

A Goal of One's Own: Self-Concordance of Equality Increases Support for Feminism

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Introduction

Self-concordance:

- People pursue goals for a variety of reasons, ranging from intrinsic (in line with aspects of self) to extrinsic (feeling compelled to pursue a goal; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999)
- Goals that are more in line with self-values are called “self-concordant” and lead to positive outcomes regarding goal attainment, well-being and happiness (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001)

Identification:

- When people take on an *identity* related to a goal versus “someone who does” the goal, they act more in line with that goal
- E.g., people are more likely to vote if they think of themselves as “voters” versus “someone who votes” (Bryan, Walton, Rogers, & Dweck, 2011)
- Identifying oneself as “feminist” predicts feminist activism over and above endorsement of feminist values regarding equality (Zucker, 2004)

Hypothesis

People asked to reflect on how gender inequality relates to their values will (a) identify more strongly as feminists and (b) act more strongly in line with feminist goals, relative to those for whom equality is made accessible or for whom self-concordant values are made accessible.

Method

Sample:

- 192 participants from Mechanical Turk (113 female, 59%)
- Age: range 18 to 71, $M = 34.27$, $SD = 12.06$
- Race: 79% White, 10% Black, 10% Other

Manipulation:

- Participants randomly assigned to complete one of four essay responses
 - Gender inequality*: wrote about a time when someone was being treated unfairly due to one's gender, and how that related to the participant's values
 - Racial inequality*: wrote about a time when someone was being treated unfairly due to one's race, and how that related to the participant's values
 - No-value control*: wrote about a time when someone was being treated unfairly due to one's gender (but was not asked to relate to values)
 - Self-concordance control*: wrote about a personally meaningful goal the participant was pursuing, and how that goal related to the participant's values

Method (cont.)

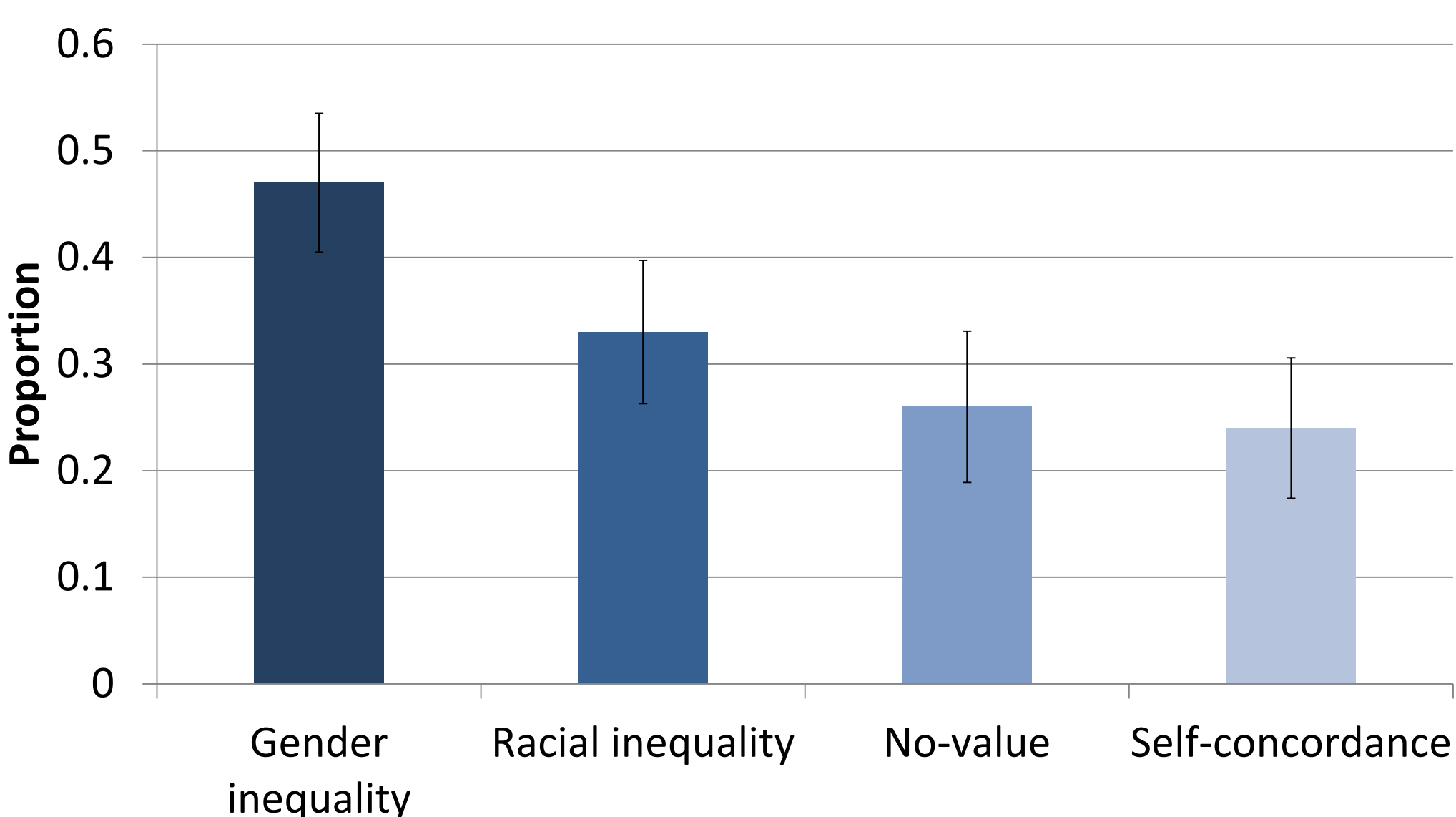
Dependent variables:

- “I am a feminist.” (Yes/No)
- “‘Feminism’ is a positive label.” (7-point scale)
- Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale (LFAIS; 10 items, 7-point scale)
- Interest in receiving more information about the Women's Funding Network charity (among distractor items, 7-point scale)
- Interest in joining mailing list for National Organization for Women feminist organization (Yes/No)
- Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) scale for “feminist” and “self” (7-point scale)
- Victim blame measure of acquaintance rape scenario (7 items, 7-point scale)

Results

- Feminist identification: Marginal effect of condition, $Wald's X^2(3) = 7.28$, $p = .06$, with gender inequality condition more likely to identify as feminist than no-value condition (*odds ratio [OR]* = .39, $p = .03$) and self-concordance condition ($OR = .36$, $p = .02$), but not racial inequality condition ($OR = .56$, $p = .17$; see Figure 1)
- Positive label: Effect of condition, $F(3,188) = 3.27$, $p = .02$, with same pattern as above
- Interest in women's charity: Effect of condition, $F(3,176) = 4.04$, $p = .01$, with same pattern as above
- No effects of condition found for LFAIS, race-related charity, mailing list, IOS item, victim blaming (all $ps > .54$)

Figure 1. Feminist Identification

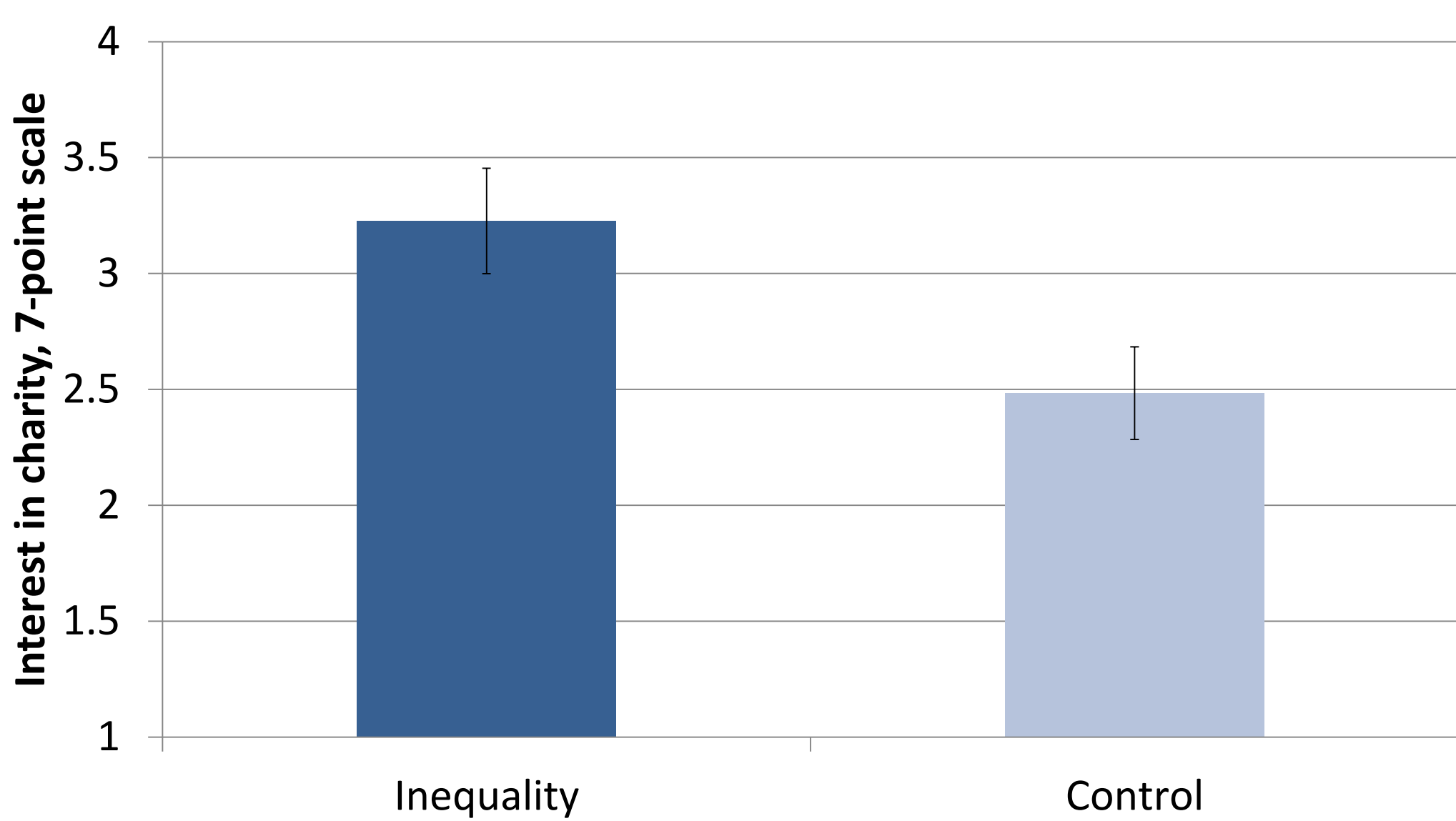


Results (cont.)

Contrasts:

- Because the gender and racial inequality conditions functioned similarly on all DVs, we set up contrasts to compare the gender and racial inequality conditions to the two control (no-value and self-concordance) conditions
- Feminist identification: Inequality conditions led to higher feminist identification than control, $t(188) = 2.29$, $p = .02$
- Positive label: Inequality conditions led to more perceived positivity of feminism, $t(188) = 2.86$, $p = .01$
- LFAIS: Inequality conditions led to higher feminist attitudes, $t(188) = 2.25$, $p = .03$
- Interest in women's charity: Inequality conditions led to more interest in women's charity, $t(176) = 3.24$, $p = .001$ (see Figure 2)

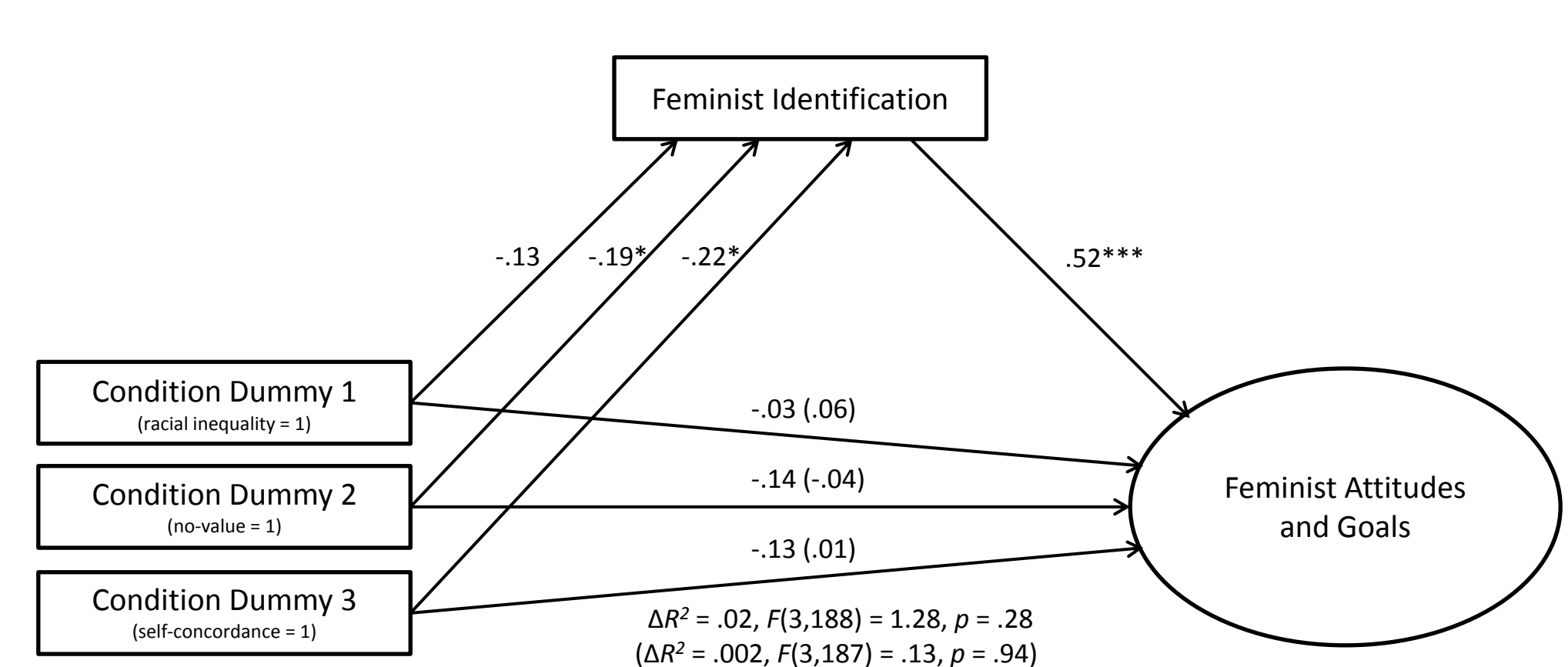
Figure 2. Interest in Women's Charity



Mediation:

- A test of feminist identification as a mediator using SEM revealed significantly better fit of the mediated model over the non-mediated model, $p < .001$ (see Figure 3)
- These models measured the effects of condition on a latent construct of feminist attitudes and goals, which included the positive label item, LFAIS, interest in women's charity, interest in mailing list, IOS, and victim blame

Figure 3. Test of Mediation



Conclusions

- There is initial evidence to suggest that making equality goals more self-concordant with existing values can lead to greater feminist identification and attitudes
- This effect occurs over and above simply reflecting on instances of gender inequality, and over and above general feelings of self-concordance
- The effect of condition on feminist attitudes and goals was consistent with feminist identification as a mediator
- Reflecting on either gender or racial inequality seemed to have similar effects

Implications

- This study extends existing self-concordance research into the domain of social goals (vs. personal goals), demonstrating that similar processes are at work even for goals that are shared by groups of people
- Taking on a goal as part of one's *identity* is one important mechanism that self-concordance may use when influencing goal pursuit
- Unexpectedly, the racial inequality condition had similar effects to the gender inequality condition; tying a goal to one's values may link it to more superordinate goals, resulting in more domain-general or global approaches to goal pursuit (see Carver & Scheier, 1982)
- To increase participation in social movements, it may be useful to find ways to make social goals more concordant with others' self-concepts, including ways of increasing their personal identification with the movement

References

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