

Is There a “Fair” in Fair-Trade? Social Dominance Orientation Influences Perceptions of and Preferences for Fair-Trade Products

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Abstract In recent years, there has been a surge in popularity of the fair-trade industry, which seeks to improve trading conditions and to promote the rights of marginalized workers. Although research suggests that fair-trade products are perceived as promoting social and economic responsibility, some individuals—namely, those who seek to *maintain* existing group inequalities (i.e., those high in social dominance orientation or SDO) or those induced to think inequality is a good thing—may not share this perception. Across three studies, we found that (1) SDO relates negatively to fair-trade consumption, and (2) this relationship is mediated by the tendency for high-SDO individuals to see fair-trade products as less compatible with their conception of social justice. Our findings held after controlling for related individual-differences variables, and regardless of whether SDO was measured or manipulated. Implications for how to maximize the likelihood that people will perceive fair-trade products as “fair” are discussed.

Keywords Fair-trade products · Social dominance orientation · Consumer behavior · Justice

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Fair-trade products are growing in popularity among consumers (Moore 2004; Nicholls 2010). Fair-trade sales internationally have increased by 20 % since 2000 (Krier 2005), and the market share of fair-trade coffee in the US grew 2 % between 2000 and 2005, representing a \$400 million increase in sales (TransFair 2006). Capitalizing on this trend, in recent years, an increasing number of firms have started to signal that their products are “fair-trade” to increase their market share and gain a strategic competitive advantage (Benzençon and Blili 2009; Bjorner et al. 2004; Rode et al. 2008).

An increasing number of fair-trade consumers see their purchases as a way of tackling social and environmental problems in the global marketplace (Taylor et al. 2005). For instance, from 2001 to 2008, the percentage of people who boycotted a product for ethical reasons—including low-wage payments, unsafe work environments, and environmentally toxic production practices—increased from 20 to 27 % (Turcotte 2010). Consumers further exert influence over the pricing of products, as consumers are willing to pay (WTP) up to 10 % more for fair-trade labeled products compared to unlabeled products (Benzençon and Blili 2009).

However, do consumers inevitably perceive fair-trade products as socially just? In the present research, we examine the role of social dominance orientation (SDO)—or support for group-based inequality—in perceptions of fair-trade products and, ultimately, in fair-trade product preferences. Because people who have high SDO seek to *sustain* existing social hierarchies (Pratto et al. 1994), they should be less inclined than people who have low SDO to believe that the fair-trade industry (which seeks to maximize equity in international trade, and to improve trading conditions for disadvantaged producers and workers; Fair Trade International 2011; Moore 2004) is truly “fair.”

Although some studies have examined the effects of general value orientations and ethics on fair-trade consumption (e.g., De Pelsmacker et al. 2005; Doran 2009; Schuldt et al. 2012), our research is among the first to show that some consumers view fair-trade products as less compatible with their conception of fairness than do other consumers, and that these views can influence product choices.

The Impact of Ethics on Fair-Trade Consumption

Recent research has uncovered a handful of ethics-related predictors of fair-trade consumption. For example, Doran (2009) found that loyal consumers of fair-trade products cite universalism values (e.g., protection of the environment, concern for humankind; Schwartz 1994) as most important, and power values (e.g., desire for authority, wealth, and prestige; Schwartz 1994) as least important, to their purchasing decisions. Relatedly, religious individuals whose faith has been made salient (versus not) are more likely to purchase fair-trade products, presumably because the core values of many religions—similar to universalism values—involve altruism and a focus on others as opposed to oneself (Salvador et al. 2013).

In addition to general value orientations, placing a high priority on socially responsible consumption has been shown to positively predict fair-trade purchasing behaviors (Kim et al. 2010; Schuldt et al. 2012). According to Kim and colleagues, individuals who use notions of social responsibility to guide their consumption patterns are prone to view fair-trade companies and products as more ethical, and these views in turn heighten their loyalty toward fair-trade brands (Kim et al. 2010). In fact, people who prioritize socially responsible consumption even tend to believe that fair-trade foods are lower in calories than non-fair-trade foods, due to a “halo effect” of seeing such foods as superior on other dimensions (e.g., healthier, lower in calories) (Schuldt et al. 2012).

Though the aforementioned studies shed light on the critical role of ethics in fair-trade consumption, an underlying assumption of most of these studies is that people see fair-trade products as ethical. In our work, however, we are specifically interested in the factors that *undermine* people’s beliefs that fair-trade products are socially just. Given the emphasis of the fair-trade movement on supporting the needs of marginalized producers and workers, and on increasing equity in the international trading market (Moore 2004; Fair Trade International 2011), we test whether endorsement of social inequality—that is, SDO (Pratto et al. 1994)—relates negatively to perceptions of and likelihood of purchasing fair-trade products.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Perceptions of Fair-Trade Products

SDO has traditionally been considered and operationalized as an individual-differences measure of support for group-based hierarchies (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). However, recent research suggests that it can change depending on situational factors, such as having high (relative to low) group status (Schmitt et al. 2003) and being induced to feel threatened by an outgroup (Morrison and Ybarra 2008). People high in SDO support policies designed to maintain inequality between groups (e.g., the death penalty; Pratto et al. 1994) and tend to exhibit prejudice against members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities; Duckitt 2006; Kteily et al. 2011). By contrast, people low in SDO support policies designed to attenuate hierarchies between groups, such as welfare and affirmative action (Pratto et al. 1994), and are positively predisposed toward multicultural ideologies that promote recognition and appreciation of diversity (Guimond et al. 2013; Levin et al. 2012).

Whereas people high in SDO tend to support the status quo and to want to preserve inequalities between groups, the fair-trade industry strives to create equity in the economic system and enhance the resources of producers and workers who have traditionally been marginalized (Fair Trade International 2011). In addition, people high in SDO are specifically interested in preserving the advantaged position of their ingroup relative to outgroups (Schmitt et al. 2003), and fair-trade consumption could be considered an act of disloyalty to the ingroup. For example, Doran (2010) found that non-consumers of fair trade cite loyalty values as primary drivers of their purchasing decisions. Accordingly, she speculated that non-consumers of fair trade might equate “disadvantaged producers in far-flung corners of the globe” with outgroup members (p. 538). We therefore argue that people high in SDO should see fair-trade companies and products as incompatible with their ideas about what constitutes justice and fairness. To them, fairness involves maintaining (rather than changing) the existing hierarchy, with advantaged groups at the top and disadvantaged groups at the bottom. As such, people high in SDO should show a reduced preference for fair-trade products compared to people low in SDO, and the former’s (reduced) perceptions of fair-trade products as promoting social justice should mediate this effect.

Notably, SDO correlates with but is distinct from a number of other constructs that may also predict fair-trade consumption. For example, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) involves preferences for traditional values and social order (Altemeyer 1998). Although fair-trade products have only recently gained popularity and thus may be considered inconsistent with tradition, an explicit objective

of the fair-trade movement is to “[secure] the rights of marginalized producers and workers” (Moore 2004, p. 2; Fair Trade International 2011), which is potentially more closely related to reducing social and economic inequalities than to eradicating “mainstream” values. We thus expect SDO, to a greater degree than RWA, to predict attitudes toward fair-trade products. Supporting this expectation, SDO is more closely associated with prejudice against disadvantaged (i.e., low-status) groups than is RWA, which is more closely associated with prejudice against socially deviant groups than is SDO (Duckitt 2006).

Another related construct, system justification, involves beliefs that the world is a fair and just place (Jost and Banaji 1994; Jost et al. 1994). Although measures of SDO and system justification predict similar outcomes (e.g., ethnocentrism for dominant group members, negative attitudes toward policies that challenge existing hierarchies; Jost and Thompson 2000), SDO involves maintaining the status quo of differences between particular groups. By contrast, system justification is a broader construct that involves not only attitudes toward group-based hierarchies, but also beliefs about fairness in society more generally (e.g., endorsement of meritocracy; Jost and Banaji 1994; Jost et al. 1994). Because fair-trade product preferences have been linked to loyalty to one’s ingroup vis-à-vis outgroups (e.g., producers from different parts of the world; Doran 2010), and SDO reflects support for existing *group* inequalities specifically (Sidanius and Pratto 1999), the effect of SDO on fair-trade consumption should still hold even after controlling for system justification.

Overview of Research

We investigated the relationship between SDO, perceptions of fair-trade products as socially just, and fair-trade consumption in three studies. In Study 1, we tested whether SDO uniquely predicts fair-trade consumption after controlling for related but distinct individual-differences variables (i.e., RWA and system justification). In Study 2, we compared ratings of fair-trade products as promoting social justice versus promoting “mainstream” values, to ensure that the former (but not the latter) mediated the relationship between SDO and fair-trade consumption. In Study 3, we experimentally manipulated attitudes toward group-based inequality in order to (1) establish the causal role of SDO in perceptions and consumption of fair-trade products, and (2) provide evidence that SDO, despite normally being operationalized as an individual-differences variable, is at least somewhat malleable to situational influences. First, however, we conducted a pilot study of whether SDO negatively impacts preferences for fair-trade products.

Human Subjects Considerations

All research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards stipulated by the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. All participants gave informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study.

Pilot Study

Ninety-eight US residents (55 women; age range: 18 to over 65) participated in this study. In all of our studies, we recruited participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform. Participants in Mechanical Turk studies are generally more diverse than typical college student samples in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and gender (Buhrmester et al. 2011).

Participants were randomly assigned to evaluate a tea described as either fair-trade or non-fair-trade. All participants saw a picture of a bowl of loose-leaf green tea and read that the tea came from the Lijiang Valley in China. However, participants assigned to evaluate the fair-trade tea read that the tea was made in a “fair trade village cooperative,” which “values cultural and economic diversity,” and “promotes the use of fair wages and worker benefits.” Conversely, participants assigned to evaluate the non-fair-trade tea read that the manufacturer “has been marketing premium teas around the world,” and no mention was made of fair trade or cultural/economic diversity.

Participants then indicated how desirable, appealing, and tasty the tea seemed to them (7-point scales; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), and their ratings were averaged into composites (fair-trade: $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.31$, $\alpha = 0.91$; non-fair-trade: $M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.23$, $\alpha = 0.91$). Participants also completed the 16-item SDO scale, which measures one’s preference for inequality between groups (e.g., “To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups”; “Increased social equality would be a good thing” [reverse-scored]; Pratto et al. 1994). Participants responded on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), and their responses were averaged ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.84$; $\alpha = 0.96$).

Consistent with our hypothesis, SDO correlated negatively with liking of the fair-trade tea ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, SDO was unrelated to liking of the non-fair-trade tea ($r = 0.03$, $p = 0.82$). Having established that SDO predicts reduced preferences for fair-trade products, we conducted three studies to test whether SDO also diminishes perceptions that fair-trade products are socially just, and whether these perceptions ultimately explain high-SDO individuals’ consumption patterns.

Study 1

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-six US residents (51 women; age range 19–71) completed the study on Mechanical Turk in exchange for monetary compensation. Three participants were omitted because they completed the study in 2 min or less, suggesting that they did not read the instructions or questions carefully. The data from the remaining 123 participants were analyzed.

Procedure and Materials

Participants first completed the following measures using 7-point scales: the 16-item SDO measure from the pilot study (Pratto et al. 1994; $M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.19$, $\alpha = 0.94$); a 15-item RWA measure (Zakrisson 2005; $M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.20$, $\alpha = 0.92$; e.g., “The ‘old-fashioned ways’ and ‘old-fashioned values’ still show the best way to live”); and a 17-item economic system justification measure (Jost and Thompson 2000; $M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.89$, $\alpha = 0.86$; e.g., “If people work hard, they almost always get what they want”; “Social class differences reflect differences in the natural order of things”). The economic system justification scale was administered because of its potential relevance to the objectives of the fair-trade movement (e.g., to improve trading conditions for disadvantaged producers; Fair Trade International 2011; Moore 2004), and its strong positive correlation with SDO among dominant group members (Jost and Thompson 2000).

Next, participants completed a product choice task. Participants read that they would be entered into a lottery to win a \$10 gift certificate to either GlobalExchange.com (a fair-trade company) or HickoryFarms.com (a non-fair-trade company). Participants then read a short blurb about each website. All participants read both blurbs, which were presented side by side. GlobalExchange.com was described as follows:

Global Exchange is a human rights organization that implements the principles of socially and economically responsible business by operating according to fair-trade criteria. Since its founding in New York City in 1988, we have been working with communities across the world to build greater awareness of global trade issues and translate that awareness into fair-trade activism.

HickoryFarms.com was described as follows:

When Hickory Farms was founded in 1951 in the pastoral farm country of Ohio, the products quickly became a hallmark gift for those who appreciate rich and savory foods. Based in northwest Ohio, Hickory Farms brings the best of Midwest values and unwavering quality to consumers in North America and the U.S. Armed Forces all over the world.

Participants then indicated which gift certificate they preferred to receive if they won the lottery (1 = Global Exchange, 0 = Hickory Farms). In total, 63 participants preferred the Global Exchange (fair-trade) gift certificate, and 60 participants preferred the Hickory Farms (non-fair-trade) gift certificate. Participants also rated how desirable and appealing they found each gift certificate (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), and these ratings were averaged into composites (Global Exchange: $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.93$, $\alpha = 0.96$; Hickory Farms: $M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.69$, $\alpha = 0.97$).

Next, participants responded to the following question about each website using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*): “To what extent does Global Exchange [Hickory Farms] promote social justice?” The mean for Global Exchange was 5.43 ($SD = 1.44$), and the mean for Hickory Farms was 3.18 ($SD = 1.38$).

Finally, participants completed a demographic survey and were debriefed.

Results

The correlations between all measured variables are depicted in Table 1.

We hypothesized that SDO would negatively relate to fair-trade consumption even after controlling for RWA and system justification. To test this hypothesis, we submitted participants’ (dichotomous) gift certificate choices to a logistic regression analysis and their (continuous) product ratings to a multiple regression analysis, with SDO, RWA, and system justification as predictors.

As hypothesized, participants with higher SDO scores were less likely to choose the fair-trade (Global Exchange) gift certificate ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.01$), $\chi^2(1) = 5.97$, $p < 0.02$. RWA was unrelated to gift certificate choice ($b = -0.004$, $SE = 0.01$), $\chi^2(1 \text{ df}) = 0.08$, $p = 0.78$, and participants with higher system justification scores were marginally less likely to choose the fair-trade gift certificate ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.02$), $\chi^2(1) = 3.06$, $p = 0.08$.

Participants with higher SDO scores also rated the fair-trade gift certificate less positively ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = -2.69$, $p < 0.01$, but neither RWA ($b = -0.002$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = -0.19$, $p = 0.85$, nor system

Table 1 Zero-order correlations, Study 1

	SDO	RWA	SJ	Choice (1 = fair-trade)	Fair-trade ratings	Non-fair-trade ratings
SDO		0.50**	0.61**	0.41**	-0.39**	0.09
RWA	0.50**		0.54**	0.27**	-0.25**	0.10
SJ	0.61**	0.54**		0.38**	-0.34**	0.12
Choice (1 = fair-trade)	0.41**	0.27**	0.38**		-0.75**	0.32**
Fair-trade ratings	-0.39**	-0.25**	-0.34**	-0.75**		-0.02
Non-fair-trade ratings	0.09	0.10	0.12	0.32**	-0.02	

** $p < 0.05$

justification ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = -1.32$, $p = 0.19$, predicted fair-trade gift certificate ratings. There were no effects of SDO ($b = 0.001$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = 0.13$, $p = 0.89$, RWA ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = 0.45$, $p = 0.65$, or system justification ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$), $t(119) = 0.64$, $p = 0.53$, on ratings of the non-fair-trade (Hickory Farms) gift certificate.

Discussion

The results of this study supported our prediction that SDO diminishes preferences for fair-trade products, controlling for RWA and system justification. Thus, support for group-based inequality has a unique negative effect on fair-trade consumption after support for tradition and social order, and tendencies to justify existing social systems, are taken into account. However, a central component of our argument is that high SDO predicts resistance to fair-trade consumption because it decreases the likelihood of viewing such consumption as socially just in the first place. To this end, in Study 2, we tested the mediating role of social justice ratings in the relationship between SDO and fair-trade product preferences. We also measured participants' perceptions of whether fair-trade consumption promotes "traditional" values, in order to ensure that our effects were due specifically to perceptions of social justice rather than to the general valence of fair-trade (versus non-fair-trade) product ratings (see Schuldt et al. 2012).

Study 2

Method

Participants

One hundred and thirty-two US residents (57 women; age range: 18–63) completed the study on Mechanical Turk in exchange for monetary compensation. One participant was omitted because his/her SDO score (6.06 out of 7) was more than 3 SD above the sample mean, and 10

participants were omitted because they took 2 min or less to complete the survey. The data from the remaining 121 participants were analyzed.

Procedure and Materials

As in Study 1, participants read the descriptions of the Global Exchange (fair trade) and Hickory Farms (non-fair-trade) websites prior to indicating which gift certificate they would like to receive (Global Exchange: $n = 73$; Hickory Farms: $n = 48$). Participants also rated how much they wanted to win and how desirable they found each gift certificate (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), and these ratings were averaged into composites (Global Exchange: $M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.96$, $\alpha = 0.97$; Hickory Farms: $M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.58$, $\alpha = 0.95$).

Participants then responded to the justice questions from Study 1 (Global Exchange: $M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.54$; Hickory Farms: $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.47$). In addition, they indicated the extent to which they believed each company promoted traditional values (Global Exchange: $M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.77$; Hickory Farms: $M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.49$). All ratings were made on 7-point scales.

To alleviate concerns that demand effects might drive the impact of SDO on product preferences, we measured SDO after the product choices and ratings ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.18$ on a 7-point scale; $\alpha = 0.95$). Finally, participants completed a demographic survey.

Results

We predicted that SDO would relate negatively to choices and ratings of the fair-trade (Global Exchange) gift certificate. Furthermore, we predicted that the negative relationship between SDO and fair-trade preferences would be mediated by high-SDO individuals' reduced tendencies to see the fair-trade company as promoting social justice. To test these predictions, we conducted logistic regression (choice) and multiple regression (ratings and social justice) analyses, with SDO as the predictor.

Consistent with predictions, high-SDO individuals were less likely than low-SDO individuals to choose the fair-trade gift certificate ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.17$), $\chi^2(1) = 2.69$, $p = 0.10$. In addition, high-SDO individuals rated the fair-trade gift certificate less positively than did low-SDO individuals ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.16$), $t(119) = -1.78$, $p < 0.08$. Although these effects were only marginal, they replicated the findings from Study 1.

Importantly, high-SDO individuals were significantly less inclined to see the fair-trade website as promoting social justice ($b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.12$), $t(119) = -2.60$, $p = 0.01$. SDO did not predict perceptions of the non-fair-trade website as promoting social justice ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.12$), $t(119) = 1.18$, $p = 0.24$, nor did SDO predict perceptions of either website as promoting traditional values (fair-trade: $b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.14$), $t(119) = -0.75$, $p = 0.46$; non-fair-trade: $b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.12$), $t(119) = 0.18$, $p = 0.86$). Thus, only justice ratings for the fair-trade website were a candidate for mediation.

Mediation Analyses

As noted above, SDO was related to both gift certificate choice and social justice ratings. The zero-order relationship between social justice ratings and gift certificate choice was also significant ($b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.15$), $\chi^2(1) = 7.66$, $p < 0.005$. Thus, we tested whether ratings of the fair-trade company as socially just mediated the relationship between SDO and gift certificate choice (Baron and Kenny 1986).

When choice was regressed onto both SDO and fair-trade justice ratings, the effect of SDO became nonsignificant ($b = -0.18$, $SE = 0.18$), $\chi^2(1) = 1.06$, $p = 0.30$, but the effect of justice ratings remained significant ($b = 0.38$, $SE = 0.15$), $\chi^2(1) = 6.37$, $p = 0.01$. A bootstrapping analysis with 1,000 estimates (Preacher and Hayes 2004) revealed that justice ratings of the fair-trade website mediated the relationship between SDO and reduced tendencies to choose the fair-trade gift certificate ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.08$, 95 % CI -0.36 to -0.02).

We repeated this mediation analysis with fair-trade gift certificate ratings as the dependent variable, given that: (1) SDO was related to fair-trade gift certificate ratings (see above), (2) SDO was related to social justice ratings of the fair-trade company (see above), and (3) social justice ratings of the fair-trade company were related to fair-trade gift certificate ratings ($b = 0.46$, $SE = 0.11$), $t(119) = 4.26$, $p < 0.001$. When fair-trade gift certificate ratings were regressed onto both SDO and fair-trade justice ratings, the effect of SDO became nonsignificant ($b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.15$), $t(118) = -0.93$, $p = 0.36$, but the effect of justice ratings remained significant ($b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.11$), $t(118) = 3.93$, $p < 0.001$. A bootstrapping analysis with

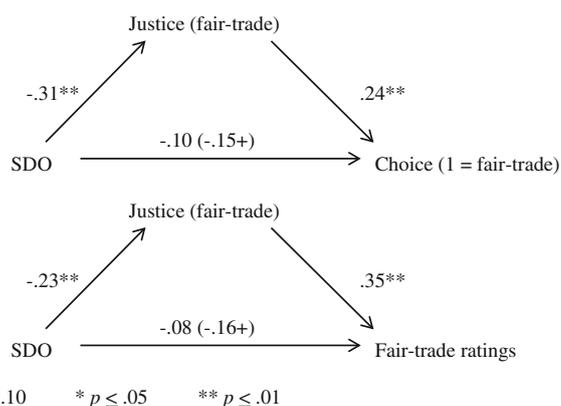


Fig. 1 Mediation analyses, Study 2 (standardized betas)

1,000 estimates (Preacher and Hayes 2004) revealed that justice ratings of the fair-trade website mediated the relationship between SDO and reduced preferences for the fair-trade gift certificate ($b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, 95 % CI: -0.31 to -0.03). This mediation is depicted in Fig. 1.

Discussion

Study 2 built upon Study 1 by demonstrating *why* people high in SDO are relatively resistant to consuming fair-trade products. Specifically, high-SDO individuals view fair-trade companies as less socially just than do low-SDO individuals. Study 2 thus provides evidence that fair-trade products are not uniformly considered “fair,” which can in turn influence consumption patterns.

In Studies 1 and 2, we measured fair-trade product preferences using real products and real brands. Thus, these studies mirror tradeoffs between fair-trade and non-fair-trade products that consumers might make in their everyday lives. However, one alternative explanation for our results is that the fair-trade product was less familiar to consumers than the non-fair-trade product, and that this lack of familiarity led low-SDO individuals to prefer the latter product (see Hoyer and Brown 1990, for a discussion of how brand familiarity impacts consumer choice). We see this explanation as unlikely for two reasons. First, in the pilot study, we did not provide brand information and still demonstrated a negative effect of SDO on fair-trade preferences. Second, if familiarity accounted for high-SDO individuals’ reduced preferences for fair-trade products, these preferences would likely have been mediated by (lowered) perceptions that the fair-trade product promoted “traditional” values, but we found no evidence for such mediation. Nevertheless, to further demonstrate that familiarity was not responsible for our results, in Study 3 we used a novel product (chocolate bars) and, as in the pilot study, we did not provide any brand information to participants.

In addition to replicating our findings with a different product, in Study 3 we directly tested the causal relationship between SDO and fair-trade product preferences by manipulating attitudes toward social inequality. Doing so would help to ensure that fair-trade product preferences stem from attitudes toward group-based hierarchies in particular, and that SDO affects fair-trade consumption rather than the reverse. It would also constitute evidence that SDO, in addition to varying across individuals, can be induced according to the situation.

Study 3

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred and twenty US residents (45 women; age range: 18–72) participated in the study through Mechanical Turk. One participant was omitted for completing the study in only 2 min, leaving 119 individuals in the final sample.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the high-SDO or low-SDO condition. In addition, participants were randomly assigned to evaluate either the fair-trade or non-fair-trade product first. However, there were no interactions between order of evaluation and SDO condition on any of the dependent measures (SDO scores: $F(1, 116) = 0.25$, $p = 0.61$; WTP [fair-trade]: $F(1, 116) = 0.07$, $p = 0.79$; WTP [non-fair-trade]: $F(1, 116) = 1.14$, $p = 0.29$; justice ratings [fair-trade]: $F(1, 116) = 0.38$, $p = 0.54$; justice ratings [non-fair-trade]: $F(1, 116) = 0.57$, $p = 0.45$), so order will not be discussed further.

Procedure and Materials

Participants first completed the SDO manipulation. Specifically, they were asked to list either three ways that *inequality* between groups could be a good thing (high-SDO condition) or three ways that *equality* between groups could be a good thing (low-SDO condition). Immediately following this manipulation, participants filled out the 16-item SDO scale and were instructed to respond according to how they felt at the moment, which constituted the manipulation check ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.26$ on a 7-point scale; $\alpha = 0.96$).

Next, participants viewed descriptions of two different chocolate bars. Each description was accompanied by an image of an unwrapped chocolate bar, and neither description contained information about the brand or where the chocolate was produced. The fair-trade chocolate bar was described as follows:

We invite you to try our delicious chocolates and take a step toward change. By eating good food, you contribute to building vibrant, culturally diverse, sustainable communities around the world. All of our products are fair-trade and we work with families of local farmers, bringing them to our facilities to learn valuable new production techniques.

The non-fair-trade chocolate bar was described as follows:

We invite you to try our delicious chocolates. We're one of the largest chocolate manufacturers in the world and have been this way since the 1950's. By buying our chocolates, you join millions of other chocolate lovers in enjoying delicious chocolate that has been made the same way since 1950.

Participants then indicated what percentage of the retail price they would be WTP for the fair-trade ($M = 0.81$, $SD = 0.26$) and non-fair-trade ($M = 0.60$, $SD = 0.31$) chocolate bars (see e.g., Rucker and Galinsky 2008 for a discussion of similar measures). There was no maximum percentage (i.e., participants could indicate a WTP more than the full retail price—that is, more than 100 %—if they wished), and responses ranged from 0 to 150 % for the fair-trade chocolate and from 0 to 100 % for the non-fair-trade chocolate. Because responses were negatively skewed (-1.14 for the fair-trade chocolate, -0.52 for the non-fair-trade chocolate; $SE = 0.22$), we squared them and used the transformed scores as the dependent measures (0.19 for the fair-trade chocolate, 0.24 for the non-fair-trade chocolate, $SE = 0.22$).

After indicating their WTP, participants responded to the justice questions from Study 2, reworded to pertain to the chocolates (fair-trade: $M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.36$; non-fair-trade: $M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.56$), and completed a demographic survey.

Results

Manipulation Check

Participants in the high-SDO condition ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.44$) had higher subsequent SDO scores than did participants in the low-SDO condition ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 117) = 7.09$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.06$. Thus, the high-SDO condition increased support for group-based inequality relative to the low-SDO condition.

Main Analyses

We predicted that participants in the high-SDO condition would be WTP less for the fair-trade chocolate bar, relative

to participants in the low-SDO condition. The results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) supported our prediction (high-SDO condition: $M_{\text{raw}} = 76.88\%$, $SD_{\text{raw}} = 25.58\%$, $M_{\text{transformed}} = 6552.23$, $SD_{\text{transformed}} = 3135.53$; low-SDO condition: $M_{\text{raw}} = 84.81\%$, $SD_{\text{raw}} = 26.54\%$, $M_{\text{transformed}} = 7885.79$, $SD_{\text{transformed}} = 3945.85$), $F(1, 117) = 4.10$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$. There was no difference in WTP for the non-fair-trade chocolate bar between conditions (high-SDO condition: $M_{\text{raw}} = 60.27\%$, $SD_{\text{raw}} = 31.94\%$, $M_{\text{transformed}} = 4634.38$, $SD_{\text{transformed}} = 3572.72$; low-SDO condition: $M_{\text{raw}} = 60.30\%$, $SD_{\text{raw}} = 30.29\%$, $M_{\text{transformed}} = 4538.97$, $SD_{\text{transformed}} = 3219.57$), $F(1, 117) = 0.02$, $p = 0.88$, $\eta^2 = 0.0002$.

We also predicted that participants in the high-SDO condition would be less likely than participants in the low-SDO condition to view the manufacturer of the fair-trade chocolate bar as promoting social justice. This prediction was supported (high-SDO condition: $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.55$; low-SDO condition: $M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.13$), $F(1, 117) = 3.57$, $p = 0.06$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Ratings of the non-fair-trade chocolate bar manufacturer as promoting social justice did not differ by condition (high-SDO condition: $M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.87$; low-SDO condition: $M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 117) = 0.74$, $p = 0.39$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$.

Mediation Analysis

To test whether justice ratings of the fair-trade manufacturer mediated the relationship between SDO condition (0 = low-SDO, 1 = high-SDO) and WTP for the fair-trade chocolate bar, we first ensured that: (1) SDO condition (the independent variable) predicted WTP (the dependent variable) ($b = -1333.56$, $SE = 658.93$), $t(117) = -2.02$, $p < 0.05$; (2) SDO condition predicted justice ratings (the mediator) ($b = -0.47$, $SE = 0.25$), $t(117) = -1.89$, $p = 0.06$; and (3) justice ratings predicted WTP ($b = 693.53$, $SE = 238.93$), $t(117) = 2.90$, $p < 0.005$. Next, we regressed WTP onto both SDO condition and justice ratings. Although the effect of justice ratings on WTP remained significant ($b = 627.43$, $SE = 240.97$), $t(116) = 2.60$, $p = 0.01$, the effect of SDO condition was eliminated ($b = -1041.01$, $SE = 652.97$), $t(117) = -1.59$, $p = 0.11$. A bootstrapping analysis with 1,000

estimates (Preacher and Hayes 2004) indicated that the effect of the high-SDO condition on reduced WTP for the fair-trade chocolate was mediated by (reduced) justice ratings of the manufacturer ($b = -302.69$, $SE = 213.73$, 95% CI: -866.02 to -4.51). Figure 2 depicts this mediation.

Discussion

Study 3 demonstrated that holding more favorable attitudes toward group-based inequality (i.e., high SDO) can *cause* people to perceive fair-trade products as less socially just, and in turn to resist consuming such products. As noted earlier, SDO is related to a number of other individual-differences measures (e.g., RWA, system justification). It is thus imperative to establish the unique role of attitudes toward social inequality in perceptions and consumption of fair-trade products, and experimentally manipulating such attitudes helped to do so.

Notably, even though our manipulation check confirmed that participants in the high-SDO condition scored higher on the SDO scale than did participants in the low-SDO condition, the former mean (2.76) was still below the midpoint. This is most likely because SDO scores tend to be quite low on average; indeed, validation of the SDO scale across 15 different samples produced means that ranged from 1.51 ($SD = 0.41$) to 3.27 ($SD = 0.71$) out of 7 (Sidanius and Pratto 1999).

One potential limitation of our chocolate descriptions in this study is that the fair-trade product was described not only as fair-trade, but also as promoting values such as sustainability and cultural diversity. By contrast, the non-fair-trade product was not described as possessing any of these characteristics. We worded the descriptions in this way to ensure that they were as rich and externally valid as possible, but in so doing, we sacrificed some internal validity. Nevertheless, we believe that Studies 1 and 2 address this concern by using more consistent wording across experimental conditions.

General Discussion

What types of people are more versus less willing to consume fair-trade products, and what situational factors may influence these decisions? Prior research has examined ethics-related predictors of fair-trade product preferences, such as prioritization of socially responsible consumption (Kim et al. 2010; Schuldt et al. 2012), religiosity (Salvador et al. 2013), and concern for the environment and humanity (Doran 2009). However, a tacit assumption of much research is that people uniformly view fair-trade products as ethical. In the present work, we

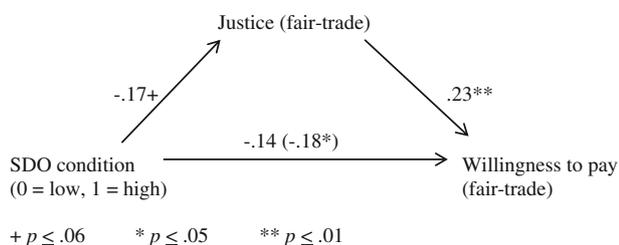


Fig. 2 Mediation analysis, Study 3 (standardized betas)

focused on SDO (Pratto et al. 1994) as a factor that may *reduce* the extent to which fair-trade products are considered socially just. We argued that for people high in SDO, support for group-based inequality is directly incompatible with the fair-trade industry, in which improving trading conditions for marginalized producers and increasing equity in international trade overall are considered to be of paramount importance (Fair Trade International 2011; Moore 2004). Thus, we predicted that SDO would relate negatively to fair-trade consumption and perceptions of fair-trade products as promoting social justice.

Across three studies, high SDO—be it measured (Studies 1 and 2) or experimentally induced (Study 3)—predicted a reduced liking for and tendency to purchase fair-trade products, over and beyond related individual differences (i.e., RWA and system justification; Study 1). Notably, we demonstrated these effects on behavioral product choice measures as well as on self-reported ratings of fair-trade and non-fair-trade products. Furthermore, in Studies 2 and 3, the relationship between SDO and fair-trade consumption was mediated by (lowered) perceptions that the fair-trade companies promoted social justice. This mediation pattern is consistent with the notion that for people high in SDO, justice involves preservation rather than attenuation of existing hierarchies between groups.

In addition to demonstrating that high SDO induces people to view fair-trade products as less socially just than they otherwise would, our studies make a methodological contribution. Specifically, in Study 3, we manipulated support for either social inequality or social equality, and we found that participants were less willing to purchase fair-trade products and less likely to see such products as fair after the positive aspects of social inequality had been made salient. A small number of studies have shown that although SDO has long been considered a stable individual-differences variable (e.g., Pratto et al. 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1999), it can also fluctuate according to aspects of the situation (e.g., intergroup threat; see Morrison and Ybarra 2008; high status of the ingroup; see Schmitt et al. 2003). However, no research to date has primed people with the mindset that social inequality is a good (or bad) thing and measured effects on subsequent behavior. Thus, our study has the potential to inspire additional work on the downstream consequences of inducing high (versus low) SDO, and the conditions under which SDO is versus is not susceptible to contextual influences.

Future research should continue to investigate different predictors of fair-trade consumption. For example, although other individual-differences variables measured in Study 1a (e.g., RWA) did not predict fair-trade consumption in the present studies after controlling for SDO, these variables may predict willingness to consume fair-trade

products in other contexts. For example, because RWA assesses support for social order and tradition (Altemeyer 1998), RWA may be an especially strong negative predictor of fair-trade consumption after the “non-mainstream” aspects and values of the fair-trade market, or obligations to support “traditional” (non-fair-trade) companies, have been made salient. By contrast, because SDO involves attitudes toward social and economic inequality (Pratto et al. 1994; Sidanius and Pratto 1999), SDO may be an especially strong predictor of fair-trade consumption when the economic aspects of the fair-trade market (e.g., improving international trading conditions, promoting economic responsibility) are made salient. Furthermore, system justification may be especially likely to predict fair-trade consumption when the potential of the fair-trade industry to change the status quo more broadly (versus in relation to specific groups) is highlighted.

The present work advances understanding of the psychological predictors of fair-trade perceptions and consumption, most notably by suggesting that some individuals (i.e., those high in SDO) do not inevitably see the “fair” in fair-trade. Despite the changing landscape of consumer behavior—with fair-trade products becoming more prevalent than ever before (Krier 2005; Moore 2004)—it is critical to study the factors that may undermine as well as bolster fair-trade product preferences. For instance, a growing body of literature on the fair-trade movement has discussed the marketing of fair-trade products as part of the mainstream retailing system (e.g., selling fair-trade food products through conventional retail outlets such as supermarkets) versus the marketing of fair-trade products as occupying a specialized niche (Low and Davenport 2006; Moore 2004; Moore et al. 2006). If fair-trade producers focus on quality rather than social justice when mainstreaming, then it is possible that high-SDO (low-SDO) consumers might have more favorable (less favorable) attitudes toward mainstreamed fair-trade products than non-mainstreamed fair-trade products. If, however, the fair-trade industry is construed as zero-sum (i.e., whereby increases in the prevalence of fair-trade products correspond to decreases in the prevalence of “mainstream” products), then preferences and purchasing behaviors will likely differ between high-SDO and low-SDO consumers. For example, high-SDO consumers might exhibit less favorable attitudes toward and reduce their intentions to purchase from retailers whom they know have eliminated non-fair-trade options, compared to retailers whom they know have kept non-fair-trade options. By investigating such questions, marketers will be in a better position to understand which aspects of fair-trade products are more versus less appealing to different groups of consumers, and why.

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