

Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation differentially predict biased evaluations of media reports

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Abstract

This study tested the dual-process motivational (DPM) model, which posits that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) differentially predict attitudes toward socially threatening or subordinate groups, respectively. Participants read articles on same-sex relationships and affirmative action and evaluated the article content and the biases of the article authors. The article conclusions (i.e., pro- or anti-same-sex relationships and affirmative action) were varied between subjects. As expected, only RWA predicted evaluations of the same-sex relationships articles and authors, whereas only SDO predicted evaluations of the affirmative action articles and authors. These results extend applications of the dual-process model by demonstrating that RWA and SDO differentially predict evaluations of political information that pertains to socially threatening or subordinate groups, respectively.

“Reality has a well-known liberal bias.”—Stephen Colbert, comic (April, 2006)

The above quote lampoons the phenomenon by which the objective presentation of political information can be construed as subjective at best, and partisan and ideological at worst. In order to maintain their deeply held political beliefs, people sometimes uncritically accept evidence that confirms them and highlight flaws in evidence that disconfirms them (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Edwards & Smith, 1996). Although these processes may protect the integrity of partisans' belief systems and self-esteem, they do little to improve one's ability to reasonably and fairly evaluate political information.

A number of studies have highlighted the role of ideological motives in the evaluation of politically relevant information. In their classic study of the biased assimilation phenomenon, Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) found that instead of belief-disconfirming evidence having a persuasive effect on death penalty attitudes, people bolstered information that confirmed their prior beliefs and discredited information that disconfirmed their beliefs. Similar effects have been observed on a number of other political and social issues, including gun control, school vouchers, medical mari-

juana use, abortion rights, race relations, and military action (MacCoun & Peletz, 2009; Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Ideological beliefs not only affect people's evaluations of the content of political information, but also the sources of this information (i.e., social science researchers or the producers of television media reports; MacCoun & Peletz, 2009; Vallone et al., 1985).

It is clear that ideological beliefs generally influence people's evaluations of political information. However, it is currently unknown whether different aspects or components of ideological attitudes predict motivated evaluations of evidence regarding specific social and political issues. For example, might discrediting evidence contrary to your beliefs about abortion rights satisfy one particular ideological motive, whereas discrediting evidence contrary to your beliefs about affirmative action policies might satisfy a different ideological motive? The dual-process cognitive-motivational model (DPM) of ideology and social attitudes (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009) may provide a theoretical framework for examining this issue. The DPM model suggests that right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996, 1998) and social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)

represent two distinct dimensions of ideological attitudes. On the one hand, RWA is the covariation of three attitudinal clusters: submission to perceived established and legitimate authorities, general aggressiveness perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities, and strong adherence to social conventions (Altemeyer, 1996). On the other hand, SDO is marked by the “general support for the domination of certain socially constructed groups over other socially constructed groups” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 61).

Whereas both RWA and SDO strongly predict intergroup attitudes in a variety of national, social, and political contexts (Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; Duriez, Van Hiel, & Kossowska, 2005; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), a growing body of evidence suggests that RWA and SDO are independent of each other. According to the dual-process model (Duckitt, 2001, 2006), RWA and SDO originate from divergent social and psychological bases. Specifically, RWA originates from perceptions of the world as a dangerous place, whereas SDO originates from a view of the world as a competitive jungle. Whereas perceptions of a dangerous world derive from both threatening social contexts and dispositional social conformity, perceptions of a competitive world derive from competitive social contexts and dispositional tough-mindedness (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Consequently, whereas RWA expresses a motive to mitigate dangerous and destructive forces by seeking social conformity, stability, and security, SDO expresses a motive to maintain or enhance social status hierarchies (Duckitt, 2006).

These distinct motives have differential consequences for intergroup attitudes. According to the DPM model, RWA (but not SDO) predicts attitudes toward groups seen as socially deviant and therefore threatening social cohesion or stability, whereas SDO (but not RWA) predicts attitudes toward socially subordinate or disadvantaged groups that threaten to alter the status hierarchy. Consistent with these predictions RWA, but not SDO, predicts prejudice toward socially dangerous and threatening groups (e.g., violent criminals; drug dealers and users; rock stars). SDO, but not RWA, predicts prejudice toward subordinate and disadvantaged groups (e.g., people with physical disabilities; unemployed people; people with obesity; housewives; Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007).

Other research findings support the hypotheses that RWA predicts attitudes toward social and political issues or policies that mitigate or aggravate threats to social cohesion and stability, whereas SDO predicts attitudes toward issues and policies that attenuate or enhance status hierarchies (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt et al., 2002). For example, although both RWA and SDO were related to support for the war in Iraq, the effects of RWA were mediated by a perceived threat from Iraq, whereas the effects of SDO were mediated by tough-minded beliefs about war-related casualties (McFarland, 2005). More generally, RWA (but not SDO) is associated with cultural conservatism (e.g., attitudes on abortion, premarital sex, and

euthanasia), whereas SDO (but not RWA) is associated with economic conservatism (i.e., attitudes toward maintenance or enhancement of existing status hierarchies; Duriez et al., 2005; Van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004).

More recent studies have examined how the differential effects of RWA and SDO on intergroup attitudes are moderated by social context, with mixed results. According to Lehmler and Schmitt (2007), the relationship between intergroup and political attitudes and SDO is dependent upon specific intergroup comparative contexts (e.g., when the ingroup is powerful and the outgroup is not). However, consistent with the DPM model, Dru (2007) found that when ingroup norms and values were made salient, RWA, but not SDO, predicted attitudes toward ethnic outgroups (i.e., Arabs, Blacks, Asians). However, when group competitiveness was salient, SDO, but not RWA, predicted attitudes toward these same outgroups (Dru, 2007).

Cohrs and Asbrock (2009) recently found that when the outgroup was manipulated to appear socially threatening, RWA had a powerful effect on prejudice. Inconsistent with the DPM model, however, when the outgroup was manipulated to appear socially competitive, SDO did not have an effect on prejudice. In their discussion of Cohrs and Asbrock's findings, Duckitt and Sibley (2010) suggests that this lack of a relationship between SDO and prejudice may be attributable to the description of the outgroup in the social competition experimental condition as personally industrious, achievement oriented, and competitive—all characteristics that those high in SDO would find appealing. In accordance with the DPM model, Duckitt and Sibley (2010) found that when a bogus immigrant group was described as a threat to social norms, RWA (but not SDO) was associated with prejudice toward this group. However, when this bogus group was described as competitive over relative dominance, SDO (but not RWA) was associated with prejudice toward the group.

The present study

The present study builds on and extends prior research on the differential effects of RWA and SDO on social and political attitudes, and the moderating effects of social context on these relationships. Specifically, we examined whether RWA and SDO beliefs differentially influence how people evaluate evidence regarding social issues and public policies that affect socially deviant or subordinate groups, respectively. To address this issue, we examined people's evaluations of both the veracity of media reports and these reports' authors. Each participant read one article that addressed same-sex relationships and another that addressed affirmative action. The conclusions of these articles (i.e., pro- or anti-same-sex relationships; pro- or anti-affirmative action) were varied between subjects.

Gay and lesbian relationships may be perceived by some as representing a threat to the stability of gender and sexuality

norms (Altemeyer, 1996; Goodman & Moradi, 2008), and RWA is frequently related to antigay attitudes (Altemeyer, 1996; Haddock & Zanna, 1998; Hodson, Harry, & Mitchell, 2009). Therefore, the DPM model predicts that RWA but not SDO should predict evaluations of the same-sex relationships articles and their authors. In contrast, affirmative action programs for disadvantaged minority groups threaten to attenuate existing status hierarchies, and SDO is frequently related to affirmative action attitudes (Haley & Sidanius, 2006; Pratto & Cathey, 2002). Therefore, the DPM model predicts that SDO but not RWA should predict evaluations of the affirmative action articles and their authors.

The present research thus extends previous applications of the dual-process motivational model in predicting intergroup and political attitudes by examining whether RWA and SDO differentially predict people's evaluations of the content and source of political information that pertains to socially deviant or subordinate groups, respectively. In addition to presenting social contexts that make either social threat or competition salient, as in previous research (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Dru, 2007; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010), we manipulated whether the evidence presented in the media report was consistent or inconsistent with RWA and SDO beliefs. Based on the DPM model, it was hypothesized that RWA would be associated with positive evaluations of the anti-same-sex article content and author, and negative evaluations of the pro-same-sex article content and author. Likewise, SDO would be associated with positive evaluations of the anti-affirmative action article content and author, and negative evaluations of the pro-affirmative action article content and author.

Method

Participants

One hundred and sixty-seven (167) undergraduate students volunteered through the participant pool of the Psychology Department at The College of New Jersey (84% female; 73% Caucasian; mean age = 20 years). Because some scholars have raised concerns about relying solely on college student samples to assess political and social attitudes (Henry, 2008; Sears, 1986), 110 adult relatives of these students were also recruited (61% female; 86% Caucasian; mean age = 48 years). In total, 277 participants (75% female; 78% Caucasian; mean age = 31 years) were included in the analysis.

Measures

Independent measures

RWA was measured with Hunsberger and Altemeyer's (2006) 20-item RWA scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). SDO was

measured with Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) 16-item SDO scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). Average scores for RWA and SDO were computed on 9-point and 7-point scales, respectively. However, in order to facilitate the comparison of unstandardized regression coefficients for RWA and SDO, the RWA scale was rescaled to a 7-point scale. Scores on the transformed 7-point RWA scale ranged from .78 to 6.22. Scores on the 7-point SDO scale ranged from 1 to 5.19.

Control measures

Age, particularly parenthood (Altemeyer, 1996, p. 92), religiosity (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), and political conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) often covary with RWA. Gender (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006) and political conservatism (Jost et al., 2003) often covary with SDO. Therefore, these factors were assessed in order to statistically control for their effects. Religious importance (1 = not at all important; 7 = extremely important) and ideological self-placement (1 = extremely liberal; 7 = extremely conservative) were each measured by 7-point items.

Procedure

Student participants were e-mailed a link to the survey (experimental condition assignment was randomized). At the conclusion of the study, participants were asked to volunteer e-mail addresses of their parents or older adult relatives. One hundred and forty-four (144) students volunteered e-mail addresses. Links to the survey were sent to these e-mail addresses and 110 adult relatives (76%) responded and were included in the analysis.

Participants first provided basic demographic information (i.e., age, gender, race/ethnicity, religiosity) and completed the 7-point ideological self-placement item and the RWA and SDO scales. Each participant then read two articles. Some participants read an anti-affirmative action article, followed by a pro-same-sex relationships article. The anti-affirmative action article was an abbreviated version of an actual news article that reported the research of a University of California, Los Angeles law professor. This research concluded that affirmative action admissions policies were harmful to African American law students (Appendix A). The pro-same-sex relationships article was an abbreviated version of an article that appeared in the *American Psychological Association's Monitor on Psychology* (Dingfelder, 2005, December). The general conclusion of this article, backed by clinical and empirical evidence, was that same-sex relationships are just as healthy as heterosexual relationships (Appendix B).

Other participants read altered versions of the above articles, for which the conclusions were reversed. The pro-affirmative action article indicated that affirmative action policies were *beneficial* to African American law students. The anti-same-sex relationships article indicated that same-sex

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for All Study Variables

	Student Sample				Adult Sample				Entire Sample			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. RWA												
2. SDO	.48***				.46***				.49***			
3. Ideology	.70***	.50***			.57***	.48***			.67***	.50***		
4. Religiosity	.34***	.03	.33***		.28**	.04	.09		.35***	.06	.28***	
<i>M</i>	2.58	2.36	3.31	4.30	3.04	2.60	4.04	5.06	2.76	2.45	3.59	4.60
<i>SD</i>	.97	.94	1.38	1.69	1.02	1.02	1.48	1.56	1.01	.97	1.46	1.68

Notes. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; SDO = social dominance orientation. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

relationships were *not* as healthy as heterosexual relationships (Appendices C and D, respectively). Thus, in a between-subjects design, some participants read an anti-affirmative action article and a pro-same-sex relationships article, whereas other participants read a pro-affirmative action article and an anti-same-sex relationships article.

Following the presentation of each article, participants responded to the two dependent items. The *perceived veracity* item assessed people's evaluation of the content of the newspaper article: "Please indicate how true you think this newspaper article is, from 0% true to 100% true." The *perceived author bias* item assessed people's evaluation of the source of the message: "How biased do you believe the author of this newspaper article is?" (1 = not at all biased; 7 = extremely biased).

Results

Preliminary analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables

Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations for all study variables (i.e., the control variables of ideological self-placement and religiosity and the independent variables of RWA and SDO), as well as the correlations among these variables. Across both student and adult samples, the average scores on the RWA and SDO scales are consistent with those in the extant literature (Altemeyer, 1996, p. 56; Duckitt et al., 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, pp. 69–70), suggesting the distribution of scores in this sample does not differ substantially from previous investigations. The correlation between RWA and SDO across both samples ($r = .49$) was much higher than the average correlation Roccato and Ricolfi (2005) reported ($r = .20$) for countries characterized by weak ideological contrast, such as the United States.

Correlations among dependent items

There were moderate correlations between the two dependent items for the same-sex relationships articles,

$r(271) = -.64, p < .001$, as well as the two dependent items for the affirmative action articles, $r(271) = -.54, p < .001$. These coefficients suggest that although the two dependent items are related, they are also assessing distinct constructs (i.e., evaluations of the content of the article vs. the author of the article).

Testing the differential effects of RWA and SDO on evaluations of article content and source

These analyses tested two main predictions of the DPM model for this study: (1) RWA, but not SDO, should predict evaluations of the article content and authors of the same-sex relationships articles; and (2) SDO, but not RWA, should predict evaluations of the article content and authors of the affirmative action articles. To test these predictions, a series of four-step hierarchical regression analyses¹ were performed, following Aiken and West (1991).

There were two dependent items for the same-sex relationships articles and two dependent items for the affirmative action articles (i.e., perceived veracity and perceived author bias). One regression analysis was performed for each of these four dependent items. All continuous study variables (age, religiosity, RWA, and SDO) were centered on their respective means. The control variables of age, gender (0 = female; 1 = male), religiosity, and ideological self-placement were entered into the first step. The independent variables of RWA, SDO, and experimental condition (0 = pro, 1 = anti for the same-sex relationships articles; 0 = anti, 1 = pro for the affirmative action articles) were entered into the second step. The RWA \times Condition, SDO \times Condition, and RWA \times

¹To determine if the sample (0 = student; 1 = adult) moderated any of the findings, all regression models initially included the sample as an independent variable. Across all four dependent items, there was only one significant main effect for the sample: the student sample perceived the author of the affirmative action article to be more biased than the adult sample, $b = -1.31, SE = .57, \beta = -.36, t = 2.28, p < .05$. No other statistically significant sample main effects or interactions between the sample and the other independent variables emerged: all t s < 1.86 , all p s $> .06$. Therefore, we collapsed across the student and adult samples in the presented analyses.

Table 2 Predictors of Perceived Veracity for the Same-Sex Relationships Articles

	Step 1				Step 2				Step 3				Step 4			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Gender	1.77	4.41	.03	.40	.28	4.07	.01	.07	.15	3.84	.01	.04	.17	3.84	.01	.04
Age	.12	.13	.06	.89	.12	.12	.07	1.04	.03	.11	.02	.31	.03	.11	.02	.28
Ideology	2.04	1.35	.10	1.50	-.46	1.64	-.02	.28	-.07	1.55	-.01	.04	-.11	1.56	-.01	.07
Religiosity	-.87	1.16	-.05	.75	-.39	1.12	-.02	.35	-.46	1.05	-.03	.44	-.45	1.05	-.03	.43
Condition (C)					-22.90	3.36	-.40	6.82***	-23.67	3.15	-.42	7.52***	-22.47	3.47	-.39	6.47***
RWA					-.35	2.40	-.01	.15	-10.30	2.86	-.36	3.60***	-10.15	2.87	-.36	3.54***
SDO					5.89	2.17	.20	2.71**	6.69	2.98	.23	2.24*	6.21	3.04	.21	2.04*
RWA × C									19.40	3.64	.49	5.32***	19.32	3.65	.49	5.29***
SDO × C									-1.67	3.82	-.04	.43	-.92	3.93	-.02	.23
RWA × SDO									-2.10	1.55	-.08	1.35	-.51	2.47	-.02	.21
RWA × SDO × C													-2.61	3.17	-.08	.82

Notes. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; SDO = social dominance orientation. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. R^2 -adjusted values are .00 (Step 1), .18*** (Step 2), .28*** (Step 3), and .28*** (Step 4). R^2 change values are .02 (Step 1), .18*** (Step 2), .11*** (Step 3), and .00 (Step 4).

Table 3 Predictors of Perceived Author Bias for the Same-Sex Relationships Articles

	Step 1				Step 2				Step 3				Step 4			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Gender	.31	.26	.08	1.19	.27	.24	.07	1.12	.27	.24	.07	1.16	.28	.24	.07	1.17
Age	-.02	.01	-.20	2.88**	-.02	.01	-.19	2.94**	-.02	.01	-.15	2.44*	-.02	.01	-.16	2.51*
Ideology	-.10	.08	-.09	1.27	.07	.10	.06	.74	.05	.10	.04	.55	.05	.10	.04	.50
Religiosity	.10	.07	.10	1.55	.14	.07	.14	2.14*	.14	.06	.14	2.22*	.15	.06	.14	2.25*
Condition (C)					1.30	.20	.38	6.50***	1.33	.19	.39	6.84***	1.48	.21	.43	6.93***
RWA					-.31	.14	-.18	2.20*	.10	.18	.06	.58	.12	.18	.07	.68
SDO					-.04	.13	-.02	.33	-.05	.18	-.03	.28	-.11	.19	-.06	.59
RWA × C									-.81	.22	-.34	3.59***	-.82	.22	-.35	3.65***
SDO × C									.03	.24	.01	.12	.12	.24	.05	.49
RWA × SDO									.08	.10	.05	.89	.28	.15	.17	1.85†
RWA × SDO × C													-.32	.19	-.16	1.66†

Notes. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; SDO = social dominance orientation. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. R^2 -adjusted values are .04* (Step 1), .19*** (Step 2), .24*** (Step 3), and .24*** (Step 4). R^2 change values are .05* (Step 1), .16*** (Step 2), .05*** (Step 3), and .01* (Step 4).

SDO interactions were entered into the third step. The RWA × SDO × Condition interaction was entered into the fourth step. The unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors, standardized regression coefficients, and *t*-statistics for all main effects and interactions, as well as the R^2 change and adjusted R^2 values at each step, are presented in Tables 2 and 3 for the same-sex relationships articles, and in Tables 4 and 5 for the affirmative action articles. (Note that the unstandardized regression coefficients for perceived veracity are larger than those for perceived author bias because perceived veracity was measured on a 0–100-point scale, whereas perceived author bias was measured on a 7-point scale).

Same-sex relationships articles

This set of analyses tested the hypothesis that RWA, but not SDO, should predict perceived veracity of the same-sex rela-

tionships article content and perceived author bias. Support for this hypothesis would be indicated by an interaction between experimental condition and RWA, but not SDO. Furthermore, simple slopes analyses of RWA by experimental condition should reveal that RWA predicts perceived veracity of the same-sex relationships article content and perceptions of author bias. For perceived veracity, a positive slope should be observed on the anti-same-sex relationships article, whereas a negative slope should be observed on the pro-same-sex relationships article. For perceptions of author bias, a negative slope should be observed on the anti-same-sex relationships article, whereas a positive slope should be observed on the pro-same-sex relationships article.

For *perceived veracity* of the article content (Table 2), no control variables emerged as predictors in the first step. A significant main effect for SDO and experimental condition emerged in the second step, indicating that SDO was associated with greater perceived veracity regardless of the

Table 4 Predictors of Perceived Veracity for the Affirmative Action Articles

	Step 1				Step 2				Step 3				Step 4			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Gender	4.76	4.08	.08	1.17	2.89	3.63	.05	.80	1.85	3.55	.03	.52	1.84	3.56	.03	.52
Age	.04	.12	.02	.35	.10	.11	.06	.91	.14	.10	.08	1.31	.14	.10	.08	1.35
Ideology	-1.68	1.25	-.09	1.34	-.93	1.46	-.05	.63	-1.73	1.44	-.10	1.20	-1.69	1.44	-.09	1.17
Religiosity	-.84	1.07	-.05	.79	-.05	.10	-.01	.05	-.49	.98	-.03	.50	-.50	.98	-.03	.51
Condition (C)					24.70	2.99	.47	8.26***	24.53	2.92	.47	8.41***	23.36	3.22	.44	7.26***
RWA					-4.09	2.14	-.16	1.91 [†]	-4.41	2.65	-.17	1.67 [†]	-4.56	2.66	-.17	1.72 [†]
SDO					3.94	1.93	.14	2.04*	11.53	2.82	.42	4.26***	11.99	2.82	.44	4.26***
RWA × C									2.29	3.38	.06	.68	2.37	3.38	.06	.70
SDO × C									-13.25	3.54	-.36	3.74***	-13.97	3.64	-.38	3.84***
RWA × SDO									-.12	1.44	-.01	.08	-1.66	2.29	-.07	.72
RWA × SDO × C													2.54	2.94	.08	.86

Notes. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; SDO = social dominance orientation. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. R^2 -adjusted values are .00 (Step 1), .24*** (Step 2), .28*** (Step 3), and .28*** (Step 4). R^2 change values are .02 (Step 1), .24*** (Step 2), .05** (Step 3), and .00 (Step 4).

Table 5 Predictors of Perceived Author Bias for the Affirmative Action Articles

	Step 1				Step 2				Step 3				Step 4			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Gender	-.21	.27	-.05	.78	-.14	.26	-.04	.56	-.05	.25	-.01	.21	-.05	.25	-.01	.21
Age	-.01	.01	-.14	1.91 [†]	-.02	.01	-.15	2.24*	-.02	.01	-.16	2.39*	-.02	.01	-.16	2.45*
Ideology	.12	.08	.10	1.44	.01	.10	.01	.04	.06	.10	.05	.55	.05	.10	.04	.50
Religiosity	.06	.07	.05	.81	.02	.07	.02	.23	.05	.07	.05	.75	.05	.07	.05	.78
Condition (C)					-1.14	.21	-.33	5.33***	-1.10	.21	-.31	5.31***	-.96	.23	-.27	4.21***
RWA					.28	.15	.16	1.85 [†]	.58	.19	.33	3.06**	.59	.19	.34	3.16**
SDO					-.07	.14	-.04	.52	-.65	.20	-.36	3.24**	-.71	.20	-.39	3.56***
RWA × C									-.70	.24	-.29	2.93**	-.71	.24	-.30	2.98**
SDO × C									1.04	.25	.43	4.15***	1.13	.26	.47	4.39***
RWA × SDO									.02	.10	.01	.16	.20	.16	.12	1.26
RWA × SDO × C													-.31	.21	-.15	1.49

Notes. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; SDO = social dominance orientation. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. R^2 -adjusted values are .01 (Step 1), .12*** (Step 2), .17*** (Step 3), and .18*** (Step 4). R^2 change values are .03 (Step 1), .12*** (Step 2), .06** (Step 3), and .01 (Step 4).

article content, and that people found the pro-same-sex relationships article truer than the anti-same-sex relationships article. In addition to these two main effects, a main effect for RWA also emerged in the third step, indicating that RWA was associated with less perceived veracity of the same-sex relationships articles, regardless of article content. More importantly, the third step revealed the predicted interaction between experimental condition and RWA, but not SDO. The RWA × Condition interaction is displayed in Figure 1. As predicted, RWA was negatively related to the perceived veracity of the pro-same-sex relationships article ($b = -10.29$, $SE = 3.04$, $\beta = -.43$, $t = 3.39$, $p < .01$), and positively related to the perceived veracity of the anti-same-sex relationships article ($b = 9.27$, $SE = 3.36$, $\beta = .34$, $t = 2.76$, $p < .01$). No significant three-way interaction emerged in the fourth step.

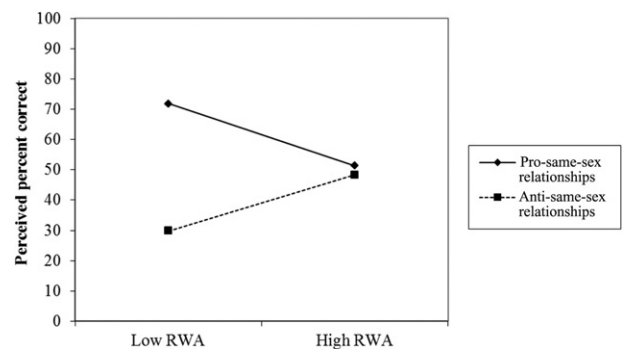


Figure 1 Perceived veracity of same-sex relationships articles. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism.

Note: Higher scores indicate greater perceived veracity of the article.

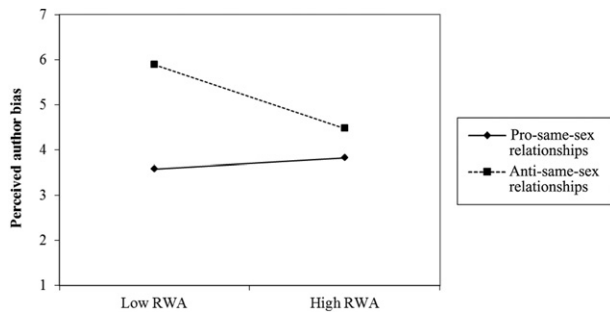


Figure 2 Perceived author bias for same-sex relationships articles. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism. Note: Higher scores indicate more perceived author bias.

For perceptions of *author bias* (Table 3), there was a main effect for age in the first step, indicating that younger people perceived more author bias, regardless of article content. The experimental condition, religiosity, and RWA also emerged as significant predictors in the second step. These main effects indicate that people perceived the author of the anti-same-sex relationships article as more biased than the pro-same-sex relationships article, and that those high in religiosity and low in RWA perceived more author bias, regardless of article content. Most importantly, the third step found the predicted interaction between experimental condition and RWA, but not SDO. The RWA \times Condition interaction is displayed in Figure 2. As predicted, RWA was negatively related to perceived author bias on the anti-same-sex relationships article ($b = -.64$; $SE = .21$; $\beta = -.39$; $t = 3.10$; $p < .01$); however, contrary to expectations, RWA did not predict perceived bias of the pro-same-sex author ($b = .01$; $SE = .19$; $\beta = .01$; $t = .06$; ns). No significant three-way interaction emerged in the fourth step.

Affirmative action articles

The next set of analyses tested the hypothesis that SDO, but not RWA, should predict perceived veracity of the affirmative action article content and perceived author bias. Support for this hypothesis would be indicated by an interaction between experimental condition and SDO, but not RWA. Furthermore, simple slopes analyses of SDO by experimental condition should reveal that SDO predicts perceived veracity of the affirmative action article content and perceptions of author bias. For perceived veracity, a positive slope should be observed on the anti-affirmative action article, whereas a negative slope should be observed on the pro-affirmative action article. For perceptions of author bias, a negative slope should be observed on the anti-affirmative action article, whereas a positive slope should be observed on the pro-affirmative action article.

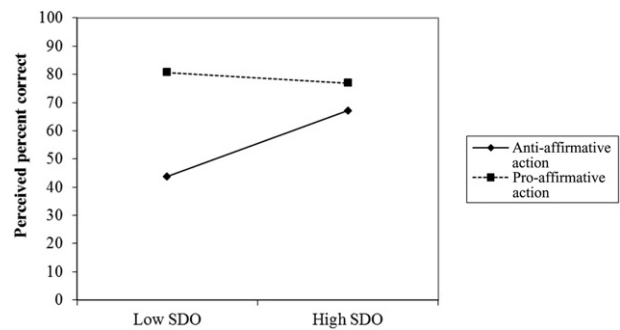


Figure 3 Perceived veracity of affirmative action articles. SDO = social dominance orientation. Note: Higher scores indicate greater perceived veracity of the article.

For *perceived veracity* of the article content (Table 4), no control variables emerged as predictors in the first step. A significant main effect for experimental condition and SDO emerged in the second step, indicating that people found the pro-affirmative action article truer than the anti-affirmative action article, and that SDO was associated with greater perceived veracity, regardless of the article content. Importantly, these main effects were qualified in the third step by the predicted interaction between experimental condition and SDO, but not RWA. The SDO \times Condition interaction is displayed in Figure 3. As predicted, SDO was positively related to the perceived veracity of the anti-affirmative action article ($b = 11.23$; $SE = 3.33$; $\beta = .40$; $t = 3.72$; $p < .01$). Although the slope for the pro-affirmative action article was in the expected negative direction, it did not approach statistical significance ($b = -1.73$; $SE = 2.33$; $\beta = -.08$; $t = .74$; ns). No significant three-way interaction emerged in the fourth step.

For perceptions of *author bias* (Table 5), there was a main effect for age in the first step, indicating that younger people perceived more author bias, regardless of article content. The experimental condition also emerged as a significant predictor in the second step, indicating that people perceived the author of the anti-affirmative action article as more biased than the pro-affirmative action article. This main effect was qualified by the expected interaction between experimental condition and SDO. The SDO \times Condition interaction is displayed in Figure 4. As predicted, SDO was positively related to perceived author bias on the pro-affirmative action article, although this relationship only approached significance ($b = .37$; $SE = .20$; $\beta = .21$; $t = 1.82$; $p = .07$). Likewise, as predicted, SDO was negatively related to perceived author bias on the anti-affirmative action article ($b = -.63$; $SE = .19$; $\beta = -.38$; $t = 3.34$; $p < .01$).

An unpredicted RWA \times Condition interaction also emerged in the third step. Interestingly, simple slopes indicated that RWA was positively related to perceived author

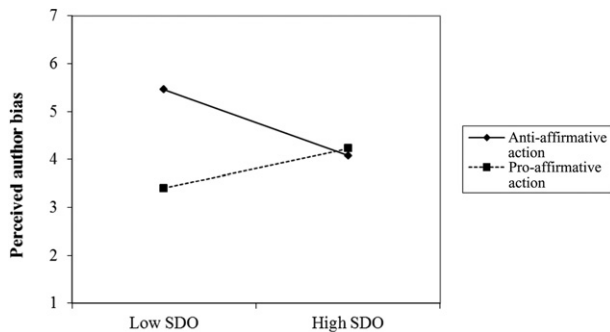


Figure 4 Perceived author bias for affirmative action articles. SDO = social dominance orientation.

Note: Higher scores indicate more perceived author bias.

bias for the *anti*-affirmative action article ($b = .59$; $SE = .19$; $\beta = .34$; $t = 3.16$; $p < .01$). In other words, RWA predicted critical reactions toward an author making a “conservative” argument against affirmative action programs. RWA did not predict perceptions of the pro-affirmative action article author ($p = .57$). No significant three-way interaction emerged in the fourth step.

Discussion

In general, ideological motives distort people’s interpretation of political information (Lord et al., 1979; MacCoun & Peletz, 2009; Robinson et al., 1995; Vallone et al., 1985). Drawing on the predictions of the DPM model of ideology and social attitudes (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), the present study demonstrated that distinct dimensions of ideological beliefs differentially predict the interpretation of information that pertains to particular political issues and social groups. Specifically, RWA and SDO differentially predicted interpretations of media reports pertaining to socially threatening (i.e., gays/lesbians) and disadvantaged groups (i.e., African Americans), respectively.

RWA, but not SDO, interacted with the same-sex relationships experimental condition (pro- vs. anti-same-sex relationships) in predicting people’s evaluations of both the article content and authors. RWA predicted favorable evaluations of the anti-same-sex relationships article content and author, and unfavorable evaluations of the pro-same-sex relationships article content. Furthermore, SDO, but not RWA, interacted with the affirmative action experimental condition (pro- vs. anti-affirmative action) in predicting people’s evaluations of both the article content and authors. SDO predicted favorable evaluations of the anti-affirmative action article author and content, and marginally predicted unfavorable evaluations of the pro-affirmative action article author. These findings were observed across two distinct dependent items (i.e., evaluations of article content and the motives of

the author) and across different article frames (i.e., pro- vs. anti-same-sex relationships and affirmative action). All of these findings are consistent with the DPM model.

The only finding inconsistent with the DPM model was that RWA also predicted perceptions of author bias for the anti-affirmative action article. This result was surprising not only because the DPM model suggests that RWA should not predict responses on a topic related to hierarchy attenuation, but also because those high in RWA, who tend to be more politically conservative (Jost et al., 2003), were more critical of an author making the “conservative” argument against affirmative action programs. One potential explanation for this finding is that to the extent that affirmative action programs are considered sanctioned by existing U.S. law, those high in RWA may react negatively toward arguments against such government-sanctioned policies. Considering that both SDO and RWA predicted responses to this article (although in opposite directions), these findings may suggest potentially interesting intersections of RWA and SDO attitudes that can be explored in future research.

Typically, tests of the DPM model have examined the differential effects of RWA and SDO on attitudes toward socially threatening and subordinate groups, respectively (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). A handful of studies have addressed how RWA and SDO differentially predict support for policies that activate social threat or competition concerns, respectively (Duriez et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005; Van Hiel et al., 2004). The present study complements these previous investigations, but more importantly, extends them by demonstrating that the same ideological beliefs that influence intergroup and sociopolitical attitudes also distort people’s evaluations of evidence pertaining to these groups and issues. Thus, this research is the first to suggest that such biased assimilation processes (Lord et al., 1979) can be expected based on the relationship between particular dimensions of ideological beliefs and specific political or social issues.

It is important to note that we measured people’s evaluations of political information regarding gays/lesbians and African Americans, not their support for policies that affect those groups. Only a handful of studies have addressed the differential effects of RWA and SDO on support for public policies that raise social threat or hierarchy maintenance concerns, respectively (see Duriez et al., 2005; McFarland, 2005; Van Hiel et al., 2004). Although evidence from the present study and the extant literature suggests that RWA and SDO would differentially affect endorsement of gay marriage and affirmative action policies, respectively, future studies could more explicitly test this prediction.

Cohrs and Asbrock (2009) did not find evidence of moderation of perceived competitiveness on SDO, and Lehmiller and Schmitt (2007) found that the relationship between SDO and political attitudes only held in particular comparative contexts. Contrary to those findings, our research

suggests that contexts that raise social threat (i.e., same-sex relationships) and relative group dominance (i.e., affirmative action) concerns activate RWA and SDO beliefs, respectively, as predicted by the DPM model. Thus, these findings complement other recent findings (Dru, 2007; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010) of the differential effects of RWA and SDO on intergroup attitudes as moderated by social threat and relative dominance salience, respectively. This was accomplished in the present study with a unique manipulation that varied not only whether social threat or relative dominance concerns were raised, but also whether RWA and SDO beliefs were challenged or supported.

With the exception of Cohrs and Asbrock (2009, Study 2), tests of the differential moderating effects of social context on RWA and SDO have occurred by manipulating social threat or competition between subjects, respectively. Considering that Cohrs and Asbrock (2009, Study 2) did not confirm the differential effects of SDO in competitive contexts in either a between- or within-subjects design, the present study is the first to demonstrate support for the differential moderation hypothesis *within* individuals (because each individual read a same-sex relationships article and an affirmative action article). This represents strong support for the DPM model,

and suggests that particular social contexts can essentially “turn on” and then “turn off” the influence of RWA and SDO beliefs within the same individual (see Crawford, 2012).

Conclusion

Instead of inspiring the objective evaluation of media reports on controversial social and political issues, ideological motives lead belief-confirming information to be bolstered and belief-disconfirming evidence to be discredited (Lord et al., 1979; MacCoun & Peletz, 2009; Robinson et al., 1995; Vallone et al., 1985). Drawing on the dual-process motivational model (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009), this study provided the first evidence that distinct dimension of ideological beliefs (i.e., RWA and SDO) differentially predict such biased assimilation processes when media reports address issues relevant to socially threatening and subordinate groups, respectively. These findings have important implications for the scope of the DPM model, demonstrating that it can successfully predict not just attitudes toward social groups and the policies that affect them, but also the way in which people evaluate evidence that pertains to these groups and policies.

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Appendix A

Anti-affirmative action article

Law professor questions usefulness of affirmative action

A recent study published in *The Stanford Law Review* by Richard H. Sander, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, has come to the conclusion that

affirmative action programs actually reduce the number of Black lawyers, because many Black students end up attending law schools that are too difficult for them, and perform badly. If Black law students were accepted to less difficult law schools under race-blind admissions, Professor Sander writes, they would receive better grades and pass the bar in greater numbers.

Professor Sander says he came to his conclusion based on a great deal of data. His research shows three large gaps between Black and White students:

their academic credentials before entering law school, their grades in law school, and their success on bar examinations.

Using a standard 1,000-point scale to reflect both Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores and undergraduate grade point averages, the average Black student's score was 130–170 points below that of the average White student.

Once at law school, the average Black student gets lower grades than White students: 52% of Black students are in the bottom 10th of their first-year law school classes, while only 8% are in the top half. And the grades of Black students drop slightly in relative terms from the first year of law school to the third.

Black students are also twice as likely as Whites to fail to finish law school. Nineteen percent of the Black students who started law school in 1991 have failed to graduate 5 years later; the corresponding figure for Whites was 8%. About 88% of all law students pass a bar exam on the first attempt; 95% pass eventually. For Blacks, the corresponding figures are 61% and 78%.

Appendix B

Pro-same-sex relationships article

Gay and lesbian relationship are as healthy as heterosexual relationships

Research over the past two decades indicates that homosexual relationships are just as healthy as, and in some ways more healthy than, heterosexual relationships. In a recent review of the literature on gay and lesbian couples, several findings indicate the status of homosexual relationships.

- In heterosexual couples, women are still more likely to be assigned household chores and labor. In homosexual relationships, the chores are divided more fairly between the two individuals.
- Homosexual couples and heterosexual couples argue about the same kinds of issues (for example, finances, affection, sex, driving style). However, compared with heterosexual couples, homosexual couples discuss these issues more positively, take on a more positive tone, and are more likely to compromise with each other when conflicts arise.
- It is not possible to compare the relationship stability of unmarried homosexual couples to married heterosexual couples, because married heterosexual couples receive more institutional and family support for their relationships than homosexual couples do. However, when we compare unmarried heterosexual couples who live together with unmarried homosexual couples who live together, research indicates that these two groups have equally stable relationships.

Appendix C

Pro-affirmative action article

Law professor affirms usefulness of affirmative action

A recent study published in *The Stanford Law Review* by Richard H. Sander, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, has come to the conclusion that affirmative action programs have led to an increase in the number of Black lawyers. Black law students under affirmative action programs are succeeding even at the most difficult law schools, Professor Sander writes.

Professor Sander says he came to his conclusion based on a great deal of data. His research shows a gap between Black and White students in their academic credentials before entering law school, but finds no significant gap between their grades in law school and their success on bar examinations.

Using a standard 1,000-point scale to reflect both LSAT scores and undergraduate grade point averages, the average Black student's score was 130–170 points below that of the average White student.

By the time they finish law school, however, the average Black student gets similar grades as White students: the grades of Black students increase slightly in relative terms from the first year of law school to the third. Of law students in the top 10% of their class, there are an equal proportion of Black and White students.

Professor Sander also finds no difference in retention of Black and White law students: Black students are as likely as White students to finish law school. Eighty percent (80%) of the Black students who started law school in 1991 graduated 5 years later; the corresponding figure for Whites was 83%. About 88% of all law students pass a bar exam on the first attempt; 95% pass eventually. For Blacks, the corresponding figures are 86% and 94%.

Appendix D

Anti-same-sex relationships article

Gay and lesbian relationships are not as healthy as heterosexual relationships

Research over the past two decades indicates that homosexual relationships are not as healthy as, and in some ways are less healthy than, heterosexual relationships. In a recent review of the literature on gay and lesbian couples, several findings indicate the status of homosexual relationships.

- Heterosexual and homosexual couples divide labor unequally: one partner is assigned household chores and labor more than the other partner.

- Homosexual couples and heterosexual couples argue about the same kinds of issues (for example, finances, affection, sex, driving style). However, compared with heterosexual couples, homosexual couples discuss these issues more negatively, take on a more negative tone, and are less likely to compromise with each other when conflicts arise.
- It is not possible to compare the relationship stability of unmarried homosexual couples to married heterosexual

couples because married heterosexual couples receive more institutional and family support for their relationships than homosexual couples do. However, when we compare unmarried heterosexual couples who live together, with unmarried homosexual couples who live together, research indicates that unmarried homosexual couples have less stable relationships than unmarried heterosexual couples.