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## Social Dominance Orientation: A root of resistance to intercultural dialogue?



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### ABSTRACT

Intercultural dialogue is a process central to creating a just social world. Despite this, people are often prejudiced against it. In order to better understand the nature of this antagonism, the present research investigated the role of Social Dominance Orientation as one potential source of resistance. Across three studies, the direct and mediated impact of SDO on both self-reported and behaviorally-indicated dialogic engagement was assessed. Results provide evidence that increasing levels of SDO encourage ideological beliefs and social evaluations that, in turn, prejudice participants against dialogue with an African-American woman. The significance of these results is discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

In a 21st century filled both with more cultural contact and fault lines than ever before, the promise of intercultural dialogue has never been greater. As Ikeda puts it, “dialogue is the starting point and unifying force in all human relationships” (n.d.). Provided its importance in present age, intercultural scholars have sought to better understand dialogue in hopes of better promoting it (Ganesh & Holmes, 2011). Dialogue, however, does not come easy. People often have some small—or even tremendous—resistance to it. The present research aims to investigate one such potential source of resistance: Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). When individuals adopt a social dominance ideology, do they take a step back from the promise dialogue holds for our world?

### Social dominance orientation

Although rarely examined within the purview of communication studies (however cf., Garrett, Nisbet, & Lynch, 2013; Saleem, Prot, Anderson, & Lemieux, 2015), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is a widely used and central construct within social psychology, one best described as “a general preference for group-based hierarchy” (Fischer, Hanke, & Sibley, 2012, p. 282). Individuals high in SDO agree with statements such as “it’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others”, whereas individuals low in SDO agree with statements such as “increased social equality is desirable” (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). At first glance, SDO appears to be a measure of outgroup prejudice or intergroup bias. However, those endorsing SDO do not necessarily favor their own group (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002), thus researchers recognize it as more than simple bias. Indeed, SDO is a rare instrument that seemingly captures an individual’s *foundational orientation* toward social group relations—one predicting a wide range of secondary beliefs “including political conservatism, noblesse oblige, just world beliefs, nationalism, patriotism, militarism, internal attributions for poverty, sexism, rape myths, [and the] endorsement of the Protestant work ethic... across a range of cultures” (Ho et al., 2012, p. 587). Viewing this, it is important to consider whether SDO may also be one root of resistance to intercultural dialogue.

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## Intercultural dialogue

Although difficult to define, many scholars agree that dialogue typically denotes interaction that is somehow sacramental, communal, and distinct from everyday conversation (e.g., Buber, 1965; Freire, 1970; Gadamer, 1982). As Bohm (2003) put it, “a key difference between dialogue and an ordinary discussion is that, within the latter, people usually hold relatively fixed positions and argue in favor of their views... In dialogue, however, a person may prefer a certain position but does not hold it non-negotiably” (p. 295). Dialogue is thus not about self-confirmation, but rather about openness to the other. Exactly how it is achieved remains a mystery, yet scholars have nevertheless endeavored to identify characteristics that help transform monologic interactions into genuine dialogic ones. As one such example, Johannesen (2002) submits that the key attributes of dialogue are authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, presentness, a supportive climate, and a spirit of mutual equality. Although much has been written about all of these attributes, it is this last one that deserves particular attention in the current effort to understand SDO’s potential impact on intercultural dialogue.

In a world filled with interaction across a range of social hierarchies, genuine dialogue emerges only when each party believes in the fundamental rights and dignities of the other. Put differently, dialogue demands a spirit of mutual equality.

Dialogue is the encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny other [people] the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them (Freire, 1970, pp. 76–77).

As described, SDO is a foundational preference for group-based hierarchy. Consequently, it should logically engender a secondary and specific view that some dialogue participants have more of a “right to speak” their word than others. In purely conceptual terms then, SDO is antithetical to a spirit of mutual equality—among other characteristics—and should therefore stand opposed to dialogue.

Supporting this argument, a variety of studies have found that participant levels of SDO successfully predict measures indicative of intercultural dialogue. Beginning in 2005, Oswald found that participants higher in SDO reported less willingness to interact with Arabs after the attacks of September 11. The following year, Diemer et al. (2006) found that high school students with higher levels of SDO were less likely to engage conversations about social justice issues with peers or family members. Similarly, SDO has been found to predict students’ willingness to discuss power inequalities with outgroup members (Bikmen & Sunar, 2013), attitudes toward communicating with the hearing impaired (LaBelle, Booth-Butterfield, & Rittenour, 2013), and “openness” to a testimony of race-based suffering (Cargile, 2015). Lastly, several studies have reported a negative relationship between SDO and intergroup contact (e.g., Asbrock, Christ, Duckitt, & Sibley, 2012; Dhont & Van Hiel, 2011). Together this evidence suggests that SDO figures in people’s reluctance to engage with some cultural others. But does SDO ground such resistance?

As many authors contend, SDO is a foundational orientation toward social group relations that is “strongly associated with and determinant of so many socially relevant behaviors and attitudes” (Sidanius et al., 2013, p. 315). Consequently, it is important to not only track the correlation between SDO and indicators of intercultural dialogue, but also to study the direct and indirect effects of SDO in a plausibly sequenced network of beliefs and responses. According to social dominance theory, SDO grounds a host of reactions in which the most direct outcome is support for beliefs and ideologies that maintain social inequality (i.e., hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths, Pratto et al., 2006). Subsequently, these beliefs and ideologies are considered to influence in-turn reactions to specific policies and particular social actors. In this manner, ideological beliefs are believed to mediate the impact that SDO has on responses made in context (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999).

A considerable body of research has demonstrated that SDO effects are, in fact, consistent with models of mediated impact. Employing a variety of legitimizing myths (e.g., meritocracy, anti-black racism) in relation to a host of specific policies and judgments (e.g., military programs, Clarence Thomas), Pratto, Stallworth, and Conway-Lanz found that relevant myths entirely mediated the influence that SDO had on all contextualized reactions. “For all five samples, the theoretical model, in which SDO predicted support for legitimizing ideologies, and ideologies predicted attitudes towards policies, fit the data” (1998, p. 1869). The following year, Whitley argued that “stereotypes constitute one form of legitimizing myth” and found that they too mediated the relationship between SDO and self-reported affective responding to the group (1999, p. 127). Like these studies, subsequent ones have continued to detail the impact that SDO has on contextualized reactions as mediated by different forms of legitimizing myth (e.g., Crowson & Brandes, 2010; McFarland, 2005; Saunders, Kelly, Cohen, & Guarino, 2015). Because this mediated impact is well-established, legitimizing ideologies should also mediate the expected impact that SDO has on intercultural dialogue.

In addition to legitimizing ideologies, cognitive and affective responses also likely mediate SDO’s impact on dialogue. As Hodson and Dhont (2015) argue, intergroup interaction is influenced by a wide range of factors that are often studied independent of one another. In their view, research needs to better integrate these factors by, for example, including cognitive and affective variables alongside ideological ones (e.g., Bizer, Hart, & Jekogian, 2012). In this case, one cognitive and one affective variable were additionally considered for study as potential mediators: interpersonal trust (i.e., a belief about another’s dependability; Dirks, 1999) and empathic concern (i.e., feeling for the other; Batson, 2009). Beginning with trust, researchers generally view the lack of trust as a central determinant of intergroup prejudice (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Tam et al., 2008) and have confirmed its role in mediating the impact of ideology on prejudice (Dhont & Van Hiel, 2011). Relatedly, SDO has been found negatively tied to trust in low-status group members (Xin & Chi, 2010), while trust itself has been positively tied to prosocial behaviors (Choi, 2006; Kosfeld, Heinrichs, Zak, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2005; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Treating dialogue as a prosocial act (Taylor & Kent, 2014) dependent upon trust (James, 1999), it appears that trust should mediate the relationship between SDO and intercultural dialogue—a process wherein SDO decreases trust in low-status group members thereby producing an in-turn diminishment of dialogic engagement.

Like trust, empathic concern has also been tied to prosocial behavior (e.g., Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Masten, Morelli, & Eisenberger, 2011), suggesting that it too positively relates to dialogic engagement. Additionally, empathy has been theoretically tied to SDO (Pratto et al., 1994) and subsequent research has robustly supported this claim in the case of both dispositional empathy (e.g., Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Lázaro, Castañeiras, Ledesma, Verdinelli, & Rand, 2016) and situational empathic concern (Chiao, Mathur, Harada, & Lipke, 2009). Individuals higher in SDO have reported both a diminished generalized concern for others and have demonstrated less affective responding to specific individuals, thus there is reason to believe that SDO may depress empathic concern for particular others which—in turn—may decrease dialogic engagement with them.

As discussed, SDO is a foundational orientation toward social group relations with the potential to inform a variety of secondary beliefs, as well as situated (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) reactions to cultural others. Because intercultural dialogue behavior has been highlighted here as the outcome of interest in relation to SDO, and because SDO may have many different mediated effects, the present research sought to explore the viability of a specific, integrated model; one that begins with SDO, ends with dialogue, and is mediated by both beliefs and situated (affective and cognitive) responses. Although constrained by these interests—as well as by the limits of cross sectional data—tests of this model will provide a first look at the hypothesized relationship between SDO and intercultural dialogue. In addition, these tests will further assess social dominance theory's claim that legitimizing ideologies mediate SDO's impact and will also answer the call to integrate different factors in the study of intergroup behavior. Thus, in order to assess the potential direct and indirect effects of SDO on intercultural dialogue engagement, the following three studies were undertaken.

### Study one

Because many different constructs may function as legitimizing beliefs, this first study sought to investigate the mediating influence of a relatively broad and abstract ideology—a just world belief. A just world belief asserts that people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980) and thereby functions to justify the status quo, especially with respect to negative outcomes. Individuals with strong just world beliefs will, for example, often blame victims of sexual harassment for their victimization (De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001), or blame poverty on people's character (Campbell, Carr, & MacLachlan, 2001). In light of this, social dominance theorists consider a just world belief to be an all-purpose, hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing belief grounded in a social dominance orientation (e.g., Haley & Sidanius, 2006; Pratto et al., 2006). As such, it is a suitable belief for beginning the present assessment of SDO's mediated impact on intercultural dialogue behavior. Moreover, no study has yet tested the ability of just world beliefs to mediate the effect of SDO. Thus, a plausible, mediated model was tested here—one in which the endorsement of a social dominance ideology was expected to encourage just world beliefs, which—in turn—were expected to discourage dialogue with a low-status group member expressing a hierarchy attenuating viewpoint.

In addition to assessing the potential of just world beliefs to mediate the impact of SDO on dialogue behavior, study one also sought to simultaneously model the role of cognitive and affective mediators (i.e., trust and empathic concern). Before doing so however, it was first necessary to establish the most theoretically appropriate order of mediation for a model treating SDO as the foundational (i.e., primary distal) predictor and dialogue engagement as the ultimate outcome. To begin, because just world beliefs are typically considered as a stable individual difference (Furnham & Procter, 1989), they were modeled here as a secondary distal predictor, subsequent to SDO. In contrast, empathic concern and trust were considered as state variables and were thus modeled subsequent to both SDO and just world beliefs, but antecedent to dialogue engagement (see Fig. 1). Finally, regarding the modeled sequence of emotion (i.e., empathic concern) and cognition (i.e., trust), Eisenberg et al. (2014) explain that although complex “cognition might elicit vicarious emotions... in most instances, one would expect additional cognitive processing subsequent to the onset of empathic affect” (p. 80). As a result, empathic concern was situated prior to trust. Overall, the serially mediated model tested here does not represent all possible—but simply the most likely set of—causal interrelationships. As such, it provides a reasoned framework for testing the claim that SDO may indirectly impact dialogue engagement.

Before turning to this study's ultimate variable—dialogue—it should be reemphasized that the concept is both a difficult to define and challenging to measure. Although previous research has employed constructs that can be considered indicators of dialogue (e.g.,

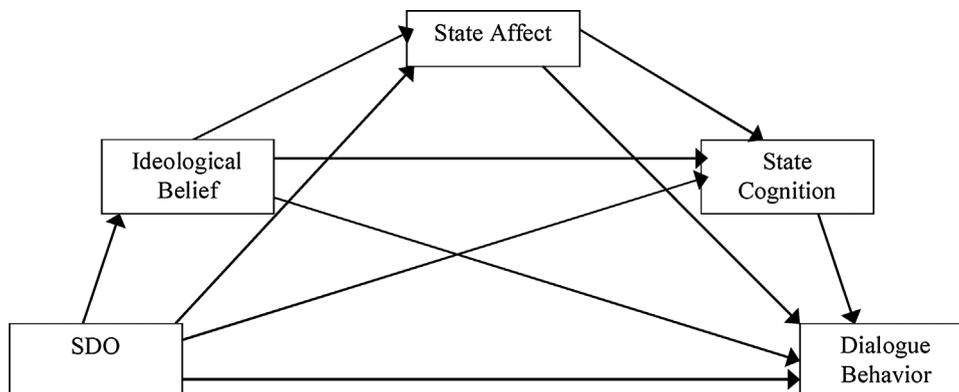


Fig. 1. Diagram of the Conceptual Model.

“willingness to interact”), none of them were intended as measures of dialogue. Indeed, a review of the literature failed to turn up any such quantitative measure of dialogue, at least in the sacramental and communal sense invoked here (cf., Kaplan, Park, & Ridout, 2006). Consequently, a self-report instrument was developed for this study based on the characteristics identified by Johannesen (2002). This resulted in the imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR) measure, described below.

Although not an indicator of material behavior, imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR) is a self-report of behavioral intentions in a scenario of imagined interaction. Recent neuroscience suggests that imagined behaviors typically recruit the same neural networks as either witnessed (e.g., Kim et al., 2007) or performed behaviors (e.g., Gerardin et al., 2000). Imagined interactions thus have a material basis, as well as measured impacts on both behavior (West, Turner, & Levita, 2015) and behavioral intentions (Miles & Crisp, 2014). As Husnu and Crisp summarize, “simply imagining a particular social context can evoke cognitive and behavioral effects similar to those experienced in the context itself” (2010, p. 944). Thus, although not equivalent to observing naturalistic or confederate-facing dialogue behavior—methods which have their own limitations (e.g., Kuhlén & Brennan, 2013; Lipinski & Nelson, 1974)—the measurement of behavioral intentions in imagined interaction is nevertheless a useful and valid method for the investigation of behavior aligned with the communal meaning of dialogue.

Having now established that the purpose of study one was to assess the mediated impact of social dominance orientation (SDO) on imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR) in an intercultural context, the following hypotheses and research questions can be offered.

**H1.** Participant SDO will be negatively related to participant IDR.

**H2.** The negative effect of SDO on IDR will be mediated by belief in a just world—a variable that will relate positively to SDO and negatively to IDR.

**RQ1.** Will the negative effect of SDO on IDR be mediated by empathic concern in the speaker?

**RQ2.** Will the negative effect of SDO on IDR be mediated by trust for the speaker?

## Method

Participants were 95 undergraduate students at a large urban university in Southern California, recruited in class to take part on a voluntary basis. Study protocol was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board and participation took place online, administered via Qualtrics. The sample included 30 males and 63 females (1 “other” and 1 “no response”), were on average 22.90 (SD = 2.83) years old, and reported a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds (27 Caucasian, 37 Hispanic, 15 Asian, 6 African-American, 7 “other”, and 3 “no response”).

After consent was collected, participants completed the short (8-item) form of the original SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994;  $\alpha = 0.76$ ), as well as the Global Belief in a Just World scale (Lipkus, 1991; 4-items,  $\alpha = 0.81$ ). Subsequently, in an effort to simulate one important context of intercultural dialogue—conversation about race in the United States—participants listened to a genuine testimony of race-based suffering as told by a woman describing her experiences during Hurricane Katrina. Qualitative research has revealed that among the many patterned behaviors of interracial dialogue, one of the most common includes people of color offering testimony of their own oppressive experiences (e.g., Drew, 2012; Srivastava & Francis, 2006) in a discursive attempt to interrupt prevalent ‘master’ narratives (Anderson, Reimer Kirkham, Browne, & Lynam, 2007). Because it challenges the dominant cultural ideology, testimony such as this can serve as rich fodder for imagined intercultural interactions (i.e., “In a continued conversation with this woman, I would...”). In this instance, the testimony used here was a one minute, forty-five second audio recording (only) taken from a video series of oral histories (Glide Racial Justice Group, n.d.), during which the speaker made claims of ‘collective racism’ (i.e., organized racial others seeking to restrict the rights of African-Americans, Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996).

After listening to the recording, participants then completed measures of their cognitive, affective, and intended behavioral responses with respect to the speaker. This included three items from the Individualized Trust Scale (e.g., “to me the speaker seemed honest”, Wheelless & Grotz, 1977;  $\alpha = 0.88$ ), three items adapted from the empathic concern subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (e.g., “I had tender, concerned feelings for the speaker”, Davis, 1983,  $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and 12 items developed to measure imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR) based on the six characteristics of dialogue identified by Johannesen (2002): authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, presentness, mutual equality, and supportive climate. Both a positive- and reverse-coded item was authored for each of the six characteristics and all 12 items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis.

Following Osborne and Costello (2009), the factor analysis was conducted using principle axis factoring with oblique rotation. A scree test was employed to select the number of retained factors, which was two in this case. Although the second factor was potentially interpretable, it included only two highly loading items (i.e., 0.50 or better) and was thus considered weak. Consequently, the analysis was rerun extracting only one factor and retaining only those items with communalities of 0.32 or higher (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). This resulted in the 9-item Imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR) measure ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). The items, along with their factor loadings are reported in Table 1. The mean, standard deviation, and range for this measure, as well as all other measures used in this study, can be found in Table 2.

## Results

To begin, an initial correlation analysis indicated that social dominance orientation (SDO) was directly associated with participants' imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR), as well as all three proposed mediating variables (see Table 2). In order to further chart

**Table 1**  
Communalities for Imagined Dialogue Receptivity (IDR) Items.

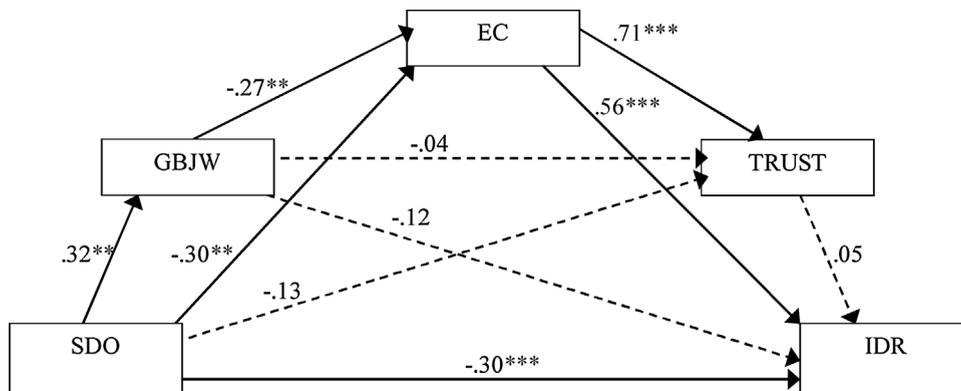
Item	Score
I would really pay attention to everything she said.	0.71
I would probably “tune out” a lot of what she said. (R)	0.56
I would try my best to “hear her out”, without interfering with what she said.	0.59
I would avoid imagining myself “in her shoes”. (R)	0.35
I would encourage her to share her experiences, even if they were difficult for me to hear.	0.49
I would suggest that she not share her experiences, at least not with everyone. (R)	0.67
I would “keep it real” and be honest about my own thoughts and feelings.	0.38
I could never share my own thoughts and feelings about racism with her. (R)	0.46
I would try to help her see how wrong she is about the situation. (R)	0.34

**Table 2**  
Correlations Among and Descriptive Statistics for Study One Variables.

	M (SD) Range	SDO	GBJW	EC	TRUST	IDR
SDO	2.63 (.97) 1.00–5.88		0.33**	−0.39**	−0.42**	−0.53**
GBJW	3.24 (1.37) 1.00–6.50			−0.36**	−0.34**	−0.40**
EC	5.60 (1.18) 2.50–7.00				0.78**	.55**
TRUST	5.58 (1.20) 1.00–7.00					0.68**
IDR	5.69 (.91) 3.60–7.00					

these effects, a mediation analysis was undertaken using PROCESS (Model 6; Hayes, 2013) with unstandardized coefficients and bootstrapping with 5000 resamples. The results of this analysis are given in Table 5 and the model, with standardized coefficients, is presented graphically in Fig. 2. The three models predicting global belief in a just world [ $F(1.90) = 10.46, p = 0.002$ ], empathic concern [ $F(2.89) = 12.00, p = 0.000$ ], and trust [ $F(3.88) = 48.03, p = 0.000$ ] were all statistically significant. The final model predicting IDR was also significant, explaining 56% of the variance [ $R^2 = 0.56, F(4.87) = 27.86, p = 0.000$ ].

As presented in Table 5, six of the path coefficients were significant. When multiplied, these paths resulted in two significant mediated pathways from SDO to IDR: through global belief in a just world and empathic concern (effect =  $-0.05, SE = 0.02, 95\%$  bootstrap CI =  $-0.12, -0.01$ ), and through empathic concern (effect =  $-0.16, SE = 0.07, 95\%$  bootstrap CI =  $-0.32, -0.04$ ). When added up, the total indirect effect of SDO on dialogue response (via all possible pathways) was  $-0.22 (SE = 0.07)$  with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of  $-0.35$  to  $-0.09$ . Finally, when combined with the direct effect, the total unstandardized effect of SDO on imagined dialogue receptivity was  $-0.51 (SE = 0.08, 95\% \text{ bootstrap CI} = -0.67, -0.34)$ , meaning that every point increase in SDO resulted in a one-half point decrease in IDR.



**Fig. 2.** Diagram of Mediated Model for Study One (PROCESS model 6). Notes. SDO = social dominance orientation. GBJW = global belief in a just world. TRUST = trust in the speaker. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. IDR = imagined dialogue receptivity. The path coefficients are standardized betas. Dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant path. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

As summarized by figure two, the results of this first study supported both hypotheses and answered the first research question in the affirmative. Regarding hypothesis one, participant SDO was negatively related to participant IDR, both directly and indirectly. This indirect influence was mediated by participant belief in a just world, thus supporting hypothesis two. In addition, this indirect influence was further mediated by empathic concern for the speaker—but not speaker trust—leading to an affirmative answer for research question one, but not for research question two.

The purpose of study one was to assess the mediated impact of social dominance orientation (SDO) on imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR). Results indicate that not only did SDO have a mediated impact, but that the magnitude of this impact ( $-0.22$ ) was nearly equal to that of the direct impact ( $-0.28$ ). Such relative balance is worth noting as previous research has found that SDO's impact is oftentimes fully mediated by ideological beliefs (e.g., McFarland, 2005; Pratto et al., 1998; Saunders et al., 2015). In this instance at least, the significant impact of SDO was only partially mediated. Although SDO is robustly connected to just world beliefs—both theoretically (e.g., Ho et al., 2012) and empirically (e.g., Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010), and has been found to mediate the effect of just world beliefs on behavioral intentions (Bizer et al., 2012), this study is the first to investigate the impact of SDO as mediated by these beliefs. Consequently, it is important to assess the reliability and generalizability of these partially mediated findings. In particular, because study one used a convenience sample of participants who were students, young, and racially/ethnically diverse—characteristics that can affect the variable relationships studied here (e.g., Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino, 2010)—the opportunity to reassess this mediated model with an older and more racially homogenous (i.e., White) non-student sample was pursued in study two.

### Study two

In an attempt to assess the generalizability of the mediated effects found in study one, study two examined the same hypotheses and research questions among a sample of community respondents. Evidence suggests that the relationship between SDO and legitimizing myths may be stronger for White U.S. Americans than for ethnic minority respondents (e.g., Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998; Peña & Sidanius, 2002). Because SDO is not a simple ingroup bias, but rather a generalized preference for group hierarchy, it may interact with an individual's social status. For example, according to SDO theory's ideological asymmetry hypothesis (Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996), high SDO individuals of high status are motivated to strongly endorse hierarchy-enhancing beliefs because such views help preserve their status. In contrast, high SDO individuals of low status have less motivation for endorsement and will thus either support such beliefs less robustly (i.e., isotropic asymmetry), or oppose them (i.e., anisotropic asymmetry; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). Consequently, where race is a marker for social status, the relationship between SDO and legitimizing myths is likely to be more robust among White, compared to ethnic minority, respondents.

Provided the results of study one, it seems that the mediated model is not characterized by anisotropic asymmetry; an ethnically diverse sample of (ostensibly low-status) respondents has already recorded a significant, positive relationship between SDO and a just world legitimizing myth. This result is consistent with a system justification approach which predicts that low-status group members will often support the system of social stratification right alongside high-status members (i.e., hypotheses 6–8; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004), especially those low-status members high in SDO (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Overbeck, Jost, Mosso, & Flizik, 2004). With evidence against anisotropic asymmetry already indicated, study two is needed to investigate the possibility of isotropic asymmetry (i.e., will there be a more robust relationship between SDO this legitimizing myth among sample comprised mostly of White U.S. Americans?), and to establish whether the mediated model more generally replicates with a contrasting sample of respondents.

### Method

Participants were 99 adults residing in the United States and recruited via Amazon's MTurk to take part in exchange for payment. Study protocol was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board and participation took place online, administered via Qualtrics. The sample included 52 males and 46 females (1 “no response”), were on average 33.63 (SD = 11.04) years old, and were predominantly White (78 Caucasian, 8 Hispanic, 2 Asian, 8 African-American, 2 “other”, and 1 “no response”).

After consent was collected, participants completed the short (8-item) form of the SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994;  $\alpha = 0.93$ ), as well as the Global Belief in a Just World scale (Lipkus, 1991; 4-items,  $\alpha = 0.94$ ). As before, participants subsequently listened to the testimony of race-based suffering as told by a woman describing her experiences in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Afterwards, participants completed measures of their cognitive (i.e., 3-item trust measure, Wheelless & Grotz, 1977;  $\alpha = 0.96$ ), affective (i.e., 3-item adapted empathic concern measure, Davis, 1983;  $\alpha = 0.95$ ), and intended behavioral responses with respect to the speaker (i.e., 9-item IDR measure;  $\alpha = 0.90$ ). The mean, standard deviation, and range for all study measures can be found in Table 3.

### Results

As expected, the initial correlation analysis indicated that SDO was significantly negatively correlated with all study variables, including IDR (see Table 3). A mediation analysis was then undertaken using PROCESS with unstandardized coefficients and bootstrapping with 5000 resamples. The results of this analysis are given in Table 6 and the model is presented graphically in Fig. 3. The three models predicting global belief in a just world [ $F(1.96) = 36.64$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ], empathic concern [ $F(2.95) = 26.15$ ,

**Table 3**  
Path coefficients for Study One Mediated Model (n = 92).

	Path coefficient											
	To GBJW			To EC			To Trust			To IDR		
	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$
SDO	0.46	0.14	0.32**	-0.37	0.12	-0.30**	-0.16	0.09	-0.13	-0.28	0.08	-0.30***
GBJW				-0.23	0.09	-0.27**	-0.03	0.06	-0.04	0. -0.08	0.05	-0.12
EC							0.72	0.08	0.71***	0.43	0.09	0.56***
Trust										0.04	0.09	-0.05

**Table 4**  
Correlations Among and Descriptive Statistics for Study Two Variables.

	M (SD) Range	SDO	GBJW	EC	TRUST	IDR
SDO	2.41 (1.36) 1.00–6.50		0.52**	-0.56**	-0.56**	-0.59**
GBJW	3.52 (1.50) 1.00–6.25			-0.46**	-0.55**	-0.45**
EC	4.83 (1.78) 1.00–5.00				0.88**	0.75**
TRUST	5.00 (1.78) 1.00–7.00					0.80**
IDR	5.46 (1.19) 2.00–7.00					

Notes. *N*'s range from 92 to 99 due to occasional missing data. SDO = social dominance orientation. GBJW = global belief in a just world. SR = symbolic racism. TRUST = trust in the speaker. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. IDR = imagined dialogue receptivity. \* *p* < 0.05. \*\* *p* < 0.01.

**Table 5**  
Path coefficients for Study Two Mediated Model (n = 98).

	Path coefficient											
	To GBJW			To EC			To Trust			To IDR		
	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$
SDO	0.56	0.10	0.52***	-0.57	0.13	-0.44***	-0.05	0.08	-0.03	-0.17	0.07	-0.20*
GBJW				-0.29	0.12	-0.24*	-0.21	0.07	-0.18**	0.03	0.06	0.04
EC							0.78	0.06	0.78***	0.10	0.08	0.16
Trust										0.38	0.09	.57***

Notes. SDO = social dominance orientation. GBJW = global belief in a just world. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. TRUST = trust in the speaker. IDR = imagined dialogue receptivity. \* *p* < 0.05. \*\* *p* < 0.01. \*\*\* *p* < 0.001.

**Table 6**  
Correlations Among and Descriptive Statistics for Study Three Variables.

	M (SD) Range	SDO	DBS	EC	TRUST	FOCUS
SDO	2.88 (1.25) 1.00–6.50		-0.32**	-0.41***	-0.35**	-0.14
DBS	5.76 (1.80) 1.00–8.80			0.24*	0.09	0.31**
EC	3.83 (.84) 1.00–5.00				0.49***	0.55***
TRUST	5.56 (1.14) 1.75–7.00					0.42***
FOCUS	0.54 (.50) 0.00–1.00					

Notes. *N*'s range from 87 to 91 due to occasional missing data. All variables are scored such that larger values indicate increased levels of the construct. SDO = social dominance orientation. DBS = discrimination belief scale. TRUST = trust in the speaker. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. FOCUS: 0 = self-focused response; 1 = other-focused response. \* *p* < 0.05. \*\* *p* < 0.01. \*\*\* *p* < 0.001.

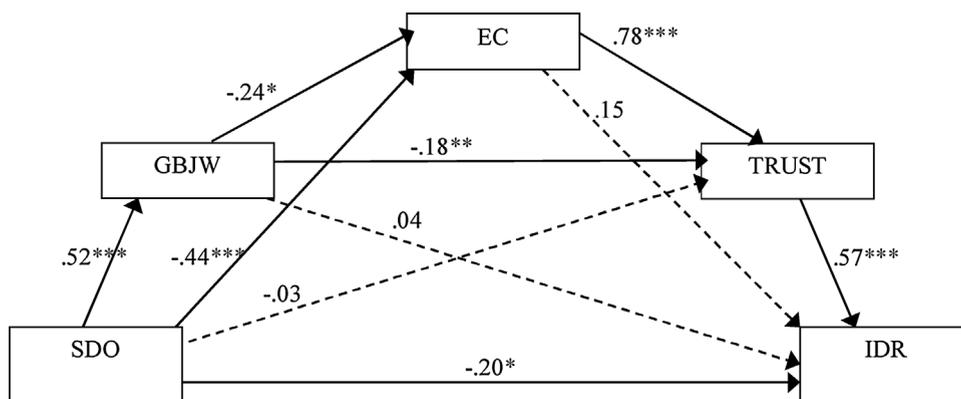


Fig. 3. Diagram of Mediated Model for Study Two (PROCESS model 6). Notes. SDO = social dominance orientation. GBJW = global belief in a just world. TRUST = trust in the speaker. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. IDR = imagined dialogue receptivity. The path coefficients are standardized betas. Dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant path. \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

$p = 0.000$ ], and trust [ $F(3.94) = 124.42, p = 0.000$ ] were all statistically significant. The final model predicting imagined dialogue receptivity was also statistically significant and explained 67% of the variance [ $R^2 = 0.67, F(4.93) = 47.18, p = 0.000$ ].

As presented in Table 6, six of the path coefficients were significant. When multiplied, these paths resulted in three significant mediated pathways from SDO to IDR: through global belief in a just world to trust (effect =  $-0.05$ , SE = 0.02, 95% bootstrap CI =  $-0.11, -0.01$ ), through global belief in a just world to empathic concern to trust (effect =  $-0.05$ , SE = 0.02, 95% bootstrap CI =  $-0.12, -0.01$ ), and finally through empathic concern to trust (effect =  $-0.17$ , SE = 0.06, 95% bootstrap CI =  $-0.32, -0.08$ ). When combined, the total indirect effect of SDO (via all possible pathways) was  $-0.34$  (SE = 0.07) with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of  $-0.49$  to  $-0.20$ . Finally, when combined with the direct effect, the total unstandardized effect of SDO on imagined dialogue receptivity was  $-0.51$  (SE = 0.07, 95% bootstrap CI =  $-0.65, -0.36$ ), meaning that—exactly as in study one—every point increase in SDO resulted in a one-half point decrease in IDR.

## Discussion

As summarized by figure three, the results of this second study again supported both hypotheses and, in contrast to study one, answered both research questions in the affirmative (i.e., the negative effect of SDO was mediated by both empathic concern and trust). Whereas among student respondents trust was found to have no impact on imagined dialogue receptivity, trust became the central mediating variable among the community respondents studied here. In this case, trust was found to mediate the impact of both a just world belief and empathic concern on dialogue. As a result, the overall indirect, mediated effect assigned to SDO was larger ( $-0.34$  in study two;  $-0.22$  in study one), as well as the overall proportion of explained variance (67% in study two; 56% in study one). The larger indirect effect suggests a generalized model best characterized by isotropic asymmetry. Indeed, the relationship between SDO and a just world legitimizing myth was more robust among the ethnically homogeneous sample ( $\beta = 0.52$ ) than the ethnically diverse one ( $\beta = 0.32$ ). Despite these differences, the findings from both studies largely offer evidence of SDO's consistent impact on imagined dialogue receptivity. To this point, it must be highlighted that the total unstandardized effect of SDO on imagined dialogue receptivity was exactly  $-0.51$  across both studies.

As just detailed, both study one and study two confirmed the mediated relationship between SDO and intercultural dialogue that was originally hypothesized. However, this research also aimed to test the more general claim that (many, different) ideological beliefs can mediate SDO's impact—not merely just world beliefs alone. As a result, a third study was designed which would employ a hierarchy attenuating ideological belief in place of the hierarchy enhancing belief used thus far (i.e., the legitimizing myth—global belief in a just world). In addition, this third study also aimed to test the model with a second outcome measure—one comprised of material communicative responses rather than self-reports of imagined behavior. Recently, Cargile and Salazar (2016) developed a coding schema for communicative responses to stories of race-based suffering. Although not a measure of dialogue per se, this schema permits the coding of “other-focused” responses that, as argued below, are entirely consistent with the dialogue concept. Consequently, study three was conducted in an effort to further confirm the generalizability of a mediated model of SDO impact on intercultural dialogue behavior when substituting a behavioral outcome measure for the self-reported IDR, as well as hierarchy attenuating ideological belief.

## Study three

As just stated, the aim of study three was to test the same model of SDO impact as before while also employing a behavioral outcome measure and a second mediating belief. In this instance, discrimination beliefs were selected in order to test the model using a hierarchy attenuating ideological belief. With the development of system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004), scholars have increasingly focused on hierarchy enhancing ideologies (i.e., legitimizing myths), such as just world beliefs, while

neglecting hierarchy attenuating ideologies. Although they are the theoretical complement to enhancing ideologies, comparatively few have been identified (e.g., noblesse oblige, climate change action; Devine-Wright, Price, & Leviston, 2015; Pratto et al., 1994) and fewer still have been studied. Thus, to expand testing of the mediated model, a contextually suitable, hierarchy attenuating belief was selected for use here: discrimination beliefs (Levin et al., 1998).

The construct of discrimination belief assesses the degree to which individuals judge racial/ethnic discrimination to persist in the United States. In post-civil rights America, societal institutions treat discrimination as a settled question: it is illegal and does not persist in any large-scale manner. As just one example, consider that the U.S. Supreme Court recently invalidated key parts of the 1965 Voting Right Act, suggesting that its protections were no longer needed in a country that has already successfully dealt with the problem of discrimination. In light of such outlook and practice, those who claim the persistence of discrimination—as the Black Lives Matter movement does—advocate a hierarchy attenuating belief. Consequently, because this belief in discrimination is hierarchy attenuating, it should *negatively* relate to a Social Dominance Orientation, unlike the positive association previously found with just world beliefs. Conversely, this same belief should also *positively* predict receptivity to dialogue with persons of color who share their race-related, hierarchy attenuating experiences and points of view.

Alongside assessing SDO's impact when possibly mediated by a hierarchy-attenuating belief, study three also made the important substitution of a behavioral outcome measure in place of a self-reported one. As Cargile and Salazar (2016) demonstrate, communicative responses to stories of race-based suffering can be categorized reliably as either other-focused (i.e., orienting toward engaging the other's experience of suffering), or self-focused (i.e., protecting the self from the other's experience). As discussed earlier, authentic dialogue is grounded in openness to the other, thus other-focused responses can be used as a behavioral indicator of dialogic receptivity. As Johannesen et al. put it, "the essential movement in dialogue, according to Buber, is turning toward, being outgoing toward, and reaching for the other" (2008, p. 53). Indeed, many scholars agree on this point (e.g., Gadamer, 1982; Pearce & Pearce, 2004). Consequently, other-coded communicative responses were used here as a measure of dialogic receptivity. Provided these changes to the outcome and mediating variables, study three aimed to test the following hypotheses and research questions.

**H1.** Participant SDO will be negatively related to other-focused responses.

**H2.** The negative effect of SDO on other-focused responses will be mediated by discrimination belief- a variable that will relate negatively to SDO and positively to other-focused responses.

**RQ1.** Will the negative effect of SDO on other-focused responses be mediated by empathic concern for the speaker?

**RQ2.** Will the negative effect of SDO on other-focused responses be mediated by trust for the speaker?

## Method

Participants were 95 undergraduate students at a large urban university in Southern California, recruited in class to take part on a voluntary basis. The university's Institutional Review Board approved study protocol and informed consent was collected at the outset. The sample included four international students with limited English proficiency. Viewing that this study's behavioral coding scheme confounded non-responses based on fluency with those based on anti-dialogic standing, these students were excluded a-priori. This resulted in a final sample of 91 participants that included 29 males and 62 females, were on average 23.20 (SD = 4.52) years old, and reported a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds (29 Caucasian, 34 Hispanic, 16 Asian, 6 African-American, and 6 "other").

The study took place in an on-campus lab space. Students first completed a survey packet that included the short (8-item) form of the SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994;  $\alpha = 0.76$ ) and five items from the Discrimination Belief Scale (Chen, Fryer, Phillips, Wilson, & Pathman, 2005;  $\alpha = 0.86$ ). They then donned a microphone headset and listened to the same testimony of race-based suffering used previously. After hearing the testimony, participants were instructed to imagine that this person told this story to them and to respond as if they were speaking directly to this person. Their responses were audio-recorded as they sat alone in the lab. In order to minimize social desirability bias, they were informed that the audio recordings would be reviewed neither by the study proctor nor their course instructor. Finally, participants completed measures of their cognitive (i.e., 4-item trust measure, Wheelless & Grotz, 1977;  $\alpha = 0.86$ ) and affective (i.e., 7-item adapted empathic concern measure, Davis, 1983;  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) responses to the speaker. The mean, standard deviation, and range for all study measures can be found in Table 4.

In order to determine the focus of participant responses, the author and two trained coders independently categorized the latent, projective content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999) of each audio-recorded response according to the nine types identified by Cargile and Salazar (2016). All three coders were blind to participant information, including SDO scores, and each coded 79 responses. The resulting intercoder reliability was found to be acceptable (Krippendorff's Alpha = 0.71) and the author alone coded the remaining responses. The taxonomy identifies four of the response types as self-focused (i.e., victim blaming, pro-forma, intellectualizing, and skepticism), and five as other-focused (i.e., empathic anger, empathic sadness, empathic anger/sadness, problem solving, and caring), thus participant responses subsequently were re-coded as self- or other-focused accordingly.

## Results

To begin, an initial correlation analysis indicated that although social dominance orientation was not directly associated with

**Table 7**  
Path coefficients for Study Three Mediated Model (n = 87).

	To DBS			To EC			To Trust			To Focus		
	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$
SDO	-0.49	0.14	-0.34***	-0.25	0.07	-0.37***	-0.19	0.10	-0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.22	0.15	0.28
DBS				0.05	0.05	0.12	-0.05	0.06	-0.08	0.16	0.10	0.28
EC							0.59	0.14	0.43***	0.67	0.26	0.56*
Trust										0.26	0.18	0.30

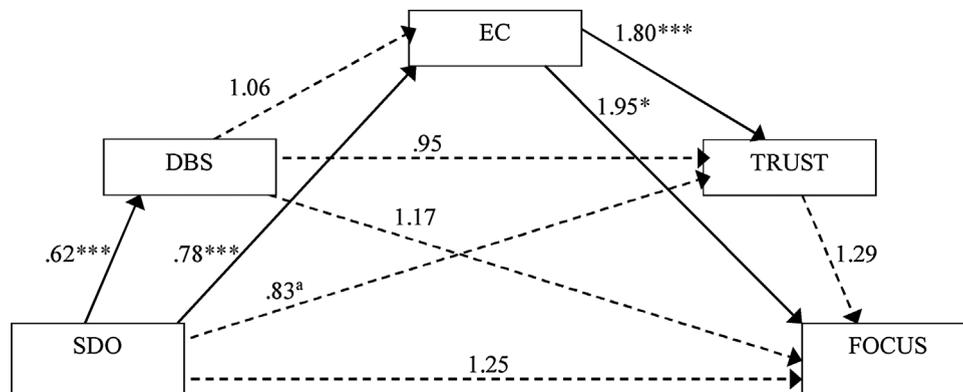
Notes. The model is log-linear with a binary outcome (i.e., response focus). SDO = social dominance orientation. DBS = discrimination belief scale. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. TRUST = trust in the speaker. FOCUS: 0 = self-focused response; 1 = other-focused response. \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup>  $p = 0.06$ .

response focus, it was significantly correlated with the three proposed mediating variables. These variables were themselves, in turn, significantly correlated with response focus (see Table 4), thereby suggesting possible indirect effects of SDO on response focus. In order to further explore this possibility, a log-binomial path model was estimated for the binary outcome of response focus using the generalized structural equation model package within STATA (StataCorp, 2013). Although logistic modeling with binary outcomes and continuous mediators has been recommended for mediation analysis (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Brown, Wang, & Hoffman, 2007) and is still regularly used (e.g., Braithwaite, Aaron, Dowdle, Spjut, & Fincham, 2015), this approach has been criticized (Imai, Keele, & Tingley, 2010) chiefly because the traditional product of coefficients method for indirect effect estimation is biased in this circumstance. Fortunately, several possible solutions to this problem have been proposed (e.g., Buis, 2010; Hicks & Tingley, 2011), including the use of log-linear modeling (VanderWeele, 2015). Because this last remedy is the only one suited to the path analysis approach used here, log-linear modeling was undertaken as described above. The results are given in Table 7 and the model is presented graphically in Fig. 4.

As Table 7 indicates, four path coefficients were found to be statistically significant and these results suggested one pathway of indirect effect via empathic concern. Using the product method, a log-linear coefficient was calculated for the effect of SDO on response focus as mediated by empathic concern and the resulting value was -0.17 (SE = 0.08,  $p = 0.04$ , 95% bootstrap CI = -0.33, -0.01). When exponentiated, the value of this coefficient is 0.85, meaning that the probability of an other-focused response decreased 15% with each point increase in SDO. Neither the direct effect (coefficient = 0.22, SE = 0.15,  $p = 0.14$ , 95% bootstrap CI = -0.07, 0.52), nor any other indirect pathway was found to be statistically significant.

**Discussion**

The aim of study three was to test the model of SDO impact on coded behavioral responses while employing a hierarchy-attenuating ideological belief in a mediating role. Unlike the previous studies, the results from this study only partially confirmed the first hypothesis. Both studies one and two found that SDO was negatively related to imagined dialogue receptivity (IDR), both directly and indirectly. Study three, however, simply demonstrated an indirect negative relationship to other-focused responses; the direct relationship was found to be positive, though statistically insignificant. These diverging results are undoubtedly due to differences in the employed measures (i.e., latent behavioral versus self-report outcomes). Despite this lack of a direct effect, the hypothesized negative effect was nevertheless found when the mediated pathway of empathic concern was included. Indeed, increasing levels of SDO were ultimately linked to a decreasing probability of nonverbally expressing concern for a female victim of racial profiling.



**Fig. 4. Diagram of Mediated Model for Study Three.**Notes. SDO = social dominance orientation. DBS = discrimination belief scale. TRUST = trust in the speaker. EC = empathic concern for the speaker. FOCUS: 0 = self-focused response; 1 = other-focused response. The model is log-linear, thus the path coefficients are exponentiated, unstandardized betas that represent change in the event probability (p) of Y for every one-point increase in X. When  $p > 1$ , the probability of Y increases; when  $p < 1$ , the probability of Y decreases. Dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant path. \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . <sup>a</sup>  $p = 0.06$ .

A second unexpected finding was the lack of support for hypothesis two. Although SDO demonstrated the anticipated negative relationship with discrimination belief (i.e., a hierarchy-attenuating belief), this belief did not subsequently influence any participant responses (i.e., affective, cognitive, or behavioral). This suggests a potential limitation to the general mediated model presented in figure one. For example, perhaps the model works only with hierarchy-enhancing, but not hierarchy-attenuating ideological beliefs. Despite this, correlation evidence did indicate a weak negative relationship with two responses (i.e., empathic concern and response focus, see Table 4), thus the model may ultimately generalize, but perhaps just weakly in the case of hierarchy-attenuating beliefs. Similarly, although speaker trust was found correlated with response focus, the path was not significant in the mediated model. Consequently, the answer to research question two (i.e., will the negative effect of SDO on other-focused responses be mediated by trust for the speaker?) is “no”, thereby suggesting careful reconsideration of the role that state cognitions may (or may not) play in the depicted process.

Finally, and in contrast to the above, research question one was answered in the affirmative; study three found that the negative effect of SDO on other-focused responding was entirely mediated by empathic concern for the speaker. Interestingly, only the participants' self-reported affect significantly predicted to their latent, projective responding. As the exponentiated coefficient listed in figure four indicates (1.95), the probability of an other-focused response increased by 95% for every point increase in self-reported empathic concern. And, as expected, SDO negatively predicted empathic concern—here and across both previous studies. Together, these results highlight the importance of the participants' emotional state in enabling a foundational ideological orientation (i.e., SDO) to impact dialogue behavior. Moreover, in the specific case of study three, results suggest that other-focused responding may be more a matter of affect than of belief, ideological or otherwise.

### General discussion

Social dominance orientation is a central social psychological construct rarely examined in relation to communication outcomes. Although conceptually antithetical to dialogue, no study had previously explored this relationship in the context of social dominance theory's claim of mediated impact. Thus, in an effort to test SDO's direct and indirect effects on dialogue receptivity in an intercultural context, a series of three studies was undertaken using samples from two different populations. Across all studies, results confirm that SDO had significant negative effects on two different measures of dialogue receptivity and demonstrate generalizability for the mediated model across two different samples of respondents, though not across two types of ideological beliefs. Research had previously shown SDO effects to be consistent with models of mediated impact and these three studies generally serve to further reinforce that understanding in the newly investigated domain of intercultural dialogue.

Alongside charting the impact of SDO on dialogue behavior, these studies also demonstrated the value of integrating affective and cognitive response variables. Without their inclusion, studies one and two would have seemingly demonstrated the power of ideological beliefs to directly mediate the impact of SDO. Instead, these studies showed that the effect of ideological beliefs could itself be mediated by situational affect and cognition; social dominance may engender a global belief in a just world which may in turn impact imagined dialogue receptivity but perhaps only by discouraging empathic concern for and trust in the speaker. Moreover, while the mediating role of trust may have been inconsistent (i.e., no impact in study one or three), empathic concern was significantly related to SDO across all three studies and mediated its effect on dialogue both directly and indirectly. As noted earlier, SDO already shares a well-established relationship with dispositional empathy. These studies now suggest that a similarly robust relationship may exist with situational affective empathy.

Turning to differences across the study findings, it is worth noting that while both studies one and three found trust to have no independent impact on dialogue outcomes among student respondents, trust was the sole mediating variable among community respondents in study two. What are we to make of this? To begin, mean levels of trust were higher in the younger, ethnically diverse student sample surveyed in both studies ( $M = 5.58$  in study one;  $M = 5.56$  in study three) compared to the older, racial homogenous community respondents questioned in study two ( $M = 5.00$ ). Because survey data suggests that one's race affects views of race-related events more so than one's age (Pew Research Center, 2016), it is likely that racial sample differences influenced these mean trust differences. Thus, it appears that among White participants—perhaps already reluctant to extend trust across racial lines (Dovidio et al., 2002)—the decision to view the African-American woman as sincere was perhaps a tipping point to imagining dialogic engagement with her (i.e., I would only “really pay attention” if I thought she was being honest); as if one felt obligated to engage all true stories of discrimination. Among ethnically diverse listeners however, affective resonance may be the key. Because awareness of racism is already widespread within communities of color (CNN/KFF, 2015), dialogic engagement may depend less on believing a person's story than by being touched by the particularities of it. Future research should explore these post-hoc explanations, as well as investigate the role of respondent race in dialogue behavior more generally.

Another notable difference between the studies included the lack of mediation via ideological belief in study three, as well as the lack of a direct relationship between SDO and the coded behavioral dialogue outcome employed in this same study. As already discussed, the former difference suggests a possible limitation to the general model (i.e., not all ideological beliefs may mediate SDO's impact on dialogue) and this possibility should be investigated in future research. The later difference suggests an additional limitation to the model (i.e., SDO may not directly impact all dialogue measures) that should likewise be explored. More broadly, this model remains to be tested in other intercultural circumstances. The present studies all investigated dialogue receptivity to a woman in a “competitive context” (i.e., testifying about her racial group ‘losses’)—a situation to which SDO is particularly sensitive (Hodson & Dhont, 2015). So, what happens, for example, when a dialogue partner's message varies (i.e., hierarchy enhancing instead of hierarchy attenuating) or when their ascribed identity changes (e.g., White, Hispanic, or Mexican; male, female, or transgender)? Is it the case perhaps that SDO may actually encourage interracial dialogue in noncompetitive circumstances, or when low-status group

members espouse a hierarchy enhancing point of view? Without doubt, such different intercultural contexts will produce different interrelationships between SDO and dialogue and these all require further study. Lastly, future research efforts would also benefit by employing or developing dialogue measures with increased external validity. Although use of the IDR measure and coded communicative behaviors is an improvement over extant indicators of dialogue, the use of physiological measures (e.g., heart rate variability; *Silva & Gonçalves, 2011*) within more naturalistic settings holds great promise.

This discussion of future research also underscores limitations to the three studies presented here. First, it is worth remembering that these results pertain only to the samples, measures, and stimulus materials described above. Second, these studies tested only one plausible model and their results do not preclude the possibility of other models. For example, some researchers have conceived of—and demonstrated—an alternative relationship between ideological beliefs and SDO (*Bizer et al., 2012; Crowson, 2009*). Thus, although there is strong theoretical reason to believe that SDO is a distal cause in its demonstrated association with the other study variables—and thus a “root” of resistance—this is not unassailably true. Moreover, there is a possibility of interactive and additive (i.e., moderated mediation) effects that have gone untested here. Third, the tested model (as well as any untested alternative) presumes a temporal sequence that is not specified in the cross-sectional data. Although the model was informed by theoretically grounded constraints, longitudinal and experimental data are necessary to fully assess the causal claims embedded in the model.

Despite limitations, what can the present research suggest about improving the prospect of dialogue? First, these studies confirm that SDO can play a seminal role in engendering resistance to dialogue, thus we should be encouraged that efforts aimed at decreasing SDO (e.g., *Brown, 2011*) may also engender greater dialogue receptivity. Second, all three studies point to the critical role of affect as a mediator—nearly all of SDO's negative impact on dialogue depended upon decreasing listeners' empathic concern for the storyteller. But what if this link could be interrupted? Consider, for example, that morally elevating narratives (i.e., those with a feeling of warmth) have been found to neutralize the negative influence of SDO on charitable donations (*Freeman, Aquino, & McFerran, 2009*). What if same were also true for empathic concern? It is possible that offering our stories with kindness and warmth might defuse the impact of SDO and thereby tip some others towards genuine dialogue with us.

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