

Support for exclusionism as an independent dimension of social dominance orientation in mainland China

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Three studies using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses provided consistent evidence for a three-factor model of the social dominance orientation (SDO) in Mainland China. Support for exclusionism, which was not found in previous research, emerged as an independent SDO factor (Studies 1, 2, and 3). In Study 2, this factor predicted SDO difference between a high status group (managers) and a low status group (entry-level employees). In Study 3, this factor correlated positively with authoritarianism and negatively with altruism. These results provided evidence for the validity of this new SDO factor. The findings are discussed in terms of their relations to China's cultural tradition and contemporary economic development.

Key words: individual differences, preference for social superiority, psycho-cultural study of social inequality, social dominance orientation, social hierarchy.

Introduction

Social dominance orientation (SDO) is an individual difference reflecting a preference for hierarchical group relations – a preference for the superiority and dominance of one's own group over other groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). People higher on SDO tend to favour hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and policies, whereas those lower on SDO tend to favour hierarchy-attenuating ideologies and policies (Pratto *et al.*, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Pratto *et al.* (1994) developed a 16-item SDO scale (SDO₆) to measure attitudes towards group differences and social hierarchy. There is considerable evidence for the reliability and validity of this scale or slight variations of it in Sweden, Australia, and the former Soviet Union (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993a, b; Sidanius, Pratto, & Brief, 1995) and in some ethnic populations in the USA (Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz, 1994).

However, studies on the dimensionality of the SDO scale have produced inconclusive results, with some supporting a unidimensional structure and others a two-factor structure. In Israeli and American student samples, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) found that the SDO₆ consists of two highly correlated factors: (i) group-based egalitarianism; and (ii) group-based dominance. Given their high correlation and conceptual similarity, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) argued that the scale is unidimensional. Jost and Thompson (2000) also found two factors: opposition to equality and support for group-based dominance, and maintained that SDO has a two-factor structure.

Domination entails deliberate actions to block underprivileged groups from accessing the resources and privileges of the dominant groups. Extreme expressions of exclusionism can be found in the now abolished separatist policies in South Africa, and the traditional caste system in India. For example, the traditional caste system in India prohibits both social and physical contacts between people with a caste and the Untouchables. In pluralist societies with relatively small power distance, despite the presence of social inequalities, all individuals are entitled to equal opportunities of accessing the societies' resources and rewards, and underprivileged groups feel that they have the inalienable rights to negotiate for better treatments. Thus, most people in these societies would disagree with exclusionism. Probably because of this reason, support for exclusionism does not show up as a separate SDO factor in these societies.

The current investigation explored whether a separate support for exclusionism factor of SDO would emerge in China, where separation between dominant groups and subordinate groups is not proscribed. Traditional China followed a patriarchal clan system with a hierarchical structure. Unequal power distribution across social roles was accepted and people were expected to follow the proscriptive and prescriptive rules attached to their social roles (Sun, 2004). Additionally, China's economic development in the last 20 years has led to unequal distribution of wealth. With this development, China departs from the lop-sided emphasis on egalitarianism in the 1960s and 1970s and starts to acknowledge and accept economic inequalities in the society. Some individuals in China, particularly the elitists, may feel that it is legitimate to separate the commoners from the elitists and restrict entry into the elitist class. Others who are not elitists but aspire to enter the elitist class may object to exclusionism. The presence of individual differences on exclusionism should lead to the

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emergence of a separate support for exclusionism factor of SDO. Thus, we predicted that support for exclusionism would emerge as a separate SDO factor in Chinese samples.

To test these predictions, three studies were conducted in Mainland China. In Study 1, participants responded to the SDO scale. Exploratory factor analysis revealed a three-factor structure with a new factor of support for exclusionism. In Studies 2 and 3, three new exclusionism items were added to the SDO scale to enhance the reliability of the exclusionism measure. Confirmatory factor analysis provided further support for the three-factor solution. In Study 3, the reliability and validity of the support for exclusionism factor were assessed.

Study 1

Method

The participants were 196 ethnic Chinese in China. The sample consisted of 98 employees (66 entry-level employees, and 32 managers including 17 supervisors and 15 middle level managers) from a company and 98 undergraduates from a public university in Beijing. The mean age of the Chinese sample was 26.08 years ($SD = \pm 5.89$) and 43.4% of the participants were women.

All participants filled out the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO₆) Scale. The SDO₆ scale consists of 16 items.

The participants indicated their response to each item on a 7-point scale (1 = do not agree at all; 7 = strongly agree) (Pratto *et al.*, 1994). As mentioned, the SDO₆ scale purports to measure the desire for group-based social inequality and social dominance. Three Chinese psychologists translated the original scale into Chinese, and a Chinese graduate student with a bachelor degree in English back-translated the Chinese version into English.

The participants received the SDO₆, along with a consent form and a demographic information sheet. Those who consented to participate in the study completed and returned the questionnaire to the researcher. The response rate was 91.6%.

Results and discussion

To assess the structure of the SDO₆, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the data using Lisrel 8.20 (Scientific Software International Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Preliminary assessment of the distribution of the SDO data was conducted to determine the appropriate estimator model for the analysis. All univariate skewness (−0.78–1.25) and kurtosis (−1.36–0.46) values for the SDO items were within the adequate range.

For the Chinese sample, as shown in Table 1, both the unidimensional model (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and the two-factor model (Jost *et al.*, 2000) model failed to meet

Table 1 Confirmatory factor analysis results of the 16-item social dominance orientation (SDO₆) scale

| Study 1 | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|--------------|------|---------------|------|-----------------|-------|------|------|
| Model | N | Absolute fit | | | | Incremental fit | | | |
| | | χ^2 | d.f. | $\chi^2/d.f.$ | p< | GFI | RMSEA | NNFI | CFI |
| One-factor | 196 | 441.19 | 104 | 4.24 | 0.01 | 0.80 | 0.12 | 0.60 | 0.65 |
| Two-factor | 196 | 243.92 | 103 | 2.37 | 0.01 | 0.88 | 0.08 | 0.81 | 0.84 |
| Study 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| Model | N | Absolute fit | | | | Incremental fit | | | |
| | | χ^2 | d.f. | $\chi^2/d.f.$ | p< | GFI | RMSEA | NNFI | CFI |
| One-factor | 427 | 816.78 | 104 | 7.85 | 0.01 | 0.81 | 0.13 | 0.56 | 0.62 |
| Two-factor | 427 | 337.72 | 103 | 3.28 | 0.01 | 0.91 | 0.07 | 0.83 | 0.85 |
| Three-factor | 427 | 312.78 | 132 | 2.37 | 0.01 | 0.93 | 0.06 | 0.88 | 0.90 |
| Study 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| Model | N | Absolute fit | | | | Incremental fit | | | |
| | | χ^2 | d.f. | $\chi^2/d.f.$ | p< | GFI | RMSEA | NNFI | CFI |
| Three-factor | 297 | 237.22 | 132 | 1.80 | 0.01 | 0.92 | 0.05 | 0.89 | 0.90 |

the absolute and incremental goodness-of-fit criteria. Thus, following Gerbing and Hamilton (1996), we performed an exploratory principal component analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation on the scale to identify the factor structure of the SDO. No restrictions were set on the number of factors in the analysis, and each item could load on one or more factors. The criterion for item inclusion was factor loadings >0.40 . Preliminary assessment of psychometric adequacy was conducted to determine the suitability of the SDO item correlation matrix for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 850.22$, $p < 0.001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling statistic was 0.80, indicating that the data met the statistical assumptions for factor analysis.

As shown in Table 2, three interpretable factors emerged, which were labelled, respectively, as opposition to equality (8 items, $\alpha = 0.78$), support for group-based dominance (5 items, $\alpha = 0.66$), and support for exclusionism (3 items, $\alpha = 0.60$). The new factor reflects a desire to restrict mobility between the dominant and subordinate groups or social classes. These three factors accounted for 50.1% of the matrix variance. The interfactor correlations were as follows: $r_{12} = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$, $r_{13} = 0.13$, $p = 0.08$, $r_{23} = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$.

As expected, a new support for exclusionism factor was obtained in an exploratory factor analysis of the Chinese data. Although this result is encouraging, the factor struc-

ture needs to be further verified and cross-validated in a new sample. Thus, in Study 2, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the data collected from an independent sample of Chinese participants.

Study 2

This study sought to validate the three-factor model of SDO with an independent Chinese sample. Only three items in the SDO scale loaded on the new factor: 'Inferior groups should stay in their place' (Item 7), 'Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place' (Item 8), and 'If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems' (Item 5). To increase the reliability of the newly identified factors, we added three new support for exclusionism items to the scale.

Method

Participants. The sample consisted of 427 Chinese employees (176 men, and 251 women) from one company, including entry-level employees ($N = 301$) and managers (including supervisors ($N = 90$), middle level managers ($N = 27$), and senior managers ($N = 9$)). One participant did not complete the questionnaire and his data were excluded

Table 2 Results of exploratory factor analysis on the 16-item social dominance orientation (SDO scale) (Study 1)

| Subscale and items for oblique rotation | Factor | | |
|--|--------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Opposition to equality (reverse coded) (OEQ) | | | |
| 13. Increased social equality. | 0.80 | | |
| 10. Group equality should be our ideal. | 0.75 | | |
| 12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups. | 0.74 | | |
| 11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life. | 0.70 | | |
| 15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible. | 0.62 | | |
| 14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally. | 0.60 | | |
| 9. It would be good if groups could be equal. | 0.60 | | |
| 16. No one should dominate in society. | 0.51 | | 0.47 |
| Support for group-based dominance (GBD) | | | |
| 1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups. | | 0.72 | |
| 3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others. | | 0.71 | |
| 2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups. | | 0.71 | |
| 6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at bottom. | | 0.45 | |
| 4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups. | | 0.43 | |
| Support for exclusionism of dominant groups (EOD) | | | |
| 7. Inferior groups should stay in their place. | | | 0.75 |
| 8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place. | | | 0.65 |
| 5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems. | | | 0.48 |
| Eigenvalue | 4.08 | 2.32 | 1.62 |
| % of Variance | 23.26 | 14.37 | 12.46 |

from further analysis. The mean age for the sample was 34.57 years ($SD = 8.94$). About half of the participants (48.2%) had no college education, 44.3% had a bachelor's degree, and 7.5% had a graduate degree.

Measure. As mentioned, we added three new items to the scale. An initial pool of eight items was generated to capture the essence of support for exclusionism. Following Bearden and Jesse's (1989) recommendations, the content validity of items was established using the following procedures. First, six independent judges were provided with the definition and an explanation of the factor and an example item from the original scale, and asked to decide whether each item was applicable to the construct. After eliminating items that were deemed as inapplicable by one or more judges, five items were retained. Next, another four independent judges rated how representative each item was of the construct on a 3-point scale (clearly, somewhat, or not representative). Three items were rated as clearly representative of the construct by all three judges and were selected for inclusion. The three items are 'Social development is advanced by a small group of elitists', 'Some groups of people should do the simple and inferior work', and 'Upward mobility of the inferior groups should be limited'. The data collection procedure was the same as that in Study 1. The response rate was 90.0%.

Results and discussion

To identify the factor structure of the revised SDO scale, a PCA with oblique rotation was performed. Again, the criterion for item inclusion was factor loadings >0.40 . The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1619.25$, $p < 0.001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling statistic of 0.81 was adequate. Thus, the statistical assumptions for factor analysis were met.

As expected, a three-factor structure emerged. One item was dropped because of its low factor loading (loading < 0.30). The remaining 18 items loaded on three factors. The items that loaded on opposition to equality or support for group-based dominance in Study 1 loaded on the same factor in the current study. Again support for exclusionism (6 items) came out as a separate factor, with all three new items loaded on it. The three factors accounted for 43.6% of the matrix variance (20.8% for opposition to equality, 14.2% for support for group-based dominance, and 8.6% for support for exclusionism). The interfactor correlations were small or moderate ($r_{12} = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$, $r_{13} = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$, $r_{23} = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). Cronbach's α was 0.81 for opposition to equality, 0.65 for support for group-based dominance, and 0.70 for support for exclusionism.

According to social dominance theory, individuals belonging to higher (vs lower) status groups tend to have

higher social dominance orientation (Sidanius, Levin, Liu, & Pratto, 2000; Levin, 2004). To assess the validity of the revised SDO scale, we compared the SDO scores of the entry-level employees (low status group) and the managers (high status group). Consistent with our prediction, after controlling for the effects of age, gender, educational level, and year of employment in the current position in a multiple regression, as expected, compared to entry-level employees, managers had higher scores on support for exclusionism ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.05$; $M_{\text{managers}} = 25.05$ and $M_{\text{entry-level}} = 23.74$), and the total SDO score ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.05$; $M_{\text{managers}} = 68.27$ and $M_{\text{entry-level}} = 65.47$). The two groups did not differ in opposition to equality ($\beta = 0.08$, $p = 0.17$; $M_{\text{managers}} = 20.48$ and $M_{\text{entry-level}} = 19.65$) or support for group-based dominance ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.13$; $M_{\text{managers}} = 22.74$ and $M_{\text{entry-level}} = 22.10$). This finding underscores the importance of the support for exclusionism factor for differentiating SDO levels of high versus low status groups in Chinese societies.

To validate the three-factor model, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the 18 items. Preliminary assessment of the distribution of the SDO data was conducted to determine the appropriate estimator model for the analysis. All univariate skewness (-0.79 – 1.21) and kurtosis (-1.51 – 0.40) values for the SDO items were within the adequate range.

Table 1 summarizes the CFA results. As expected, the three-factor model performed better than the one-factor model and the two-factor model on the goodness-of-fit indices, although some goodness-of-fit indices of the three-factor model fell short of the conventionally acceptable standards of fit. In short, the results confirmed the presence of a separate support for exclusionism factor in the Chinese sample.

Study 3

The goal of this study was to further validate the three-factor model, and to assess the validity of the support for exclusionism factor.

Method

Participants. The sample consisted of 297 participants from one company's three factories in three different cities, including 243 employees and 42 supervisors (12 participants did not report their rank). The mean age of the sample was 32.18 years ($SD = 9.92$). The sample consisted of 151 men and 135 women (11 participants did not report their gender). Most participants (77.1%) did not have college education, 21.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 1.7% had a graduate degree.

Measures. To establish the validity of the SDO scale, we had the participants fill out the 18-item SDO scale developed in Study 2, together with a measure of altruism, authoritarianism, and self-esteem. Previous studies found that SDO was negatively related to altruism, positively related to authoritarianism, and unrelated to self-esteem (Pratto *et al.*, 1994). If the support for exclusionism factor is valid, it should display a similar correlation pattern.

The data collection procedures were the same as the ones used in Studies 1 and 2. The response rate was 86.3%.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). The 18-item SDO scale developed in Study 2 was used in the current study to assess the social dominance orientation.

Altruism. The altruism scale (Wrightsman, 1974) includes seven positive and seven negative items assessing selflessness, sympathy, and care about others. Its split-half reliability is 0.74, and test-retest reliability (3 months) is 0.83. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was 0.71. Pratto *et al.* (1994) reported negative correlations ranging from -0.24 to -0.32 between SDO and altruism, indicating that people high in SDO tend to have low altruism because they do not sympathize with and care about others.

Authoritarianism. The California F Scale (Adorno, Levinson, Frenkel-Brunswick, & Sanford, 1950) was used to measure levels of authoritarianism. The questionnaire consists of 30 items and the respondent rates his or her level of agreement or disagreement with each item on a 6-point scale. Cronbach alpha coefficients of scale range from 0.81 to 0.97. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was 0.78. Pratto *et al.* (1994) reported a small positive correlation between SDO and authoritarianism (r ranged from 0.14 to 0.18).

Self-esteem. The Self-esteem Scale (SES, Rosenberg, 1965) consists of 10 items assessing global evaluation of the self. The scale had an alpha coefficient of 0.77, and retest reliability (1 week) of 0.82 (Fleming & Courtney, 1984). In the present study, the alpha coefficient was 0.72. In previous research, SDO and self-esteem were not correlated (Pratto *et al.*, 1994).

Results and discussion

Factor structure and reliability of SDO. To address the validity and reliability of the 18-item SDO measure, a CFA was conducted. Table 1 presents the results of this analysis, and Figure 1 depicts the standardized factor loadings together with squared multiple correlations in the factor model. The goodness-of-fit-indices were comparable to those reported in Study 2, and all indices approached or

exceeded the conventional criteria of model fit. In short, the factor structure and factorial composition of the 18 items were replicated in an independent worker sample. The interfactor correlations were $r_{12} = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$, $r_{13} = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$, and $r_{23} = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$. Cronbach's alpha was 0.79 for opposition to equality, 0.66 for support for group-based dominance, and 0.71 for support for exclusionism.

The total score of the SDO scale was 58.86. The subscale mean was 18.13 for opposition to equality, 18.95 for support for group-based dominance, and 21.42 for support for exclusionism.

Validity examination. As in previous studies (Pratto *et al.*, 1994), after controlling for the effect of gender, the total SDO score had a negative correlation with altruism ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and a positive correlation with authoritarianism ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$). As shown in Table 3, the total SDO score was not associated with self-esteem ($r = 0.02$). The newly emerged support for exclusionism factor had a similar pattern of correlations: $r = -0.19$ ($p < 0.01$) with altruism, $r = 0.37$ ($p < 0.01$) with authoritarianism, and $r = 0.12$ (*ns*) with self-esteem. These results provided evidence for the validity of the SDO scale as a measure of social dominance and the support for exclusionism factor.

Table 3 Validities of the social dominance orientation (SDO) scale

| Scale | Altruism | Self-esteem | Authoritarianism |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------|------------------|
| Total Score | -0.27** | 0.02 | 0.20* |
| Opposition to equality | -0.11 | -0.19* | -0.09 |
| Support for group-based dominance | -0.16** | 0.20* | 0.19* |
| Support for exclusionism | -0.19** | 0.12 | 0.37** |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

General discussion

Three studies were conducted to investigate the nature and structure of social dominance orientation in China. Consistent support for the three-factor model was obtained from three independent samples of Chinese students and working adults. A major contribution of the current investigation is the discovery of a new independent factor of SDO – support for exclusionism.

Support for exclusionism taps the preference for restricting the subordinate group's upward mobility. As our results indicate, this factor differentiates the managers (a high status group) from the entry-level employees (a lower status group), with managers having stronger support for exclu-

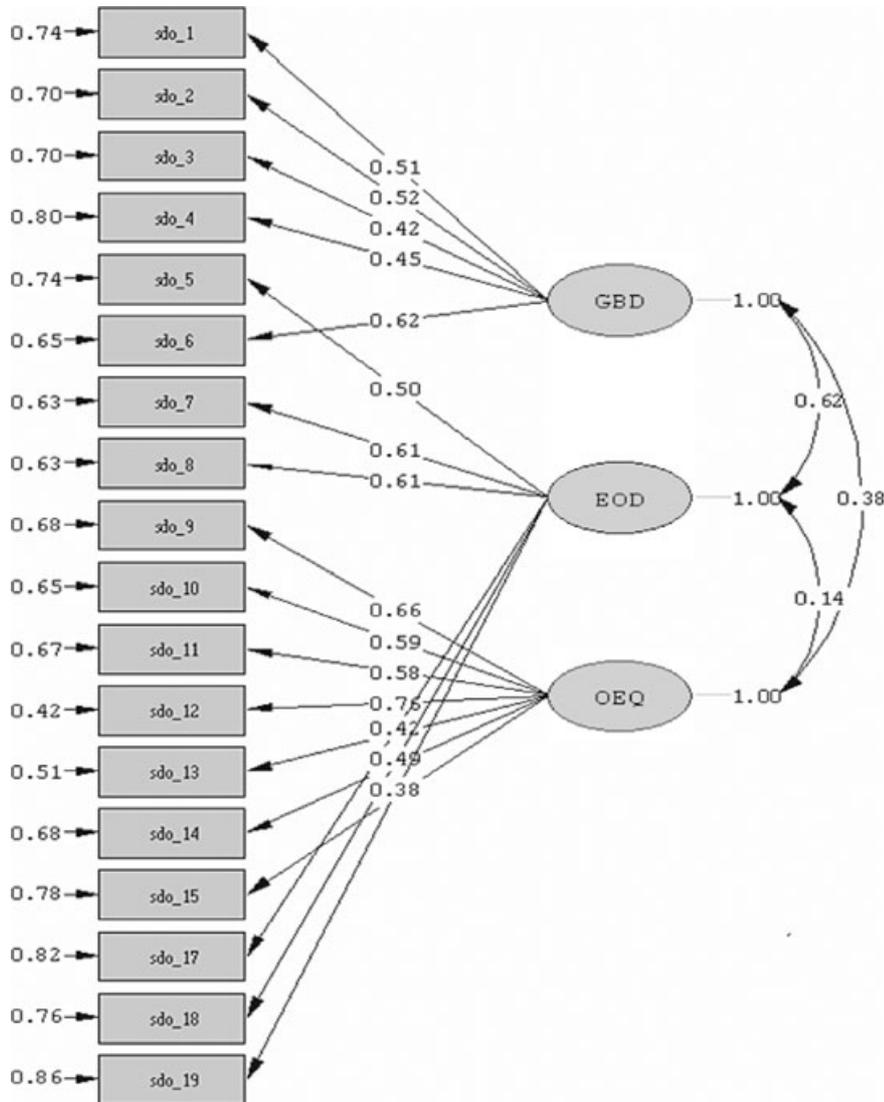


Figure 1 Standardized factor loadings and squared multiple correlations of the reconstituted social dominance orientation (SDO) scale for the worker sample ($N = 297$).

sionism (Study 2). Furthermore, individuals with stronger support for exclusionism also tend to be more authoritarian and less altruistic. These findings attest to the validity of the new factor, and underscore its importance in understanding SDO in China.

Some historical factors may account for the important role of exclusionism in defining SDO in China. As noted earlier, the patriarchal clan system, which has been around in China for a long time, carries a strong group-based hierarchical ideology, promotes acceptance of one's due, and discourages upward mobility (Sun, 2004). Therefore, in traditional China, status distinction was widely accepted.

Additionally, China's economic experiences in the past 20 years have changed the public discourse on distribution of wealth. Since the 1980s, China's economic reforms have created new economic opportunities to the Chinese, increased social mobility (Hua, 1998), enlarged the income

gap between the rich and the poor, and increased the tension between the dominant and the subordinate groups. Whereas the low status groups prefer unrestricted upward mobility (Wang, 2005), the dominant groups may prefer limited access to their privileges and resources. As a result, exclusionism may become a major area of contestation between people from different social strata.

The relative unimportance of exclusionism in defining SDO in Western societies also merits discussion. These societies privilege equal opportunities. For example, in North America, the American dream is the great national suggestion that anyone has a reasonable prospect of succeeding in life through socially permissible actions (Schudson, 2004). Thus, all individuals regardless of their background are given a reasonable anticipation (though not the promise) of the freedom to realize their American dream through personal efforts. Therefore, restriction of

social upward mobility or exclusionism is unacceptable to most people in the country. Accordingly, support for exclusionism is not a meaningful individual difference dimension in Western societies.

The foregoing analysis suggests that although all societies need to deal with the issue of status ranking, the major themes of social dominance in public discourse may vary across societies, depending on the societies' cultural traditions and current social conditions. The present research provides an illustration of how sociocultural analyses can enrich our understanding of the nature and psychological structure of the social dominance orientation in a rapidly changing society.

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