

How Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation affect Inference of Competence and Communion Traits? The Role of Intergroup Context

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Introduction

Duckitt's two-process theory (Duckitt, 2001) posits that Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) develops in response to threat created by unpredictable, unsafe social world, whereas Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) develops in response to threat to ingroup position (caused by challenging outgroup competitors). Supportive to Duckitt's conceptualization, in an earlier study (Błażewicz & Kofta, 2011) we found that RWA promoted inference of positive communion traits (likely to buffer threat produced by dangerous social world), whereas SDO promoted inference of negative competence traits (helping to detect and beat competitors). The present study examined whether the discussed pattern is modified by an intergroup context. We expected that RWA (as an ingroup-oriented ideology) should help to infer communion traits mostly in the case of ingroup members, whereas SDO (as an outgroup-oriented ideology), should help to infer negative competence traits mostly in the case of outgroup members.

Method

Research was conducted via the internet, using online platform GaduSonda / Panel Ariadna. The participants were the Polish students, users of the internet messenger Gadu – Gadu, 149 females and 102 males. They were presented with:

- the 16 item SDO scale (Polish adaptation by Klebaniuk, 2009),
- the 12 item RWA scale (Funke, 2005) including aggression, submission and conventionalism sub-scales,
- the 12 item Cameron Group Identification scale for Polish nation.

After the short distraction task, participants were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions:

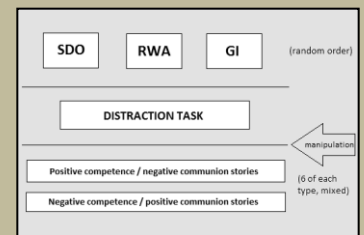
- ingroup*: participants were informed that there are many students in Poland, both Poles and foreigners, but in the following tasks they must refer only to students with Polish ethnicity ($n_1 = 81$);
- neutral*: participants were asked to refer to students in Poland ($n_2 = 85$);
- outgroup*: participants were informed that there are many students in Poland, both Poles and foreigners, but in the following tasks they must refer only to foreign students in Poland ($n_3 = 85$).

Next, they answered the following test of 12 short stories, such as:

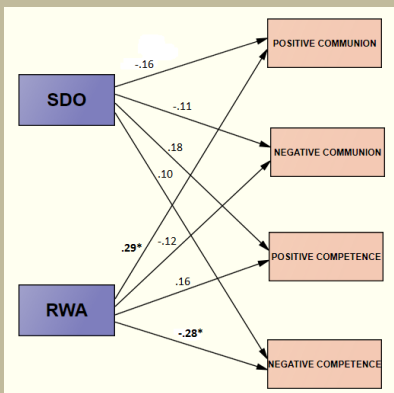
G. T. was working in the cinema, but despite his friends requests, he didn't agree to let them for free even once.

Participants were asked to infer 2 personality traits of each story hero. Four composite indices of trait attribution were calculated (for positive communion, negative communion, positive competence, and negative competence traits, separately).

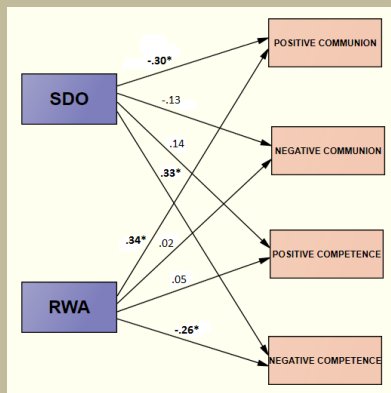
The main design of the experiment



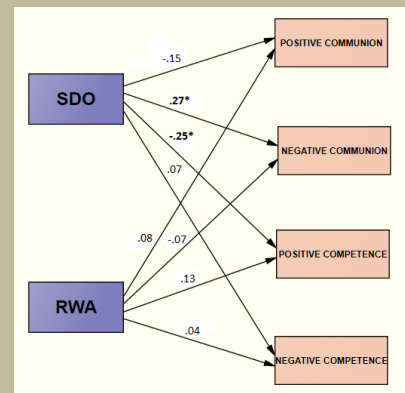
Target person is a student of Polish ethnicity.



Target person is unspecified student studying in Poland (control condition).



Target person is a student studying in Poland, but coming from another country.



Each draft represents a series of 4 simultaneous regressions with SDO and RWA as predictors included together. Standardized regression coefficients with asterisk are significant at $p < .05$.

Results and Conclusions

The regression analyses have revealed that high RWA participants were likely to infer positive communion traits and deny negative competence traits among ingroup but not outgroup members. In contrast, high SDO participants were likely to infer negative communion traits and deny positive competence traits among outgroup but not ingroup members. The results only partly support our expectations. On the one hand, they provide some evidence in line with the theory that RWA is an ingroup-oriented, whereas SDO is an outgroup oriented attitudinal structure. However, the whole pattern of our findings implies that RWA might promote inference of positive traits among ingroupers whereas SDO might promote inference of negative traits among outgroupers. Thus, the hypothesized association of RWA with search for communion traits and SDO with search for competence traits was not confirmed.

Before getting to any firm conclusions, the above pattern should be replicated in the independent research. However, it again suggests, in line with Duckitt's theorizing, that RWA and SDO are qualitatively different personality organizations, playing different functions in adaptation to challenging social world.

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