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Rooting for the top dog: How social dominance motives shape group preference in intergroup competition

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Abstract

Moving beyond prior research establishing people's preference for underdogs, we examined the role of social dominance orientation (SDO) in shaping individuals' preference for underdogs versus top dogs in intergroup competitions. Because a victorious underdog can be seen as a threat to hierarchy, we predicted that SDO would be negatively associated with underdog support. In the context of two real-world group competitions—i.e., the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games—we found that SDO was positively associated with a greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs (Study 1 - 3). This SDO effect on group preference was mediated by beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for hierarchy maintenance versus equality promotion (Study 2). Furthermore, SDO and top dog preference were positively associated regardless of the hierarchy domain—i.e., countries' economic power versus athletic achievement (Study 3). We discuss the theoretical implications of these findings for intergroup research.

KEYWORDS: INTERGROUP COMPETITION, HIERARCHY, EQUALITY,
UNDERDOGS

Rooting for the top dog: How social dominance motives shape group preference in intergroup competition

Past research has established that when a disadvantaged party (underdog) faces an advantaged opponent (top dog), people tend to root for the underdog (Kim et al., 2008; Vandello, Goldschmied, & Richards, 2007). Underdog disadvantage has been studied in several domains, including in terms of relative resources and likelihood of success (Vandello et al., 2007). In addition to greater liking of, and more support for, underdogs (Vandello et al., 2007), such work has shown that individuals perceive underdogs as more physically attractive (Michniewicz, & Vandello, 2013) and as heroic (Allison & Goethals, 2011). Indeed, it has been argued that because overcoming unlikely odds and/or adverse conditions can be seen as a form of heroism (Allison & Goethals, 2011), underdogs provide a social, moral, model for others (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). Thus, with regard to unequal competitions, prior work suggests that individuals prefer a disadvantaged underdog over an advantaged top dog.

However, past work has not considered how individuals' differences in attitudes toward hierarchy might shape their preference for underdogs versus top dogs. The current work is aimed at filling this gap in the literature by examining if, and how, social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) shapes individuals' preference for underdogs in intergroup competitions. SDO refers to individuals' preference for hierarchical, non-egalitarian relationships between social groups, which has been shown to be a powerful predictor of a wide range of social attitudes and behaviors (Kteily, Sidanius & Levin, 2011; Pratto et al., 1994). For example, high SDO individuals are more likely to seek hierarchy-enhancing professional roles (e.g., police officers, marines) as opposed to hierarchy-attenuating roles (e.g., teachers, civil rights activists; Pratto et al. 1994). Similarly, low SDO individuals, compared to high SDO individuals, are generally more supportive of

social policies that are aimed at promoting intergroup equality, such as affirmative action (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). In the current research, we depart from the notion of a universal preference for underdogs, as we propose that the tendency to prefer intergroup hierarchy, as captured by SDO, will shape individuals' preference for underdogs versus top dogs in the context of intergroup competition.

When an underdog beats a top dog in sports or political elections this is referred to as “an upset” victory or win (e.g., Tani, 2015) and the victorious underdog is dubbed as the “giant-killer” (e.g., Rothenberg, 2015). In line with this terminology, we argue that a victorious underdog can be seen as upsetting, or challenging, the hierarchy between competing groups. Therefore, we predict that individuals who value hierarchy—i.e., those relatively high in SDO—will support underdogs less than those who value equality—i.e., those relatively low in SDO. Similarly, because a victorious top dog can be seen as maintaining hierarchy between competing groups, we predict that support for top dogs will be greater for those high rather than low in SDO.

We test abovementioned hypotheses in the context of real-world intergroup competitions involving underdog and top dog contenders: The FIFA World Cup (Studies 1 and 2) and the Olympic Games (Study 3). These competitions constitute two of the world's largest and most prestigious sports tournaments (e.g., Bauder, 2014). International sports competitions have been found to heighten ingroup favoritism and nationalism, resulting in intergroup rivalry when one's in-group is competing (Bairner, 2001; Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Wann & Grieve, 2005). The current work moves beyond prior work's focus on ingroup preference, to examine the role of SDO in shaping individuals' preference for underdog versus top dog groups in international sports competitions involving outgroups. Finally, because we wanted to test the relationship between SDO and underdog preference across

domains of hierarchy, we operationalized underdog status in terms of relative economic and political power (Study 1-3) as well as in terms of athletic achievement (Study 3).

Method Study 1

Participants

Just days before the 2014 FIFA World Cup semi-finals in Brazil, participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk to complete a survey about the FIFA World Cup. Participants all completed at least 50 studies prior to this study, with an approval rate of at least 90%, and had an IP address originating in the US. A sample of 138 people completed the survey (88 men and 50 women), with ages ranging from 18 to 70 ($M = 30.36$, $SD = 9.16$). Fourteen participants self-identified as African American/Black, 101 as European American/White, 10 as Hispanic/Latino, 9 as Asian, 1 as Native American, 1 as Pacific Islander, and 2 as Other. Participants received monetary compensation for completing the study.

Procedure

After granting informed consent and providing basic demographic information, participants completed the 16-item social dominance orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994; $\alpha = .95$). Next, participants were presented with the names and flags of the four countries that qualified for the semifinals, in randomized order: Argentina, Brazil, Germany, and the Netherlands. To determine perceived status differences between the four countries, we asked participants how wealthy (1 = very poor, 7 = very rich) and how powerful (1 = not at all powerful, 7 = very powerful) they thought each country was. In addition, we asked participants to rate how personally connected they felt to each country (1 = not at all connected, 7 = very connected) and how competent they thought each country's soccer team was (1 = not at all competent, 7 = very competent). This allowed us to control for group identification and perceived group competence, respectively, when testing the effect of SDO

on group preference. Next, participants were presented with the actual line-ups for the two semi-final games (Argentina vs. The Netherlands and Brazil vs. Germany) followed by the four possible line-ups for the World Cup final game (Argentina vs. Brazil, Germany vs. Argentina, The Netherlands vs. Brazil, and the Netherlands vs. Germany) in randomized order. For each of these six line-ups, participants indicated which team they wanted to win, after which they were thanked and compensated.

Results

Perceptions of Countries' Relative Status

To test for differences in perceived status between countries, we averaged participants' ratings of perceived wealth and power for each country ($r_s = .37 - .68$, all $p_s < .001$). Next, pairwise comparisons were conducted to test for differences in perceived status between countries (see Table 1). The Netherlands and Germany were perceived as being significantly higher status compared to Brazil and Argentina. Among the high status countries, Germany was perceived higher status than the Netherlands. Among the low status countries, Brazil and Argentina were perceived as equally low status. Therefore, all but the latter line-up of these countries constituted an intergroup competition between an underdog and a top dog.

SDO and a Preference for Top Dogs

For each of the line-ups involving a higher vs. lower status country—i.e., every line-up except for Brazil vs. Argentina—we coded participants' preferred team as either 0 (underdog team) or 1 (top dog team). Adding these scores together resulted in a continuous variable ranging from 0 (preference for *underdog* in all five games) to 5 (preference for *top dog* in all five games). Overall, participants expressed no clear preference for underdog or top dog countries, as the mean score did not significantly differ from the midpoint of the scale ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.52$, $t(137) = 0.95$, $p = .34$, 95% CI [-0.13, 0.38]). To test our prediction that

SDO would be associated with a greater preference for top dog rather than underdog countries, we regressed people's team preferences on SDO. In total, 52% of participants picked a top dog country over an underdog country at least 3 out of 5 line-ups. As predicted, we found that SDO was associated with a greater preference for teams from top dog countries, $\beta = .24$, $SE = .11$, $t(137) = 2.83$, $p = .005$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.51].

Next, we examined whether SDO predicted team preference above and beyond group identification and perceived merit. We conducted two regression analyses, entering group identification and perceived team competence and SDO as predictors. As hypothesized, we found that after controlling for participants' identification with each country, SDO was still significantly associated with a greater preference for top dog countries, $\beta = .20$, $SE = .10$, $t(134) = 2.44$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.45]. Similarly, it was found that after controlling for participants' perceived competence of each countries' team, SDO remained significantly associated with a greater preference for teams from top dog rather than underdog countries, $\beta = .18$, $SE = .10$, $t(134) = 2.22$, $p = .03$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.44]. Finally, when simultaneously controlling for perceived team competence and group identification, it was observed that SDO was still marginally significantly associated with a greater preference for teams from top dog rather than underdog countries, $\beta = .16$, $SE = .10$, $t(129) = 1.93$, $p = .056$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.40] (see Table 2). Taken together, these findings provide corroborating evidence for our central hypothesis that social dominance motives are associated with a greater preference for top dog rather than underdog groups, above and beyond group identification and perceived merit.

Discussion

Results from Study 1 show that social dominance motives are associated with a greater preference for top dog rather than underdog winners in intergroup competitions, thereby qualifying people's general tendency to support underdogs (Vandello et al., 2007).

The effect of SDO on group preference was significant over and above perceived group competence and group identification. In Study 2, we set out to replicate these findings and further examine whether the effect of SDO on the preference for top dogs is mediated by individuals' beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities to maintain or challenge hierarchy between nations. We theorized that individuals' SDO would shape their beliefs about the implications of international sports competitions, resulting in their preference for top dogs compared to underdogs. More specifically, we predicted that higher-SDO individuals would prefer top dog winners compared to underdogs because these individuals believe that intergroup competitions are good opportunities for high status countries to demonstrate their superiority. In contrast, we predicted that lower-SDO individuals would prefer underdog winners compared to top dogs because they would be more likely to believe that intergroup competitions are good opportunities for low status countries to improve their standing in the world. We tested these hypotheses in Study 2.

Method Study 2

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk to complete a survey about the FIFA World Cup. A sample of 176 people completed the survey (124 men, 50 women, 1 other, and 1 not reported), with ages ranging from 18 to 58 ($M = 30.20$, $SD = 8.40$). Ten participants self-identified as African American/Black, 134 as European American/White, 7 as Hispanic or Latino, 18 as Asian, 3 as Pacific Islander, and 4 as other. Participants received monetary compensation for completing the survey.

Procedure

Similar to Study 1, participants provided informed consent and basic demographic information prior to completing the 16-item social dominance orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994, $\alpha = .96$). Next, we assessed participants beliefs about international sports competitions

as opportunities to *maintain hierarchy* between countries (4 items; $\alpha = .91$) or as opportunities to *promote equality* between countries (4 items; $\alpha = .72$), as potential mediators of the effect of SDO on preference for top dog countries (see Appendix for items). Beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for hierarchy maintenance were independent of beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for equality promotion, $r = -.01$, $p = .86$. Next, to establish 5 different line-ups involving an economic/political top dog and an underdog country with comparable teams, we selected the five poorest and five richest countries based on gross domestic product per capita (GDP)¹ from the top 15 countries in the FIFA world ranking². Participants were instructed to “Imagine the following 10 countries competing in the next FIFA World Cup: France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Colombia, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Costa Rica. These teams are all ranked in the top 15 of the FIFA world ranking, but the countries differ in terms of their national wealth and their international power.” One column labeled rich/high power countries, included France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium. Another column labeled poor/low power countries included Colombia, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Costa Rica. After these instructions, participants were presented with five line-ups, in randomized order, involving a high and low status country and indicated which country they wanted to win. Participants were then thanked and compensated.

Results

SDO and a Preference for Top Dogs

Identical to Study 1, we determined preference for top dog countries with a continuous variable ranging from 0 (preference for an underdog in all five games) to 5

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html> on September 19, 2014.

² Based on August 14, 2014 ranking: <http://www.fifa.com/worldranking/rankingtable>

(preference for a top dog in all five games). Overall, and in line with prior work (Vandello et al., 2007), participants expressed a preference for underdog countries, as the mean of the top dog preference scale was significantly below the midpoint of the scale ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.43$, $t(172) = -2.16$, $p = .03$, 95% CI [-0.45, -0.02]). In total, 45% of participants picked a top dog country over an underdog country at least 3 out of 5 line-ups. Replicating the findings of Study 1, it was found that SDO was associated with greater preference for top dog rather than underdog countries, $\beta = .26$, $SE = .09$, $t(172) = 3.47$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.48].

Mediation

To test whether the effect of SDO on preference for top dog countries was mediated by beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities to maintain hierarchy or promote equality between countries, we used the SPSS macros for bootstrapping analysis developed by Hayes (2013). Using 10,000 bootstrap samples, we entered SDO as the predictor, beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities to maintain intergroup hierarchy or promote intergroup equality as two separate mediators, and preference for top dog countries as the dependent measure in model 4. As predicted, results revealed that the effect of SDO on preference for top dog countries was mediated by beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for maintaining or challenging the hierarchy between nations (see Figure 1). The indirect effect of SDO on preference for top dogs via beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for maintaining intergroup hierarchy, $\beta = 0.20$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.36], and via beliefs about international sports competitions as opportunities for promoting intergroup equality, $\beta = .06$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.16] were both significant. Thus, as we theorized, high-SDO individuals expressed a greater preference for teams from top dog countries compared to low-SDO individuals, because the former believe international sports competitions to be good opportunities to maintain intergroup hierarchy. In contrast, low-SDO individuals expressed a

greater preference for teams from underdog countries compared to high-SDO individuals, because the former believe international sports competitions to be good opportunities to promote intergroup equality.

Although the results of Study 1 and 2 confirm our central hypothesis that SDO is associated with a greater preference for top dog rather than underdog teams, there are two main limitations to these studies that we sought to address in Study 3. First, in Study 1 intergroup hierarchy was operationalized in terms of political and economic power and in terms of economic power (i.e., GDP) in Study 2. However, it can be argued that in the context of international sports competitions, countries' relative athletic achievement is a more salient domain for intergroup hierarchy than their relative economic power. Therefore, we designed Study 3 to test whether the association between SDO and top dog preference would also hold when hierarchy was defined in terms of countries' athletic achievement. Second, in both studies all top dog countries were European and all underdog countries were South or Central American. Therefore, it is possible that the observed association between SDO and top dog preference might have been due to greater perceived cultural similarity between the ingroup (U.S.) and European versus South/Central American countries, rather than due to top dog versus underdog status. While the association between SDO and preference for top dog countries remained significant after controlling for group identification (Study 1), we addressed this issue more directly in Study 3 by including African and Asian top dogs, as well as by including line-ups consisting of two European countries competing against each other (see Table 3).

Method Study 3

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk to complete a survey about the upcoming Olympic Games. A sample of 300 people completed the survey (185

men, 114 women, and 1 not reported), with ages ranging from 18 to 74 ($M = 31.54$, $SD = 10.60$). Fifteen participants self-identified as African American/Black, 227 as European American/White, 15 as Hispanic or Latino, 37 as Asian, 5 as other, and 1 not reported. Participants received monetary compensation for completing the survey.

Procedure

Similar to Study 1 and 2, participants provided informed consent and basic demographic information prior to completing the 16-item social dominance orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994, $\alpha = .95$). Participants were informed that they would be presented with several potential line-ups between countries in several of the Olympics' sport disciplines. Next, participants were told that as general background information, they would be informed of each country's gross domestic product per capita (GDP³; see Table 4) and the number of previously won medals in a specific sport or discipline (see Table 5). Participants were then presented with six potential line-ups between two countries and asked to indicate their preferred winner for each of the line-ups. In the GDP condition, the line-ups consisted of two countries that were unequal in their GDP, but equal in terms of the number of previously won medals. In the Medals condition, the line-ups consisted of two countries that were unequal in terms of the number of previously won medals, but equal in their GDP (see Table 3). Finally, participants completed two manipulation check items, after which they were thanked and compensated.

Results

Manipulation Checks

We tested the effectiveness of the intergroup hierarchy manipulation by asking all participants how equal the competing countries in the six line-ups were in terms of their GDP

³ Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html> on January 28, 2015.

and the number of previously won medals. As intended, participants in the GDP condition indicated that the competing countries were less equal in terms of their GDP ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.92$) than those in the Medals condition ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.73$), $F(1, 297) = 293.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .50$. In addition, participants in the Medals condition indicated that the competing countries were less equal in terms of the number of previously won medals ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.98$) than those in the GDP condition ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.70$), $F(1, 298) = 327.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .52$. Taken together, these results suggest that the manipulation of intergroup hierarchy in terms of economic power versus athletic status was effective.

SDO and a Preference for Top Dogs

Similar to Study 1 and 2, we calculated a composite score for top dog preference ranging from 0 (preference for an underdog in all six line-ups) to 6 (preference for a top dog in all six line-ups). To examine whether there was an overall preference for underdogs, we conducted one-sample t-tests contrasting participants' group preference scores against the midpoint of the top dog preference scale. In line with Study 2 and prior work (Vandello et al. 2007), we observed an overall preference for underdog countries in the GDP condition, $M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.88$, $t(149) = -2.00$, $p = .047$, 95% CI [-0.61, -0.004], as well as in the Medals condition: $M = 2.47$, $SD = 2.13$, $t(149) = -3.07$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [-0.88, -0.19].

In the GDP condition, 38% of participants picked a top dog country over an underdog country at least 4 out of 6 line-ups. Replicating the findings of Study 1 and 2, we observed a significant association between SDO and greater support for top dog countries as defined by economic power, $\beta = .27$, $SE = .12$, $t(149) = 3.34$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.64]. In the Medals condition, 32% of participants picked a top dog country over an underdog country at least 4 out of 6 line-ups. Again, SDO was significantly associated with greater support for top dog countries as defined by the number of previously won medals, $\beta = .21$, $SE = .16$, $t(149) = 2.59$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.72]. Thus, as hypothesized, SDO was associated with a

greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs when status was conceptualized in terms of economic power as well as athletic achievement.

Finally, we tested whether the association between SDO and preference for top dogs differed between conditions or whether the condition moderated the effect of SDO on top dog preference. There was no effect of condition (Medals = 0, GDP = 1), $\beta = .05$, $SE = .23$, $t(297) = 0.89$, $p = .37$, 95% CI [-0.24, 0.65], and no interaction effect between SDO and condition, $\beta = -.003$, $SE = .23$, $t(297) = -0.04$, $p = .97$, 95% CI [-0.46, 0.44], on preference for top dog countries. Taken together, the results of Study 3 demonstrate that SDO is associated with a greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs, regardless of whether group hierarchy is defined in terms of economic power (i.e., GDP) or athletic achievement (i.e., previously won medals).

General Discussion

While prior work has established that people generally prefer underdogs over top dogs (Vandello et al., 2007), we theorized that social dominance orientation (SDO) would be associated with a greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs, because a victorious top dog can be perceived as maintaining hierarchy. Confirming our hypotheses, we found that SDO was associated with a greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs (Study 1 - 3), an effect that was mediated by beliefs about intergroup competitions being good opportunities to maintain hierarchy rather than promote equality between countries (Study 2). Finally, it was found that SDO was associated with a greater preference for top dogs over underdogs across domains of intergroup hierarchy—i.e., economic power and athletic achievement (Study 3). To our knowledge, this work is the first to examine top dog versus underdog preference as it relates to intergroup hierarchy versus equality, and we outline several theoretical implications of the current findings below.

First, across all three studies, people were presented with the exact same competitions, yet they differed in the extent to which they viewed those competitions as holding opportunities to maintain hierarchy versus promote equality, as a function of their SDO. Thus, our findings suggest that SDO shapes individuals' beliefs about the type of opportunities that intergroup competitions hold in terms of hierarchy maintenance versus equality promotion. This is in line with, for example, the evidence that rejection-sensitive people are more likely to perceive conflicts as opportunities for rejection compared to people who are low on rejection sensitivity (Downey, & Feldman, 1996). Similarly then, high-SDO individuals seem more likely to see intergroup competitions as opportunities for hierarchy maintenance, and less as opportunities to promote equality, compared to low-SDO individuals. Future work could examine other contexts in which high and low SDO individuals might differ in the type of opportunities they see for hierarchy maintenance versus the promotion of equality.

Second, we examined individuals' group preference at the aggregate rather than the individual level. By assessing participants' preferences across several competitions (five in Study 1 and 2, and six in Study 3), we were able to uncover the positive relationship between SDO and individuals' preference for top dogs. Similar to the way that racial discrimination can become more salient when looking at the racial composition of a company's workforce rather than a single hiring decision between a White and a Black candidate, the relationship between SDO and group preference might have gone undetected had we focused on a single intergroup competition. Future work on group preferences, including underdog and top dog preferences, should consider the potential implications of studying patterns of preference at the aggregate versus individual level.

Finally, although the current findings provide strong evidence for the central argument that SDO is associated with a greater preference for top dogs rather than underdogs,

future work should examine whether SDO also shapes individuals' preference for top dogs in competitions between individuals (e.g., David versus Goliath) rather than between groups (Study 1 – 3). Because SDO taps into individuals' preference for hierarchy between social groups rather than hierarchy between individuals, it could be the case that SDO only shapes top dog preference in intergroup competitions, not in interpersonal competitions. Indeed, it might be that individuals' interpersonal dominance—which is distinct from SDO (Pratto et al., 1994)—might be more predictive than SDO when it comes to top dog and underdog preferences in competitions between individuals. Future research can examine these processes at the individual versus group level to further our understanding of the factors that shape individuals' preferences for top dogs or underdogs.

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	M_{diff}	SD	t	p
Germany - Brazil	1.94	1.48	15.40	.000
Germany - Argentina	2.07	1.47	16.59	.000
The Netherlands - Brazil	0.88	1.38	7.44	.000
The Netherlands - Argentina	1.01	1.26	9.38	.000
Germany – The Netherlands	1.06	1.08	11.50	.000
Brazil - Argentina	0.13	1.06	1.45	.151

Table 1. Pairwise comparisons of perceived status between countries in Study 1.

	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Identification with Germany	.31	.09	2.98	.003	0.09, 0.43
Identification with Brazil	-.29	.10	-2.71	.008	-0.47, -0.07
Identification with the Netherlands	.03	.10	0.28	.781	-0.18, 0.23
Identification with Argentina	-.11	.12	-0.95	.346	-0.35, 0.12
Perceived competence Germany	.16	.12	1.80	.075	-0.02, 0.44
Perceived competence Brazil	-.11	.13	-1.20	.231	-0.42, 0.10
Perceived competence the Netherlands	.11	.11	1.21	.227	-0.09, 0.36
Perceived competence Argentina	-.18	.14	-1.87	.064	-0.55, 0.02
SDO	.16	.10	1.93	.056	-0.01, 0.40

Table 2. Standardized regression coefficients for SDO and all covariates in Study 1. Outcome variable is preference for top dogs over underdogs.

Sport or Discipline	Medals Condition		GDP Condition	
	Top Dog	Underdog	Top Dog	Underdog
10,000 meter-run	Finland	Japan	Japan	Haiti
10,000 meter-run	Ethiopia	Haiti	Finland	Ethiopia
Swimming	China	Tunisia	Sweden	China
Swimming	Sweden	Belgium	Belgium	Tunisia
Gymnastics	Switzerland	Denmark	Denmark	Romania
Gymnastics	Romania	Albania	Switzerland	Albania

Table 3. Line-ups per condition in Study 3.

	< \$4,999
	\$5,000 – \$14,999
	\$15,000 – \$24,999
	\$25,000 – \$34,999
	> \$35,000

Table 4. Legend for GDP used in Study 3.






	0 – 2 Olympic medals previously won in this sport
	3 – 5 Olympic medals previously won in this sport
	6 – 8 Olympic medals previously won in this sport
	9 – 11 Olympic medals previously won in this sport
	> 12 Olympic medals previously won in this sport

Table 5. Legend for medals used in Study 3.

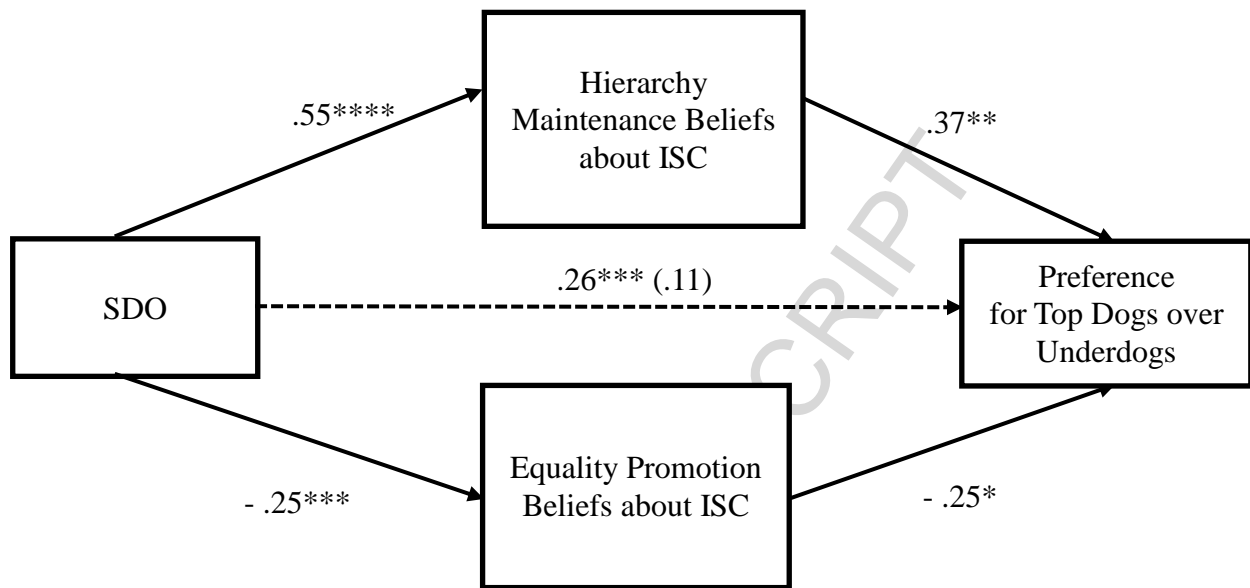


Figure 1. Mediation model Study 2. Values are standardized regression coefficients, and the standardized regression coefficient between SDO and preference for top dogs, controlling for both mediators, is in parentheses. Notes: SDO = social dominance orientation. ISC = international sports competitions. * $p < .05$ ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Appendix

Items used to assess hierarchy maintenance beliefs (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. International sports competitions are a good way to keep some countries on top and others at the bottom.
2. International sports competitions are a good way for high-power countries to show their superior standing in the world.
3. International sports competitions are a good way to put low-power countries in their place.
4. I like it when high-power countries beat low-power countries in international sports competitions, because it demonstrates that high-power countries are superior.

Items used to assess equality promotion beliefs (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree):

1. International sports competitions are a good way to promote equality between countries.
2. International sports competitions are a good way for low-power countries to improve their standing in the world.
3. International sports competitions are a good way to overthrow high-power countries.
4. I like it when low-power countries beat high-power countries in international sports competitions, because it shows that high-power countries are not superior.

Highlights

- Research suggests that people generally root for the underdog in intergroup competitions.
- We theorized, and found, that social dominance orientation (SDO) would predict a greater preference for *top dogs* rather than underdogs (Study 1-3).
- The effect of SDO on top dog preference was mediated by beliefs about intergroup competitions as being good opportunities to maintain rather than challenge intergroup hierarchy (Study 2), and held true for economic as well as athletic hierarchy between groups (Study 3).
- The current work is the first to integrate SDO and research on the “underdog effect”