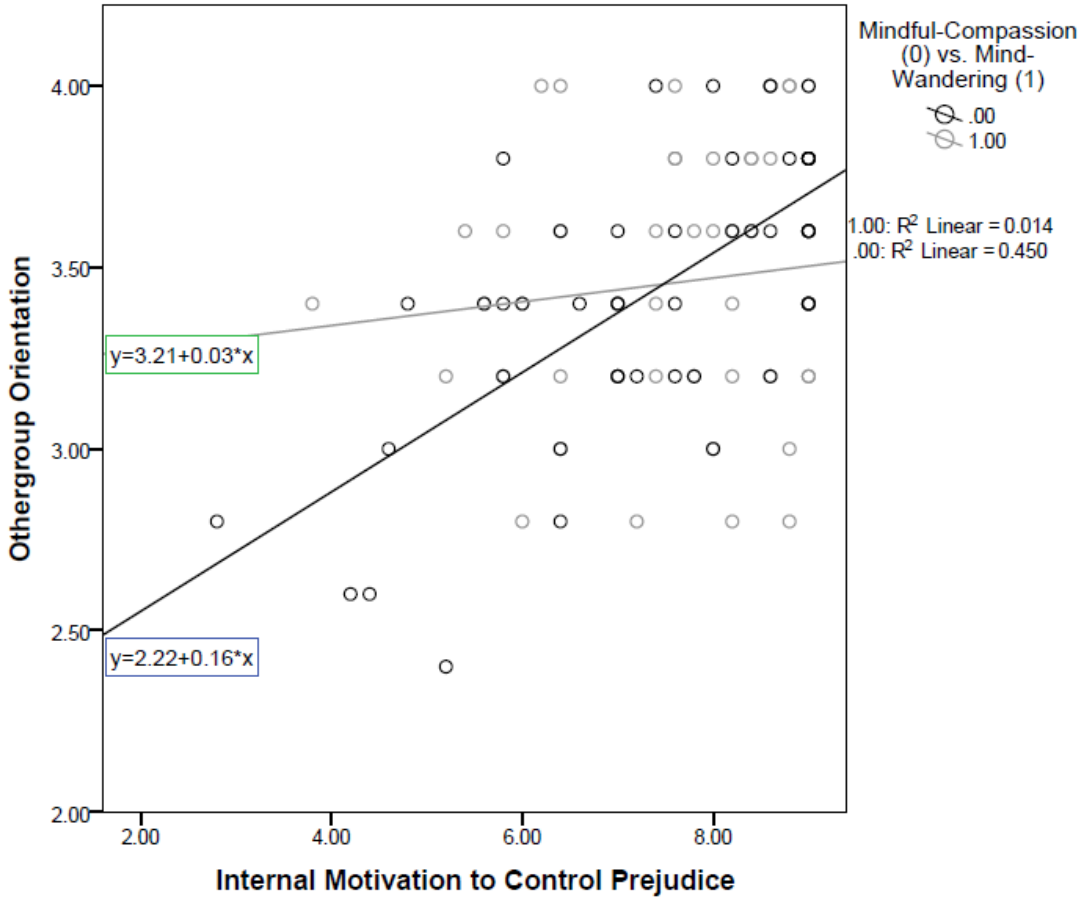


Figure 5. Results for internal motivation to control prejudice × othergroup orientation interaction, for the high threat condition.

Appendix

Script for Mindful-Compassion meditation

What you are about to listen to is a compassion meditation tape. When we say compassion, we mean having tender caring feelings toward others who are experiencing pain or difficulty. In this meditation you will be asked to bring to mind a few people you know and silently offer care and compassion to them. This tape will end with the sound of three bells.

Please settle into a comfortable position and allow yourself to relax.

It can be helpful to begin a mindfulness by consciously relaxing your body.

Take a few moments to be sure that you are seated comfortably and that your feet are placed solidly on the floor. That your shoulders are soft and relaxed and that your neck and back is straight but not stiff in an alert and erect position. You may rest your hands on the arms of the chair or on your lap. Whatever is most comfortable for you.

Now take a few breaths in and out, relaxing your whole body. Breathing in and breathing out softening and relaxing. Every once in a while, you'll hear my voice again. Simply reminding you to bring up feelings of tenderness and compassion.

So let's begin. Bring to mind a mentor or teacher. Someone who provides you help and care. Someone who you cherish deeply.

Pause 3:40 – 4:00

Imaging being with them as they are providing you guidance. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. And see them smiling at you. And sending you back feelings of calmness, confidence and compassion. Take a moment to experience any positive feelings.

Reflect on your mentor's positive qualities. And make a positive statement about them in your mind.

Now think about a difficult time this mentor is going through or might have gone through recently. Imagine being near this person as they are struggling with a difficult time. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Think to yourself and repeat in your mind "May you be free of your difficulties. I care about your difficulties. May you be free of stress and difficulty. May you be free of all physical and mental pain. May you be well. May you be happy."

Now think of a loved one who you deeply cherish. Imagine that person is seated in front of you. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. And see them smiling at you. And sending back to you feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion. Take a moment to experience any positive feelings.

Pause 8:30 – 8:45

Reflect on your cherished one's positive qualities. And make a positive statement about them in your mind.

Pause 8:54 – 9:12

Now think about a struggle this loved one is going through or might have gone through recently. Imagine being next to this person as they are struggling with a difficult time. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Think to yourself and repeat in your mind "May you be free of your struggles. I care about your struggles. May you be free of stress and struggle. May you be free of all physical and mental pain. May you be well. May you be happy."

Now bring to mind an acquaintance. Someone you don't know very well. Someone you know from only brief occasional encounters. Imagine standing with them. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Take a moment to experience any positive feelings. Reflect on your acquaintance's positive qualities and make a statement about them in your mind.

Pause 12:25 – 12:40

Now think about a difficult time this acquaintance is going through or might have gone through recently. Imagine being with this person as they are struggling with a difficult time. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them.

13:08 – 13:20

Think to yourself and in your mind, "May you be free of your difficulties. I care about your difficulties. May you be free of stress and difficulty. May you be free from all physical and mental pain. May you be well. May you be happy." Now think of a difficult person, you've encountered in your past. Imagine passing by them on your way to another place. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Take a moment to experience any positive feelings.

15:20- 15:30

Think about a struggle this person is going through or has gone through recently. Imagine passing this person as they are struggling with a difficult time. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Think to yourself and repeat in your mind. "May you be free of your struggles. I care about your struggles. May you be free of stress and struggle. May you be free of all physical and mental pain. May you be well. May you be happy."

Now think of yourself. Imagine yourself just as you are now. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to yourself. Take a moment to experience any feelings of calmness and compassion.

17:27 – 17:36

Reflect on your positive qualities and make a positive statement about yourself in your mind.

17:41 – 17:51

Now think about a struggle you're going through or might have gone through recently. Imagine yourself struggling with a difficult time. Now direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to yourself. Think to yourself and repeat in your mind "May I be free of my struggles. I care about my struggles. May I be free of stress and struggle. May I be free of all physical and mental pain. May I be well. May I be happy."

Now think of a group of people you don't know well, but that you are aware of. That you might see over the next couple of weeks. Imagine passing by them on your way to another place. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion towards them. Take a moment to experience any positive feelings.

19:34 – 19:41

Now think about a difficulty this group of people is going through or might have gone through recently. Imagine passing this group as they are struggling with a difficult time. Direct feelings of calmness, confidence, and compassion to them. Think to yourself and repeat in your mind, "May you be free of your struggles. I care about your struggles. May you be free of stress and struggle. May you be free of all physical and mental pain. May you be well. May you be happy."

Take a deep breath in and out. And as you breath out, repeat the word 'calmer' in your mind. Again breath in and breath out. Repeating the word 'calmer'. Relax your entire body, smile. And mentally repeat the mantra "calmness, confidence, and compassion". For a few breaths. Another deep breath in to the bottom of your lungs, filling your abdomen, and breathing out slowly.

21:37 Bells begin and end at 22:04

Script for Mind-wandering condition

What you are about to listen to is a mindfulness meditation tape. This meditation is designed to encourage you to perceive things in a way that allows your mind to wander freely. This tape will end with the sound of three bells. Please settle into a comfortable position and allow yourself to relax.

Brief pause: :37 - :47

It can be helpful to begin a meditation by consciously relaxing your entire body. Take a few moments to be sure that you are seated comfortably and that your feet are placed solidly on the floor. That your shoulders are soft and relaxed and that your neck and back is straight but not stiff in an alert and erect position. You may rest your hand on the arm of the chair or on your lap. Whatever is most comfortable for you. Take a few breaths in and out. Relaxing your whole body.

Breathing in and breathing out softening and relaxing.

2:22 – 2:30

We're going to ask you to think about whatever comes to mind. Without having to focus on anything in particular. Every once in a while you'll hear my voice again simply reminding you to pay attention to your thoughts. So let's begin.

3:08 – 3:28

Take this time to follow your thoughts and feelings. Whatever you want to think about. As you do when you have time to think things through thoroughly. For example, sometimes we think about ideas for later in the day or week to organize our plans. Or sometimes we think about something that happened earlier in our day. We may have a lot to think about. Maybe important things. A conversation we had. Or your mind might just wander on anything. Either way, take time to think about whatever you want. Just let your mind think and wander freely.

5:35 – 6:18

We are simply giving you time to let your mind wander freely through all your thoughts. Sometimes we don't have time to let our minds wander or think through everything with all that goes on. Yet everyone has their own interests, concerns, and ideas that occupy their thoughts when they have time. Sometimes we want some time just to think. So during this time, you can let your mind go wherever it wants as time passes. Continue to let yourself think about whatever you want to.

7:58 – 8:44

That is all you need to do during this exercise. It's that simple. Use the time to let your mind wander and think freely. Without needing to focus hard on anything in particular. Even if you zone out a bit, that's ok. Now you'll be given some quiet time to continue with this exercise. And

every now and then during this quiet time you will hear some reminders. Please continue to let your mind wander and think freely during this time.

10:10 – 12:08

Remembering this is time for your mind to wander freely. You may think about the past, an interaction with someone, or you may think about the future. Something you need to do or want to do.

12:50 – 14:33

As a reminder, you don't have to or even want to think about one thing. You are free to think about as many things as you want. And you can think about them again and again and again.

14:55 – 16:10

Think freely, not focusing on anything too hard. Allow your mind to flow freely. Thoughts arising, one after the other.

16:33 – 18:00

The exercise is simple. Just relax and allow your mind to wander freely. This is your quiet time to think about anything that comes to your mind. Interests, concerns, or ideas.

18:32 – 19:58

Take a deep breath in and out. And another deep breath in, and breathe out slowly.

Three bells 21:02

Low Threat Vignette

A student's college experience can be greatly benefited or greatly hurt by their access to resources to help them succeed. Many would argue that one such resource necessary to any college student is a University library. Libraries provide a study space, a world of reference materials, and a collection of tools to help students complete research into every subject imaginable. At the University of Missouri, the benefits of the library are deficient at best.

According to the Maneater, MU's student-written newspaper, "University of Florida spends $1,158 per student; University of Kansas spends $976. Currently, MU spends $607 per student." Because of this incredibly poor funding, staff numbers are dwindling, and the library is struggling to provide a productive work environment for the students at the University of Missouri. With the knowledge that Missouri's state legislature is diffident to sponsor any sort of bill increasing funding to the university even more, the library system took it upon itself in the Fall 2015 semester to address the issue. A referendum vote was put to the students to charge an increased library fee, much like the one students pay to have access to the recreation center. This fee would allow the library to update and expand study spaces, stay open 24 hours a day, and expand the database and research capabilities of the institution.

Unfortunately, MU students chose not to invest in their education this Fall. The referendum vote failed. Because of this, the University's prestige is at stake. With diminished research capabilities, it will be harder to attract quality faculty to the institution. Students will have fewer places to study for exams and write papers, threatening their academic performance. The library is currently facing a budget crisis, and will likely have to fire long-time staff, reduce the number of databases available for student and faculty use, and reduce the number of hours open during the week. All of this because students did not feel the need to invest in their education—at a small price. What will it take for students at the University of Missouri to invest in their education, and make this University the great institution it can be?

High Threat Vignette

The University of Missouri experienced a Fall 2015 unlike any previous semester. Racial tensions on the University's campus rose amid racial slurs yelled at both the Missouri Students Association President and the Legion of Black Collegians' homecoming court, "Racism Lives Here" rallies, sit-in protests, and vandalism of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center sign, among many other controversies. Racial tensions culminated last fall with an eight-day hunger strike, a walkout in support of the student on strike, the halt of football activities by the athletes themselves, and the resignation of University Chancellor and the President of the University of Missouri System.

These days, many students at the University of Missouri feel disappointed with the university's racial climate. Racial tensions between White and African Americans (in particular) are highly salient on MU campus currently, and many students feel that relations between these racial groups have reached a low point. Due to previous instances of racism that have occurred on campus over the past few months, some students do not feel as safe and secure as they used to, and there is a sense of uncertainty and pessimism regarding the university's future. Many believe that the university is on a course to failure and ruin with the current course racial relations are going. It seems that many other universities in the country are enjoying more harmonious social relations between members of different racial groups than the University of Missouri.

University officials have announced mandatory diversity and inclusion training for all faculty, staff, and incoming students. However, some students have voiced concerns that current students are in as much need of diversity training as others at the University. At a Board of Curators meeting on February 5th, 2016, four students spoke about their concerns about racism on campus, and one student advocated for a course series comprised of two courses that collectively address diversity issues. The University is considering mandating that all current students at MU must take this diversity training. If the events of Fall 2015 show anything, it's that University students are in serious need of such intervention.