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The Relationship Between Right-Wing Authoritarianism & Support for Military Action Among Millennial Voters

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM
& SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ACTION AMONG MILLENNIAL VOTERS

Jessica A. Nemet

May 2018

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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John Jay College of Criminal Justice

City University of New York

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the relationship between Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Militarism among millennial students at John Jay College. Previous studies have already suggested a relationship between RWA, heightened perceived individual or communal threat, and aggressive attitudes – especially towards outsiders. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to gauge the level of authoritarianism and that was endorsed by each subject and these RWA factor scores were contrasted between participants who endorsed Militarism as a viable U.S. foreign policy tactic and those who did not. Consistent with our hypothesis, results suggest that individuals who supported militarism as a viable means to solving international conflicts also scored higher on RWA. However, our results point out a divergence from the core construct of authoritarianism, where by its relevance as a form of governance (which was estimated in this study) may be unrelated to endorsement of conservative values concerning sex, religion and other personal freedoms. The implications for the drivers underlying support of U.S. military interventions worldwide among millennials are discussed.

Keywords: *Right-Wing Authoritarianism, militarism, Millennials, conservatism, U.S. foreign policy*

DEDICATION

To Roxy,
my heart, my soul,
my best friend.



"The fidelity of a dog is a precious gift demanding no less binding
moral responsibilities than the friendship of a human being.
The bond with a true dog is as lasting as the ties of this earth can ever be."
- Konrad Lorenz

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Finally, to my precious Roxy, I could not have made it through without your abundant hugs and kisses. You are missed more than words can ever express. If love alone could have saved you, you would have lived forever.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM
& SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ACTION AMONG MILLENNIAL VOTERS

“Prejudice is one of the problems of our times for which everyone has a theory, but no one an answer.” Theodore Adorno wrote these words in 1950, following WWII, the Holocaust, and overall harrowing chapter in world history. Almost seventy years later and unfortunately, his words still ring true. Adorno’s research culminated in the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, a monumental study that explored the origins of anti-Semitism in the aftermath of Hitler’s Germany and focused on the investigation of prejudice. An existing predisposition to intolerance became recognized as authoritarianism. In 2009, Vanderbilt University Professor Marc Hetherington and his colleague Jonathan Weiler published the book *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. They came to the conclusion that authoritarians fueled much of the polarization within politics. This trend has only accelerated in recent years. Several social and political changes have activated individuals’ authoritarian tendencies, causing them to look for strong leaders who promise to take action when they feel threatened. The rise of American authoritarianism, including how it has changed since Adorno first sought to study it, is transforming the dynamics of national politics, and likely to have profound consequences that extend well beyond the most recent presidential election (Taub, 2016). This study explores the relationship between individuals who score high in authoritarianism and their support for military action. Given the highly polarized social and political climate, both domestically and abroad, it is important to study the psychological processes underlying public support for prejudicial attitudes as well as aggressive and militarized policies.

Introduction

The Origin of Authoritarianism Research

Authoritarianism represents the notion that there is a recognizable disposition that consists of specific traits, such as obedience to authority, moral absolutism, conformity, intolerance towards dissidents and deviants, as well as animosity and aggression against racial and ethnic out-groups (Stenner, 2005). Research has argued these traits are inherent to the authoritarianism whether it is the result of a particular personality type originating in rigid child rearing, a predisposition whose development is constrained by social learning, or an inheritable predisposition.

Adorno et al. (1950) observed that anti-Semites were predisposed toward intolerance to others and hypothesized that the observed systemic prejudice could be measured. The theory was that a hierarchical, authoritarian, and exploitive parent-child relationship was likely to carry over into a power-oriented and exploitatively dependent attitude towards one's partner and one's god (Adorno et al., 1950). Such an individual develops a political philosophy and social outlook dependent on that which appears strong and a disdainful rejection of that perceived as relegated to the bottom (Adorno et al., 1950). Conventionalism, rigidity, repressive denial, and consequent development of one's weaknesses, fears, and dependency are fundamental aspects of this personality pattern (Adorno et al., 1950). Adorno et al. (1950) developed the F-Scale, a series of questions designed to measure nine distinct traits considered inherent in authoritarian individuals. These traits included conventionalism, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, anti-intraception, superstition, power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and over exaggerated concerns about sex. The methodology of the scale was criticized due to the flawed design of questions, which produced acquiescence bias, the

multifaceted reality of a scale intended to measure one dimension, and the overall Freudian theoretical foundation of the scales development (MacWilliams, 2016). However, the observation that prejudice is a generalized attitude of intolerant individuals was the foundation for the studies of authoritarianism that followed.

In response to the methodological problems of the F-Scale, Altemeyer (1981) developed the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale. Constructed on the principles of Social Learning Theory, as opposed to psychoanalytic tenets, it included the influence of the environment in which children develop, in addition to parental child-rearing practices, on the developing of authoritarian individuals (Altemeyer, 1981; MacWilliams, 2016). The RWA questionnaire was designed to assess an individual's propensity to authoritarian attitudes. Altemeyer (1981), narrowed the classification of right-wing authoritarianism from the nine facets proposed by Adorno et al. to three interrelated attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism. Right-Wing Authoritarian is thus defined as an orientation, or predisposition, of an individual to respond in the same general way toward a given stimuli (Altemeyer, 1981).

Other researchers have argued that authoritarianism has a strong biological component, and that over fifty percent of the variance in the RWA Scale can be attributed to genetic variability (MacWilliams, 2016; McCourt, Bouchard, Lykken, Tellegen, & Keyes, 1999). Related to this theory are epigenetic studies, which found that changes in genes, caused by stress or threat, can be passed down from one generation to another (MacWilliams, 2016). This biological view of authoritarianism is consistent with several recent sociological models, which generally describe millennials, particularly minorities, as growing up in a constant state of uncertainty due to societal and environmental changes, and more recently terrorism threats.

Harris (2017) explored how trends such as growing up with during a war, student debt, mass incarceration, and social media have influenced the millennial generation (born 1980s to early 1990s). Overall according to Harris (2017), millennials' feel less in control of their lives than previous generations. Furthermore, Twenge (2017) notes that generation z, or iGen (born in the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s), is distinct from the Harris population, not solely due to their reliance on technology, but also because of how they choose to spend their time, how they behave, and in their attitudes toward religion, sexuality, and politics. Twenge (2017) claims that iGen socializes in completely different ways than previous generations and they tend to reject the once sacred social taboos. However, similarly to Harris' millennials, Twenge (2017) noted that iGen millennials too are obsessed with safety, focused on tolerance, and have no patience for inequality. The argument can be made that the personality of young adults is a collective reaction to chronic and increasing uncertainty. It is the perpetual anxiousness that enables attitudes consistent with authoritarianism.

Definitions, Correlates, and Past Research on Authoritarianism

Overall, authoritarians are characterized by a tendency to submit to authority, to act aggressively towards out-groups, and a preference for the conventional (Altemeyer, 1996; MacWilliams, 2016). Altemeyer (1996) describes submission to perceived authorities as consisting of a general acceptance of their statements and actions and overall willingness to comply with instructions without further inducement. According to this model, aggression is presumably inherent to authoritarianism through the belief that the perception and legitimacy of authority requires it. The predisposition to such aggression does not mean that authoritarians will always act aggressively when the opportunity arises; however, they are predisposed, believing that the most effective way to control the behavior of others is through force (Altemeyer, 1996).

Individual adherence to social conventions demonstrates a strong acceptance and commitment to the traditional social norms in one's society (Altemeyer, 1996).

Building on Altemeyer's foundational components, MacWilliams (2016) added 4 additional aspects to define authoritarianism. First, authoritarian submission to authority is rooted in their need for order, which impels their submission (MacWilliams, 2016). Second, it is that same need for order that compels them to defend it. When others, be it through their actions or simple existence, challenge the accepted norms, authoritarians aggressively rise to defend them (MacWilliams, 2016). Third, authoritarians sense of order is not necessarily defined by worldly powers, usually, there are higher powers that delineate right from wrong and good from evil (MacWilliams, 2016). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, authoritarianism transcends society, culture, politics, and race (MacWilliams, 2016). Overall, authoritarians search for uniformity, singularity, unanimity, and overall seek to be part of a collective, or system (Stenner, 2005). Furthermore, authoritarians are in a perpetual state of hypervigilance; they are always threatened and activated. It is actually nonauthoritarians, that when confronted with threats act more like authoritarians (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; MacWilliams, 2016)

Empirical Studies of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

In 2017, Stefano Passini set out to examine the differences between Altemeyer's three authoritarian components in relation to values and prejudicial attitudes. He found that the dimension of authoritarian submission was mainly associated with openness to change. Individuals high in this dimension were characterized by the importance they attached to conformism and a tendency to not be self-directed (Passini, 2017). They displayed passive attitudes and behaviors of compliance and had no inclination towards dominance, leadership, or overall achievement (Passini, 2017). This finding is consistent with research that shows when the

perception of social threat is absent there are weak effects of social conformity on intolerance and prejudice (Feldman, 2003) Individuals high in authoritarian submission are considered latently aggressive. The more they perceive social threats, the more they will express hostile aggression towards those they believe to be the origin of such threats (Passini, 2017).

More relevantly, the Passini (2017) study suggested that the dimension of authoritarian aggression was characterized by self-transcendence or superiority. Individuals high in authoritarian aggression focused importance on power and achievement rather than universal values. This is consistent with the Dual Process Model of ideology and prejudice (Sibley & Duckitt, 2013), which suggests that both openness to change and conservatism broadly correlate with authoritarianism, whereas self-enhancement and superiority are correlated with social dominance orientation (SDO) (Passini, 2017). In other words, positive attitudes towards authoritarian aggression (as opposed to acting out authoritarian aggression) might be more associated with RWA through the propensity to be a passive or submissive follower. The Dual-Process Motivational (DPM) Model of ideology and prejudice, therefore, is a theoretical approach that suggests that personality influences prejudice indirectly, and the effects are mediated by social attitudes. RWA and SDO are consequently believed to be dimensions of social attitude rather than facets of personality per se. Similarly, RWA, along with social dominance orientation (SDO), has been found to be a robust predictor of prejudice, ethnocentrism, and homophobia (Zakrisson, 2005). SDO is thought to reflect a personality preference in favor of an unequal social system, with a dominant group (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994). Passini's finding is consistent with research that argues that RWA represents authoritarian submission, whereas SDO represents authoritarian dominance.

Other studies showed that RWA is associated with the belief that the world is a dangerous and threatening place along with the values of social conformity, tradition, and security (Altemeyer, 1998; Crowson, Debacker, & Thoma, 2006), while SDO is associated with the belief that the world is a competitive jungle in addition to values such as power and achievement (Crowson, Debacker, Thoma, 2006; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis & Birum, 2002). The role of social threat and feelings of uncertainty as a trigger for eliciting authoritarians' reactions is well established in the literature. Metrolla, Ramos & Zechmeister (2011) looked at expressions of social and political intolerance using 12 items from the RWA scale. Participants completed a pretreatment survey, and following exposure to either "good times" or "terror threat" condition, completed a questionnaire concerning authoritarian attitudes. Results suggest those predisposed toward authoritarianism, expressed more extreme authoritarian attitudes when exposed to threatening conditions (Metrolla, Ramos & Zechmeister, 2011). In other words, extremism as expressed via authoritarian attitudes, can develop under conditions of perceived collective crisis (Metrolla, Ramos & Zechmeister, 2011). A personality characterized by authoritarian predispositions may have a tendency to cope with collective threat by expressing less tolerant and more punitive attitudes towards less conforming individuals.

The third authoritarianism dimension, conservatism, was characterized by tradition. It was the only component that predicted the importance of religion and morality to an individual (Passini, 2017). Conventionalism is linked to aspects related to traditional morality and conservatism. However, even if conservatism is linked to authoritarian attitude, you risk excluding individuals who call for a change in society, and therefore inherently are not conservative, but at the same time believe in a model of society and distribution of power not dissimilar from the system they oppose (Passini, 2017). There is a divide between non-

conservative individuals who do not hold authoritarian attitudes, and those who are non-conservative and support a model of change that still favors that authoritarian relationship. Compared to conservatism, the authoritarian submission/aggression dimensions were more strongly correlated with prejudice and right wing political orientation (Rattazzi, Bobbio, & Canova, 2007).

In *The Authoritarian Dynamic*, Karen Stenner also makes the critical distinction between authoritarianism and conservatism. She defined authoritarianism as a general predisposition towards intolerance of differences and posited that intolerance is the outcome of an authoritarian predisposition activated by normative threat (Stenner, 2005). Conservatism was divided into two facets: status quo conservatism (an aversion to change) and laissez-faire conservatism (a commitment to free market principles) (Stenner, 2005). Authoritarianism is not a desire to preserve the status quo, it does not preclude support for social change, so long as we are changing together in the pursuit of common goals (Stenner, 2005). Furthermore, it is argued that authoritarianism does not necessitate opposition to government interventions that might serve to enhance openness and sameness (Stenner, 2005).

Authoritarianism & Support for Militarism

In separating the authoritarian submission and aggression dimensions, Passini (2017) found that authoritarian aggression was the only dimension to predict political affiliation. The higher in authoritarian aggression an individual is, the more they were affiliated with right wing politics. This is consistent with research that shows authoritarian aggression is a main predictor of support for right wing parties (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Right wing parties typically express more aggressive and militant ideas, often emanating from a rigid emphasis on 'law and order', cultural homogeneity, and conservatism. In foreign policy, those elements often take the form of

prejudicial mistrust in the abilities or the good faith of foreign entities and their leaders. It would follow that individuals high in authoritarian aggression would support the use of military action.

Militarism is defined as the exaltation of military virtues and ideals or support for a policy of aggressive military preparedness. Within research, the construct is defined as the belief or desire of a government or people that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively defend or promote national interests. The U.S. spends roughly \$580 billion a year funding its military forces and oversees operations (U.S. Department of Defense, 2016). Nevertheless, public support of the military has fluctuated over time. Americans had intensely unfavorable attitudes about the Vietnam War as well as those running the military at that time (Allen, Samaranayake, & Albrittain, 2007). Since the start of the Iraq War, public opinion about the war followed a similar decline, however, opinions of the U.S. military as a whole had barely changed (Allen, Samaranayake, & Albrittain, 2007).

The Pew Research Center (2013) asked a series of questions, similar to those asked in our survey, about foreign policy and the assertiveness of the Obama administration. Approximately half of the participants (52%) said the Obama administration's approach to foreign policy was not assertive enough, up from 31% four years ago (Pew Research Center, 2013). It follows that endorsement of the government's lack of assertiveness of the government would correlate to a higher endorsement of militarism. In fact, 35% of the public says the U.S. should increase spending on national defense, 24% say it should be cut back and 40% say it should be kept about the same as today (Pew Research Center, 2016). Since 2013, those in favor of more defense spending has increased 12 percentage points (from 23%), suggesting growing support for increased defense and military spending.

The relationship between perceived national security and a militarist mindset had been previously reported by Ray (1972) who sought to examine the social characteristics associated with support for military. He surveyed 96 Australian Army National Servicemen on a variety of characteristics including social acceptability, other-directedness, alienation, and militarism. The results showed that conservatism, authoritarianism, and militarism were all positively related (Ray, 1972). The study presented a picture of those who support the military use as contemptuous of racial prejudice, strongly believing in their existing system of government, broad-minded, and submissive to legitimate authorities (Ray, 1972). Results indicated a negative relationship between authoritarianism and racial prejudice, consistent with research findings that authoritarians are more xenophilic (Ray, 1972; Perlmutter, 1954). Given the above-mentioned research on the growing divide between conservatism and authoritarianism, it is unsurprising that this study suggests that militarists were racially tolerant, while those with more conservative personality traits were racially prejudiced. However, as the study predates the RWA scale as developed by Altemeyer, it does not address how right-wing authoritarianism is correlated to belief in militarism.

Rationale for the Present Study

Recent research supports the notion that Authoritarianism is a component of social attitude that mediates the relationship between personality and prejudice. Authoritarianism, specifically authoritarian aggression, is strongly correlated with prejudice and has been found to be a predictor of right wing political orientation (Rattazzi, Bobbio, & Canova, 2007; Passini, 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Given the correlation with right wing politics, a party typically identified by hard foreign policy positions, and a positive stance toward military action, it is expected that individuals high in authoritarianism would support military action.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) is associated with a variety of values including social conformity, tradition, and security (Crowson, Debacker, & Thoma, 2006).

Authoritarianism is also correlated with the belief that the world is a dangerous and threatening place, and the more an individual high in authoritarianism perceives a threat the more they will express hostile aggression towards those they believe to be the origin of such threats (Altemeyer, 1998; Passini, 2017). In other words, extremism among ordinary individuals, as expressed via authoritarian attitudes, can grow under conditions of collective crisis (Metrolla, Ramos & Zechmeister, 2011). Those with authoritarian predispositions cope with threat by expressing less tolerant attitudes during crisis. We expected that our population, which is subjected to high perceived societal, environmental, and political uncertainty would endorse higher RWA and support militarism.

Allen, Samaranayake, & Albrittain (2007) offer a general status of public support in regard to the Iraq War. They explain that while public opinion of the war has declined since its start, attitudes pertaining to the U.S. military as a whole barely changed (Allen, Samaranayake, & Albrittain, 2007). Although the information is informative, it doesn't explain how one's personal orientation, in this case towards authoritarianism, would affect their support of the war, or military action. Therefore, this study focused on an individual's proclivity for authoritarianism and its association with support for military action.

Limited research on the connection between militarism, conservatism, and authoritarianism suggests the concepts are all interrelated (Ray, 1972). In fact, an examination of the social characteristics associated with the militarist reveals traits similar to that of the authoritarian, including, a strong belief in the existing system of government and submission to legitimate authorities (Ray, 1972). Given that individuals characterized by authoritarian

predispositions have a tendency to cope with collective threats by expressing less tolerant and more punitive attitudes towards fellow individuals, it is expected that these same individuals would be more supportive of military action to stop the perceived threat (Metrolla, Ramos & Zechmeister, 2011). Taking into account which items of the RWA scale are most relevant to the concept of authoritarianism, we developed one factor to compare against support for and endorsement of military action in pursuit of government goals.

Methods

Research Design

The present study is an exploratory, correlational study. Through the use of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale, we explored the association between participants' level of Authoritarianism and their attitudes towards United States foreign policy, specifically their belief in militarism. We examined the correlations between Right-Wing Authoritarianism and opinions of the United States' use of military to achieve foreign policy goals both worldwide and within the Middle East.

Participants

For the sake of this study, the population we were interested in was American college undergraduates in New York State. Undergraduate students from John Jay College were eligible to participate in this study as long as they were a United States citizen and were eligible to vote (18 years old or older). It was not required for them to be registered to vote, just eligible to do so. In total, data was collected from 169 students (69.2% female) with an average age of 22.16 (range: 18 - 38). Consistent with student enrollment statistics, participants self-identified as 34% Latino/Hispanic, 19% Caucasian, 13% African American, 8% Caribbean/Other African, 7% South Asian, 6% East Asian, 5% Middle Eastern, 5% Mixed, and 4% Other.

Procedure

Graduate research assistants, who have been interviewed and accepted into Dr. Shuki Cohen's Perceptions of Anti-Arab Prejudice Lab, were trained and responsible for running participants and collecting data. All graduate students in the lab have completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program's coursework on Human Subjects Research for Social and Behavioral Faculty, Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars required by the International Review Board (IRB) to work with human participants in graduate level research.

Qualtrics is a private research software company that allows researchers to do online data collection as well as quantitative statistical analysis. This study utilized this software to compile a multi-faceted questionnaire used to measure the independent variables, dependent variable, and moderators. Using this software, the measures discussed in the following section were compiled into one large survey that participants took on a computer, under the supervision of one of the research assistants.

Participants were recruited through Sona Systems, a cloud-based participant pool management solution used by John Jay College. Sona Systems provides researchers with a unique URL that allows them to set up studies and recruit participants directly. Using the system, participants sign up for studies they qualify for. They were alerted of their upcoming appointments by email. Dr. Shuki Cohen's Perceptions of Anti-Arab Prejudice Lab has a private room located on a floor dedicated to psychology research. All participants took the survey at this location. Course credit was administered to those participants that showed up during their assigned slot and completed the study. The Sona system allows the researcher to set up customized questionnaires to prescreen participants to ensure they meet inclusion criteria and

ensure that the participant has not already participated in a similar study. We restricted participation to those students who are 18 and older and are a United States citizen.

To obtain informed consent from our participants we reviewed the procedures, risk, benefits, and other necessary information with them. We explained that the purpose of this study was to survey perceptions of Arabs in the Middle East and that the time commitment was approximately one hour. While the nature of most questions in the study are political, as opposed to personal or emotion, we alerted the participant that some questions we ask may still be upsetting or make them uncomfortable. If the participant did become uncomfortable at any time during the survey process they were allowed to withdraw consent and stop participating with no consequences. Participants were not paid for participating. Benefits to the participant were limited to obtaining course credit and getting experience of what research in political psychology is like.

Participants were informed that all information collected during this research study is confidential. Confidentiality of responses was protected because the subjects name was not recorded on any of the research material. They were identified by their assigned subject number, which was only connected to their name on the consent form. Consent forms were stored in a separate location for our records. Upon going over this with the participant they were asked to sign and date the consent form. Once participants have completed the survey they were debriefed and told that we were looking specifically at anti-Arab prejudice and how it impacts opinion of US foreign policy.

Measurements

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) was measured using the short form of the RWA Scale developed by Altemeyer in 1981 and revised in 1998. The 30-item measure has been used

around the world to assess conventionalism, authoritarian aggression and authoritarian submission. Research shows short versions of the RWA scale still yield good internal consistency (coefficient alpha of .80) (Zakrisson, 2005). This study utilizes 21 of the original RWA items. All items are answered on a 9-point scale, from one as very strongly disagree to nine as very strongly agree. Examples of questions include, “What our country really needs instead of more “civil rights” is a good stiff dose of law and order” and “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn.”

The survey also included items to assess participant’s belief in United States use of military to achieve foreign policy both worldwide and within the Middle East. Using a 4-point scale participants were asked to rank their overall opinion concerning the desired assertiveness of the government’s approach to foreign policy (1-Too Assertive; 2-Not Assertive Enough; 3-About Right; 4-No Opinion). On a similar 4-point scale, participants were also asked their opinions concerning the optimal reliance on military strength (1-Too Much; 2-Too Little; 3-About the Right Amount; 4-No Opinion).

Data Analysis

As part of the data preparation, the 11 questions of the RWA questionnaire-short form that were phrased as anti-authoritarian statements were reverse coded. Since the RWA Likert scale spans 9 levels, it was treated as a continuous – rather than ordinal – variable. The 4 militarism items were also recoded to be consistent with an increasing level of belief in militaristically aggressive foreign policy, in that the higher the score the more support the participant had for militarism.

Since militarist response is a high stakes question that is likely to be modified by response bias, we considered a participant as supportive of militarist intervention if their answer to any of the 4 questions concerning militarism was affirmative.

To establish the score of RWA for each subject, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was carried on the full RWA questionnaire using maximum likelihood estimator in package 'psych' on the R statistical software.

To examine the association between authoritarianism and militarism, the RWA means were then compared, using a t-test, between the participants who endorsed militarist response in contrast with those who didn't.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis failed to find a single factor underlying all 21 RWA items. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of a confirmatory factor analysis fitting only one factor was 0.138. However, examination of the loadings and correlation matrix showed that items that lacked content validity for the construct of authoritarianism were not contributing to the RWA factor. This led to the elimination of 10 items: 7 items concerned sexual freedom and idiosyncratic sexual practices and 3 items related to religious freedom and morality in education. This divergence from the core construct of authoritarianism as a preferred form of governance and control, especially among our Millennial-heavy participant population, is consistent with current research on the decoupling of conservative values (and especially religion, sex and personal freedoms) from authoritarianism per se and will be discussed later.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis that was run on the remainder of the items produced model fit indices that were very close to being adequate (RMSEA = 0.057), when RMSEA of 0.05 is often considered an adequate model fit. The factor scores were calculated (extracted) using the

Bartlett method (no significant change in the results were found by using the Thurstone, tenBerge and Harman methods).

As mentioned above, participants, who endorsed any of the 4 militarism items, were coded for belief in militarism (1), while participants who did not endorse any of the 4 items coded for lack of belief in militarism (0). There were 58 subjects who, at least once, believed in militarism and 111 subjects who did not believe in militarism at all. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare RWA scores of participants with high belief in militarism and participants with low belief in militarism. There was a significant difference in the scores for participants with high belief in militarism ($M = 0.382$, $SD = 1.015$) and participants with low belief in militarism ($M = 0.199$, $SD = 1.01$) conditions; $t(167) = 3.527448$ $p = 0.000542$.

Participants who support militarism were associated with higher RWA scores. There was no significant effect for gender, $t(167) = 0.295350412$, $p = 0.768093$, implying belief in militarism is unrelated to gender.

Resulting p-values of several RWA items were examined to see which individual items were most associated with militarism. RWA69, “what our country really needs instead of more ‘civil rights’ is a good stiff dose of law an order,” is mostly about militarism and unsurprisingly had a p-value of 0.000296. Item RWA66, “our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us,” features militarism (“mighty” and “destroy”) consistent with our factor ($p = 0.000499$). RWA68, “the situation in our country is getting so serious, the strongest method would be justified if they eliminated the troublemakers and got us back to our true path,” had a p-value of 0.0001075. The strongest theme in this item is militarism, however, there is also mention of troublemakers. It appears that when troublemakers are seen through the lens of labeling, when they are labeled as

troublemakers and they need to be crushed, that is where authoritarianism manifests itself.

However, when the questions asks about the rights of the troublemakers, to protest and specific individual rights, it appears our subject population is very sensitive to infringing on their personal liberties and answer in a non-authoritarian manner.

Discussion

Overall, our results support our hypothesis that RWA is related to militarism in that individuals who supported militarism as a vehicle to solving international conflicts in general, and threat to the US in particular, showed higher endorsement of Right-Wing Authoritarianism. Although to the best of our knowledge this association has not been tested directly so far, this finding is nevertheless consistent with research that links Authoritarianism to the belief that the world is a dangerous and threatening place, and therefore justifies social conformity, tradition, and security, and right wing political orientation (Altemeyer, 1998; Crowson, Debacker, & Thoma, 2006; Rattazzi, Bobbio, & Canova, 2007; Passini, 2017; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). Our results are also consistent with personality theories, in which, the traits intrinsic to that of the militarists coincides with traits inherent to Authoritarians, including a strong belief in the existing system of government and submission to legitimate authorities (Ray, 1972)

However, as mentioned above, our data fails to support a single construct underlying all the RWA items, and instead suggested that attitudes toward individual freedoms (e.g. sexual, vocational, etc.) may diverge from the core construct of authoritarianism as a preferred form of governance and control, especially among our Millennial-heavy participant population. This is consistent with current research on the decoupling of conservative values, specifically those related to religion, sex and personal freedoms, from authoritarianism. Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislun, & Sherman (2016) found that high school seniors are more likely to identify as political

conservatives now compared to ten years ago. Millennials are considered overwhelmingly liberal on the basis of their support for issues such as LGBT rights, gender equality, and racial equality (Paulson, 2017; Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislun, & Sherman, 2016). Millennials may still be authoritarians, but there is something unique about the staunch support for gays and lesbians in particular, but also sexual practices and sexual liberation at large. We see a protection for lifestyle choices and for personal freedom. Even if they are authoritarian, believe in a strong leader, and a centralized government, they do not necessarily support the morality, religious, and conservative values as they pertain to sex religion and lifestyle choices. By virtue of this research, as well as evidence of this pattern in our own analysis, items that contained themes of sexual, religious, and personal freedom were excluded from our model. Given that Millennials are now America's single largest voting bloc by age, approximately 56 percent of eligible voters, this shift in attitudes can have a profound impact on public policy in the future (Paulson, 2017). As Stenner (2005) explains, failure to grasp the fundamentally different natures of authoritarianism and conservatism means that scholars miss critical insights and political elites miss valuable opportunities.

Submission to authority may not immediately seem an explicit risk for democracy, particularly when people are blindly conforming to a society that is actively advancing democratic procedures (Passini, 2017). However, it is presumed to become a risk in the political-psychological models that were discussed in this thesis whenever society puts forward undemocratic demands, taking an authoritarian turn. It is authoritarian submission, this blind and passive support, which increases the likelihood that their actions are simply aimed at preserving their power and maintaining the status quo with possible detrimental results for democratic

values (Passini, 2017). Studying authoritarianism within each dimension, as opposed to across all three, would allow us to make associations of specific traits.

Since both RWA and militarism were gauged using self-report questionnaires, their correlation may also be partially attributed to shared method variance. For example, a cognitive style that is partial to endorsing extreme statements could conceivably lead to a common response bias both in answering the RWA and militarism item. There is some evidence to suggest that RWA is correlated with pervasive intellectual deficiencies. Data from Ornanet et al. (2015) offers a link between right-wing ideological attitudes and individual's cognitive ability. Findings suggest that cognitive ability is unrelated to all types of right-wing ideological attitudes to the same extent, however, the strongest effect was found for authoritarianism (Ornanet et al., 2015). Authoritarianism may be efficient in reducing ambiguity and offers the strongest level of closure on social and political issues.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research

There are a few limitations within this study that could be overcome with future research. First, the results are based on a single sample of college undergraduates based in New York City. Conclusions drawn from this research would need to be replicated with larger samples and across cultural and geographically settings. Second, Altemeyer's RWA Scale was the only measure used to assess authoritarianism in participants. The items on the scale were designed to express all three components, often resulting in double, sometimes, triple-barreled items. It would be worthwhile to include other measurement scales to evaluate authoritarianism, especially scales that conceptualize the three components as separate dimensions. In particular, this author believes it would be interesting to include the four-item set of child-rearing questions added to the 1992 National Election Study Survey. Child rearing values effectively reflect one's

orientations towards authority versus autonomy and allow us to distinguish the authoritarian predisposition from that of authoritarian attitudes, attitudes that are not always manifested (Stenner, 2005; MacWilliams, 2016; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009). Third, support for militarism was simplified within the scope of this thesis. Future studies should include more complex and statistically valid measurements of this construct. Also simplified due to the scope of this thesis was the choice of statistical analysis. Using path analyses in addition to factor analysis would allow for exploration of predicted pathways and various models. Overall, this thesis adds to the growing body of research in support of the phenomenon, the split between conservatism and authoritarianism. Future research should be directed at exploring what makes these constructs distinct and examining the impact each has on individuals' values, attitudes, and prejudices.

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