

Social Dominance

Bob Altemeyer's studies of RWA constitute a major advance over the California studies by Adorno et al. Still, there was more work to be done. In the 1990s, psychologists from UCLA and Stanford approached "group-based prejudice and oppression" from another direction and offer Social Dominance Theory (SDT),¹ a worthy contribution to the literature on intergroup conflict. The theory was accompanied by Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), an individual-difference variable measuring one's preference for inequality among social groups. A central thesis is that "societies minimize group conflict by creating consensus on ideologies that promote the superiority of one group over others." And such a consensus may be the best possible outcome.

SOCIAL DOMINANCE THEORY

According to Social Dominance Theory, "all human societies tend to be structured as systems of *group-based social hierarchies*." "At the very minimum, this hierarchical social structure consists of one or a small number of dominant hegemonic groups at the top and one or a number of subordinate groups at the bottom." Social value—"those material and symbolic things for which people strive"—are distributed unequally across groups up and down the hierarchy.²

- Dominant groups possess "a disproportionately large share of *positive social value*" such as, "political authority and power, good and plentiful food, splendid homes, the best available health care, wealth, and high social status."
- Subordinate groups possess "a disproportionately large share of *negative social value*" such as, "low power and social status, high-risk and low-status occupations, relatively poor health care, poor food, modest or miserable homes, and severe negative sanctions (e.g., prison and death sentences.)"

SDT offers a multi-level explanation for how societies maintain group-based inequality and the dominance of one group over others. SDT identifies multiple influences that contribute to stability in the face of group-based inequality: interlocking mechanisms that reinforce inequality, the use of disproportionate force against lower status groups, and hierarchy-legitimizing myths.

Human social systems are subject to the counterbalancing influences of hierarchy-enhancing (HE) forces, producing and maintaining ever higher levels of group-based social inequality, and hierarchy-attenuating (HA) forces, producing greater levels of group-based social equality.³

Identifying Group Inequality. Group-based inequality appears to be ubiquitous even in stable and democratic societies. Many groups are visually identifiable such as by sex and race. Dress often gives clues about religious groups. Others can be distinguished audibly, e.g., linguistic groups. But others are not so easily identified by appearance, language, or DNA, e.g., Hutu and Tutsi in Angola, and the Issa and Afar in Djibouti. Even if the differences aren't apparent to the naked eye, people will find a way to distinguish groups and then stratify them into a hierarchy.

¹ Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

² Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 31-32.

³ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 38.

Most forms of group conflict and oppression (e.g., racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, nationalism, classism, regionalism) can be regarded as different manifestations of the same basic human predisposition to form group-based social hierarchies.

Age and sex divide all societies into unequal groups, what the authors call *specific sets*: gender and age systems of inequality. In broad strokes, age and sex distinguish dominant and subordinate groups across countries, cultures, and time. In general, societies privilege the adults and the middle-aged over children and younger adults. And men are privileged over women worldwide in *patriarchy*.⁴ One might expect upward mobility in the age system but not in the gender system.

Further, societies include unequal groups peculiar to their unique circumstances, what the authors call *arbitrary sets*. Arbitrary sets are systems of inequality based on ethnicity, race, class, tribe, nation, or other socially constructed divisions. According to SDT, “systems of arbitrary-set hierarchy will emerge whenever the proper economic conditions allow,”⁵ that is, when economic surplus allows dominant males to acquire the means to impose their primordial preferences.

Consider, for example, these arbitrary sets: Western European nations and immigrant groups; ruling South American elites and indigenous groups; South African elites and indigenous groups; Jewish Israelis and Palestinians; Euro-Americans and Afro-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans; Anglo-Australians and Asians; Indonesians and Chinese. The list goes on. They are impossible to miss.

Justifying Group Inequality. SDT focuses on the more stable societies and the critical role played by *legitimizing myths* in maintaining stability. “Myths,” as used here, are beliefs about how the world works, particularly as they relate to group-based inequality. There is no implication that a myth is true or false, only that it is widely recognized, is accepted, and provides a lens through which people interpret and react to world events. Myths are components of ideologies and larger belief systems. “*Ideologies, then, are the genes of culture: They describe the patterns of the culture and get people in the culture to reproduce these patterns.*”⁶

Social Dominance Theory postulates that societies minimize internal group conflict by creating and maintaining consensus on myths that justify the social hierarchy. A justified hierarchy enables discrimination. According to SDT, the legitimizing myths most relevant to intergroup conflict are the hierarchy-enhancing myths that promote greater degrees of social inequality and the hierarchy-attenuating myths that promote greater social equality. Recognition of the distinction between hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating alone is a meaningful contribution as well as a necessary piece of the SDT logic.

Recall the notion of motivated reasoning where position on an issue is decided first, evidence marshaled, and logic then constructed to rationalize the desired position.

Uses of force and discrimination can be disguised or made acceptable by compelling cultural ideologies, called *legitimizing myths*. ... For example, the doctrine of manifest destiny and stereotypes promoting the idea that Native Americans were “savages” were used to legitimize US expansion of its territory through the 1800s;

The theory provides examples of *hierarchy-enhancing myths*: Social Darwinism, a distortion of Darwin’s theory of evolution and survival of the fittest, is one; and meritocracy, the belief that because there is equal opportunity for all and resources are allocated by merit, the allocation

⁴ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 33.

⁵ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 36.

⁶ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 303.

must be just. As for *hierarchy-attenuating myths*, the belief that there are universal human rights is a hierarchy-attenuating myth; and the belief that “all humans are God’s children” is common in the world’s religions and therefore should be a force for attenuating inequalities.

Stability and inequality must be played off of each other. Given hierarchy-enhancing myths that support group-based inequality and hierarchy-attenuating myths that support greater equality among groups, the two may counterbalance each other resulting in a stable but unequal society. Rather than hoping for stability based on utopian equality, or stability imposed by oppression in an unequal system, social dominance theory argues that reducing inequality and relying on a web of legitimizing myths may be the best that can be achieved.

Reinforcing Group Inequality. Observing that all attempts at establishing egalitarian societies have failed, SDT accepts the inevitability of group-based inequality. Given the existence of unequal groups, SDT identifies interlocking social mechanisms that reinforce the inequalities and contribute to stability.

The military serves as an example of interlocking mechanisms that reinforce group inequality. The world’s militaries started as male exclusive and hierarchy enhancing. Today, they are male dominated and hierarchy enhancing. Men are disproportionately employed and promoted. As such, men are economically advantaged, and the stereotype that men rather than women are leaders is reinforced. The military reinforces hierarchy between men and women as well as enforcement of hierarchy between all—rank is conspicuously displayed on the uniform, a matter of daily life and a constant reminder of one’s status. Upward mobility is possible for those showing institutional values. Meritocracy is claimed.

Mating strategies also reinforce group inequality, or at least asymmetry.⁷ Males prefer intercourse with multiple young, fertile females; females prefer resourceful, loyal, and high-status males. These asymmetries lead to competition among males for those things high-status females value, including social status, political power, and economic power.

“Social dominance theory states that stable inequality among groups is maintained in part through the use of disproportionate force against subordinate groups.” For example, systematic force is used by the criminal justice system, which in many societies disproportionately punishes members of subordinate groups, particularly men. Interlocking gender and arbitrary set systems put subordinate men at the bottom of the hierarchy.⁸

Established, slowly changing institutions have a persistent hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-attenuating effect and can be said to play a hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-attenuating role in society.

- Within limits, individuals self select in choosing their careers thus revealing their preferences. But dominant groups are advantaged in hiring and subordinate groups are disadvantaged.
- Generally, men are disproportionately represented in hierarchy-enhancing social institutions and roles (military, law, finance); women are strongly over-represented in hierarchy-attenuating roles (social work, charity work).
- Within an institution, individuals are socialized according to institutional values. Dominant and subordinate groups can be expected to receive differential feedback either socializing them to institutional values or subjecting them to differential promotion or attrition. These alternative paths reinforce the institution in its role.

⁷ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 290-294.

⁸ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 294-297.

- Inequality is also reinforced through institutional discrimination. “For example, public and private institutions typically provide better education, financial services, healthcare and jobs for members of dominant groups rather than for members of subordinate groups.”

Stabilizing Group Inequality.⁹ All but utopian societies face internal pressures for change over the allocation of positive and negative social value, such as power, prestige, education, jobs, wealth, housing, health care, government appointments, prison terms, and disease. Depending on conditions, the pressure for change may be below the threshold of violence manifesting only peaceful demonstrations, or it may foment sporadic violent protests, violent ethnic conflict, or outright civil war.

There are two primary means by which dominant groups maintain their hegemonic position over subordinate groups: the threat or actual exercise of naked force, and control over ideology and the contents of “legitimate” social discourse. Of these two mechanisms control over discourse and ideology are much the preferred.¹⁰

The “use of naked force can further stiffen resistance and resentment within subordinate groups.” “If deemed ‘excessive,’ the use of force will only delegitimize the dominant group’s right to rule in the eyes of subordinates and dominants alike.”

SDT stands apart from the thesis that “oppression is maintained mainly by force and threat as would be illustrated by police states”—e.g., Pinochet’s Chile, Stalin’s Soviet Union, and Hitler’s Germany. In contrast to oppression maintained by force and the threat of force in a police state, SDT claims that “even democracies can function as group-based hierarchies.”

THE SDO SCALE

Development of the SDO Scale. Scale development began by scouring existing studies for items thought related to SDO. Of the 70 candidates, 14 eventually were selected to comprise the 14-item SDO scale. “The selected items concerned the belief that some people are inherently superior or inferior to others and approval of unequal group relationships.”¹¹

Items borrowed from archival studies were worded more with attitudes toward individuals than groups. Later a 16-item scale was developed with an “orientation toward *intergroup relations* rather than unspecified or interpersonal relations: group dominance versus equality.”¹² The results of using the 14- and 16-item scales were strongly correlated and the shorter scale was chosen as the more economical measurement instrument.¹³

Scale Variable. SDO is the only scale variable. The article *defines* SDO in multiple, nuanced ways. (1) SDO is “the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of ‘inferior’ groups by ‘superior’ groups.”¹⁴ (2) SDO is “a very general individual differences orientation expressing the value that people place on nonegalitarian and hierarchically structured relationships among social groups.”¹⁵ And (3) SDO is “the extent to

⁹ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 303.

¹⁰ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 103.

¹¹ Felicia Pratto, Jim Sidanius, Lisa M. Stallworth, and Bertram F. Malle. “Social Dominance Orientation: A Personality Variable Predicting Social and Political Attitudes.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67 (4) 1994: 741-763.

¹² Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 62.

¹³ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 67.

¹⁴ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 48.

¹⁵ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 61.

which one desires that one's in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups."¹⁶ But in the end, the SDO *measure* is defined as the arithmetic mean of the 14-item scores.¹⁷

Scale Items. Using the 14-item scale, all items were measured on a *very negative* (1) to *very positive* (7) scale.¹⁸ The first seven items of the balanced scale are expressed pro-trait; the second seven are expressed con-trait and are reverse coded.

1. Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others.
2. Some people are just more worthy than others.
3. This country would be better off if we cared less about how equal all people were.
4. Some people are just more deserving than others.
5. It is not a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.
6. Some people are just inferior to others.
7. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others.
8. Increased economic equality.
9. Increased social equality.
10. Equality.
11. If people were treated more equally we would have fewer problems in this country.
12. In an ideal world, all nations would be equal.
13. All humans should be treated equally.
14. It is important that we treat other countries as equals.

HYPOTHESIZED CORRELATIONS WITH SDO

The authors of Pratto et al. consider hypotheses derived from Social Dominance Theory and measuring their relationship to SDO, but they also consider a rich cross section of archival studies for potential comparands to SDO. First, we shift attention to testing hypotheses derived from SDT and measuring their relationship to SDO. The process is best represented in Pratto et al., "Social Dominance Orientation."¹⁹ From the article's abstract:

Social dominance orientation (SDO), one's degree of preference for inequality among social groups, is introduced. On the basis of social dominance theory, it is shown that (a) men are more social dominance-oriented than women, (b) high-SDO people seek hierarchy-enhancing professional roles and low-SDO people seek hierarchy-attenuating roles, (c) SDO was related to beliefs in a large number of social and political ideologies that support group-based hierarchy (e.g., meritocracy and racism) and to support for policies that have implications for intergroup relations (e.g., war, civil rights, and social programs), including new policies. SDO was distinguished from interpersonal dominance, conservatism, and authoritarianism. SDO was negatively correlated with empathy, tolerance, communality, and altruism.

Measuring SDO has multiple challenges. The first, the most obvious, is producing a reliable measure of social dominance orientation. Second, measuring SDO is a matter of measuring attitudes toward legitimizing myths, social roles, and social policy preferences (predictive validity). The third is to show that SDO measures something different than established measures or, at least, contributes some additional explanatory value (discriminate validity). And fourth, SDO will predict orientations toward emerging situations.

¹⁶ Pratto et al., "SDO," 742.

¹⁷ Pratto et al., "SDO," 745.

¹⁸ Pratto et al., "SDO," 763.

¹⁹ Felicia Pratto, Jim Sidanius, Lisa M. Stallworth, and Bertram F. Malle. "Social Dominance Orientation: A Personality Variable Predicting Social and Political Attitudes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67 (4) 1994: 741-763.

High SDO scorers should favor hierarchy-enhancing myths and policies; low scorers should favor hierarchy-attenuating myths and policies. Other hypothesis-testing measures an individual's preferences for social roles and institutions: high SDO scorers should favor hierarchy-enhancing institutions and roles; low scorers should favor hierarchy-attenuating institutions and roles.

Predictive Validity: Legitimizing Myths. This group of hypotheses tests attitudes toward legitimizing myths. "Any potent ideology that describes groups as unequal and has policy implications is a legitimizing myth and should, therefore, correlate with SDO," either positively or negatively.²⁰

Ethnic prejudice is not a myth, but the belief that one ethnic group is superior to another certainly qualifies. In the United States, anti-Black racism is the most prominent. Anti-Arab or anti-Muslim prejudice increased after the 9/11 attacks. In general, recent immigrant communities are the target of ethnic prejudice, including Irish, Catholic, Jew, and Mexican immigrants, for example. Time of arrival isn't always the key; indigenous Americans are also targets of prejudice from the more recently arriving Europeans. SDT hypothesizes that ethnic prejudice should positively correlate with SDO.

Patriotism (procountry feelings), *nationalism* (belief that one's country is better than other countries), and *chauvinism* (the superiority of one's country justifies its domination of others) all reflect a bias in favor of one's national ingroup. Chauvinism—expressed in notions such as *white man's burden*—justifies colonization, imperialism, and subjugation of other peoples. SDT postulates that patriotism, nationalism, and chauvinism should all positively correlate with SDO.

Cultural elitism has international and national manifestations. SDT hypothesizes that cultural elitism should positively correlate with SDO scores. Across cultures, some imagine themselves to be culturally superior to others: "we are civilized, and they are not." White man's burden is a prominent myth holding that Europeans have an obligation to civilize and modernize less civilized societies. It's difficult to imagine conquest, subjugation, and colonization without cultural elitism or chauvinism.

And within a single nation, an elite group commonly sees itself as cultured and the hoi polloi as not: cultural elitism holds that the elite class has "culture" not shared by the middle- and working-classes and is therefore more deserving of the "finer things in life." The distinction justifies the disproportionate distribution of prestige, privilege, and wealth.

Antifemale sexism is the belief that men and women "are 'naturally' different and should have different work roles outside and inside the home and the extent to which people believe that women rather than men can be blamed for unwanted sexual advances such as rape and sexual harassment." SDT predicts that both of these sexism beliefs would positively correlate with SDO.²¹

Meritocracy is another hierarchy-enhancing ideology, that is, the belief that resources are already distributed appropriately based on the deservedness of the recipients thus producing a just world. The belief in meritocracy and a just world is expected to positively correlate with SDO.

Political-economic conservatism "is associated with support for capitalism versus socialism." Under capitalism, it is good that competitive individuals and businesses should succeed and the less competitive should fail. In other words, capitalism endorses an unequal distribution of

²⁰ Pratto et al., "SDO," 742-743.

²¹ Pratto et al., "SDO," 742-743.

wealth whereas socialism pursues a more equitable distribution. Capitalism includes meritocracy. Political-economic conservatism is expected to positively correlate with SDO.

Noblesse oblige is the common ideology prescribing that “those with more resources should share them with those who have fewer resources.” Privilege entails the responsibility to redistribute. *Noblesse oblige* places responsibility for redistribution on the privileged; socialism places responsibility for distribution on the state. *Noblesse oblige* is expected to negatively correlate with SDO.

Predictive Validity: Social Policy.²² Predictive validity goes beyond legitimizing myths. SDO is hypothesized to predict position on a variety of policy issues.

Social welfare, civil rights, and environmental policies. Attitudes toward social welfare, civil rights, and environmental policies are expected to correlate negatively with SDO.

Punitive policies. Attitudes toward punitive policies, including long prison sentences and capital punishment, are expected to correlate positively with SDO.

Military policy. Attitudes toward military policy, including both the production and use of military force, are expected to correlate positively with SDO.

Predictive Validity: Hierarchical Roles. SDO is also hypothesized to predict career choices that emphasize hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-attenuating societal roles.

By performing organizational roles, individuals greatly expand their capacity for group discrimination because collective institutions can often allocate resources or costs on a far larger scale than individuals can. Therefore, institutional discrimination is one of the major contributors to the creation and maintenance of social inequalities and social hierarchy.²³

As an example of hierarchy enhancers, “men serve in leadership positions in military, religious, legal, political, business, and social spheres.”²⁴ Based on previous research and observation, SDT predicts that men would, on average, have higher SDO scores.

Predictive Validity: Predicting Attitudes toward Emerging Situations. “According to social dominance theory, one of SDO’s most significant functions is orienting people toward or away from new social attitudes.” Three opportunities arose to explore during testing: the Gulf War to expel Iraq from Kuwait, the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, and the execution of Robert Alton Harris.²⁵

War making. “War making is an extreme act of discrimination against an out-group; enemy out-group members are routinely starved, raped, killed, maimed, or made ill during war.”²⁶ In war, most expect lethal violence against a state and its military, and some are more accepting than others of “collateral damage” among the non-combatants. Even economic sanctions inflict extreme harm on non-combatants under the rubric of “punishment of innocents.” High SDO scorers can be expected to be more accepting of force-on-force and force-on-public harm.

And on the home front, some can be expected to accept the casualties, sacrifice of civil liberties, increased taxes or debt, and inducements to military service, including conscription or involuntary extension of military service contracts, sometimes called a “back door draft.”

Supreme Court nomination. The nomination of Clarence Thomas, a conservative Black judge, to the Supreme Court to replace retiring Thurgood Marshall, a Black former civil rights

²² Pratto et al., “SDO,” 743.

²³ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 758.

²⁴ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 742.

²⁵ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 753-754.

²⁶ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 747.

attorney, could be expected to illicit responses from well established legitimizing myths, “including conservatism, meritocracy, racism, and sexism.”²⁷

Capital punishment. The 1992 execution of Robert Alton Harris, a repeat offender, was the first convicted murderer to be executed in the state of California since 1967. The execution, taking place during the study period, could be expected to evoke myths legitimizing the use of capital punishment, including the belief in legal retribution (revenge), the belief that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on crime, and support for painful executions.

Discriminant Validity.²⁸ Testing social policy attitudes takes a somewhat different tack by imposing requirements over and above testing correlations between myths and SDO. In addition to testing for hypothesized correlations with SDO, SDO must be shown to be independent of existing scales, and in those cases where there is correlation, SDO must be shown to have additional explanatory value.

Authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is commonly associated with The Authoritarian Personality (TAP) from Adorno et al. “Authoritarianism and SDO are similar in that authoritarians and those scoring high on SDO are both expected to be relatively racist, sexist, homophobic, ethnocentric, and politically conservative, and to show little empathy for lower-status others.”²⁹ “Conceptually, authoritarianism concerns submission to the authority of the ingroup, whereas SDO concerns attitudes toward hierarchical relationships between groups.” Whereas authoritarianism (TAP) is theorized to come from harsh parenting leading to individual dominance, SDT makes no such claim. Rather, SDT sees SDO as a normal individual difference variable developing from temperament and socialization, and therefore a low correlation between TAP and SDO is expected.

Political-economic conservatism. Conservatism [meaning political-economic conservatism] is “a well-known robust predictor of social and political attitudes” and was expected to positively correlate with SDO. Therefore, SDO would need to provide additional explanatory value.

Personality variables. Standard personality variables are captured in the Big-Five Personality Inventory: extraversion, agreeableness, openness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. SDO, to establish itself as unique, would need to show its independence from the Big-Five.

Convergent Validity.³⁰ As for convergence, a coming together, “We expected that feelings of closeness and kindness toward others should mitigate desire to dominate other groups.” Convergence should negatively correlate with SDO scores.

Empathy, altruism, and communality. Empathy (a general concern for other people), altruism (a pro-social orientation), and communality (accepting an inclusive and diverse ingroup), intuitively should correlate negatively with SDO.

People who are highly empathetic with others would seem to be less prejudiced and discriminatory against out-groups. Thus, it is reasonable to expect a general concern for other people to be negatively correlated with SDO. Similarly, any general pro-social orientation might mitigate prejudiced feelings and behaviors toward out-group members, so altruism should be negatively correlated with SDO. Furthermore, people who are quite inclusive in their definitions of what constitutes and in-group should be less able to discriminate against out-groups, so we expected communality to be negatively correlated with SDO.

Tolerance. Tolerance (the antithesis of prejudice) is expected to negatively correlate “with a general desire for in-group superiority.”³¹

²⁷ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 753.

²⁸ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 743-744.

²⁹ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 74-77.

³⁰ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 744.

DATA COLLECTION

As is common practice, existing scales, their items, and study conclusions were borrowed from a rich cross section of archival studies and leveraged to measure attitudes toward ideologies and attitudes on policy issues.³² Scales and subscales measuring ideological leanings include measurement of dominance, tolerance, and empathy; sexism; racism and ethnocentrism; personality traits; meritocracy; among others. Scales and subscales measuring attitudes toward policy issues include law and order, gay rights, women's rights, social programs, racial policy, military programs, environmental policies, and chauvinism scales.

Thirteen samples were taken from 1990-1992 with a total of 1,952 students: one sample at UC Berkeley, three at San Jose State University, and nine at Stanford University. A number of questionnaires were submitted to subjects: Policy Issues Questionnaire, Demographic Background Sheet with the common self identification of very liberal to very conservative. The Policy Issues Questionnaire included ideological (legitimizing myths) and policy attitudes. The PIQ also included the 14-item scale and a nationalism scale.

The initial results were substantiated by "45 samples and 18,741 respondents from 11 nations," spanning North America, the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, the South Pacific, Scandinavia, Israel and Palestine, and the former Soviet Union.³³

To measure *ideology* (legitimizing myths), subjects were presented with the 14-item SDO scale and were asked to rate their feelings from *very negative* (1), *negative* (2), *slightly negative* (3), *neither positive nor negative* (4), *slightly positive* (5), *positive* (6), to *very positive* (7).³⁴

To measure *attitudes on policy issues*, subjects were asked to rate their feelings from *very negative* (1), *negative* (2), *slightly negative* (3), *uncertain or neutral* (4), *slightly positive* (5), *positive* (6), and *very positive* (7).

To measure *political-economic conservatism*, subjects were asked to rate their positions on foreign policy, economics, and social issues from *very liberal* (1), *liberal* (2), *slightly liberal* (3), *middle of the road* (4), *slightly conservative* (5), *conservative* (6), and *very conservative* (7).³⁵

To measure political party preference, subjects were asked to self-identify as *strong Democrat* (1), *independent* (4), through *strong Republican* (7), and others." Interpolating to produce a 7-point Likert-like scale, the choice might look more like *strong Democrat* (1), *Democrat* (2), *Democrat leaning* (3), *independent* (4), *Republican leaning* (5), *Republican* (6), and *strong Republican* (7), and others. The category of "others" is included to allow subjects to self identify, but is not included in statistical calculations.

To measure preferences for hierarchical roles, subjects were asked to identify what economic sector they intended to work in after graduation. Twenty career choices were provided on the Demographic Background Questionnaire. Subjects were classified as hierarchy enhancing if their chosen career more benefited society's elite, and hierarchy attenuating if they more benefited society's oppressed.

- a) hierarchy enhancers (those intending careers in law, law enforcement, politics, and business);

³¹ Pratto et al., "SDO," 744.

³² Pratto et al., SDO," 745-747.

³³ Sidanius and Pratto, *Social Dominance*, 62.

³⁴ Pratto et al., "SDO," 745.

³⁵ Pratto et al., "SDO," 745.

- b) “middlers” (those who would not obviously attenuate or enhance inequality through their professional work, such as science and sales); or
- c) hierarchy attenuators (those intending to be in such professions as social work or counseling; ...)

Hierarchy enhancers were hypothesized to have higher SDO scores than hierarchy attenuators; middlers would have SDO scores in between.³⁶

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Hypothesized correlations were largely confirmed.³⁷ High SDO reflects a preference for hierarchy-maintaining political candidates and parties. High SDOs favor hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and policies; low SDOs favor hierarchy-attenuating ideologies and policies. High SDOs choose roles that maintain or increase inequality; low SDOs choose roles that reduce inequality. High ranking people have greater own-group preferences and score higher on SDO than low ranking people. We now turn to predictive, discriminant, and convergent validity.

Finally, SDO showed strong consistent correlations with scales assessing opposition to social programs, racial policies, and women’s rights, and with support for military programs. SDO was also consistently correlated with opposition to gay and lesbian rights, environmental programs, and miscegeny and was consistently correlated with support for U.S. chauvinism, law-and-order policies, and Republican party identification. SDO also predicted attitudes toward new political events, including the 1991 war against Iraq, Clarence Thomas as a Supreme Court Justice, and a state execution. Those aspiring to hierarchy-enhancing careers had higher SDO scores than those aspiring to hierarchy-attenuating careers.

Thus, we have provided substantial evidence that SDO (a) can be measured reliably, (b) is stable over time, (c) is higher among men than among women, (d) is higher among those who support hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and is lower among those who support hierarchy-attenuating ideologies, (e) is higher among those who support hierarchy-enhancing policies and lower among those who support hierarchy-attenuating policies, (f) is higher among those who choose hierarchy-enhancing social roles and lower among those who choose hierarchy-attenuating social roles, and (g) serves to orient new social and political attitudes.³⁸

Statistical Reliability. Unlike the multi-dimensional F scale from Adorno et al., but like the RWA scale from Altemeyer, SDO is shown to be unidimensional, a necessary condition. SDO also is shown to have Internal Reliability and Stability Over Time.

Predictive Validity. Hypothesized correlations associated with legitimizing myths and attitudes toward policy issues were also confirmed.

Sex and Gender. Males generally (in all but two of 13 samples) score higher than females. Men hold more hierarchy-enhancing attitudes, such as support for ethnic prejudice, racism, capitalism, and right wing political parties, than do women.³⁹

The theory-testing process produced additional interesting results related to sex and gender. High scoring SDO males *exploit, harm, and debilitate* subordinate males, and *control* subordinate females. They exhibit more promiscuity, sexual jealousy, resistance to care for other’s children, and preference for other higher ranking male associates. Females exhibit stronger preference for higher ranking male mates. High SDO scorers have a greater expectation of traditional gender roles in the home and the workplace.

³⁶ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 747.

³⁷ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 747-755.

³⁸ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 754-755.

³⁹ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 747.

Legitimizing myths. As expected, hierarchy-enhancing myths—ethnic prejudice; patriotism, nationalism, chauvinism; cultural elitism; prejudice against women and homosexuals; political-economic conservatism; and meritocracy—positively correlate with SDO. But, as expected, SDO negatively correlates with the *noblesse oblige* myth and with empathy, altruism, communality, and tolerance.

Social policy attitudes, as with legitimizing myths, were hypothesized to correlate with SDO. Similarly, SDO scores positively correlate with preferences for hierarchy-enhancing policies as well as individual preferences for hierarchy-enhancing institutions and roles. Support for punitive policies, such as capital punishment and long sentences, positively correlate with SDO. Retribution declines as rank increases, and low-ranking males receive the brunt of punishment. Members of subordinate groups accept cultural beliefs demeaning them and self debilitate.

Support for gay rights, women's rights, social welfare, ameliorative racial policy, miscegenation, and environmental policy strongly and negatively correlate with SDO in all but 3 of 13 cases.⁴⁰

SDO correlates positively with chauvinism and law-and-order policies in almost all cases. SDO correlates positively with military programs—support for, and the use of, military force—in all cases. But SDO does not unconditionally predict support for war. Instead, SDO predicts support for Wars of Dominance but not support for Wars for Humanitarian Reasons.⁴¹

Gulf War. “Higher SDO levels were associated with favoring military action against Iraq, favoring suspension of civil liberties for the war, a willingness to make sacrifices for the war effort, and a nationalistic view of environmental problems associated with the war.” High SDOs are not generally favorable to environmental policy but adopted a new legitimizing myth of stopping Saddam because of the environmental damage of burning Kuwaiti oil fields.

Clarence Thomas. As for Clarence Thomas' nomination to the Supreme Court, there was opposition from high SDOs to a black justice, support for a conservative justice, support for Thomas, and disbelief of Anita Hill's testimony.

Death penalty. “Belief that executions have a specific deterrent effect, support for Harris' execution, support of painful executions, and belief in retribution were positively correlated with SDO.”

Empathy, altruism, communalism, and tolerance. “High-dominance oriented people expressed less concern for others than did low-dominance people.” “We conclude that concern for others is the form of empathy that precludes the desire to dominate other groups.”⁴²

Political Party Preference. Subjects were asked to self-identify as *strong Democrat* (1), *independent* (4), *strong Republican* (7) and *others*. “Excluding ‘others,’ Republican political party preferences correlated positively and significantly with SDO in six out of six samples.”⁴³

Discriminant Validity. Social Dominance Theory was shown to be credible based on its predictive ability, but showing its predictive ability was not enough. Of the many existing measures, SDO needed to be shown to measure something unique, what the authors called discriminant validity. SDO was shown to be independent of interpersonal dominance, authoritarianism, political-economic conservatism, and standard personality variables, as well as empathy, altruism, communality, and tolerance.

⁴⁰ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 749.

⁴¹ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 750.

⁴² Pratto et al., “SDO,” 751-752.

⁴³ Pratto et al., “SDO,” 749.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Touchstone: This manuscript is about the union of governance and political psychology. The close of the Social Dominance Theory section is a good place to return briefly to the touchstone of governance. Democracies generally pursue a more egalitarian ideal, a more equitable balance of power, a more perfect union, if you will; autocracies less so, if at all. Autocracies are more likely to oppress ... subordinate groups while favoring elite, dominant groups.

Attitudes toward change. Societies understood as group-based dominance hierarchies contain forces of instability. Conservative forces will seek stability and preservation of the *status quo* distribution of power. Progressives, in general, tend to pursue a more equitable distribution of power. Radicals (revolutionaries) are more likely to arise from systems that are non-responsive to demands for greater equality that favor subordinate groups while reactionaries (regressives) are more likely to follow a revolution and seek a return to more inequality serving the dominant group. Generally.

Institutions reinforcing dominant group prerogatives. Interlocking relationships between political and religious authorities—viz church and state—may be the most effective concentrations of power in history: monarchies backed by the Catholic Church in Medieval Europe, Seventeenth Century theocracy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the government co-option of the church in Nazi Germany, today's Saudi monarchy and Muslim clerics, and today's theocracy in Iran.