

**Running Head: SDO, State Concept, and Attitudes towards Immigrant**

**The Influence of Social Dominance Orientation on State Concept and Attitudes  
towards Immigrant Inclusion: A Study on Adolescents**

Silvia Gattino, Ph.D.

Anna Miglietta, Ph.D.

Stefano Tartaglia, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology, University of Turin

The present research grounds on two considerations. The one refers to the mere presence of immigrants, that highlights the malleability of the group boundaries. In this way, people become aware that such boundaries are neither fixed nor stable, and that they have similarities in common with some others. This may lead people to think to the opportunity to change relationships.

The second consideration concerns adolescence, the phase of life in which individuals typically undertake the reflection about their relations to society and community. As a matter

of fact, adolescence is characterized by a growing awareness of the self being surrounded by, and facing society. The interaction between the emergence of new abilities in self-reflective thinking, perspective taking and moral judgment on the one side, and the increasing external expectations on the other side, leads adolescents to reflect about social structures, rules and symbolic products. Moreover, the specific expectations that society has towards adolescents – the taking over new social roles, responsibilities and obligations – go with society granting them new rights and new duties, such as voting. (Hoppe-Graff & Kim, 2004).

Here we develop, on an adolescent sample, a previous research carried out on adults (Miglietta, Gattino, & Tartaglia, in press). The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationships among psychological dimensions that originate in the fears generated by today's multiethnic societies. Particular emphasis was placed on: (a) at the social level the concept of citizenship i.e. the conception of the function and boundaries of the state, the basis of the inclusion, or exclusion of a newcomer and (b) at individual level, on the concept of Social Dominance Orientation, a psychological variable related to the management of social relations.

#### Multiculturalism and interethnic relations

Social psychology can observe the complex set of phenomena concerning immigration through ethnic relationships and acculturation frameworks. The term “ethnic” instead of “intergroup” implies that relationships involve groups of an essentially cultural nature (Berry, 2006). This area includes a number of constituent concepts, such as stereotypes, attitudes, prejudice, multiculturalism and security. Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural

groups and their individual members, involving various forms of mutual accommodation between groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Whilst changes at the individual level involve individual behavioural repertoire, at the group level they take place in social structure and/or in institutions, as well as in cultural practices (Berry, 2006). Although these two domains of research look at the field from different perspectives, they do address the same set of phenomena and are highly related : «First, for any particular society, they are both situated in a common historical, sociocultural and political context, which shapes the character of intercultural relationships. Second, both domains contribute to intergroup outcomes that range from harmonious to conflictual relationships. Third, in both domains, there are theoretical and empirical links between many of the elements» (Berry, 2006, p. 720).

One of the major changes that a monocultural receiving society may afford is that of considering itself multicultural, accepting diversity as a feature of the society as a whole. However, a plural society cannot be founded on the mere presence of many independent cultural communities within a society, without their equitable participation and incorporation. Otherwise, it would be necessary for non-dominant groups in multicultural plural societies to adopt the basic values of the larger society, whilst the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g.: education, labour, health) to better meet the needs of all groups living together. In fact, the concept of multiculturalism implies two important and interrelated dimensions. One of these refers to the maintenance of heritage cultures and identities and the other, to the full and fair participation of all ethno-cultural groups in the life of the society as a whole. This would imply that immigrants be accepted as full society members and not merely as temporary sojourners.

### Citizenship: a double-faceted concept

Citizenship refers to a “moving boundary” that originates from a process through which groups, rights and the balance of society are constantly on the move and re-defined. In these terms, citizenship may be considered a double-faceted concept. One face presents itself as a factor of inclusion and equality. From this point of view, the boundaries of the ingroup are functional both to membership and to the development of a sense of loyalty towards the institutions. On the other, it is an instrument of exclusion and social closure, whilst the same boundaries allow for a clear distinction between the *insiders*, who belong to the community of citizens and the *outsiders*. This is particularly true in such countries as Italy, where citizenship is ruled by a *ius sanguinis* principle. Therefore, for the immigrant, in this case, the right of citizenship is more an instrument of exclusion rather than one of inclusion.

Citizenship definition is strictly linked to the issue of enlargement of rights, that is of great interest for contemporary western societies. According to Dahrendorf (1988), the challenge of the modern era is between economic growth and social justice. This challenge implies two opposite ideological perspectives: the one supports provision development (resources, economic wealth yielded) and the other supports the enlargement of the entitlements. Some European societies have recently granted a certain number of rights to immigrants. However, if immigrants are entitled to such rights in a fairly homogeneous way amongst the different countries, their real endowment is highly conditioned by the local and national policies.

Moreover, it must be noted that only in few countries are immigrants, even if long-residing, entitled to some political rights that are fundamental to policy formulation and implementation.

The theme of rights goes together with that of duties: both are the pillars of the social contract between the individual and the state and define the role and the limits for their actions. However, as Spini and Doise (2004) note, «definitions of rights and duties are not symmetrical, as they depend on two basic ideologies that defend either the primacy of the community, emphasizing the concrete duties of individuals, or the primacy of the rights of the individual, stressing the duties of the state» (p. 23). These two contrasting ideologies, that found relationships between the individual and the state, are rooted in an ancient debate. It opposes the principles of nature to that of society, affirming in the latter the supremacy of public order over the freedom of individuals. Different studies carried out in the realm of attitudes towards human rights (Clémence, Doise, De Rosa, & Gonzalez, 1995; Diaz-Veizades, Widaman, Little & Gibbs, 1995; Devos, Spini, & Schwartz, 2002; Moghaddam & Vucksanovic, 1990) have shown that individuals hold specific reference frames on which they base the evaluation of the action of their own government. On the one hand, general agreement towards the restriction of individual rights in order to guarantee the functioning of society is shared by those who refer themselves to values of conservation, related to tradition, security and right-wing political preference. On the other, a critical evaluation and a personal concern for human rights are typically shown by the supporters of universalistic, or self-enhancement values, as well as by those committed to social change (Spini & Doise, 2004). Empirical evidence found a relation between the two opposite conceptions of rights and duties and the support to a Penal (i.e. security and crime-related policies) versus Welfare conception of the state (Sanchez-Mazas, Van Humskerken & Casini, 2003).

Social Dominance Orientation: an individual point of view on intergroup relationships

The Social Dominance theory moves from the assumption that group conflict and group-based inequality are pervasive in human existence (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). In summary, the theory postulates that societies minimize group conflict by creating consensus on ideologies, termed hierarchy legitimizing myths, that promote the superiority of one group over others (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The role of these ideologies – e.g.: ethnic prejudice, nationalism, cultural elitism, meritocracy, political-economic conservatism, support of punitive policies – is to «minimize conflict among groups by indicating how individuals and social institutions should allocate things of positive, or negative social value» (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 741). Legitimizing myths either enhance, or maintain the degree of social inequality; other ideologies may serve to attenuate the amount of social inequality that affects human societies and explicitly refer to egalitarian and inclusive values. Specifically, social welfare policies, that represent a way of distributing social and public resources to disadvantaged groups, could be considered a hierarchy attenuating ideology, whilst the support to security and crime related policies is hierarchy enhancing (Pratto, Stallworth, Conway-Lanz, 1998). The Social Dominance theory postulates the existence of a central individual-difference variable, the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), that predicts an individual's acceptance, or rejection of numerous ideologies and policies concerning group relationships. SDO is a general attitudinal orientation towards intergroup relationships, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relationships to be equal (low SDO), versus hierarchical (high SDO). In other words, SDO justifies attitudes towards policy support, enabling people to justify their attitudes towards these policies that reflect their values about intergroup relationships (Pratto, et al.,1998). SDO appears to be a useful, important, and robust individual difference variable capable of explaining a wide range of intergroup attitudes that invariably view one group inferior to another.

## Objectives and Hypothesis

The aim of this paper is to test on an adolescent sample the model yet positively tested on an adult sample (Miglietta, et al., in press). This model posit a three levels interaction of variables. The individual variables, such as personality traits (SDO) and ideology (political orientation) influence attitudes towards multiculturalism and state functioning, that, in turn, influence behaviour towards immigrant inclusion.

The model we test here differs from the previous one on two aspects. First, in the model tested on the adult sample, state function conception was assessed through the agreement to Penal State programmes. For the present study we articulated more the State Function conception adding a measure assessing individual agreement to Welfare programs. We expected this two state conceptions to be inversely related and in our actual model they are indicators of a latent variable we named State Functions (Penal vs. Welfare).

Furthermore, in the former study (adult sample) we included years of education; in the present study participants were all secondary schools students and their age was homogeneous, so we did not include this variable in the model.

We hypothesized that: (a) SDO has an inverse influence on the attitude towards multiculturalism (acceptance of cultural differences) and a positive influence on both State Functions concept (Penal rather than Welfare) and right-wing political orientation; (b) right-wing political orientation has a positive influence on the State Functions concept (Penal rather than Welfare); (c) both attitudes towards multiculturalism and State Functions concept influence majority members attitudes towards granting to immigrants the right to elect the representatives. We hypothesized that the acceptance of cultural differences had a positive

influence on this agreement, whereas the State Functions (Penal rather than Welfare) had a negative influence on it.

We also hypothesized that the model is invariant across gender, and kind of secondary school attended.

## Method

The study involved 371 Italian students residing in Piedmont and attending to different secondary schools (Professional school and High school) aged from 16 to 21 (average age = 18.29; S.D. = .98; M = 48.5%, F = 51.5%).

Data were collected by a self-reported questionnaire, that took about 20 minutes.

The questionnaire included the following variables.

1. *Social Dominance Orientation*. 7 items from the validated Italian SDO item bank (Di Stefano, & Roccato, 2005). We selected items measuring the respondents' attitudes towards intergroup relationships (e. g. "Inferior groups should stay in their place"; "Group equality should be our ideal"). Items were rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*complete disagreement*) to 5 (*complete agreement*). The internal consistency was good ( $\alpha = .72$ ).
2. *State functions*. 8 items measured *Penal State conception*, i.e. the respondents' support of security and crime-related policies (e. g.: "The State should bring back the death penalty for the most horrible crimes"; "The State should reinforce measures able to find and send illegal immigrants away"; Sanchez-Mazas et al., 2003); 7 items measured *Welfare State conception*, i.e. respondent's support to social welfare policies (e.g.: "The problem with welfare

is that too many people try to take advantage of it”; “The State should help every distressed person”; Sanchez-Mazas et al., 2003). Items were rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*complete disagreement*) to 5 (*complete agreement*). The internal consistency was adequate (Penal State:  $\alpha = .67$ ; Welfare State:  $\alpha = .60$ ).

3. *Multicultural attitude*. 4 items assessed the respondents’ degree of acceptance of intercultural differences (e. g.: “Immigrants should learn to behave as the Italians do”; “Italian people should try to know immigrants’ habits and traditions”) Items were rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale (1 = *complete disagreement*; 5 = *complete agreement*); internal consistency was good ( $\alpha = .64$ ).
4. *Attitude towards the political inclusion of immigrants* was assessed by a single question asking what the respondents’ attitude was towards immigrants being entitled to elect representatives (“In your opinion, is it right to give regular immigrants the right to elect representatives?”).
5. *Political orientation* on the left-wing/ right-wing axis was assessed by a 10 point thermometer (1 = left-wing orientation; 10 = right-wing orientation).
6. A brief list of socio-demographic items.

To verify the hypothesized relationships between variables we tested a structural equation model, assuming the influences postulated above.

## Results

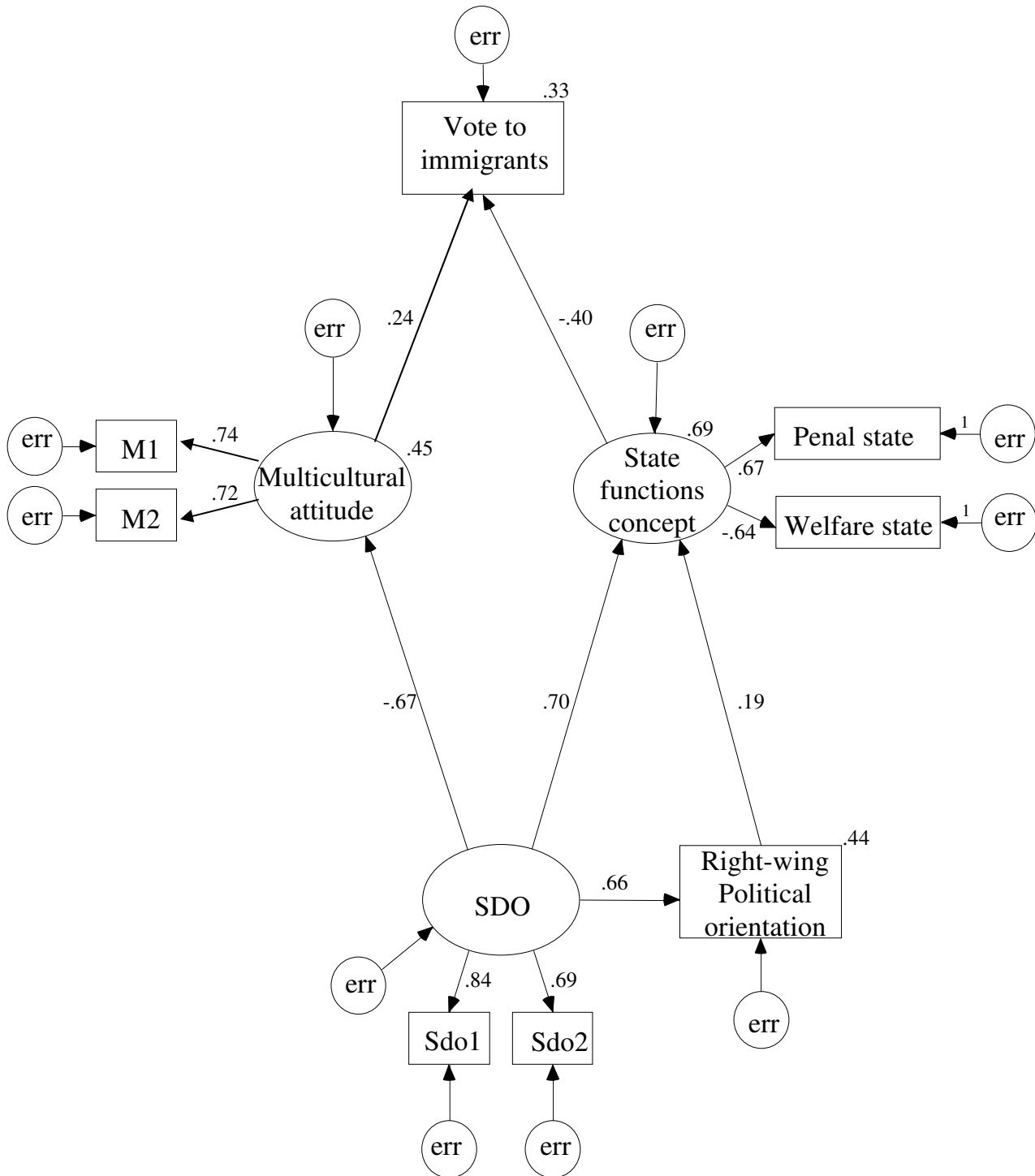
### *Model verification*

The structural equation model we tested included two single item variables (political orientation and agreement to give immigrants the right to vote) and three latent variables (SDO, State Functions concept, Multicultural attitude). A partial disaggregating approach (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998) was used for SDO and Multicultural attitude, by examining groups of aggregated items, rather than single one, as latent variable indicators. That is to say, we limited the numbers of indicators to two for each scale, aggregating the items at random. The advantage of this approach is that it reduces the number of variables in the model that may result in an excessive worsening of the fit, allowing anyway to estimate the measure error of the latent variables. State Functions concept indicators was Penal state concept scale and Welfare state concept scale values. Higher values mean an attitude oriented toward a Penal state concept whereas lower values toward a Welfare state concept.

We tested the model fit using different fit indexes, to attenuate the limits they might have e.g. the  $\chi^2$ , CFI (Bentler, 1990), the TLI (Tucker & Lewis, 1973) – also known as the NNFI (Bentler & Bonett, 1980) – and the RMSEA (Steiger, 1990). Values higher than 0.90 were considered satisfactory for CFI and TLI, as indicated by Bentler (1990). RMSEA was calculated according to Browne (1990), who considers values of less than 0.08 to be satisfactory and values of less than 0.05, good.

The model tested was acceptable according to all the fit indexes except  $\chi^2$ . As the significance of  $\chi^2$  depends on the sample size, and our sample was quite great (N=371), we considered this model as satisfactory. The indexes values was:  $\chi^2(16) = 46.71$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $CFI = .97$ ,  $TLI = .94$ ,  $RMSEA = .072$  (90% CL = .049, .096). All the parameters estimated were statistically significant. Figure 1 shows the model in graphic form.

Figure 1. Structural equation model: Standardized regression weights and variances.



SDO was observed to have an inverse influence on Multicultural attitude ( $\beta = -.67$ ) and a positive one on both the Penal State concept ( $\beta = .70$ ) and right-wing political orientation ( $\beta = .66$ ). Political orientation influenced the Penal State concept ( $\beta = .19$ ). The Penal State concept had a negative influence on agreement to grant immigrants the right to vote ( $\beta = -.40$ ) whereas Multicultural attitude influences it positively ( $\beta = .24$ ).

#### *Structural invariance of the model*

To test the hypothesis of structural invariance, we followed the procedure indicated by Reise, Widaman, and Pugh (1993). We first tested our model simultaneously on both gender groups (Baseline model or B), then we tested a model ( $M_1$ ) assuming invariance of regression weights in boys and girls; this means that these parameters were fixed so as to be equal in both groups. The hypothesis of invariance may be accepted if the difference in the  $\chi^2$  values of the  $M_1$  model, compared to the B model, is not significant for a number of degrees of freedom equal to the difference in degrees of freedom of the two models. In other words, a model is invariant if the constraining parameters to invariance do not significantly increase the  $\chi^2$ , thereby worsening the model fit. We followed the same procedure dividing the sample into secondary school groups (Professional school vs. High school).

Table 1.

#### *Test of the invariance of the model across gender*

<i>Model</i>	<b>Goodness of Fit</b>	<b>Test of hypotheses</b>
B: baseline	$\chi^2(32) = 62.66, p < .01, CFI = .97, TLI = .94,$ $RMSEA = .051 (90\% CL = .032, .070)$	-
M <sub>1</sub> : (regression weights invariant)	$\chi^2(38) = 69.79, p < .01, CFI = .96, TLI = .95,$ $RMSEA = .048 (90\% CL = .029, .065)$	M <sub>1</sub> – B $\chi^2(6)_d = 7.13, p = .31$

*Note.* Boys  $N = 180$ , Girls  $N = 191$ .

Table 2.

*Test of the invariance of the model across secondary school*

<i>Model</i>	<b>Goodness of Fit</b>	<b>Test of hypotheses</b>
B: baseline	$\chi^2(32) = 59.87, p < .01, CFI = .96, TLI = .94,$ $RMSEA = .049 (90\% CL = .029, .067)$	-
M <sub>1</sub> : (regression weights invariant)	$\chi^2(38) = 74.61, p < .01, CFI = .95, TLI = .93,$ $RMSEA = .051 (90\% CL = .034, .068)$	M <sub>1</sub> – B $\chi^2(6)_d = 14.74, p = .02$
M <sub>2</sub> : Partial invariance	$\chi^2(37) = 65.99, p < .01, CFI = .96, TLI = .94,$ $RMSEA = .046 (90\% CL = .027, .064)$	M <sub>2</sub> – B $\chi^2(5)_d = 6.12, p = .29$

*Note.* Professional school  $N = 165$ , High school  $N = 206$ .

Results (tables 1 and 2) show that the relations between variables in our model do not vary across genders, but vary across schools. So we tested a partial invariance hypothesis, which occurs when the majority of the parameters of a model (but not all) do not vary across groups (Reise, Widaman, & Pugh, 1993). The exploration of the regression weights matrix and the modification indexes led us to test a second model (M<sub>2</sub>), where all the regression weights, except one, were invariant across groups. The

free parameter was the influence of SDO on Penal State concept. This second model did not determine a significant  $\chi^2$  increase, so we can assert that the relations of our model are invariant between students of different kind of secondary school with the exception of the influence of SDO on Penal State concept. These parameters estimated in the group of Professional schools student and High schools student are both positive and significant but are not considerable equal. This relation is stronger for High schools student ( $\beta = .74$ ) than for Professional schools student ( $\beta = .56$ ).

## Discussion

In this study, conducted on an adolescent sample, we successfully replicated the results obtained in a previous research on an adult sample (Miglietta et al. in press). The interest for adolescence starts from the consideration that in this phase of life, individuals typically undertake the reflection about the relations to society and community (Hoppe-Graff & Kim, 2004). This process may involve attitudes and behaviours towards inclusion and exclusion in the state, and general attitudes towards relations between groups and the social structure. These last attitudes are well represented by SDO concept (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Empirical evidence showed that SDO was at the core of the process, generating two different but interrelated paths. In the one SDO affected the State Function conception; in the other SDO influenced majority members' attitudes towards multiculturalism. As we discussed before, in this study we considered two variables (Penal State vs. Welfare State) as indicators of the State Function conceptions, instead of the single Penal State conception as in the previous research. The negative correlation emerged between these two variables is in

line with the assumption of the Social Dominance theory affirming the opposition between hierarchy enhancing and hierarchy attenuating ideology in orienting individual attitudes toward intergroup relations. Moreover, thanks to this greater articulation we obtained more detailed cues about the way people conceive the function of the state.

Even though the similarities, the present research shows some differences between the adolescents' pattern and the previously obtained results. The major difference concerns the influence of multicultural attitudes on granting immigrants formal voting rights, that did not result in the adult sample. A possible explanation of this discrepancy may reside on the real age of participants: contrasting with the adult sample, most of them are not old enough to vote, and probably they are not yet aware of the complex implications concerning citizenship. Moreover, and most importantly, we considered that adolescents were born and brought-up in an already multicultural society; at the opposite, for the adults the plurality of ethnic groups may represent a relative and potentially menacing novelty, leading them to consider immigrants as an "exotic" society feature but not as potential full society members.

Another difference from the previous research concerns structural invariance, that has not been tested on the adult sample. Results showed a complete gender invariance, whereas some differences emerged by respect to the kind of school participants attend to. Specifically, it emerged that the relation between SDO and State Function conception (mainly Penal state conception) was stronger for High school students than for Professional school students.

We can formulate two interpretative hypotheses. First, High school is preparatory to academic studies, whereas Professional school leads to a more practical and work-oriented education. As Jackman and Muha (1984, p. 761) stated "the learning process itself influences the way people think. While people with little education have mastered only rudimentary cognitive skills, those with an advanced education have acquired a broader and more

sophisticated knowledge, as well as a sensitivity complexities and a distaste for simple answers". We suppose that the more educated people dispose of more sophisticated cognitive tools to better articulate the relation between state conception and intergroup relations.

Second, these schools are very different for the socio-cultural level of the families' students and generally high school students belong to the upper-class. The belonging to the dominant class could strengthen the relation between SDO and State Function conception.

The relations between SDO and educational level could represents an interesting line for further researches (see also Sidanius, Sinclair and Pratto, 2006).

## References

- Bagozzi, R.P., & Edwards, J.R. (1998). A general approach for representing constructs in organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods, 1*, 45-87.
- Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin, 107*, 238-246.
- Bentler, P. M. & Bonett, D. G. (1980). Significance tests and goodness of fit in the analysis of covariance structures. *Psychological Bulletin, 88*, 588-606.
- Berry, J. W. (2006). Mutual attitudes among immigrants and ethnocultural groups in Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30*, 719-734.
- Browne, M. W. (1990). *MUTMUM PC: User's guide*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, Department of Psychology.
- Clémence, A., Doise, W., De Rosa, A. S., & Gonzalez, L. (1995). La représentation sociale des droits de l'homme: Une recherche internationale sur l'étendue et les

limites de l'universalité. [The social representation of the human rights: International research on the range and limits of universality]. *International Journal of Psychology*, 30, 181-212.

Dahrendorf, R. (1988). *The Modern Social Conflict: An Essay on the Politics of Liberty*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Devos, T., Spini, D., & Schwartz, S. H. (2002). Conflicts among human values and trust in institutions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41, 481-494.

Di Stefano, G., & Roccato, M. (2005). Una banca di item per misurare l'orientamento alla dominanza sociale in Italia. [An item bank for measuring social dominance orientation in Italy]. *TPM*, 12, 5-20.

Diaz-Veizades, J., Widaman, K. F., Little, T. D., & Gibbs, K. W. (1995). The measurement and structure of human rights attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 135, 313-328.

Hoppe-Graff, S. & Kim H.O. (2004). Understanding rights and duties in different cultures and contexts: Observation from German and Korean adolescents. In N. J. Finkel, F. M. Moghaddam (Eds.), *The Psychology of Rights and Duties: Empirical Contributions and Normative Commentaries* (pp. 49-73). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Jackman M. R. & Muha M. J. (1984). Education and intergroup attitudes: Moral enlightenment, superficial democratic commitment, or ideological refinement? *American Sociological Review*, 49, 751-769.

Miglietta, A., Gattino, S. Tartaglia, S. (2009 in press). The influence of Social Dominance Orientation on state concept and attitudes towards immigrant

- inclusion. In Heatherton, A. T. & Wallcott, V. A. (Eds.) *Handbook of Social Interactions in the 21st Century*. Hauppauge, NY, US: Nova Science Publishers.
- Moghaddam, F. M., & Vucksanovic, V. (1990). Attitudes and behaviour towards human rights across different contexts: The role of right-wing authoritarianism, political ideology, and religiosity. *International Journal of Psychology, 25*, 455-474.
- Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social Dominance Orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 741-763.
- Pratto, F., Stallworth, L. M., & Conway-Lanz, S. (1998). Social Dominance Orientation and the ideological legitimization of social policy. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 28*, 1853-1875.
- Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M. (1936). Memorandum on the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist, 38*, 149-152.
- Reise, S. P., Widaman, K. F., & Pugh, R. H. (1993). Confirmatory factor analysis and item response theory: Two approaches for exploring measurement invariance. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*, 552-566.
- Sanchez-Mazas, M., VanHumskerken, F., & Casini, A. (2003). Towards a social representational approach to citizenship: Political positioning in lay conceptions of the Belgian and of the European citizen. *Psychologica Belgica, 43-1/2*, 55-84.
- Sidanius, J. Sinclair, S., & Pratto, F (2006). Social Dominance Orientation, gender and increasing educational exposure. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 36*, 1640-1653.
- Sidanius, J. & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social Dominance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Spini, D. & Doise, W. (2004). Universal Rights and Duties as Normative Social Representations. In N. J. Finkel, F. M. Moghaddam (Eds.), *The Psychology of Rights and Duties: Empirical Contributions and Normative Commentaries* (pp. 21-48). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Steiger, J. H. (1990). Structural model evaluation and modification. An interval estimation approach. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 25, 173-180.
- Tucker, L. R. & Lewis, C. (1973). A reliability coefficient for maximum likelihood factor analysis. *Psychometrika*, 38, 1-10.