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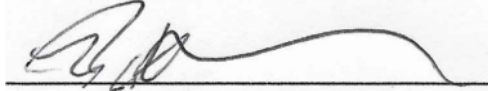
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Scale Validation of American Exceptionalism Index

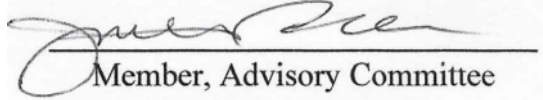
BY

EVAN CHARLES

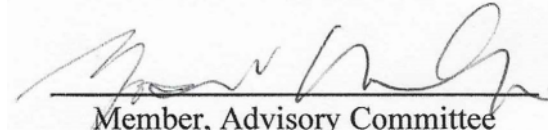
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SCALE VALIDATION OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM INDEX

BY

EVAN CHARLES

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

2022

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to those who have, are, or ever will ask questions about why the world works as it does and seek to patch the shortcomings and strive for the common good, even if that means looking in the mirror and changing how one conducts themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Matthew Winslow, for his insight, tutelage, and unwavering support in crafting this manuscript. I would also like to express gratitude to Dr. Jonathan Gore and Dr. Yoshie Nakai who have been very patient with my timeline and want to see me succeed. And I thank my wife, Darian, for reminding me why I chose this path when the destination seemed very far away.

ABSTRACT

A powerful nation that commits reprehensible actions but only holds other countries accountable must be checked, especially if the nation's populace turns a blind eye. This thesis sought to validate a new scale called the American Exceptionalism Index. The current study draws from instruction and examples from academics and professionals who have experience with scale validation – a primer was developed and available to guide future scale development. Following these steps or the inherent purpose behind these steps, the current study seeks to contribute to the American Exceptionalism literature. The current study seeks to validate the American Exceptionalism Index (AEI) and compare it to Gilmore's thirteen national exceptionalism bias items (2015). A total of 506 U.S. adults ($M = 35.8$, $SD = 10.7$) took part in the study, and 477 were included in analyses. The average score of the AEI and the average scores of each of the four domains were correlated to the average score of the two domains of Gilmore's items separately and conjointly. A mistake was made in creating the survey; one item of Gilmore's first domain was mistakenly left out of the current study and was not intentional. Despite the error, the second domain remained fit to analyze. The AEI nearly achieved convergent validity with Gilmore's thirteen U.S. national exceptionalism bias items. Despite this, the current study asserts that, with some future improvements, the AEI is a new, valid scale measuring American Exceptionalism.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Exceptionalism is the idea that “the United States is dedicated to freedom, equality, democracy, human rights” but when “we sometimes make mistakes in or innocence or naivete or their blunders but nothing can be fundamentally immoral or improper” (Chomsky’s Philosophy, 2015). A powerful nation that commits reprehensible actions but only holds other countries accountable must be checked, especially if the nation's populace turns a blind eye. This thesis sought to validate a new scale called the American Exceptionalism Index.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

U.S. Distinction

In his novel, *The Epic of America*, James Truslow Adams coined the term “the American Dream”, in which he elaborated on the idea that the United States was a “land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (Adams, 1931, p. 404). The word “better”, implies that something is inherently different about the U.S. - that those in the largest democracy on Earth are exceptional. Later, a president of the democratic party, Barack Obama, discussed the 2013 Syria chemical attacks on its civilians by saying that “America is not the world's policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong” but later says “I believe we should act. That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional,” (Obama, 2013, para. 28). A few years later, a president of the Republican party, Donald Trump, trademarked what would be his presidential campaign slogan “Make America Great Again” (Tumulty, 2017). Though former President Trump's slogan outlined his belief that the U.S. was no longer exceptional (Gilmore et al., 2020), it implied that it was once exceptional and that, through him, America could be exceptional again.

Both major U.S. political parties' leaders engage in this American Exceptionalism rhetoric. Republican leaders have expressed it, such as President Trump's 'M.A.G.A.' slogan and President Reagan's belief that the U.S. is a “Shining City upon a hill” (Reagan Library, 2016). Democratic leaders invoke it as well, with President Obama declaring, “I believe in American Exceptionalism with every fiber of

my being” (The Obama White House, 2014), and Hillary Clinton's belief in the same city President Reagan believed in (PBS Newshour, 2017). While both parties appeal to American Exceptionalism, the Democratic presidents have more often advocated for the premise (especially on a foreign, rather than domestic, level) in their speeches than Republican presidents (Gilmore & Rowling, 2019).

Since the early 1930s, speeches of both Republican and Democrat presidents have highlighted U.S. superiority when speaking domestically and its distinction when speaking to a foreign audience (Gilmore, 2014). While there is a distinction between superiority and singularity, they are still interpretations under the American Exceptionalism umbrella. The belief that the U.S. is a superior nation to all others can come from the idea that after WWII and the Cold War, the U.S. emerged as a world superpower (Bacevich, 2008; Shafer, 1991). On the other hand, the belief that the U.S. is a singular nation, distinct from every other country (Lipset, 1996; Madsen, 1998; Hietala, 2003; Edwards & Weiss, 2011), is traced back to the U.S. winning its independence and became the first new nation (Lipset, 1996; Hietala, 2003). With presidential discourse affirming these analogous ideas for nearly a century, it is reasonable to believe that the belief would foster in the constituency.

Many U.S. citizens would agree that their nation is a remarkable place to live, if not the best. Indeed, a 2020 poll shows that 55% of U.S. citizens believe that the country is one of the greatest in the world, with another 24% saying that the country stands above all others; also, the poll is repeated yearly and has relatively consistent numbers (Hartig, & Gilberstadt, 2020). Comparing countries to one another implies that there will be a sense of patriotism in evaluating one's nation, and the topic of uncritical

vs. constructive patriotism will arise. This literature seeks to avoid the discussion of the constructive patriotism scale in regards to American Exceptionalism. There has been evidence that uncritical patriotism is associated with conservatives greater than liberals (Schatz et al., 1999). Reflecting on Hartig's & Gilberstadt's numbers, the use of social identity theory has shown that the constructive patriotism scale is not perfect. The scale is not related to most other forms of patriotism; it has little predictive power and is noted to, perhaps, be liberally biased (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). While patriotism is heavily present in American Exceptionalism, U.S. patriotic values differ significantly from other countries.

The U.S. is a W.E.I.R.D. - a Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic - country and its' populace's thinking may not be representative to the global population (Henrich, 2010; Muthukrishna et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2018). To then claim the title of the greatest country in the world is narcissistic as the U.S. vision of the hypothetically best nation would differ from, for example, China. An ingroup, let alone a nation of three hundred million-plus people, found to have a collective narcissism, characterizes itself with intergroup aggression, poor collective self-esteem, an overestimation of perceived insults and threats, and an unwillingness to forgive outgroups (Zavala et al., 2009; Zavala et al., 2019). American Exceptionalism can be associated with collective narcissism as it has been called a "national exceptionalism bias" or an extreme in-group bias that depicts one's country in an exceptionally positive light according to Jason Gilmore, who has developed items related to American Exceptionalism (Gilmore, 2015, p. 305). The identification with one of the most potent forms of group identity (Huddy & Khatib, 2007) is a source of positive self-value for

the populace (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Gilmore et al., 2013; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel, 1982) and negative evaluation of other national groups (Rivenburgh, 2000). The current study seeks to develop a new scale and compare it to Gilmore's items.

The History of the Term

The term's existence, let alone the premise of American Exceptionalism, has a long history before Dr. Gilmore developed themes of it. Regarded as the first new nation (Lipset, 1996; Hietala, 2003), President Reagan welcomed the idea that, in the 1600s, John Winthrop believed America was an example for all other nations (Reagan Library, 2016). Unfortunately, President Reagan and others misinterpreted the context of what John Winthrop meant. Winthrop's famous 1630 sermon “A Model of Christian Charity” was read to the Massachusetts Bay Company, inspiring them to be a “New England” that would be a “Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us.” (Hodgson, 2009, p. 1). Winthrop was speaking to other Englishman, inspiring them to be a shining example for all other colonies, not to be an independent nation – a novel idea that would not appear in the U.S. for another 130 years (Hodgson, 2009). This illumination is an exemplary representation of the overall purpose of this literature – it is perfectly acceptable for U.S. citizens to feel proud of their nation, so long as they are fully aware of what makes the U.S. distinct. One of the earliest notes of U.S. distinction comes from the words of French political thinker and author Alexis de Tocqueville, colloquially known as Tocqueville.

In 1835, Tocqueville published *Democracy in America* after traveling to observe U.S. society firsthand. He remarked that U.S. societal values were distinct from European, aristocratic culture, noting the emphasis placed on egalitarianism,

individualism, and the Christian religion, and enjoyed the absence of Toryism (traditional British conservatism) (Tocqueville, 1835/2002). One must acknowledge that Tocqueville's ideas only noted a clear distinction between the U.S. and Europe, not necessarily believing it was exceptional to any other society. The context of Tocqueville's writing meant he was warning against making any scientific generalizations about his observations, like American Exceptionalism (Litke, 2012). Tocqueville should still be included in the current study as much has changed over the nearly two centuries since his warning; the distinct society he observed was the foundation, and American Exceptionalism is the evolution. The societal values held when Communism failed to take root in the U.S. 100 years later when American Communist leader, Jay Lovestone, claimed the “American proletariat wasn't interested in revolution” (Mccoy, 2012). Upon hearing this, Joseph Stalin allegedly became frustrated with the “heresy of American Exceptionalism”; though Jay Lovestone may have been the first to use the term American Exceptionalism (Litke, 2012).

The current study does not disregard that the U.S. can be an exception to some generally accepted principles, such as its avoidance of a socialist revolution. However, the belief that the U.S. is universally superior because of these distinctions is an unhealthy viewpoint. Any democracy requires truth to function, and the U.S. is no exception; even if some disagree on this, they cannot deny the consequences of leaving the U.S. populace in the dark. It is unreasonable to expect the world's largest, most powerful democracy to function optimally when the populace does not fully understand the impact of their decisions, what the current legacy of the U.S. purports, and where it

will lead. The current study notes the strong themes of society, history, innocence, and influence that could be a part of American Exceptionalism.

Previous American Exceptionalism Scales

Gilmore developed three expressions of American Exceptionalism by observing invocations of American Exceptionalism by U.S. Presidents speaking domestically and on a foreign level. These methods include primary themes of explicit references to American Exceptionalism, secondary themes where American Exceptionalism addresses the U.S. as exceptional without comparing to other nations, and mutual themes where the U.S. can be addressed as exceptional while highlighting another country at the same time (Gilmore, 2014). The three primary themes include:

- addressing the U.S. as a distinct country from all others,
- addressing the U.S. as superior, and
- addressing the U.S. as specifically chosen to play a vital role in world affairs by a higher power such as God.

These themes come from the belief that the U.S. became distinct when it gained independence from the British Empire (Hietala, 2003; Lipset, 1996), that the U.S. emerged as a superpower after WWII (Schafer, 1991), and that the U.S. historic beginnings could have been divinely intended (Madsen, 1998). Secondary themes occur when speeches highlight the U.S. as a global leader or an example to follow, such as during the State of the Union speeches observed by Neumann and Coe (2012). A mutual theme is a subtle suggestion of another nation being one of the strongest or the second strongest in the world – prompting the audience to fill the number one position with the U.S.

With the primary and secondary themes defined, Gilmore later created thirteen items - divided into two domains - to further his research on how individuals reacted to different American Exceptionalism themes. The first domain emphasized a belief in the U.S.'s special status, and the second emphasized a belief in other countries' inferior status to the U.S. When exposed to primary themes of American Exceptionalism, individuals were likelier to believe that the U.S. was superior to all other nations and that others were inferior by comparison. It also influenced attitudes on whether the U.S. should be exempt from the same rules/laws other countries must follow. Following this, secondary themes could inspire a more assertive stance in the U.S. public when thought to be a part of the world's leader/caretaker (Gilmore, 2015).

In a future study, Gilmore would count the invocations of singular, superior, and God-favored American Exceptionalism during Presidential speeches on the foreign level. Findings indicate that American Exceptionalism is a central idea when addressing the global community, is recited more often to the globe than to individual nations, and presents differently during the Cold War. Its purpose was to win the hearts of nations caught between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and, after the Cold War, to reiterate U.S. power (Gilmore & Rowling, 2018). Further research called for redefining American Exceptionalism (Gilmore & Rowling, 2018) and examining President Trump's influence on the term (Gilmore, & Rowling, 2018; Gilmore & Rowling, 2019).

Jennifer Ward's unpublished manuscript is the only known work that has attempted to expand the domains of American Exceptionalism. Ward asserted that American Exceptionalism was a meta-myth of the U.S. qualitative distinction supported by four logically independent myths: American Performative Exceptionalism, American

Spiritual Exceptionalism, American Moral Exceptionalism, and American Moral Exemplarism (Ward, 2019). Performative Exceptionalism took Gilmore's distinct and superior themes and applied them to various aspects such as U.S. history, government, military, and influence. Spiritual Exceptionalism tied closely to Gilmore's God-favored Exceptionalism with the sub-myth stating that it presented a unique connection between the U.S. and God/higher power and then borrowing items from other literature such as Gilmore & Rowling's 2017 study. Moral Exceptionalism specifically purported that the U.S. populace was superior in moral character and, as a variant of the former, Moral Exemplarism was the idea that the U.S. should be the moral example for the rest of the globe.

Ward ventured to validate the new scale hoping for a .95 comparative-fit-index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of less than .006 (Schreiber et al., 2006) but fell just short by yielding a CFI of .93 and RMSEA of .007 in a four-factor model. Ward notes the difficulty in bringing American Exceptionalism under one definition because of the independence of the four sub-myths – for example, an individual can believe that the U.S. performance exceeds all others in the world but can disagree that the U.S. is the finest in moral character. Following the analysis and results, Ward concedes that future research should identify how many latent constructs encompass American Exceptionalism, all of which accurately represent the U.S. population by age, education, and religious as well as political belief.

The current study seeks to validate the American Exceptionalism Index (AEI) and compare it to Gilmore's thirteen national exceptionalism bias items (2015). The AEI's composition varies from both Gilmore and Ward – the former chiefly observed

the types of American Exceptionalism invoked, and the latter proposed that there were additional layers to the overall construct of American Exceptionalism. The current study seeks to utilize both primary (specifically of the superior category) and secondary themes fashioned by Gilmore for the current study's items but, like Ward, pursue the potential sub-domains of American Exceptionalism. Instead of studying invocations of American Exceptionalism, the study will test for an overall construct and specific domains of American Exceptionalism. A thorough examination of the premise is essential before validating the scale.

Proposed Domains of American Exceptionalism

Lipset describes the American Creed, the character of U.S. society, to contain “liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire” (Lipset, 1996, p. 31). Liberty is an easy enough feature to recognize what with the critical documents of the U.S. relating to Independence and Rights, as well as having July 4th as a federal holiday. Lipset goes on to say that since the people believed they had already achieved an egalitarian society after doing away with class-system tradition, then there was never really a need for a socialist movement within the U.S. One should be prefaced that, in the face of egalitarianism, however, that black families decline in social mobility across generations (Pfeffer & Killewald, 2019), earn less than white families (CPS, 2019), and that female wages are lower than male wages (CPS, 2019). Though some collectivistic tendencies do exist (Lipset, 1979; Lipset, 1996), the American Dream exhibits individualism within U.S. culture.

Populism is the belief in placing importance on the general public and distrusting the powerful elite. This anti-statist attitude is, for the U.S., associated with

emphasizing the virtues of laissez-faire (Lipset, 1996). The U.S. Bill of Rights and later Amendments give power to the people, and Lipset points out that these civil liberties reflect anti-statist attitudes (Lipset, 1986; Lipset, 1996). Despite a slight increase in support for state intervention during the Great Depression and WWII, it would almost be “obligatory for American politicians of both the right and the left to profess mistrust of government” (Glendon, 1992) fifty years later. Compared to the sibling nation that emerged from the Revolutionary War alongside the U.S., Canada today is more open to state intervention when private institutions fall short (Lipset, 1990). One could argue, however, that the U.S. provides a substitution of state intervention when private philanthropy is abundant, a strong example of how individualism resonates within the nation compared to other countries (Ross, 1987).

Murray (2013) asserts that the very civic culture of the U.S. makes it exceptional and outlines similar societal traits to that of Lipset. From civic culture comes industriousness, egalitarianism, religiosity, and community life that have evolved to produce a nation whose daily life is different from any other nation. The apparent similarity is that both authors note the nation's emphasis on egalitarianism; although there are similar justifications, Murray proficiently summated how U.S. citizens did not permit the idea that one's class influenced a person's virtue or human worth. Another parallel can be made between Lipset's individualism and Murray's industriousness as the synonyms involve self-reliance and a hard-working philosophy to improve one's livelihood. Perhaps religiosity is not as intense as it once was in Tocqueville's day (which is what Murray is commenting on), but religion has a principal part in the nation's founding and even prior to that. The Puritans' desire for religious freedom

convinced them to flee to the Americas (Sjursen, 2021), and the Founding Fathers (who very few were devout Christians) acknowledged the importance of religion for the U.S. government they crafted. John Adams said, “We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion.” and “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” (Murray, 2013, p. 24).

The current study extrapolates Lipset and Murray's defining U.S. societal features into items and appends one more characteristic. Many believe that the moral values of the U.S. are exceptional - the complicated, highly subjective principles of behavior of the U.S. are innately better than all other nations (Hodgson, 2009; Ivie & Giner, 2009; Lipset, 1996). According to Lipset (1996), the desired moral character of a U.S. citizen has the economic ambition to work hard, hopes for social ascension for oneself and their family, and to one day philanthropically give back. Ward attempted to validate a moral aspect of American Exceptionalism through Moral Exceptionalism and Exemplarism. However, the current study asserts that both are not individual facets but merely part of two facets. Regarding Moral Exceptionalism, the latent construct may exist, but morals are too associated with one's character and can be a part of a collective Societal Exceptionalism.

The Founding Fathers' contributions in building the nation by drafting the Constitution are revered and deified, despite it being a hasty second attempt to establish a functioning republic (Sjursen, 2021). The U.S. populace believes themselves to be exceptional when they are associated with mythical-status figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton and feats such as winning the

war for independence and becoming the 'savior' of WWII (Sjursen, 2021). A deification of the Founding Fathers and their Constitution, believing that the Constitutional Convention was meant to give civil rights to the U.S. populace, likely bolsters a national exceptionalism bias. This is ironic when one notes that the Convention may have done the exact opposite for civil rights, with one delegate, Elbridge Gerry, commenting, “The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy” (Sjursen, 2021. p.60).

The U.S.' uniqueness does, indeed, partly come from the idea that it was the first colony to gain independence and is therefore qualitatively different (Heitala, 2003; Lipset, 1996). It is strengthened further by the idea that the country rapidly developed and became a key player in international relations (Madsen, 1998), although it could not have progressed as it did. While it is more patriotic to believe that the new nation was completely independent European ideas, innovations, and events occasioned the U.S.; even the economy was tied tightly to the British. The U.S. and Europe felt an equivalent impact of essentially the same forces (Hodgson, 2009). It was not until the end of WWI that the U.S. gained any semblance of superiority, as it was one of the weakest in military power at the onset of the conflict. It emerged as a sole beneficiary by avoiding fighting and destruction on U.S. soil, increasing wealth from selling food and ammo, and developing commercially by manufacturing (but not inventing) many technological advancements (Hodgson, 2009). Post-WWII, the U.S. became one of the world's superpowers, with many citizens considering their nation exceptional on the world stage (Bacevich, 2008; Shafer, 1991). Research shows that experiencing joy when given something positive and unexpected – such as contributing to a significant victory - they

are overconfident in their assessments (Koellinger & Treffers, 2015). This overconfidence, applied to a national level, might lead to social-enhancing behaviors (Anderson et al., 2012), such as overestimating a nation's Historical Exceptionalism.

Related to overestimating historical accomplishments, the U.S. tends to downplay mistakes or disregard its faults outright. Sirvent and Haiphong (2019) criticize the U.S. for its imperialistic and violent history, among other things. Furthermore, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (O.E.C.D.) details many facets of the U.S. that would conflict with 80% of the U.S. population's presumption that their nation is one of the greatest (Hartig, & Gilberstadt, 2020). Sirvent and Haiphong (2019) discuss how white supremacy drowns out the supposedly ungrateful black population who do not yet have equal rights and opportunities, meritocracy is a façade to inheritance in the U.S., and violence in wars is considered justified despite countless civilian casualties (so long as the U.S. had good intentions). Innocence characterizes all of these mistakes as endeavors that did not work out. It is one matter to be completely unaware of an atrocity committed, but an entirely different affair when one dismisses the atrocity and even goes so far as to justify it based on who they are or their intentions. One of the authors' many examples is the sanctions on Iraq preventing the nation from repairing vital infrastructure (previously destroyed during a U.S. invasion). This resulted in millions of deaths, and the U.N. labeling the sanctions genocide – U.S. innocence justified the acts, with Secretary of State Madeline Albright saying it was “worth it” to remove nonexistent chemical and biological weapons (Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019, p. 149).

Innocence does not strictly apply to past evils committed that are ignored or sugarcoated. However, it can be an illusion of knowing that something is excellent and exceptional when it is poor. An illusion of knowing is the phenomenon where there is a belief that one has fully understood a subject when, in fact, their understanding of something is poor (Avhustiuk et al., 2018; Glenberg et al., 1982). This can apply to those who believe the U.S. is one of the most powerful countries in the world despite being ranked low in essential qualities of livelihood. The O.E.C.D., an intergovernmental organization that collects data from 38 countries and reports to the United Nations, has the ranking of the U.S. on education scores, income inequality, and more. In 2018, the U.S. ranked 9th in reading performance (O.E.C.D., 2021e), 13th in science performance (O.E.C.D., 2021f), and 33rd in math performance (O.E.C.D., 2021c) and ranked fifth highest in poverty rate (O.E.C.D., 2021d) and income inequality in 2019 (O.E.C.D., 2021a). It is rational to assume that the 80% of the population who believes the U.S. to be one of the greatest nations in the world is unaware of such rankings. U.S. Innocence is further displayed when they do not realize that the U.S. is ranked 28th in life expectancy (O.E.C.D., 2021b), ranked lower than even Afghanistan in percent of healthy years in life expectancy (WHO, 2020), and is not even the happiest populace (Helliwell et al., 2021).

“You see, American influence is always stronger when we lead by example,” said President Obama (The Obama White House, 2014). This short sentence is telling in two regards: 1. U.S. influence is regarded as a positive absolute or should at least be strived for, and 2. It is most desirable when the U.S. is in charge or setting the path/example for other nations to follow. Undoubtedly the U.S. has played a leading

role in recent global history (Gilmore, 2017), having vast economic influence (Gilmore et al., 2016; Hodgson, 2009), cultural impacts (Gilmore et al., 2016; Kohut & Stokes, 2006), and become the dominant superpower following the end of the Cold War (Bacevich, 2008; Gilmore, 2016). While there are benefits in calling on American Exceptionalism in global influence, such as using the rhetoric to further humanitarianism relief efforts (Mottet, 2010), there is a frightening disproportion of foreign military influence. Projected to have three times the number of foreign military bases as the U.K., Russia, and China combined, the U.S. itself does not have any full-scale foreign military bases within its borders (Bledsoe, 2022).

With the evident influence the U.S. has – be it by proxy or directly – in the world (Sirvent & Haiphong; Sjursen, 2021), one must question if other countries should attempt to match the same amount of influence or if the U.S. is the only nation with such power. Should the latter be true, then one must question why the U.S. stands as an exception. Take the Kantian philosophical categorical imperative, “Act as though the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature.” (Kant, 1785/2005, p.24). Essentially, if an individual permits themselves to do something, then every other person in the world is given the same entitlement. For example, if one cheats on their partner, they must accept that their partner is also cheating. If the U.S. uses remote drones to eliminate threats in a foreign nation without reprimand, then foreign nations can do the same to a U.S. citizen. It is implausible that the U.S. would ever permit such an action by a foreign nation and has expressed outrage over the possibility of Russia tampering with U.S. elections, despite having had a role in inciting wars and coups in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019). This

level of influence on the world and how the U.S. exempts itself from some of its own declarations (Bacevich, 2008; Chomsky, 2017; Koh, 2003; Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019) is a clear domain of American Exceptionalism. U.S. Influence and the three other facets discussed prior are the domains the current study seeks to explore in the new American Exceptionalism scale.

The Present Study

The current study draws from instruction and examples from academics and professionals who have experience with scale validation – a primer was developed and available to guide future scale development. Boateng et al. published a guide in 2018 that consists of three phases covering nine steps which the current study uses as a loose guide for establishing convergent validity to Gilmore's American Exceptionalism domain and national exceptionalism bias items (2015). This manuscript discusses all nine steps despite not completing each as specified - this is satisfactory as long as the manuscript meets the inherent objective when establishing convergent validity with the original scale. The scale validating process begins with an identification of an establishment of a domain – the previously unidentified behavior that a given study is looking for (Haynes et al., 1995). In addition to the overarching American Exceptionalism domain are four independent domains supporting the central bias – three of which were grounded with Gilmore's (2015) primary themes and one with the secondary themes. Below are the definitions of all five constructs:

American Exceptionalism: A national exceptionalism bias that the U.S. is distinctive or exceptional in some way(s) to other countries.

American Historical Exceptionalism (AHE): A facet of American Exceptionalism that purports the U.S. polity has a more positive, noteworthy history and performance record in its creation, resistance to outside influence, and economic, social, and military victories compared to other countries.

American Societal Exceptionalism (ASE): A facet of American Exceptionalism that purports the U.S. polity is a distinct society having a unique character to its people with greater values such as morals, meritocracy, and egalitarianism compared to other countries.

American Innocence (AIO): A facet of American Exceptionalism that purports the U.S. polity has made/makes fewer mistakes than other nations and that education, healthcare, and other vital infrastructures are the greatest compared to other nations.

American Influence (AIF): A facet of American Exceptionalism that purports the U.S. polity alone, rather than other nations, should be the example for the ideal society and maintain the most substantial global influence.

The current study omitted a Spiritual Exceptionalism/focus on a God-favored theme for a few reasons. The primary reason was that Gilmore's God-favored themed items were already going to be included in a separate questionnaire to test for convergent validity with the proposed AEI. Also, despite the U.S.' Manifest Destiny, the facet may not be as vital as the others. A God-favored theme is not invoked as often and is not as well received as the other themes. When Ward attempted to add Spiritual Exceptionalism as a sub-domain of American Exceptionalism, it was rendered "ineffectual" due to a large number of atheists in their study (Ward, 2019, p. 39). One could even argue that the construct may not appeal to the values of every Christian

denomination equally; regardless, the Christian religion does not entirely dominate the country. 29.4% of the U.S. population (over 97 million people) are non-Christian (Pew Research Center, 2022), which is far too large a number to allow Spiritual Exceptionalism to remain a latent construct.

Domains of a scale were identified *a priori* as the previous authors such as Lipset, Bacevich, Sirvent and Haiphong could be considered an established framework alongside academic works like Gilmore and Rowling to help limit the scope of the items' themes. These four domains are meant to be broad aspects of American Exceptionalism in fear that if the domains observe particular phenomena, it could lead to construct underrepresentation – this would invalidate the scale (Mackenzie et al., 2011; Messick, 1995). The preliminary AEI included any item thought remotely related to the domain at hand, since the draft is meant to be longer (Kline, 1993; Schinka et al., 2012) and beyond the theoretical view of the construct (Clark & Watson, 2019).

Boateng et al. (2018) stress that every item should warrant as little interpretation as possible. Indeed, Fowler's five essential characteristics of items had the central themes of communication and consistency – in communicating the item's intent, what constitutes an adequate answer, and whether respondents have enough information to make an informed decision (Fowler, 1995). This can be fairly difficult to achieve when there is no way of knowing how committed a participant is to the study and giving satisfying answers rather than accurate ones (Krosnick, 2018). Essentially, in item generation, one must effectively conceptualize the theme of the items and ensure that they are simple and easy to read for participants.

The current study notes that Boateng et al. (2018) call for pre-testing of questions, referred to as cognitive interviews, to ensure that the items reflect the domain and that they are valid measurements (Fowler, 1995). Pre-testing is the distribution of the proposed scale to participants for cognitive interviews, not for completion and analysis of items. This step of the process is meant to be a final check against any expertise bias so that the everyday respondent fully understands what the items are asking, what their intent is, and what would be a valid answer. Following any edits made after the cognitive interviews, one may proceed to the first distribution of the survey to a sample.

No detail in the distribution process is too small - be it collecting data via pencil and paper versus computer data entry or estimating how large the desired sample should be. Paper data collection is not susceptible to soft/hardware crashes or data leaks (in both cyber and physical avenues) and does not depend on an internet connection; but, if one is collecting data from a large sample, the labor, expenses, and the possibility of human error increase (Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009; Fanning & McAuley, 2014). On the other hand, using technology in data collection helps increase the sample size, reduce errors, and help the administrators to maintain participant confidentiality (Dray et al., 2016; Fanning & McAuley, 2014; Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009).

Several authors have disputed the needed sample size for scale validation studies. Some assert that there should be a ratio of participants to items (Nunnally, 1978), others a range of participants numbering in the hundreds (Comrey, 1988; Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988; Clark & Watson, 1995); some have proposed a graded scale of 100 participants being poor and more than 1,000 participants being excellent

(Comrey & Lee, 1992). It all depends on what the particular survey at hand calls for, but generally, a larger sample size yields a more faithful representation of the population with fewer measurement errors (MacCallum et al., 1999; Osborne & Costello, 2004). The end of a study could have sampled from multiple thousands of participants should the proposed scale undergo multiple rounds of survey administration. Following each round, however, the scale would be edited/updated according to the previous round's results.

Item reduction analyses are needed to ensure that the items in the final version of the scale are parsimonious, functional, and internally consistent (Thurstone, 1947). Several techniques are used to complete this step, such as item difficulty, item discrimination indices, and distractor efficiency analyses. However, the most relevant ones for the current study are inter-item and item-total correlations (Devellis, 2012; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Generally utilized for categorical items (Devellis, 2012; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011), the inter-item correlations are used to correlate the relationship of each item to all other items (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011; Raykov, 2015), and the item-total correlations observe how each item's score relates to the total score of the overall score of the scale (Devellis, 2012; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). It is most desirable for both analyses to have an item cut if they lower correlations ($<.30$) in order to improve the tentative scale (Boateng et al., 2018). Following this step is the extraction of factors via a regression model.

This step provides a hypothetical scale structure, identifying which items fall under particular domains. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identifies shared variance in the items and thus the scale's latent structure (domains) (McCoach et al., 2013). For

the current study, it is beneficial to understand that this step can also reduce items when inadequate. Indeed, items retaining a factor loading of .40 and above should be preserved (Nunnally, 1978; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011) to test the factors' dimensionality. This next step involves identifying if a proposed scale can act similarly across different times and samples (Brown, 2014). Boateng et al. (2018) provide several methods for testing dimensionality, such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) - which can assess domains determined *a priori* (Morin et al., 2016) - RMSEA, and CFI. Noted as best practice, Pushpanathan et al. (2018) utilized three different models of CFA - a 1, general factor model, a 3-factor model composed of sub-scales, and a combined general factor and 3-factor model.

Sampling across different times and participants does not equate to reliability. Reliability tests, on the contrary, report how consistent a scale is under the same conditions (Porta, 2018). Methods vary in assessing reliability, but Cronbach's alpha and the test-retest reliability options are the (Asparouhov & Muthen, 2014; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Reliability tests report how consistent a scale is when repeated with Cronbach's alpha assessing how items co-vary according to the cumulative score (Cronbach, 1951; Develles, 2012; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011), and test-retest reliability assessing the consistency of these cumulative scores are across time (Develles, 2012). Achieving a higher score for both reliability tests is desirable. A coefficient alpha of .80 or .95 for an item is preferred over the minimum of .70 (Bernstein & Nunnally, 1994; Cronbach, 1951; Glanz et al., 2015), and the test-retest reliability can be satisfied with a high intra-class correlation coefficient (Weir, 2005).

Lastly, Boateng et al. (2018) outline step nine to establish validity beyond content validity achieved in step two. Step nine's validity occurs after data collection and involves “criterion (predictive and concurrent) and construct validity (convergent, discriminant, differentiation by known groups, correlations)” (Boateng et al., 2018, p. 13). Criterion validity relies on another comparable measurement to model after - the relationship between the two models signifies the ability of the scale at hand to predict a particular behavior. Construct validity, more directly, measures how well the scale measures the concept it was designed to assess. Two subsequent forms of criterion and construct validity are encouraged to be utilized concurrently to ensure that predictive validity is established.

Following these steps or the inherent purpose behind these steps, the current study seeks to contribute to the American Exceptionalism literature. Numerous acclaimed authors have observed myriad factors of American Exceptionalism, which the current study seeks to examine. Using Gilmore's (2015) items as a basis for convergent validity, the current study seeks to validate the AEI out of necessity for a healthier nation. Logically, American Exceptionalism is not an ideal ideology or practice; nor is the premise a unique idea to the U.S. “Every great power takes the same stand, so a Stalinist Russia prided itself on its advancing the cause of human civilization. Promoting democracy, people defending the world against the fascist forces led by the United States,” an Imperial Japan committing horrendous atrocities but wanting to make a paradise of China, and Hitler claiming to end ethnic cleansing after taking Czechoslovakia (Chomsky's Philosophy, 2015).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

A total of 506 U.S. adults ($M = 35.8$, $SD = 10.7$) took part in the study, and 477 were included in analyses. Some individuals who claimed to have taken part in the survey but were not recorded as doing so were dropped automatically. The study consisted of more male participants (66.5%) than female (33.3%); participants consisted of mostly White respondents (86.8%), followed by Asian-Americans (6.4%), Native-Americans (4.7%), African-Americans (1.6%), and two or more ethnicities (0.4%). The majority of participants attained a Bachelor's degree (75.7%), describing themselves as a Democrat (33.1%), strong Democrat (14.4%), Republican (29.4%), strong Republican (13.2%) with more associations as Liberal (32%) than Conservative (17.2%).

Materials

AEI. The AEI (Appendix A) is hypothesized to measure a national exceptionalism bias that the U.S. is distinctive or exceptional in some way(s) to other countries. It is further hypothesized to have four domains: American Historical Exceptionalism, American Societal Exceptionalism, American Innocence, and American Influence. This proposed scale was completed by participants in order to be validated for later studies. The 45-item questionnaire asked participants to indicate the degree in which they agree with a statement on a 7-point Likert scale. 11 items pertained to American Historical Exceptionalism, 11 to American Societal Exceptionalism, 12 to American Innocence, and 11 to American Influence.

Gilmore's National Exceptionalism Bias. Gilmore (2015) created 13 items to measure a national exceptionalism bias (Appendix B), and is comprised of two components: 7 items measured the belief in the U.S.' special status, and six items measured how other countries were inferior to the U.S. These items measured the impact of how participants reacted to primary and secondary types of American Exceptionalism. Participants completed these 13 items as well to assess for convergent validity with the AEI.

Procedure

A posting on Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) recruited prospective participants to complete a survey created in Qualtrics. mTurk is an online crowdsourcing network that can collect many and diverse participant data (Aguinis et al., 2021) and has been shown to have more attentive participants than college students (Hauser & Schwartz, 2016). As an incentive for participation, individuals were financially compensated with 50¢ after they completed the Qualtrics survey. Participants completed demographic information, a version of the AEI, as well as Gilmore's (2015) national exceptionalism bias items. All participants were prefaced with an informed consent statement before clicking a link to the Qualtrics survey. The statement made it aware that participation was voluntary, that they could stop at any time, and that they would receive compensation upon completing the survey.

Simple, straightforward language and syntax were used across all four *a priori* domains of American Exceptionalism to ensure all participants easily understood them. With some reverse-coded exceptions, the items were similar to the language used in these two examples: "The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional society compared to other

countries” and “The U.S. should serve as an example of the most exceptional society that other countries aspire to mimic”. Instructions were provided on how to respond to the AEI items according to a 7-point Likert scale - a score of one being “Strongly Disagree” and seven being “Strongly Agree”. Gilmore's (2015) items were accompanied by the instructions he provided (a 4-point Likert scale of one being “Strongly Disagree” and four being “Strongly Agree”).

Descriptive statistics were analyzed, including an average of the preliminary AEI, its skewness, and how different political ideologies responded to the scale. In the interest of time, only one round of data was collected; although the data was split in half at random. One half of the data (238 participants) was used to reduce items through item-rest correlation, and then extract factors with EFA – both were conducted in Jamovi. The second half of the data (239 participants), utilizing the adjusted number of items and domains previously identified, underwent three CFA to test the scale’s dimensionality. A one-factor model was analyzed, as well as a four-factor model, and a second-order model of a principal American Exceptionalism construct and four sub-domains all of which were conducted in Mplus. In Jamovi, Cronbach’s alpha was estimated to measure reliability, and lastly, a multi-trait multi-method matrix was used to measure convergent validity between the AEI and Gilmore’s (2015) items.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The preliminary AEI's average score ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 1.06$), consisting of 45 items, displayed a normal distribution (Figure 1) with a slight negative skew of $-.285$ ($SE = .186$). As shown in Figure 2, political ideology did not appear to have an effect on responses to the AEI. Even when splitting the data, the skew, mean, and standard deviation did not change significantly, reassuring that with the scale's distribution being normal the rest of the analyses could proceed. To begin, an item reduction analysis was conducted on the first half of the data ($n = 238$) before factor analysis. The item-rest correlation is the corrected item-total correlation and is a splendid method for item reduction (Lord & Novick, 1968). If the item-rest correlation of an item was greater than $.30$, then the item was considered desirable (Devellis, 2012; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Utilizing Jamovi's reliability analysis item-rest correlation option, all items were deemed relevant with a range of $.48$ to $.71$.

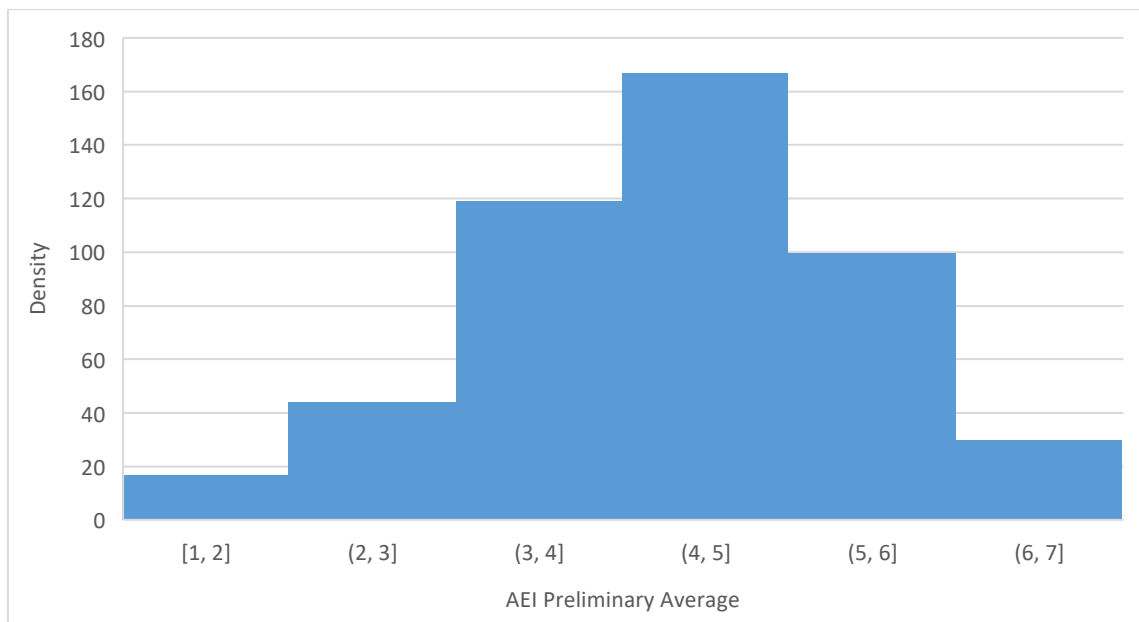


Figure 1 – AEI Preliminary Histogram

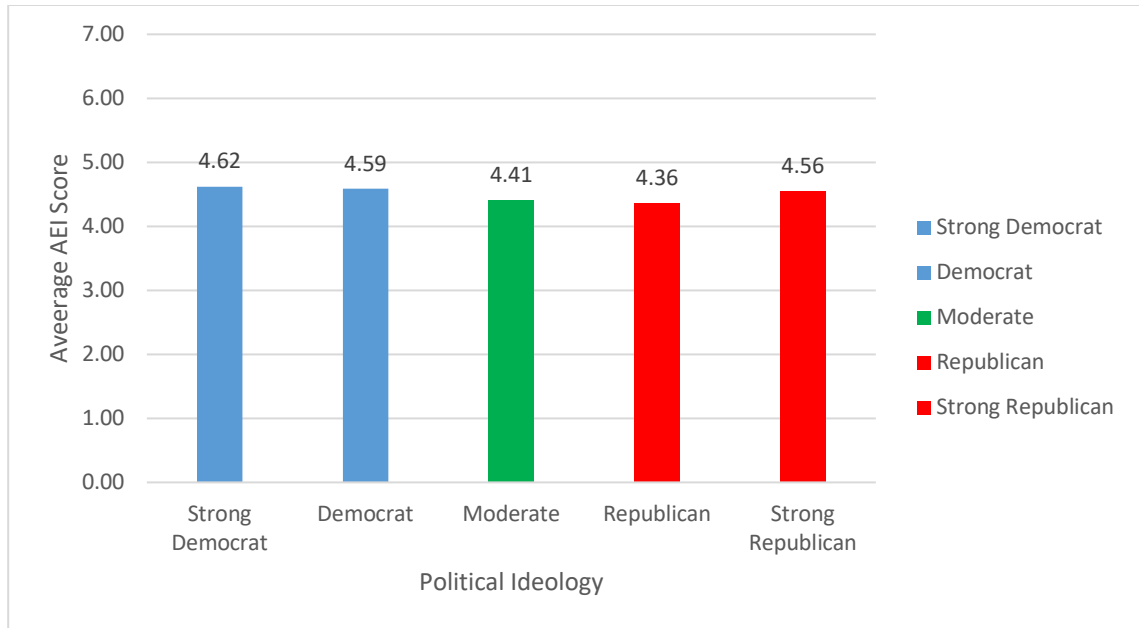


Figure 2 – Preliminary AEI Across Ideology

Since all 45 items passed quantitative judgment, items were kept based on qualitative judgment. The items kept were thought to be the strongest representations of their respective domains - those that plainly stated that the U.S. is distinct in "X" category and items bearing similarities became the final AEI. With domains identified *a priori* an emphasis was placed on keeping the four domains balanced – all domains would have an equal number of items to one another. Item reduction eliminated 25 items, leaving 20 items as the finalized AEI. Of particular note, the first five items of American Innocence were dropped automatically; while they could be seen as testing innocence, upon reflection they were more likely based on one’s trivial knowledge of U.S. global standing.

The finalized AEI scale was tested for the optimal number of latent factors through exploratory factor analysis. The current study utilized a maximum likelihood extraction, which did not differ greatly from the minimum residual and principal axis

methods. The oblique Promax rotation was chosen in case the EFA pulled four factors that would likely have some overlap. The parallel analysis option - a method recommended by the primer to determine the number of latent factors - of EFA yielded one factor for the AEI (Boateng, et al., 2018). Both of the assumption checks Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2192$, $df=190$, $p<.001$) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test ($KMO = .955$) indicate that the data was appropriate for EFA. The one-factor model accounted for 46.3% of the variance, with the only factor having an eigenvalue of 9.25 (Table 1).

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of the Finalized AEI ($N = 238$).

| Factor | Eigenvalue | % of variance after extraction | Cumulative % of variance after extraction |
|--------|------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| AEI | 9.26 | 46.3 | 46.3 |

Note. AEI = American Exceptionalism Index.

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis Factor Pattern Matrix for the Finalized AEI

| | Factor 1 |
|---|-------------|
| AEI | |
| AHE6. The U.S. was often the first to make positive, notable social reforms (such as ending slavery and giving women the right to vote) before other countries. | .69 |
| AHE7 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has experienced very few internal problems. | .68 |
| AHE8 - After the Revolutionary War and just before WWI, the U.S. experienced nothing but growth and prosperity. | .65 |
| AHE9 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. was the most significant factor in winning WWII. | .70 |
| AHE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional history compared to other countries. | .65 |
| ASE3 - The U.S. values and rewards honest, hard work more than other countries. | .70 |
| ASE5 - The U.S. has the most civil liberties/rights/freedoms compared to other countries. | .72 |
| ASE9 - The people of the U.S. share a higher sense of morals than other countries. | .73 |
| ASE10 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has a distinct/exceptional set of values. | .73 |
| ASE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional society compared to other countries. | .71 |
| AIO6 - The U.S. acknowledges, apologizes/compensates for its mistakes, unlike other countries where mistakes are silenced or overlooked. | .71 |
| AIO7 - The U.S. has made mistakes, but unlike other countries, they were always made with good intentions. | .73 |
| AIO10 - The mistakes the U.S. has made are in the past and do not dictate the country's future. | .72 |
| AIO11 - Despite a few problems, the U.S. leaves a significant, positive impact on the world more than any other country. | .68 |
| AIO12 - The U.S. has made the fewest mistakes compared to other countries. | .65 |
| AIF2 - The U.S. should serve as an example of the most exceptional society that other countries aspire to mimic if they do not already do so | .70 |
| AIF4 - Other countries should follow the U.S.' lead in world affairs if they do not already do so. | .68 |
| AIF7 - The U.S. should have a distinct influence in global affairs if it does not already. | .67 |
| AIF9 - Other countries should have as much influence in global affairs as the U.S if they do not already have influence. ^a | .59 |
| AIF11 - The U.S. should not be significantly influenced by any other country. | .49 |

^aReverse-coded item

For the remainder of the analyses, the second half of the sample was used ($n = 239$) to compensate for only one round of data collection. Three confirmatory factor analyses were performed on the AEI to test the scale's dimensionality. The first CFA, shown in Table 3 utilized the single factor extracted from the EFA and reported a decent model fit (RMSEA = .054, CFI = .951, TLI = .945), but a statistically significant test of model fit ($\chi^2 = 288$, $df = 170$, $p < .001$). This model supports the notion of the AEI as a principal construct but does not note the domains identified *a priori*.

As the analysis allows for testing previously identified domains (Boateng et al., 2018), a second CFA was conducted to test the four domains of American Historical Exceptionalism, American Societal Exceptionalism, American Innocence, and American Influence. Table 3 reports that the four-factor model is a great fit (RMSEA = .046, CFI = .966, TLI = .961) and that the test of model fit was significant ($\chi^2 = 245$, $df = 170$, $p < .001$). A chi-square difference test between the one-factor and four-factor model found a significant Sattora-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square Difference of 68.24 and a difference in Degrees of Freedom of 6. The four-factor model does not, however, include a principal construct that is supported by the aforementioned four domains.

A second-order CFA was conducted with an overall American Exceptionalism construct as one level, and the four sub-domains as another level. Table 3 reports a good second-order model (RMSEA = .047, CFI = .964, TLI = .959), despite the test of model fit significance ($\chi^2 = 253$, $df = 166$, $p < .001$). With the second-order model showing a good fit, and the current study's theory that the AEI is composed of one principal

domain, and four subdomains the second-order CFA model is presented as the accepted AEI model.

Table 3. Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Finalized AEI.

| Model | χ^2 | <i>df</i> | RMSEA (90% CI) | TLI | CFI |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|------|------|
| One-factor model | 288.08 | 170 | .054 [.043, .064] | .945 | .951 |
| Four-factor model | 245.39 | 164 | .045 [.033, .057] | .961 | .966 |
| Second-order factor model | 235.37 | 166 | .047 [.035, .058] | .959 | .964 |

Note. AEI = American Exceptionalism Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; 90% CI = 90% Confidence Interval for RMSEA (lower limit, upper limit); TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

Cronbach’s alpha was greater than .80 ($\alpha = .95$), which indicates the scale is reliable (Boateng, et al., 2018) but has redundant items being over .90 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) (Table 4). Lastly, a correlation matrix was created to test the AEI for convergent validity with Gilmore’s (2015) national exceptionalism bias items (Table 5). It is important to note that the first item of Gilmore’s first national exceptionalism bias domain was not included; this was not intentional but a mistake. Indeed, when creating the survey in Qualtrics one item was simply overlooked – human error prevented the desired item from being included. Unfortunately, an educated guess could not be made as to what the score would have been for this missing item as the scores for the rest of the construct in the current study compared to Gilmore’s (2015) study varied too greatly.

Table 4. Finalized AEI Reliability Estimates (Cronbach's Alpha).

| Sample | AEI | | | | |
|---------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | Total | AHE | ASE | AIO | AIF |
| Split 1 | .94 | .84 | .84 | .83 | .80 |
| Split 2 | .95 | .79 | .86 | .84 | .83 |

Note. Split 1 $N = 238$; Split 2 $N = 239$

Table 5. Correlations between the AEI, its four subdomains, and Gilmore's national exceptionalism bias domains

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. AHE | | | | | | | |
| 2. ASE | .79** | | | | | | |
| 3. AIO | .75** | .77** | | | | | |
| 4. AIF | .71** | .76** | .81** | | | | |
| 5. AEI | .89** | .91** | .92** | .90** | | | |
| 6. Gilmore 1 st domain | .55** | .56** | .53** | .52** | .61** | | |
| 7. Gilmore 2 nd domain | .49** | .51** | .54** | .47** | .53** | .78** | |
| 8. Gilmore total | .55** | .57** | .58** | .52** | .61** | .94** | .95** |

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

The average score of the AEI and the average scores of each of the four domains were correlated to the average score of the two domains of Gilmore's items separately and conjointly. The current study considered what Boateng et al (2018) meant by having too low of a correlation in a multi-trait multi-method matrix when analyzing for convergent validity and proposed a range for an acceptable correlation. The current study's criteria is as follows: if Pearson's r was greater than .30 and less than .60, and if the correlation was significant, this would meet convergent validity criteria – the correlation must be palpable but not strong enough to indicate redundancy. Taking into account the missing item in Gilmore's first domain, the AEI narrowly missed achieving convergent validity. Table 7 shows that the AEI average score was too similar to Gilmore's overall average score ($r = .608$) and the incomplete first domain ($r = .607$); although the AEI did correlate well with the complete second domain ($r = .532$). All domains of the AEI reported a good correlation across all three of Gilmore's average scores. Given that the correlations were on the cusp of convergent validity the current study concludes that the AEI could be considered valid after edits to the scale and include the missing item of Gilmore's.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This thesis aimed to validate a new scale called the American Exceptionalism Index and compare it to Gilmore's national exceptionalism bias items (2015). American Exceptionalism is dissimilar to one's patriotism toward the U.S. It is, in fact, an overestimation of its might and ability to determine what is right. This national exceptionalism bias depicts the U.S. as unique in nearly every facet that those caught in the in-group can think. Democratic and Republican leaders alike have invoked American Exceptionalism rhetoric (Gilmore & Rowling, 2019; Obama, 2013, para. 28; The Obama White House, 2014; PBS Newshour, 2017; Reagan Library, 2016; Tumulty, 2017), and there is little difference in how Democrats ($M = 4.57$, $S.D. = .99$) and Republicans ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.25$) responded to the AEI.

American Exceptionalism is not the root cause for all of the U.S.' wrongful actions and beliefs, but it is undoubtedly a powerful presence in them. The extensive literature concerning American Exceptionalism notes U.S. distinction in the societal and historical sense, the innocence it breeds, and the influence it must maintain. Though there are some legitimate exceptions the U.S. has achieved at the societal level, the argument of U.S. societal values (Lipset, 1986; Lipset, 1990; Lipset, 1996; Murray, 2013) being superior to other countries is too subjective for one W.E.I.R.D. nation to proclaim (Henrich, 2010; Muthukrishna et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2018). Historically, the U.S. experienced the same forces as Europe, and despite glorifying past feats (Sjursen, 2021), it was not until after WWII and the destruction of the rest of the world that the U.S. became distinct (Bacevich, 2008; Shafer, 1991). Some past actions committed by the U.S. are mislabeled as innocent, even justifiable in some eyes; a Secretary of State

has validated a U.S. action that the U.N. labeled as genocide (Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019). On the macro level, the U.S. sometimes exempts itself from its declarations but still expects other countries to adhere to U.S. influence (Bacevich, 2008; Chomsky, 2017; Koh, 2003; Sirvent & Haiphong, 2019). The current study believed these to be domains of an overall American Exceptionalism construct and generated 45 items to undergo the validation process.

The study followed a primer of nine steps for best practices in scale development and validation (Boateng et al., 2018). Though the current study utilized the primer as a step-by-step guide, the methodology often differed but never outright ignored a step. Reasonable means outside the primer's guide were utilized to satisfy a few steps' inherent purposes. Instead of conducting interviews with experts to establish content validity, their published works were read. Using their content and replicating the simple syntax of Gilmore's national exceptionalism bias items (2015) ensured the domains would match what was intended. These alternatives were time and money convenient but never made at the expense of the scientific method. The criteria for evaluating critical points of the AEI, such as reliability and validity margins, were never avoided.

U.S. adults participated to the current study's Qualtrics survey, responding to the proposed AEI and an incomplete version of Gilmore's national exceptionalism bias items (2015). A mistake was made in creating the survey; one item of Gilmore's first domain was mistakenly left out of the study and was not intentional. Despite the error, the second domain remained fit to analyze. After identifying that the data had a normal distribution, it was split in half at random, with one set of participant data analyzed for

item-rest correlations and exploratory factor analysis. The latter data underwent three confirmatory factor analyses: a one-factor model, a four-factor model, and a second-order model. The final AEI of 20 items was analyzed for Cronbach's alpha and was correlated to Gilmore's two national exceptionalism bias domains, as well as an overall construct of the two domains.

Results indicated many redundant items in the AEI, but all were quantitatively acceptable. Therefore, the best judgment of which items best represented the American Exceptionalism construct decreased the number to 20. When reducing items, an emphasis was maintained on balancing the number of items per domain. The current study's belief in a second-order model and maintaining an equal ratio of items per domain to scrutinize these domains' existence was considered harmless to a principal construct. Item-rest correlations indicated a strong association across all domains, evoking the presence of an overarching construct but in no way dissuading the existence of sub-domains.

The 20-item AEI produced one factor from EFA, and while the results of the one-factor CFA model could be considered acceptable in some light, it was not as strong as a four-factor or second-order model. Indeed, the criteria provided by Boateng et al. (2018) indicated that RMSEA, CFI, and TLI are excellent model fit indices, and thus all were included in the current study. All CFA models reported acceptable RMSEA and CFI statistics, but the one-factor model did not have a $TLI > .95$, whereas the four-factor and the second-order models did. Though the four-factor model produced good statistics, the literature review shows many discussing one central construct in a different light that varied from author to author. Taking this and the EFA

results into account, the current study accepts the second-order model as the best representation of the AEI. The second-order model reported a robust set of statistics, mediates an ideal balance between the EFA and four-factor CFA results, and corresponds with the expectations detailed in the literature review.

Cronbach's alpha was within the threshold Boateng et al. (2018) presented; however, Tavakol & Dennick (2011) state that an alpha greater than .90 indicates a scale contains too many redundant items. This likely applies to the AEI, and future studies should attempt to diversify the items further. This is not to disparage the four-factor model results. However, with hindsight gained at the item reduction step, many items could have been rephrased to connect more explicitly to their respective domain. Also, many items could have been more direct instead of calling on individual and (perhaps to the participants) randomly specific instances of U.S. history and culture. Though the 20-item AEI did not achieve reliability, it is conceivable that a smaller version of the scale could achieve validity, but this may drastically change the model fit.

Lastly, a correlation matrix displayed significant positive correlations between the 20-item AEI, each of its 5-item domains, Gilmore's two national exceptionalism bias domains (2018), and a combined 12-item construct. The criteria for convergent validity was established to be observing for a mild Pearson's r between the average score of the one-factor AEI and the average score of each of Gilmore's two domains. It is essential to note that the first domain of Gilmore's was incomplete; however, the second domain was perfectly fit for analysis. Boateng et al. (2018) note that the correlation cannot be too weak (less than .30) and the current study thought it unwise to accept a correlation too high (greater than .60) that would indicate the constructs were too similar. The 20-

item AEI achieved convergent validity with Gilmore's second domain but narrowly could not achieve the same with the (incomplete) first or combined construct.

It is unclear how participants would respond to the missing item of the first domain of Gilmore's (2015), and the current study cannot assert too much concerning the AEI's validity. Considering that the second domain correlated well with the AEI, one can see that the current study is on the right track. If one were to refuse to assume the correlation could not drop with the inclusion of the missing item, no one could not refute how close the AEI came to convergent validity. Regardless of the unfortunate error, the results are a welcome addition to American Exceptionalism literature. The AEI nearly achieved convergent validity with Gilmore's thirteen U.S. national exceptionalism bias items. Despite this, the current study asserts that, with some future improvements, the AEI is a new, valid scale measuring American Exceptionalism.

The rationale behind the AEI being composed of one principal construct and four subdomains was to gauge if participants scored differently across domains. Perhaps one participant scored high in American Historical Exceptionalism but scored low in American Societal Exceptionalism. It was also merely a theory generated by seeing the many sides of American Exceptionalism across multiple authors. Having conducted a second-order CFA it is clear that there is a distinction between each of the domains while remaining under an overarching construct. The testing of these distinctions alone is a valuable avenue of future study – testing U.S. favoritism with American Innocence or even Influence, and grappling with U.S.-based education and American Historical Exceptionalism comes to mind first. These four domains – these four specific domains

that were synthesized based on the observable consensus of previous literature - provide a more refined understanding of how American Exceptionalism is constructed.

The AEI is not meant to replace Gilmore's items as they are accompanied by news articles meant to test the potential impact of their two distinct domains of the U.S. national exceptionalism bias. The AEI does not require this and can measure American Exceptionalism alone. The AEI incorporates both of Gilmore's two domains – U.S. superiority, and other countries' inferiority to the U.S. and has an additional understanding of American Exceptionalism with four new domains. Finally, the current study finds that the AEI does not favor any political ideology. Indeed, Democrats and Republicans scored nearly the same in the AEI, but Gilmore's items found conservatives score higher than liberals (Gilmore, 2015). This is the core of the AEI's usefulness for future study; it does not need additional materials to be administered – though future studies would do well to test the AEI in the same fashion as Gilmore – and it does not favor one side's politics.

A concern felt by this study was the needed sample size. Boateng et al. (2018) provide multiple criteria for the sample size for a good scale validation, the number traveling into the hundreds, if not thousands if one is performing multiple collection rounds. A larger sample size may yield better results, but if one knew the statistical power needed, the same observation could be met with a considerably smaller sample. Power analyses require some baseline or assumed parameters, which the current study did not necessarily have. Emulating Gilmore's (2015) sample size seemed appropriate, but available funding could not account for seven hundred participants. Studies in the future can now use the current as a baseline in their American Exceptionalism work.

Future studies should review the American Exceptionalism Index items in at least three ways. Another round of participants may increase factor uniqueness after editing the items to relate more strongly with their respective domains. Another viewpoint on American Exceptionalism could rearrange the items included in the 20-item AEI, resulting in vastly different outcomes. Lastly, if the scale still shows a high Cronbach's alpha after revising the items for greater distinctiveness, then the scale will need to be reduced in size. The current study shows great promise for the future of the AEI, but the scale needs polishing before moving forward.

Experimental testing may begin if a future study successfully validates an improved version of the scale. Countless avenues present themselves after validation - measuring the AEI after different invocations of American Exceptionalism are presented, testing for in-group hostility against out-groups, patriotism and American Exceptionalism comparison, and more. A particular purpose of the AEI is to foster communication and reduce competition at the everyday individual and Congressional levels. The inherent purpose is to reel U.S. beliefs and attitudes back to realistic, empathetic, and acceptable levels. The AEI presenting no difference between conservative and liberal scores shows promise in its usefulness as an unbiased tool across the U.S. political spectrum. Furthermore, Gilmore's items and the AEI may measure a U.S. national exceptionalism bias, but the latter has shown that it can do so outside of an experimental condition and that it has a more detailed understanding of the bias - American Exceptionalism - with the four new domains under the principal construct.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Items

Appendix A: Demographic Items

- Please specify your sex.
- Please specify your age.
- Please specify your ethnicity.
- Please specify the highest level of education you have completed.
- Please specify your personal income per year (if you do not know off-hand a best-guess is acceptable).
- How would you (politically) describe yourself?
- Please specify your political affiliation.

Appendix B: Preliminary American Exceptionalism Index

Appendix B: Preliminary American Exceptionalism Index

Please carefully read the following prompts and answer by rating them on a scale of 1 - 7 on how much you agree/disagree with each statement.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Not sure / Neutral | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

AEI:

AHE1 - John Winthrop’s “City on a Hill” quote in 1630 emphasized the exceptional nature of colonists settling in America.

AHE2 - The Founding Fathers relied on their own ideas for forming the U.S. and the Constitution.

AHE3 - The Founding Fathers were not unique and were lucky to found the U.S successfully. (r)

AHE4 - Unlike other countries, the U.S. developed without much outside influence after the Revolutionary War.

AHE5 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has always had a strong, if not the strongest, economy.

AHE6 - The U.S. was often the first to make positive, notable social reforms (such as ending slavery and giving women the right to vote) before other countries.

AHE7 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has experienced very few internal problems.

AHE8 - After the Revolutionary War and just before WWI, the U.S. experienced nothing but growth and prosperity.

AHE9 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. was the most significant factor in winning WWII.

AHE10 - The era after WWII was truly an exceptional time to live in the U.S.

AHE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional history compared to other countries.

ASE1 - The Founding Fathers’ views of society, government, and morals are irrelevant to today’s matters. (r)

ASE2 - Dreams and success can be achieved much more easily in the U.S. compared to other countries.

ASE3 - The U.S. values and rewards honest, hard work more than other countries.

ASE4 - Society in the U.S. is designed for everyone to improve their economic class more than in any other country.

ASE5 - The U.S. has the most civil liberties/rights/freedoms compared to other countries.

ASE6 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has the purest version of democracy.

ASE7 - Only in the U.S. can anyone become whomever they desire to be.

ASE8 - All people in the U.S. are born with equal rights and opportunities, whereas there is no guarantee in other countries.

ASE9 - The people of the U.S. share a higher sense of morals than other countries.

ASE10 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has a distinct/exceptional set of values.

ASE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional society compared to other countries.

AIO1 - Education scores in the U.S. are greater than other countries' scores.

AIO2 - The life expectancy in the U.S. is greater than in other countries.

AIO3 - The people of the U.S. are the happiest compared to other countries.

AIO4 - The people of the U.S. have a degree of economic equality compared to other countries.

AIO5 - The people of the U.S. have a high degree of social equality compared to other countries.

AIO6 - The U.S. acknowledges, apologizes/compensates for its mistakes, unlike other countries where mistakes are silenced or overlooked.

AIO7 - The U.S. has made mistakes, but unlike other countries, they were always made with good intentions.

AIO8 - The U.S. has made mistakes, but unlike other countries, they were always justifiable.

AIO9 - The U.S. has made mistakes, but unlike other countries, they were always one-time occurrences that were learned from.

AIO10 - The mistakes the U.S. has made are in the past and do not dictate the country's future.

AIO11 - Despite a few problems, the U.S. leaves a significant, positive impact on the world more than any other country.

AIO12 - The U.S. has made the fewest mistakes compared to other countries.

AIF1 - The U.S. is the most exceptional society that other countries aspire to mimic.

AIF2 - The U.S. should serve as an example of the most exceptional society that other countries aspire to mimic if they do not already do so.

AIF3 - Other countries follow the U.S.' lead in world affairs.

AIF4 - Other countries should follow the U.S.' lead in world affairs if they do not already do so.

AIF5 - The U.S. has a distinct obligation to make the world a better place.

AIF6 - The U.S. has a distinct influence on a global level.

AIF7 - The U.S. should have a distinct influence in global affairs if it does not already.

AIF8 - Other countries have as much influence in global affairs as the U.S. (r)

AIF9 - Other countries should have as much influence in global affairs as the U.S if they do not already have influence. (r)

AIF10 - The U.S. is not significantly influenced by any other country.

AIF11 - The U.S. should not be significantly influenced by any other country.

Appendix C: Final American Exceptionalism Index

Please carefully read the following prompts and answer by rating them on a scale of 1 - 7 on how much you agree/disagree with each statement.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Not sure / Neutral | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

AEI:

AHE6 - The U.S. was often the first to make positive, notable social reforms (such as ending slavery and giving women the right to vote) before other countries.

AHE7 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has experienced very few internal problems.

AHE8 - After the Revolutionary War and just before WWI, the U.S. experienced nothing but growth and prosperity.

AHE9 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. was the most significant factor in winning WWII.

AHE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional history compared to other countries.

ASE3 - The U.S. values and rewards honest, hard work more than other countries.

ASE5 - The U.S. has the most civil liberties/rights/freedoms compared to other countries.

ASE9 - The people of the U.S. share a higher sense of morals than other countries.

ASE10 - Compared to other countries, the U.S. has a distinct/exceptional set of values.

ASE11 - The U.S. has a distinct/exceptional society compared to other countries.

AIO6 - The U.S. acknowledges, apologizes/compensates for its mistakes, unlike other countries where mistakes are silenced or overlooked.

AIO7 - The U.S. has made mistakes, but unlike other countries, they were always made with good intentions.

AIO10 - The mistakes the U.S. has made are in the past and do not dictate the country's future.

AIO11 - Despite a few problems, the U.S. leaves a significant, positive impact on the world more than any other country.

AIO12 - The U.S. has made the fewest mistakes compared to other countries.

AIF2 - The U.S. should serve as an example of the most exceptional society that other countries aspire to mimic if they do not already do so

AIF4 - Other countries should follow the U.S.' lead in world affairs if they do not already do so.

AIF7 - The U.S. should have a distinct influence in global affairs if it does not already.

AIF9 - Other countries should have as much influence in global affairs as the U.S if they do not already have influence. (r)

AIF11 - The U.S. should not be significantly influenced by any other country.

Appendix D: Gilmore National Exceptionalism Bias Items

Appendix D: Gilmore National Exceptionalism Bias Items

First component of Gilmore’s national exceptionalism bias items:

A belief in the U.S.’ special status.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1 - Strongly Disagree | 2 - Disagree | 3 - Agree | 4 – Strongly Agree |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|

Note: The following item should have been included in Gilmore’s items but was unfortunately missed:

“Americans are a uniquely blessed people.”

A1. God has chosen the United States to play a special role in the world.

A2. The United States is different from every other country on earth.

A3. America has a unique set of values that sets it apart from the world.

A4. The American people are the greatest people in the world.

A5. America is not the greatest country on earth. (r)

A6. No other country will ever be as great as the United States.

Second component of the national exceptionalism bias items:

A belief in other countries’ inferior status to the U.S.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1 - Strongly Disagree | 2 - Disagree | 3 – Agree | 4 – Strongly Agree |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|

B1. In comparison to the United States, other countries are simply inferior.

B2. People in other countries are not as favored by God as Americans are.

B3. People in other countries do not value freedom like we do in the United States.

B4. In the eyes of God, other countries are inferior to the United States.

B5. Other countries have inferior values to those in the United States.

B6. Other countries are just as unique as the United States. (r)

All remaining items were included but ultimately not necessary for the analyses at hand.

People's attitudes about potential foreign policy approach for the United States.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Strongly Disagree | 2 - Disagree | 3 - Agree | 4 - Strongly Agree |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|

C1. It is acceptable for the United States to invade other countries if it is for the right reasons.

C2. The United States should always stand up for what is right, even if it means breaking the rules.

C3. The United States should be able to sidestep the United Nations when necessary.

C4. The United States should not always have to play by the same rules as other countries.

C5. The United Nations Security Council should have final say over all U.S. military action abroad. (r)

C6. The United States should have to abide by all international laws even if they conflict with America's national interests. (r)

C7. The United States should always have to consult with other powerful countries before taking any serious action in world affairs. (r)

C8. The United States should invade Iran if it does not dismantle its program to build nuclear weapons

C9. The United States should no longer be a part of the United Nations.

C10. The United States should be able to remove leaders in other countries from power when necessary.

People's belief that the United States should spread American values abroad.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Strongly Disagree | 2 - Disagree | 3 - Agree | 4 - Strongly Agree |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------------|

D1. It is America's responsibility to promote democracy in other countries.

D2. The United States should lead the way in spreading freedom around the world.

D3. The United States should engage with other countries as their equal, not as their leader. (r)

D4. The United States should let other countries take the lead in world affairs. (r)

D5. Other countries should try to make their governments as much like America's as possible.

D6. The world would be more peaceful if other countries were more like the United States.

D7. The United States has much to learn from other countries. (r)

D8. If another country is better than the United States, in some way the United States should model itself after them. (r)

D9. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own economic system, even if they don't choose capitalism. (r)

D10. Other countries should be allowed to decide their own style of government, even if they do not choose democracy. (r)