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Managing Discrimination in Selection: The Influence of Directives from an Authority and Social Dominance Orientation

Abstract

We examined one manner in which to decrease the negative impact of social dominance orientation (SDO), an individual difference variable that indicates support for the "domination of 'inferior' groups by 'superior' groups" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48), on the selection of candidates from low status groups within society. Consistent with the tenets of social dominance theory, in two studies we found that those high in SDO reported that they were less likely to select a potential team member who is a member of a low status group (i.e., a White female in Study 1 and a Black male in Study 2) than those low in SDO. However, directives from an authority moderated this effect such that those high in SDO were more likely to select both candidates when authority figures clearly communicated that job performance indicators should be used when choosing team members. Thus, our studies suggest that the negative effects of SDO may be attenuated if those high in SDO are instructed by superiors to use legitimate performance criteria to evaluate job candidates.

Key Words: social dominance orientation, diversity, discrimination, selection

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Despite what would appear to be our best efforts, discrimination seems to persist within today's organizations (e.g., Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas, & Johnson, 2005). Clearly, efforts have not been wasted, as evidenced by the increasing representation of traditionally underrepresented groups within once unattainable occupations and hierarchical levels within organizations (Reskin, 1998). However, the struggle seems far from over. Although women embody 47% of the workforce, for example, men are over four times more likely to be at the highest levels of the organization than women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). Further, Whites are over 11 times more likely to be in positions of management than blacks and Latinos (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). There is evidence that these differences reflect organizations failing to select or promote qualified female and minority applicants (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Neumark, Bank, & Van Nort, 1996). With regard to selection, for instance, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) conducted a field experiment in which they sent fictitious resumes with either Black (e.g., Jamal) or White (e.g., Gregg) names to organizations with job postings in Boston and Chicago newspapers. They found that Blacks received 50% fewer callbacks than Whites, and this gap was uniform across industry, employer size, and occupation.

Negative attitudes or prejudice is one potential reason members of low status groups within society (e.g., women and minorities) are less likely to be selected than members of higher status groups (e.g., men and Whites). If those making selection decisions have these negative attitudes, then their evaluations of job candidates from low status groups are also likely to be negative. Indeed, previous research indicates that those who report implicit or explicit prejudices toward members of low status groups tend to react negatively toward candidates from low status

groups (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Stewart & Perlow, 2001; Ziegart & Hanges, 2005). Here, we further explore how individuals react to candidates from low status groups by investigating the influence of an individual difference variable (social dominance orientation – SDO), which has been overlooked in the selection literature. We also explore how directives from authority figures impact the intent to select a candidate who is a member of a low status group in two studies. In both studies, our dependent variable was the intent to select the best qualified candidate who was also a member of a low status group. We chose to focus on the best qualified candidate because the failure to select the best qualified candidate represents a selection error, thus resulting in a loss of a potential high performer (c.f., Boudreau, 1991; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2003) as well as possibly constituting discrimination within organizational settings (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1978). Our overall purpose is to better understand why discrimination occurs and how it might be mitigated.

Our work contributes to the organizational literature in two important ways. First, we demonstrate how social dominance orientation influences the intent to select candidates from low status groups. This is the first work, to our knowledge, that shows that the tendency to support the hierarchy within society, or SDO, influences the selection of candidates from low status groups. We believe this is a particularly relevant individual difference variable in selection contexts because it has the potential to predict how those making selection decisions may react toward candidates from a number of low status groups within society (e.g., women, blacks, Latinos, immigrants). As such, we believe that SDO offers diversity researchers a parsimonious manner in which to measure and predict reactions toward candidates from low status groups. In addition, as we describe further below, the tendency of those high in SDO to support the hierarchical structures of society translates into the tendency to support the hierarchy within

organizations as well. Thus, SDO not only has the potential to predict reactions toward candidates from low status groups, but also the ability to predict how individuals react to directions from those higher in the organizational hierarchy (e.g., their boss). Such directions include, as in our studies, the instructions concerning how to make selection decisions. For these two reasons we believe that SDO will play a particularly important role in selection contexts.

Our second contribution lies in our manipulation of directives from authorities. Those studies investigating the influence of negative attitudes (or prejudices) and directions from an authority member on the selection of candidates from low status groups typically manipulate the directions by providing business justifications for discrimination, which provides an environment that allows negative attitudes toward low status groups to thrive (e.g., Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000; Petersen & Dietz; 2005; Ziegart & Hanges, 2005). For example, Brief et al. demonstrated that those with negative attitudes toward blacks showed more negative evaluations of black job candidates when provided with a business justification to discriminate (i.e., race matching) than when no business justification for discrimination was presented. In our studies, rather than focusing on the justification *to discriminate*, which exacerbates the impact of negative attitudes, we investigate the possibility that directives from authorities can moderate the relationship between SDO and reactions toward low status groups. Specifically, we manipulated whether or not an authority figure included a statement to use qualifications as the principal criteria as candidates were selected. In doing so, we hope to add to the literature by demonstrating that the presence versus absence of a proactive attempt from managers *to decrease discrimination*, in this case a focus on qualifications, diminishes the influence of SDO on negative reactions toward low status groups.

The remainder of our manuscript will unfold as follows. First, we review work on SDO, and describe social dominance theory, the foundation upon which the concept was built. Next, we predict how directives from authorities and SDO might interact to determine reactions to candidates from low status groups. Finally, we present two studies testing our predictions and we discuss the implications of our results.

Social Dominance Theory and Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance theory was developed to better understand and describe why oppression continues to plague human societies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The theory begins with the assumption that all human societies are structured in group-based social hierarchies. Within these hierarchies those groups at the top possess a disproportionate share of positive social value (or the desirable symbolic and material possessions for which people endeavor, such as political power, wealth, high status occupations, and superior health care) while those at the bottom possess a disproportionate share of negative social value. Beyond explaining why inter-group conflict occurs, the theory describes an individual difference variable (SDO) that identifies who will support the mechanisms that produce and maintain such group-based social hierarchies.

SDO is defined as "…the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of 'inferior' groups by 'superior' groups" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48). Individuals who are high in SDO are motivated to support and adhere to the traditional societal hierarchy such that they express more negative responses toward members of low status groups than high status groups. Thus, no matter the basis of group formation (e.g., race, gender) those higher in SDO will tend to support the hierarchy evident among these groups. Consistent with this notion, measures of SDO have been shown to correlate highly with prejudice and negative reactions toward a variety of low status groups (e.g., Blacks and women;

Aquino, Stewart, & Reed, 2005; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; Kemmelmeier, 2005; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2005). In particular, Aquino et al. (2005) demonstrated that as SDO increased, participants expected a recently hired Black employee to have less career advancement potential, interpersonal warmth, and competence.

Because those high in SDO are motivated to adhere to the traditional hierarchy within society, we propose that individuals high in SDO are more likely to discriminate against members of low status groups (even those to which they belong) than individuals who are low in SDO. Although we propose the same prediction for members of high and low status groups who are high in SDO (i.e., that they will discriminate against members of low status groups), the implications suggested by such discrimination are entirely different. For members of high status groups, such discrimination can be attributed to group-enhancing behavior. For members of low status groups, however, such discrimination represents out-group favoritism or group-debilitating behavior. In support of this logic, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) have shown that the relationship between in-group favoritism and SDO is positive for members of high status groups (e.g., Whites and men) and negative for members of low status groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinos, and women). Further, research demonstrates that as SDO increased, women expressed more negative evaluations of a female plaintiff (Jost & Burgess, 2000) and were less attracted to an organization with a high representation of women than one composed predominately of men (Umphress, Smith-Crowe, Brief, Dietz, & Baskerville, 2007).

In our studies, we examined the reactions of men and women to a White female candidate in Study 1 and a Black male candidate in Study 2. We chose to focus on reactions to candidates with these demographic characteristics to help demonstrate the conceptual utility of SDO in

explaining reactions to members of low status groups (i.e., women and Blacks). Consistent with social dominance theory and previous empirical research, we propose that those with higher levels of SDO will be less likely to select candidates from low status groups. We expect this relationship to hold while considering the race and gender of the individual making the selection decision. That is, consistent with previous findings and social dominance theory, we expect that members of both high and low status groups who are high in SDO will express negative reactions toward candidates from low status groups. Specifically, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1: Social dominance orientation will be negatively related to the intent to select a candidate from a low status group.

Although we propose that SDO influences candidate selection, we also acknowledge that situational factors within organizations may influence the strength of this effect. One such situational factor that could have a particularly pronounced effect is the presence versus absence of clear justifications or instructions for selecting a candidate. This situational factor operates through directives from superiors or authorities, as discussed next.

SDO and Directives from Authorities

As mentioned above, those high in SDO wish to support and maintain the hierarchy within society. Although research on SDO generally focuses on gender, ethnicity, or race-based hierarchies within society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), hierarchical structures are evident within all social environments, such as those inherent within organizations and classrooms. Indeed, within organizations almost everyone reports to another person, who could be thought of as boss, manager, or someone "in charge." According to social dominance theory, individuals high in SDO, regardless of group-membership and position within the hierarchy, will be compelled to promote the hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, those high in SDO will show deference

to the dominant groups, such as one's superiors or authority figures, when afforded the opportunity (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Smith-Crowe, Umphress, Brief, Tenbrunsel, & Chan, 2006).

To review, we have argued that those high in SDO will 1) negatively evaluate a candidate who is a member of a low status group and 2) stringently follow directives from superiors. Interestingly, we wished to capitalize on the latter tendency to obey an authority in order to diminish the former tendency to discriminate. Specifically, we manipulated whether or not individuals received instructions from an authority to focus on job qualifications when making candidate decisions.[1] We expect that the negative relationship between SDO and intent to select a job candidate from a low status would be weaker when instructions from the authority to focus on job qualifications are present versus absent. When instructions from the authority to focus on qualifications are present, those higher in SDO will act in accordance with these instructions due to their tendency to obey an authority and be less likely to discriminate. In the absence of such instructions, SDO will have a strong negative relationship with intent to select a job candidate from a low status group because those high in SDO have the tendency to discriminate against members of low status groups. The presence of this interactive effect will demonstrate that one can help diminish the negative impact of SDO on the intent to select a candidate from a low status group when coupled with the instructions from an authority to focus on job-relevant criteria versus when these instructions are not present. In sum, we propose the following:

[1] We choose to focus on job qualifications, rather than implement preferential selection criteria, because previous research demonstrated that job candidates as well as their coworkers react more positively to situations in which qualifications are explicitly used in selection decisions rather than ambiguous or preferential selection (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998). Therefore, we sought to determine if a selection strategy (i.e., focusing on qualifications) that generates positive views from job candidates and coworkers would also lead to less discriminatory responses from those making selection decisions.

Hypothesis 2: SDO and directives from authorities will interact on the intent to select a candidate from a low status group such that when directives from authorities to focus on job-related selection criteria are present the negative impact of SDO will be weaker than when these directives are absent.

Below, we report two studies to test our predictions.

Study 1 Method

Participants

Undergraduate students were recruited, independent of sex and ethnicity, from an upper class business course at a large public university in the southern United States. Of the 88 students recruited to participate, 68 provided complete data and these individuals constituted our sample. Slightly over half (51.5%) of the respondents were female. The majority of participants were White (83.8%), 8.8% were Latino, 2.9% were Black, and 2.9% were Asian. Their average age was 21 years. Participants received extra credit in their business course for participating in this study.

Procedure

The study was conducted in two phases via an online data collection website. Social dominance orientation, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, race, and gender were collected during Phase 1 of the study. Approximately six weeks later, the same individuals from Phase 1 participated in Phase 2, which contained the directives from authorities manipulation and our dependent variable. When we recruited participants, we led them to believe that there would be three phases in the study. We explained that during Phase 1 they were to complete a questionnaire, and during Phase 2 they would be randomly assigned to either a selection role or a work group member role. Those in the selection role would choose three work group members to

work with in a subsequent group task in Phase 3; those who were not given the selection role would have no choice regarding their work group and would be assigned to a work group by their classmates in selection roles. In reality, all participants were assigned to a selection role, but we wished for participants to believe that not everyone was in the selection role because it would seem unrealistic for all participants to be selecting work group members. Because we wished to motivate participants to take the selection task seriously, participants were told that in Phase 3 they would participate in a face-to-face group exercise with the people they selected to work with in Phase 2 and that the highest performing group in the laboratory exercise would receive a monetary reward ($100 for each of the four group members). However, Phase 2 was the last component of the study; none of the participants would truly partake in a group activity. Instead of rewarding participants based on their performance, each participant had an equal chance to obtain the monetary reward (four $100 lottery prizes). At the conclusion of Phase 2 all participants were debriefed and the lottery prizes were distributed.

Phase 1 Measures

Social dominance orientation. SDO was measured using Sidanius, Pratto, Sinclair, and van Laar's (1996) 16-item scale. Three representative items from this scale are "Some groups of people are just more worthy than others," "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups," and "Inferior groups should stay in their place." Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The 16 items were averaged to yield a scale score. Higher scores on the SDO scale indicated higher levels of SDO. This scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$; Cronbach, 1951).

Gender and race. Previous research indicates that those who are members of higher status groups within society such as men and Whites tend to have higher levels of social dominance orientation than those who are members of lower status groups such as women and Latinos (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, we controlled for participants' gender and whether or not participants were White. Gender was coded as 1 = male and 0 = female. Race was dummy coded such that 1 = White and 0 = non-White.

Hostile sexism. Hostile sexism is antipathy or prejudiced attitudes toward women and emphasizes the notion that women should be controlled by men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Those high in hostile sexism hold negative stereotypes about women such as the notion that men are smarter than women. Those who exhibit such prejudices are also likely to view female job candidates negatively. To control for prejudice against women, we used Glick and Fiske's (1996) 11-item hostile sexism scale (α = .89).

Benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism is similar to hostile sexism in that benevolent sexists endorse the notion that women should be controlled by men and that women should occupy stereotypical, low status roles within society (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexists tend to have less derogatory reasons for their sexist attitudes and behavior than hostile sexists. Those high in benevolent sexism generally have subjectively positive feelings about women, and believe that women should be protected and cherished. Even with this more positive characterization of women, however, benevolent sexists will tend to categorize women as substandard to men. We controlled for this form of sexism because it could negatively influence how individuals select female job candidates. We used Glick and Fiske's (1996) 11-item benevolent sexism scale (α = .82).

Phase 2

In Phase 2 all participants were told that they were assigned to the selection role in which they were responsible for choosing three work group members whom they would work closely with in a laboratory group activity the following week (Phase 3). The laboratory activity was described as a group naval command-and-control task that required the group to monitor the airspace around a naval carrier. Participants were to be a part of a four-person team where each individual would participate in one of the following four roles: one patrolling the airspace North of the carrier, one patrolling the airspace South of the carrier, one patrolling the airspace East of the carrier and one patrolling the airspace West of the carrier. Each member of the team was to be solely responsible for their individual air patrol unit. This description was based on a group task used by Hollenbeck et al. (2002).

Participants were told that they were to choose three work group members from a list of eight fellow classmates to work with on this naval command task. To select their workgroups they were provided with the following information: age, gender, race, overall GPA, and a Leadership Potential Test Score (LPT) all of which were said to be derived from the results of the Phase I questionnaire. The LPT was a fictitious test, but it was described to participants as a test that could gauge the leadership ability that was needed in the naval command task. To provide some face validity to participants that we had measured the LPT, in Phase 1 we embedded several items that seemed to measure leadership ability. That is, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they "Take charge," "Try to lead others," "Take the initiative," "Wait for others to lead the way," and "Find it difficult to approach others." These items were taken from the leadership component of the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP, 2007). All

participants were told during Phase 2: "results from previous studies indicate that the best performers of this task are those with high GPAs and LPT Scores."

Manipulation. After reading the information discussed above, participants read our manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: directives from authorities to focus on job-related criteria absent (n = 33) or present (n = 35). To manipulate directives from authorities, we wished to create a situation in which participants knew the wishes of their authorities in the experimental situation. In this situation, the research team functioned as the authority figure, a role similar to the role of a superior in that the research team held a position of authority in this research project, and they would determine which team would receive the $400 in reward money. Thus, in the directives from authorities present condition we provided clear instructions to participants regarding the research team's wishes. Specifically, in the directives from authorities present condition, participants read: "Because you will be rewarded based on group performance, the research team encourages you to choose the best possible performers (i.e., those with high GPAs and LPT's) for this task." Those in the directives from authorities absent condition did not have this sentence included in their experimental materials, but everything else was exactly the same for both conditions.

Intent to select the candidate. After the manipulation, we listed the information about each of the eight candidates. We asked the participants to read the information about each candidate carefully and make their selections. Although participants were told that we had randomly chosen eight individuals from their classmates participating in this study to serve as their specific pool of candidates, all participants selected from the same eight candidates.

The GPA's and LPT's of the candidates were created such that one candidate, a White female, was clearly more qualified than the other candidates. Before we conducted this study, we

pre-tested the eight potential candidates by asking 28 students in a different business class to indicate the candidate that they would be most interested to work with in a group setting. These students were given the same candidate information provided to our participants in Phase 2. However, we removed information regarding the candidates' gender and race to obtain a measure of the best-qualified candidate according to the criteria we highlighted in the stimulus materials (i.e., GPA and LPT). As expected, one candidate was evaluated significantly higher than the other seven candidates (results available upon request), and this candidate's qualifications were used as the description for our best candidate, a female. Intent to select this female candidate served as our dependent variable.

After reading the information regarding their work group member task (supposedly to be completed in Phase 3), participants were asked to respond to two items for each candidate that assessed our dependent variable, intent to select the candidate. Participants were told that their answers to these items would determine their work group members such that those candidates to whom participants gave higher scores would be their future work group members. The first item was "Please select the one choice that best indicates the quality of the candidate as a potential work group member." Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale where 1 = *unacceptable candidate* and 7 = *excellent candidate*. The second item was "Please select the one choice that best indicates your intention to choose this candidate as a work group member." Participants responded to this question using a 7-point scale where 1 = *extremely unlikely to choose* and 7 = *extremely likely to choose*. Our dependent variable was participants' ratings of the best candidate, who was described in this experiment as a White female. The two items for this candidate were averaged and this measure demonstrated high internal consistency (α = .88).

Study 1 Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check

The effectiveness of the manipulation was assessed using a separate sample of 25 students enrolled in a business class. These individuals received the stimulus materials from Phase 2 described above and were randomly assigned to the directives from authorities present (n = 13) or absent (n = 12) conditions. Then, they were asked to respond to the following two items: "I was not given direction on how to select the best possible group members" and "The research team told me the type of characteristics I should look for when I selected my group members." Participants responded to the manipulation check items by using a Likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. The first item was reverse-coded and both items were averaged to create a scale such that higher numbers indicated more agreement that the research team provided instructions about how to evaluate the candidates (α = .70). A t-test indicated that the manipulation was successful [t (23) = -2.26, $p \leq .05$]: those in the directives from authorities present condition were more likely to agree that the research team provided instructions on how to evaluate candidates (M = 5.65) compared to those in the directives from authorities absent condition (M = 4.67).

Hypothesis Testing

See Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for all variables. We conducted hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test our hypotheses. Following Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), SDO was centered to test for moderation. The regression analysis consisted of four steps (see Table 2 for the results). In Step 1, intent to select the best candidate, who was female, was regressed on the control variables gender, race, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism. The results from this step failed to reach significance (R^2 = .03). In Step

2, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on the directives from authorities manipulation. This step did not produce significant results (R^2 = .05; ΔR^2 = .02). In Step 3, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on SDO. The results of this step were statistically significant (R^2 = .11; ΔR^2 = .06). In support of Hypothesis 1, results showed that SDO was significantly related to intent to select the best candidate such that as SDO increased, ratings of the candidate decreased (β = -.30, $p \leq .05$). In Step 4, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on the two-way interaction between SDO and the directives from authorities manipulation. The interaction term was significantly related to intent to select the best candidate (R^2 = .17, ΔR^2 = .06) (see Figure 1). Demonstrating support for Hypothesis 2, analysis of the simple slopes indicated that SDO had a stronger impact on intent to select the best candidate when directives from authorities were absent (β = -.43, $p \leq .05$) than when directives were present (β = -.04, $p > .10$).

Results from this study demonstrated why some individuals have more negative reactions toward candidates from low status groups than others and one manner in which to diminish this negative relationship. Specifically, we demonstrated that those high in SDO reported lower intent to select a female candidate than those low in SDO. Importantly, we found support for this prediction while controlling for gender, showing that those high in SDO will react negatively to candidates from low status groups, even to those to which they belong.[2] We also showed that this negative relationship between SDO and intent to select the female candidate was attenuated by instructions given by superiors. Specifically, the presence versus absence of explicit instructions

[2] We conducted an additional regression analysis to determine if the interaction between gender and SDO determined ratings of the female candidate. Results indicated that this interaction term failed to reach significance, suggesting that as SDO increased participants reported lower intent to select the female candidate and this relationship did not significantly vary depending on whether our participants were male or female. This result is consistent with our reasoning that levels of SDO drive reactions toward members of low status groups, even groups to which they belong.

to focus on job qualifications in making one's selection decision decreased the negative relationship of SDO on intent to select the candidate. Taken together, these results showed that instruction from a superior to focus on job qualifications helps to counteract the negative reactions of individuals who are high in SDO. Importantly, we demonstrated support for our hypotheses while controlling for conceptually related variables (i.e., benevolent sexism, hostile sexism) as well as race and gender.

In our first study we examined the effects of SDO and directives from an authority on intent to select a female candidate. In the following study we attempted to replicate our findings using the same experimental materials, but we changed the demographics associated with our best candidate to focus on intent to select a Black candidate. In doing so, we have attempted to demonstrate the generalizability of our findings. Also, we included an important control variable in our second study, authoritarianism. Those high in authoritarianism believe in submitting to the wishes of authorities and committing aggression against those who authorities target (Altemeyer, 1998). From this description authoritarianism appears similar to SDO; however, previous literature indicates important conceptual differences. For instance, authoritarianism is viewed as abnormal and pathological stemming from a troubled adolescence whereas SDO is considered to be a normal trait (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Further, although authoritarianism and SDO are related, these concepts have been shown to be independent (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998). Most importantly, SDO focuses on *inter*group hierarchy and domination and authoritarianism focuses on *intra*group hierarchy and domination (Sidanius et al., 1994). Because of our focus on group-based social hierarchies or intergroup hierarchies (low status groups within society and superiors within social settings such as organizations and classrooms) we focused on the effects of SDO rather than authoritarianism in our studies.

Nonetheless, we thought it important to control for authoritarianism to demonstrate the impact of SDO while considering this similar construct.

Study 2 Method

Participants

Junior and senior undergraduate students were recruited from a management course at a mid-sized university in the southern United States. Of the 105 students recruited to participate 79 provided complete data and these individuals constituted our sample. The majority (59.5%) of the participates were female, 79.7% were White, 10.1% were Black, 6.3% were Latino, 1.3% were Asian, and 2.5% were Native American. Their average age was 24 years. Most of our participants (74.7%) were employed at the time of the investigation. Participants received extra credit in their business course for participating in this study.

Procedure

We used the same procedure and stimulus materials as in Study 1 with two modifications. First, whereas in the previous study we told participants that the highest performing group in the laboratory exercise would receive a monetary reward ($100 for each of the four group members), participants in this study were told that the highest performing group would receive additional extra credit points as a reward (10 additional extra credit points for each individual within the highest performing group). As in the previous study, after participants completed Phase 2, they were debriefed and each participant was awarded 40 extra credit points.

Second, in this study we changed the demographics of the best candidate. In Study 1 the best candidate was a White female. In this study we wished to examine how SDO and directives from authorities impact ratings of a candidate who was a member of a low status racial group

within society. Therefore, in this study we changed the demographics of the best candidate to a Black male.

Phase 1 Measures

Social dominance orientation. We used the same SDO scale that was administered in Study 1 ($\alpha = .92$).

Gender and race. We used the same measures for gender and race as in Study 1.

Full-time work experience and employment status. We controlled for full-time work experience and employment status because those with employment experience could have more familiarity working within actual workgroups, and this experience could influence how they rate potential workgroup members. Employment status was coded as 1 = employed and 0 = not employed. Participants indicated their level of full-time work experience by choosing one of the following: 0-6 months, 7 months to a year, 1.1 to 1.5 years, 1.6 to 2.0 years, 2.1 to 2.5 years, 2.6 to 3.0 years, 3.1 to 3.5 years, 3.6 to 4.0 years, 4.1 to 4.5 years, and other. 39.2% of participants reported working full-time for 0 to 1.5 years, 20.3% of participants reported working full-time from 1.6 to 3.0 years, and 19% of participants reported working full-time from 3.1 to 4.5 years.

Modern racism. Modern racists (i.e., those who are high in modern racism) have been shown to endorse subtle negative beliefs about Blacks such as "Blacks are pushing too hard, too fast and into places where they are not wanted" (McConahay, 1986, p. 92-93). Modern racism was used as a control in this study because modern racists tend to express negative reactions toward Blacks (e.g., Brief, et al., 2000; McConahay, 1983) and modern racism is positively correlated to SDO (e.g., Hodson & Esses, 2005). To assess modern racism participants responded to McConahay, Hardee, and Batts' (1981) seven-item modern racism scale ($\alpha = .72$).

Authoritarianism. As discussed above, we controlled for authoritarianism in this study because it is a similar to though conceptually distinct from SDO (Altemeyer, 1998), thus allowing us to assess the independent effect of SDO. We measured authoritarianism using Altemeyer's (1981) 24 item measure ($\alpha = .83$).

Phase 2

Manipulation. In this study we used the same manipulation as in Study 1. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: directives from authorities absent ($n = 37$) or present ($n = 43$).

Intent to select the candidate. Other than the change mentioned above focusing on candidate race rather than gender in this study, the eight candidates were presented in the same fashion as in the first study. Ratings of the Black male served as the dependent variable for this study. We used the same measure from Study 1 to assess ratings of the best candidate ($\alpha = .87$).

Study 2 Results and Discussion

Manipulation Check

The effectiveness of the manipulation was assessed using a separate sample of 14 students enrolled in a business class. As in Study 1, these individuals received the stimulus materials from Phase 2 described above and were randomly assigned to the directives from authorities present ($n = 6$) or absent ($n = 8$) conditions. Then, they were asked to respond to the same manipulation check items described in Study 1. The first item was reverse-coded and both items were averaged to create a scale such that higher numbers indicated more agreement that the research team provided instructions about how to evaluate the candidates ($\alpha = .68$). A t-test indicated that the manipulation was successful [$t\ (12) = -2.28$, $p \leq .05$]: those in directives from authorities present condition were more likely to agree that the research team provided

guidelines about how to evaluate candidates (M = 5.50) compared to those in the directives from authorities absent condition (M = 3.63).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for the variables used in Study 2. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test our hypotheses. SDO was centered in the regression analysis (Cohen et al., 2003). We conducted the regression analysis in four steps (see Table 4). In Step 1, intent to select the best candidate, a Black male, was regressed on the control variables employment status, full-time work experience, race, gender, authoritarianism, and modern racism. The results for this step were significant (R^2 = .19). Specifically, employment status was significantly related to intent to select the best candidate such that employed participants reported that they were more likely select the best candidate than participants who were not employed. In Step 2, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on the directives from authorities manipulation. The results from this step was not incrementally significant (R^2 = .20; ΔR^2 = .01). In Step 3, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on social dominance orientation. This step was statistically significant (R^2 = .33; ΔR^2 = .14). Providing support for Hypothesis 1, SDO was negatively related to intent to select the candidate (β = -.48, $p \leq .05$).

In Step 4, intent to select the best candidate was regressed on the interaction between SDO and the directives from authorities. The results from this step were statistically significant (R^2 = .37; ΔR^2 = .04) (see Figure 2). Demonstrating support for Hypothesis 2, analysis of the simple slopes indicated that SDO had a stronger impact on intent to select the best candidate when directives from authorities were absent (β =-.70, $p \leq .05$) than when directives were present (β =-.34, $p \leq .05$).

As in the previous study, our results demonstrate why some individuals have more negative reactions toward candidates from low status groups than others and one manner in which to diminish these negative reactions. In particular, we found that those high in SDO had lower intent to select a most qualified Black candidate than those low in SDO. We found support for this prediction while controlling for both gender and race, showing that those high in SDO will react negatively to candidates from low status groups, even to those to which they belong.[3] We also showed that the negative relationship between SDO and intent to select the Black candidate was attenuated by instructions given by superiors. That is, receiving explicit instructions to focus on job qualifications in making one's selection decision decreased the negative relationship between SDO and intent to select the candidate. Finally, we demonstrated support for our hypotheses while controlling for modern racism, authoritarianism, full-time work experience, employment status, race, and gender.

Results for our second hypothesis were slightly different than in our first study. Although directives from an authority to focus on job qualifications diminished the negative relationship between SDO and ratings of the Black candidate, simple slope tests indicated that this relationship was still significant when directives from the authority were present. In the first study, however, the simple slope tests revealed that the relationship between SDO and ratings of the female candidate did not reach significance when directives from the authority were present. That is, the directive from authorities to focus on job qualifications seemed more successful in removing the negative response of those high in SDO on reactions to the female candidate (in

[3] We conducted two additional regression analyses to determine if the interaction between race of the participant (White versus nonwhite, and Black versus not Black) and SDO determined ratings of the Black candidate. Results indicated that the interaction terms failed to reach significance, suggesting that as SDO increased participants reported lower intent to select the Black candidate and this relationship did not significantly vary depending on whether our participants were White or nonwhite or Black or not Black. This result is consistent with our reasoning that levels of SDO drive reactions toward members of low status groups, even groups to which they belong.

Study 1) than the Black candidate (in Study 2). We think this is because the negative effect of SDO was stronger in Study 2 than Study 1, suggesting that high SDO participants had a more negative response to the Black candidate than the female candidate. This difference could be due to perceptions of the relative status of female versus Black groups, and we attempted to provide some support for this status differential using post hoc analyses described next.

At the end of phase 2 we asked participants to indicate the status that certain groups occupy within society using a scale from 1 = low status to 7 = high status. In both studies participants indicated that women enjoyed significantly higher status than Blacks within society (Study 1: women $M = 4.95$ $SD = 1.71$, Blacks $M = 3.67$ $SD = 1.41$, t (66) = -7.14; Study 2: women M = 4.99 SD = 1.30, Blacks $M = 4.14$ $SD = 1.41$, t (76) = -5.38). Because those high in SDO exhibit negative reactions to lower status groups, it is possible that our differential findings were due to this perceived difference in status. Future research should further examine the possibility that those high in SDO react more negatively to Blacks than women because of perceived status differences.

General Discussion

In two studies we demonstrated why some individuals may react negatively toward candidates from low status groups and one manner to diminish these negative reactions. First, we found that individuals who support and adhere to the traditional societal hierarchy, or those high in SDO, reported that they were less likely to select a female (Study 1) and a Black (Study 2) candidate than those low in SDO. This is the first empirical work to demonstrate that SDO influences the selection of candidates from low status groups. It is important to note that the low status candidate of interest in both of our studies were the most qualified candidates, suggesting that those high in SDO could make selection errors when the best qualified candidate is a

member of a low status group. Second, we demonstrated that this negative effect was attenuated by directives from supervisors. In particular, receiving explicit instructions to focus on job qualifications in making one's selection decision decreased the negative impact of SDO on the intent to select the candidate such this relationship was stronger when these instructions were present versus absent. This is the first empirical work, to our knowledge, to show how a proactive attempt from managers to decrease discrimination, in this case a focus on qualifications for the job, diminishes the negative influence of SDO and reactions toward low status groups.

Theoretical Implications

We believe that the most valuable theoretical contribution of our studies is the introduction of social dominance theory and the SDO construct into research in the selection context. As we demonstrated in our study, SDO has the potential to explain two fundamental issues within organizations: 1) the tendency for individuals to discriminate against members of low status groups and 2) the tendency for individuals to follow the instructions of authority figures. With regard to the first tendency, social dominance theory provides the theoretical lens to explain how individual differences in SDO may result in discrimination. We chose to focus on reactions to a female and a Black candidate. However, SDO can predict how those making selection decisions react to immigrants, Latinos, and candidates from members of other traditionally underrepresented groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Furthermore, SDO also helps explain who will be more compliant or submissive to authority figures within organizations. Simon (1976) proposed that employees sign a "blank check" when entering an organization, and are thereby obligated to obey organizational authority in exchange for the benefits associated with their job (e.g., a salary). Yet individuals vary to the

extent to which they will comply with directives from above, and SDO helps to explain why some show greater deference to those higher in the organizational hierarchy.

We chose to illustrate that instructions from an authority to focus on job qualifications diminishes the negative relationship between SDO and intent to select a candidate. Yet, we may expect that the relationship between SDO and intent to select a candidate would be moderated by the presence versus absence of instructions from authorities related to any selection strategy such as preferential selection or discriminatory policies such as race-matching. Thus, while our study shows how directives from authorities can promote attention to job qualifications, instructions from above could increase the salience of race or gender and possibly increase the tendency for those high in SDO to discriminate. In sum, social dominance theory has the potential to offer selection scholars theoretical rationale to explain how organizations become demographically composed.

Practical Implications

As noted, finding that SDO is negatively related to the intent to select low status group members (in our case, a female and a Black candidate) offers insight on discrimination that may occur during selection decisions. While discrimination against low status groups is of course an important societal issue, from an organizational standpoint, failing to select qualified individuals is very costly in terms of a loss in potential human resources. In our study, those higher in SDO were willing to sacrifice working with a high-performing female and Black male even when doing so would adversely affect their team's performance and ultimately harm their chance for a reward. In an organizational setting, such discrimination against highly qualified candidates (particularly if systemic) is deleterious in terms of ethical, monetary (e.g., due to law suits), and potentially performance outcomes.

Our findings demonstrated that those higher in SDO, regardless of their own particular demographic composition, reacted negatively to members of low status groups. Yet organizational leaders often place individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups on staffing committees in an effort to enhance diversity within their organizations. However, our results and those from other studies (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Umphress et al., 2007) demonstrate that individuals high in SDO will react negatively toward low status group members, even those to which they belong. Thus, this strategy to place individuals who are members of low status groups in selection positions to increase diversity may not be effective to the extent that such individuals are high in SDO. That is, a woman who is high in SDO may be just as likely to discriminate against other women as a man who is high in SDO. A more effective strategy would be to ensure individuals with lower levels of SDO are involved in staffing decisions.

Of course, assessing individuals' SDO may not always be feasible, thus leaving organizations exposed to potentially discriminatory hiring managers. An important contribution of our study is that organizations can weaken the discriminatory tendency of individuals high in SDO with the presence versus absence of explicit communication from superiors to focus on job qualifications. This suggests that organizations that develop and communicate hiring policies focused on job qualifications will be more successful in their diversity efforts than those that do not. These findings are also consistent with prior research that has shown how directives from superiors *to discriminate* are similarly followed by those with negative attitudes toward low status groups (Brief et al., 2000; Petersen & Dietz, 2005; Ziegart & Hanges, 2005). The key point is that those higher in SDO are quite likely to follow the instructions set forth by their

superiors, indicating that organizations need to be conscious of the implicit and explicit messages sent by organizational leaders regarding selection.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

We recognize that because our studies utilized an experimental design the generalizability of our findings must be questioned. Although our predictions were supported after controlling for work experience in Study 2, we used business students as participants in both studies rather than conducting our studies with employees within actual organizations. Future research should examine these relationships in the field. In particular, the effects of the experimenters' instructions to focus on job qualifications might not be as strong in the lab because participants might not have considered the experimenters to be their superiors. We attempted to simulate superior/subordinate dynamics by creating a situation in which experimenters awarded extra credit points and the chance to win four $100 prizes based on the students' participation. However, the effects of directives from authorities may be stronger in organizational situations in which a clear hierarchy exists and consequences for failing to follow instructions are likely more severe, thus suggesting our study was a conservative test of the effect.

Another potential limitation was the small sample sizes in both studies. We found significant effects in support of our hypotheses in both studies, suggesting that power was sufficient. Indeed, given the effect size, alpha level, sample size, and the number of independent variables, the power for Study 1 and 2 was .70 and .99, respectively (Cohen, 1988, 1992). Nonetheless, future research using larger samples should test the effects found here as well as develop a more complex model considering the role of various negative attitudes toward lower

status groups (e.g., modern racism, modern sexism), demographic variables, and contextual moderators.

One potentially important avenue for future research is to examine how those high in SDO respond to the directives from those who are from different levels within the organizational hierarchy. In our studies we argued and found that the presence versus absence of explicit instructions to focus on job qualifications from an authority who was hierarchically superior (i.e., controlled needed resources such as extra credit points and had obtained more advanced degrees*)* moderated the relationship between SDO and intent to select the candidate. However, social dominance theory suggests that someone high in SDO would likely reject directives from those who are lower in the hierarchy. It is important to distinguish how those high in SDO react to directives from a superior versus from those lower in the hierarchy because discrimination might not be diminished, indeed it might be exaggerated, when directives to focus on job qualifications are given to those high in SDO by those lower in the organizational hierarchy.

In our study, we examined intent to select a female and a Black candidate. Though the tenets of social dominance theory would apply to and have been examined in prior research among other low status groups (e.g., ethnic-based), future research in the selection context should further investigate the role of SDO in discriminating against different groups. Similarly, consistent with Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) Subordinate Male Target Hypothesis (SMTH), we may expect differences in the relative level of discrimination within groups dependent on SDO. We focused on intent to select a member of a low status group who was also the best candidate, thus offering insight on a critical loss in human resources associated with discrimination. However, examining the effect of SDO on selection decisions involving comparable candidates of differing status groups (i.e., female from a high status group, female from a low status group,

male from a high status group, and male from a low status group) may reveal nuances to discrimination levels. It would also be interesting to examine the role of SDO in making other types of candidate evaluation decisions, such as decisions for promotion, layoffs, job assignments, and pay raises.

Finally, it would be fruitful to further investigate the effects of SDO within different samples. According to Sidanius and Pratto (1999), SDO should vary by gender such that "males will have significantly higher average levels of SDO than females" (p. 49) (Dambrun, Duarte, Guimond, 2004; Sidanius, Levin, Liu, & Pratto, 2000; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Brief, 1995; Sidanius, Sinclair, Pratto, 2006). However, in our studies the relationship between SDO and sex did not reach significance. This non-significant finding could be due to the characteristics of our samples. Students from business classes served as our participants in both studies, and previous work indicates that individuals from hierarchy enhancing majors (e.g., business majors) tend to have higher levels of SDO than individuals from hierarchy attenuating majors (e.g., social work majors) (van Laar, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Sinclair, 1999). This suggests that our female participants might have been relatively higher in SDO than the general population. Future work should explore the possibility that individuals within certain groups and occupations (e.g., accountants) are higher in SDO than other groups and occupations (e.g., social workers), as suggested by Sidanius and Pratto (1999). If this is so, then one might also expect to find higher levels of discrimination within occupations that tend to attract individuals high in SDO because those making selection decisions would also likely be high in SDO.

Conclusion

This study examined why individuals react negatively to candidates from low status groups. We found that SDO, or the desire to support and maintain hierarchical structures within

society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), is negatively related to intent to select a candidate from a low status group (a female and a Black candidate). In addition, we demonstrated that this same desire to support hierarchical structures could help diminish this negative relationship, such that the presence versus absence of a clear communication from an authority provides that valid criteria (i.e., job qualifications) should be used when selecting candidates weakens the relationship between SDO and intent to select a candidate from a low status group. Our results showed that this emphasis on job qualifications might help thwart discrimination, at least for those high in SDO who are making selection decisions.

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Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Study 1

	Mean	Standard Deviation	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Manipulation	.51	.50	-.20	.14	.18	-.03	.09	.04
2. SDO	2.99	.95		-.25*	.21	.06	.50**	.24*
3. Intent to Select the Best Candidate	6.21	1.09			-.10	-.10	.01	-.05
4. Gender	.49	.50				-.13	.36**	.23
5. Race	.84	.37					-.10	-.31*
6. Hostile Sexism	3.32	.95						.24
7. Benevolent Sexism	3.72	.86						

Note. Gender coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race coded 1 for White and 0 for non-White.

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

Table 2
Regression Results for Intent to Select the Best Candidate (who was female) for Study 1

Step	Variable	β	R^2	ΔR^2
1	Gender	-.12	.03	
	Race	-.13		
	Benevolent Sexism	-.08		
	Hostile Sexism	.06		
2	Gender	-.14	.05	.02
	Race	-.13		
	Benevolent Sexism	-.08		
	Hostile Sexism	.05		
	Manipulation	.16		
3	Gender	-.13	.11*	.06*
	Race	-.09		
	Benevolent Sexism	-.03		
	Hostile Sexism	.19		
	Manipulation	.08		
	SDO	-.30*		
4	Gender	-.21	.17*	.06*
	Race	-.10		
	Benevolent Sexism	.02		
	Hostile Sexism	.22		
	Manipulation	.07		
	SDO	-.57*		
	Manipulation * SDO	.37*		

Note. Gender coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race coded 1 for White and 0 for non-White.
$N = 68$

* $p \leq .05$

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Study 2

	Mean	Standard Deviation	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Manipulation	.53	.50	-.09	.04	.05	.03	-.02	.01	.11	.04
2. SDO	2.77	0.98		-.48**	.08	.05	.02	.09	.56**	.34**
3. Intent to Select the Best Candidate	6.41	.93			-.04	-.04	.27*	-.11	-.20	-.20
4. Gender	.41	.49				.03	.24*	.19	.10	.08
5. Race	.80	.40					.07	-.13	.26*	.17
6. Employment Status	.75	.44						.25*	.17	.05
7. Full time work experience	5.14	3.44							.14	.11
8. Modern Racism	2.54	0.73								.27*
9. Authoritarianism	4.59	0.68								

Note. Gender coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race coded 1 for White and 0 for non-White.

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

Table 4
Regression Results for Intent to Select the Best Candidate (who was Black) for Study 2

Step	Variable	β	R^2	ΔR^2
1	Gender	-.07	.19*	
	Race	.00		
	Full time work experience	-.14		
	Employment Status	.37*		
	Modern Racism	-.20		
	Authoritarianism	-.14		
2	Gender	-.08	.20	.01
	Race	.00		
	Full time work experience	-.14		
	Employment Status	.37*		
	Modern Racism	-.21		
	Authoritarianism	-.14		
	Manipulation	.08		
3	Gender	-.06	.33*	.14*
	Race	-.06		
	Full time work experience	-.15		
	Employment Status	.33*		
	Modern Racism	.05		
	Authoritarianism	-.04		
	Manipulation	.01		
	SDO	-.48*		
4	Gender	-.05	.37*	.04*
	Race	-.02		
	Full time work experience	-.19		
	Employment Status	.33*		
	Modern Racism	.05		
	Authoritarianism	-.05		
	Manipulation	.03		
	SDO	-.75*		
	Manipulation * SDO	.35*		

Note. Gender coded 1 for males and 0 for females. Race coded 1 for White and 0 for non-White.
$N = 79$
* $p \leq .05$

Figure 1. Interaction between SDO and the directives from authorities manipulation on intent to select the best candidate (who was female) for Study 1.

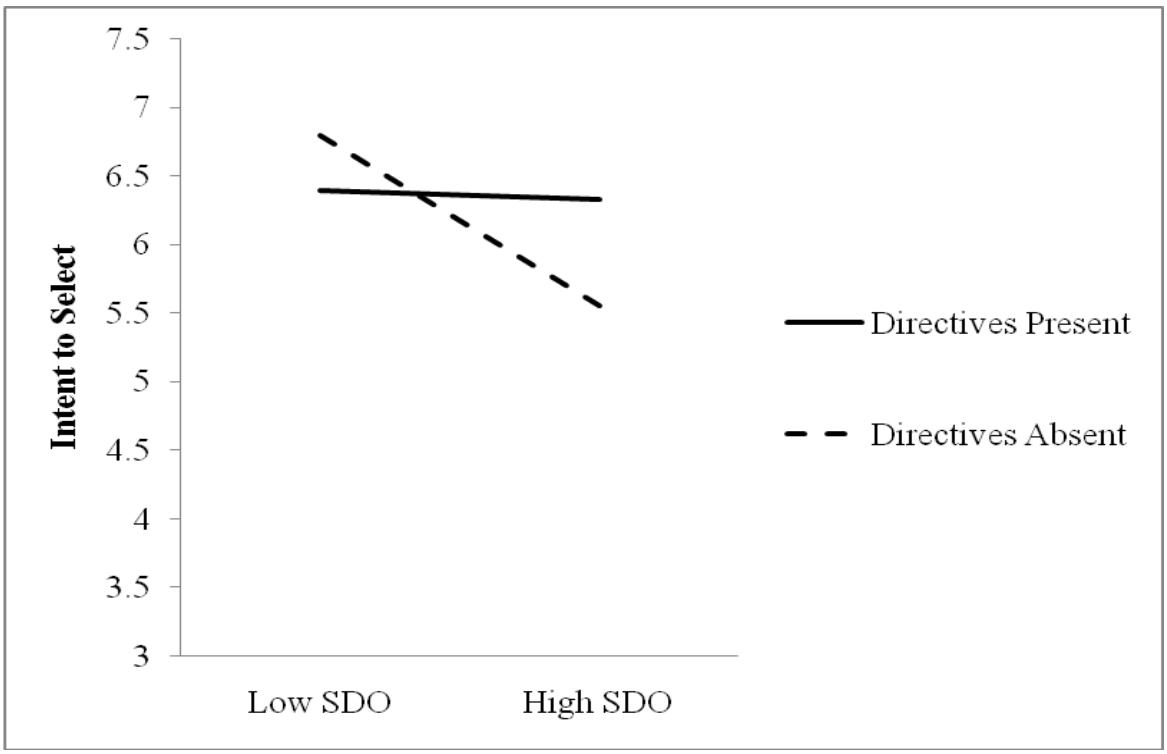

Figure 2. Interaction between SDO and the directives from authorities manipulation on intent to select the best candidate (who was Black) for Study 2.