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Support for Militant U.S. Foreign Policy:
The Role of Authoritarianism and International Xenophobia

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Abstract

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) has been studied extensively in the domestic socio-political context, but its potential impact on foreign policy is still poorly understood. The current study replicated the putative two-factor model of the construct (Authoritarian Aggression/Submission and Conventionalism) and examined the associations of each factor with perceptions of overall danger to the U.S. posed by other countries and with the support for more militant U.S. foreign policy. As expected, both RWA factors correlated with self-reported levels of political conservatism ($r = 0.32, r = 0.33; p < .001$) Additionally, Authoritarian Aggression and Submission (but not Conventionalism) were correlated with increased perceived danger from foreign countries ($r = .35; p < .001$) and increased support for a more militant U.S. foreign policy ($r = .25; p < .001$). Participants higher in RWA were more likely to view the world as a hostile and threatening place, and in turn support more aggressive military action in response to those fears.

Key Words: right-wing authoritarianism, militarism, xenophobia, foreign policy, perceived danger

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Support for Militant U.S. Foreign Policy:

The Role of Authoritarianism and International Xenophobia

This paper is interested in understanding the relationships between Support for Militarism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and International Xenophobia. Specifically, we are interested in understanding how Authoritarianism and International Xenophobia play a role in support for militant foreign policy. The United States is often criticized for its meddling in other countries' affairs in efforts to further its own interests. On the international front, there has been a great deal of disillusionment by American citizens after the long and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as fears of potential conflict with China. On the domestic front, there has been an increased level of militarization of American policing due to the US PATRIOT ACT. This increased militarization has led to disproportionate use of force against Black Americans and people of color. Furthermore, the successful campaign of Donald Trump and the subsequent shift in the Republican party toward embracing Trump-like politicians has underscored the importance of studying the connection between these concepts. This paper will first discuss Right-Wing Authoritarianism, then Militarism and Foreign Policy Research, and finally we will discuss Xenophobia, Need for Cognitive Closure, and Perceived Danger.

Authoritarianism

After the horrors of World War II, and the realization that the fascist Nazi Party led Germany to commit mass crimes against humanity, academics around the world began to try and understand how people supported these atrocities. The first scholars to champion this goal were philosophers who, influenced by the psychoanalytic framework prevalent at the time, emphasized individual disposition toward practicing (or, equivalently in this framework, seeking) rigid relationship to authority figures or sources. One of the most prominent scholars of

this ilk was Theodor Adorno. Adorno and his fellow German émigrés to California created the F-scale, which measured pre-fascist tendencies. The scale consisted of 9 subscales (conventionalism, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, anti-intraception, superstition/stereotype, power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and sex) which measured an individual's tendencies to support fascist ideals (Adorno et al., 1950). The F-scale served as a springboard and a blueprint for consequent research into authoritarian regimes. The next major development in the construct did not come until 1981 when Bob Altemeyer developed the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) is a measure of individual preference for political attitudes concerning the aggressive pursuit of centralized power, conservative societal norms. Those who score higher on this measure tend to submit to authorities they perceived as legitimate, are therefore more aggressive than the average respondent toward members of an out-group, and deem themselves conventional people (Altemeyer, 2007). Altemeyer's (and several others) factor analysis of the RWA identified three components: Authoritarian Submission, Authoritarian Aggression, and Conventionalism. Authoritarian Submission refers to extreme support and respect for perceived authorities in all circumstances, even if the perceived authorities are doing something immoral or illegal (Altemeyer, 2007). Authoritarian Aggression refers to the perception that any aggression they partake in is endorsed or supported by the authorities. They also tend to be aggressive when they believe that the in-group is superior to the out-group, and that the in-group has more of an advantage (or domination) over the out-group (Altemeyer, 2007). Conventionalism refers to the belief that societal norms and customs

established by the perceived authorities are the norms and customs that everyone must adhere to (Altemeyer, 2007).

Although Altemeyer (1981) conceived of the RWA scale as a unidimensional measure, there has been a great deal of research suggesting that RWA consists of several distinct factors. In particular, 3-factor models are consistent across most studies. The wording of the RWA scale items are often double or triple-barreled, which confounds the measure overall. Many studies correct for these or use short-form versions of the measure. Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses show that a three-factor (aggression, submission, and conventionalism) solution was superior to a one-factor, unitary construct (Mavor, Louis, & Sibley, 2010). A study by Duckitt and Bizumic (2013) found support for a three-factor solution which combined authoritarian aggression and submission into one factor and separated out the conventionalism items into conservatism and traditionalism. This ACT solution was found to be reliable in samples in both New Zealand and Serbia and had a good fit in both (Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013). Similarly, a 2017 study found that a short-form, three-factor (Authoritarian Aggression, Submission, Conventionalism) solution had a better fit than did a one-factor model (Passini, 2017). Other studies have also shown that a one-factor solution is completely unsatisfactory in terms of fit. A study on an Italian sample using a short-form version of the RWA scale found that the best fit resulted from a two-factor model. This model combined Authoritarian Aggression and Authoritarian Submission into one factor and left conventionalism as the other (Rattazzi et al., 2007).

Social Psychological Implications of RWA.

Intergroup biases such as prejudice, stigma and stereotype play a major role in RWA. Intergroup bias refers to the tendency of people to judge others based on group relationships.

People who are in the same group (e.g., of the same race, Socio-Economic Status (SES), etc.) tend to view other members of their group positively, and members of other groups less positively (Beattie, 2018). Intergroup conflicts, though determined by numerous factors, are nonetheless exacerbated by intergroup biases, including intergroup prejudice. For example, competition (rather than collaboration) as a reaction to resource scarcity (be it perceived and/or realistic) is frequently cited as a source of intergroup conflict (Beattie, 2018; De Dreu, 2010; Deutsch, 1949; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979). However, looking more closely at real life examples of intergroup conflict (for example, poor whites who adopt authoritarian political attitudes due to feeling in competition with immigrant groups for jobs) often underscores the importance of intergroup bias in authoritarianism.

Furthermore, belief in the superiority of one's ingroup has been found to be correlated with out-group prejudice, especially when there is a large population of immigrant outgroup members (Beattie, 2018), or when one of the groups has an unequal advantage over the other (Tajfel et al., 1979). Intergroup biases also influence perceptions of ingroup and outgroup members. When reading news stories about a violent act committed, participants were more likely to attribute the act to situational factors when the perpetrator is an ingroup member, and dispositional factors when the perpetrator is an outgroup member (Beattie, 2018).

Authoritarianism is related to intergroup bias because authoritarian leaders often invoke these intergroup biases to scapegoat out-groups (Beattie, 2018).

Theoretical Implications of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

RWA and Prejudice. In accord with its theoretical conceptualization, empirical studies consistently found RWA to be associated with prejudice and xenophobia. For example, in a study on ethnonationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments in Swedish voters, Jylhä and

colleagues (2019) found that RWA was the strongest predictor of xenophobia and correlated with anti-immigrant sentiments overall. RWA is also associated with driving voting behaviors in Europe, especially for far-right parties advocating these hardline policies (Jylhä et al, 2019). Similarly, a study on Italian voters found that RWA is positively correlated with dangerous world views, populist beliefs and attitudes, and support for anti-immigrant policies (Pellegrini et al., 2019). A different study of Italian voters found that RWA was positively related to prejudice and right-wing political identity (Rattazzi et al., 2007).

RWA and Political Behavior. RWA was also found to be associated with support for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential elections. Trump supporters had higher levels of Authoritarian Aggression and a desire to be aggressive toward out-group members, even compared to supporters of other Republican candidates (Womick et al., 2019). The findings suggest that Trump supporters were much more likely to promote their perceived in-group supremacy through violent means, even when compared to other Republican voters (Womick et al., 2019).

Many studies use RWA as an ideological variable in order to measure Political Behavior. RWA has been found to be very useful in predicting political voting behaviors. In a study using a New Zealand sample, it was found that RWA was strongly related to political behavior in the European majority, but not related to political behavior in the ethnic minority: the Maori and Pacific Nations people (Duckitt & Sibley, 2016). These findings suggest that RWA is more predictive of political behavior in the majority group, and not predictive of political behavior in the minority group. This makes sense when you consider the idea that authoritarians tend to feel justified in their beliefs and actions when their in-group is the one in control (Altemeyer, 2007).

Militarist Political Attitudes

Militarism historically refers to the valorization and glorification of military service and the military overall. In a psychological sense, militarism refers to the glorification of war (Stavriankis, 2015). According to the Centre for Research on Globalism, the United States has been at war for much of its existence: 222 years out of its 239 years (2015). Furthermore, a report by the Washington Post found that Americans born in or after the year 2001 have seen the U.S. at war for 100% of their lives (Washington Post, 2020).

Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy

Recent national survey polls are a good indication of people's political beliefs and leanings, which are especially useful in election years. A recent Pew Research survey asked Americans their opinions on U.S. foreign policy. Interestingly, there was a close split between support for the U.S. being active in the world (53%) and the U.S. being inactive in world affairs and focusing on domestic issues (46%) (2019). Furthermore, 61% of Americans think that America should be the only world superpower, compared to only 23% of Americans who would not be concerned if another military superpower emerged (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Similarly, a recent report by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found that 69% of Americans want the U.S. to take an active role in global politics (Chicago Council, 2019). Furthermore, most Americans support strategic military alliances, military superiority, stationing U.S. troops overseas in allied countries, and feel that these measures keep America safe (Chicago Council, 2019). Interestingly, more Americans feel that U.S. military intervention makes the country feel less safe, although they feel that there are some exceptions (Chicago Council, 2019).

Militarism and Foreign Policy Research

Although there has not been much research in psychological literature, research in international relations and political science tries to understand how people make decisions about

their preferences for foreign policy. Peffley and Hurwitz note that in an individual's preference for foreign policy, there is a Militarism continuum with a desire for an aggressive foreign policy with an emphasis in the reliance on the military on one end, and a desire for a foreign policy that focuses on diplomacy and negotiations on the opposite end of the continuum. Thus, individuals who are supportive of coercive foreign policy in the world would rely more on military aggression to achieve political aims (Peffley & Hurwitz, 1987).

Similar studies have tried to bridge the gap between opinions and attitudes in domestic affairs and opinions and attitudes in foreign policy. One such study found support for a dual-process model by which non-informed individuals (i.e.- the general public) can look for cues to make decisions on foreign policy preferences (Rathbun, 2020). This dual-process model of Collaborative Internationalism (CI) and Militant Internationalism (MI) refer to individual orientations by which individuals can process information on international politics. CI refers to individuals with more liberal ideology and a universalist worldview, and a desire to provide (Rathbun, 2020). MI refers to individuals with more conservative worldviews, support for a strong authority, a unified ingroup, and dangerous worldviews. Individuals higher in MI have a motivation to protect the ingroup (Rathbun, 2020). MI has been found to be positively related to RWA (Rathbun, 2020). This research is important in that it shows how social-political psychology can be applied to foreign policy research. It also shows how we can apply social-political psychology (such as RWA) to militarism.

Militarism and its Relation to RWA.

A study by Crowson and colleagues on support of the military and perceptions of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq revealed that RWA was associated with higher levels of support. Specifically, individuals who scored higher on RWA were more likely to support the war with

Iraq than those who scored lower (Crowson et al., 2006). Similarly, RWA was found to be predictive of support for President Bush and support for restricting human rights as a necessity of the ‘war on terror.’ RWA also predicted belief that Saddam Hussein was supporting terrorism (Crowson et al., 2006). RWA, expectedly, was shown to be positively related to support for military action, especially in the context of threatening conditions (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005). A major – though tacit – disposition that undergirds RWA is the belief that the world is a dangerous place (Altemeyer, 2007). As such, support for more aggressive attitude against non-normative groups is theorized to be mediated by their perceived danger to the existing hegemonic structure.

Xenophobia, Need for Closure and Perceived Danger

Xenophobia is defined as “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange and foreign” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Given the inherent distrust of the outgroup as a threat to the ingroup, it is clear to see how Xenophobia is a key component of RWA. The consequences of xenophobic ideology can be tragic. In 2019 alone, there were 7, 314 reported hate crimes, and 51 hate crime murders in the U.S. (FBI, 2019). Furthermore, a study by Stacey and colleagues comparing the rate of Hispanic immigration and the number of anti-Hispanic hate crimes found a positive relationship between the two. As Hispanic immigration in an area increases, so does the number of reported anti-Hispanic hate crimes (Stacey et al., 2011).

During the Syrian Refugee Crisis, in which countless numbers of people fled their homelands seeking safety, many relocated to Germany. As refugees arrived in Germany, the number of reported xenophobic hate crimes increased from 512 in 2014 (pre-Refugee Crisis) to 1,190 in 2016 (Wagner et al., 2020). Interestingly, the researchers found that in line with the Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport 1954; Pettigrew et al., 2011), there were significantly less

hate crimes reported in districts which had a larger number of foreign-born residents than in areas with fewer foreign-born residents (Wagner et al., 2020). In other words, the number of hate crimes was negatively related to the number of foreign-born residents in an area.

Need for Cognitive Closure

According to Webster and Kruglanski, Need for Cognitive Closure (NFC) refers to a person's disposition. Someone who is higher in NFC is a person who wants predictability and structure in their lives, does not like ambiguous information, and is very decisive and often close-minded. NFC has been shown to be a psychometrically valid and reliable measure of cognitive rigidity (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

A study by Merolla and colleagues (2011) examined the empirical relationship between Authoritarianism, Need for Closure, and the response to a Threat or crisis event. The researchers assigned people to either a crisis threat condition, in which mock news articles described a potential biological terror attack, or to a 'Good Times' condition, in which the article discussed positive news about health, and the environment. In a second study, they also added an economic threat condition, in which the article discussed negative effects of the 2008 recession. The results indicated that there is a significant (although small) interaction such that those participants who were rated as higher in NFC expressed more authoritarian predisposition in response to the threats (Merolla et al., 2011). The authors concluded that those who are higher in NFC and Authoritarian predisposition are more likely to resort to extremism in times of national crises such as a terror attack or an economic recession (Merolla et al., 2011).

Furthermore, researchers in Poland found that when someone identified as politically conservative, there was a strong positive relationship between NFC and desire for aggressive action in intergroup conflict (De Zavala et al., 2010). Specifically, in situations of intergroup

conflict, those who were both high in NFC and identified as politically conservative preferred to resolve conflicts using aggressive and/or coercive actions against the outgroup. They also found that in an ambiguous situation of terrorism, Anti-Arab hostility was predicted by the interaction of High NFC, conservatism, and the belief that there was a threat of a terrorist attack to the ingroup (Poland) (De Zavala et al., 2010). This illustrates how NFC is associated with political conservatism and intergroup prejudice.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Perceived Danger

Right-Wing Authoritarianism is believed to be increased when presented with threatening situations. RWA was found to be positively (and strongly) related to threats. The strongest relationship was between RWA and perceived threat to in-group, whereas the weakest relationship was between RWA and personal threats and environmental threats (Shaffer & Duckitt, 2013). This suggests that although all threats are strongly related to RWA, threats to in-groups are more threatening than personal or environmental threats. Interestingly, when all factors were controlled, Threats to ingroup remained as the only significant predictor of RWA (Shaffer & Duckitt, 2013).

A 2005 study by Hastings and Shaffer examined the effects of threatening situations on authoritarianism and support for military aggression in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks. They presented participants with a scenario of President Bush's speech after 9/11. In the non-threatening condition, participants were presented with the president's speech, which was positive and hopeful regarding the war on terror. In the threatening condition, the speech was altered to be negative, and less hopeful. The results indicated that RWA was a significant predictor of support for Military aggression, especially in the threatening condition. The authors

concluded that when presented with threatening situations, RWA is more predictive of support for military aggression. (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005).

Current Study

Aims

This study aims to explore the relationship between Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), support for militarism, and international xenophobia. Because RWA is associated with aggression toward out-group members, submission to perceived authorities, and traditional values, it will likely correlate with a higher level of support for aggressive military action, as well as a higher level of perceived danger from other countries or groups.

Study Justification

Although there is a great deal of research into RWA, there has been less research into how RWA is related to international xenophobia and support for militarism specifically. Furthermore, given the recent rise in hate crimes, and xenophobic sentiments generally, understanding these relations can help to inform policy. Furthermore, given the extremely diverse population at John Jay, this study can help to better understand how these phenomena occur in minority populations.

Research Questions

1. Is Right-Wing Authoritarianism reliably associated with support for militarist U.S. foreign policy as the principal means to realize its national goals and interests?
2. Is this support for militarist U.S. foreign policy undergirded by xenophobia due to perceived threats to the U.S. from other countries or political entities (such as foreign terrorist organizations)?

Methods

Participants

This report combines data from previous cohorts of a larger, ongoing study examining anti-Arab prejudice and thus represents the collaborative efforts of several experimenters. The sample for this study consisted of undergraduate psychology students ($n = 206$; 68% female) from a diverse (35% Latino/Hispanic, 18% Caucasian/White, 11% African American, 7% Caribbean/Other African, 7% South Asian, 6% East Asian, 5% mixed, 4% other), Hispanic-serving urban university. Students were enrolled in an introductory psychology course and participated in our study in exchange for course credit. In order to participate in our study, students had to be 18 years of age and voting eligible.

Procedure

Recruitment. Participants were recruited through Sona Systems, which is a cloud-based participant management service. Sona allows researchers to recruit students using a unique URL link. Students are able to sign up for studies they qualify for and participate in research studies in exchange for Research Experience Program (REP) credit. Only students who met our study criteria of being at least 18 years old and voting eligible saw our study on the platform. Students who qualified and signed up to participate were sent an email confirmation and an email reminder. Participants were given the survey in a secure room dedicated to this study in the psychology department.

Informed Consent. Upon arrival, participants were welcomed, and directed to take a seat. Informed consent was obtained after reviewing with the participants the risks, benefits and other important information. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand perceptions of Arabs in the Middle East, and their participation would take approximately an hour. Most of the items were political in nature, not emotional or personal, but

participants were assured that at any time they felt uncomfortable, they had the right to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences to them. Participants were reminded that they will not be paid for their participation, but they would receive course credit and get experience in political psychology research.

All participant data collected was kept confidential. All materials were kept in a locked office, on a password-protected computer. Furthermore, there was no personal data collected on any of our materials, participants were assigned an arbitrary subject number that could not be linked to them. The only place that any personal information was collected was on the consent forms, which were stored separately for our records.

Debriefing. Upon completion of our study, we thanked them for participating. We then went over the debriefing forms with participants and informed them that we were actually looking at anti-Arab prejudice and political biases and how they affect U.S. foreign policy. We needed to wait until debriefing to inform participants so that they would not be primed into looking negatively at Arabs.

Materials

Participants were presented with items from the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale, a scale measuring support for Militarism, items measuring levels of International Xenophobia, and Self-Reported Political Identity. Items from these scales were presented in a randomized order.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale. We measured Right-Wing Authoritarianism using a short-form version of Altemeyer's RWA Scale (1981). The items are all on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Strongly Disagree) to 9 (Very Strongly Agree). Examples of some items include: "*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,*" and "*What our country*

really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.” There are also some reverse-coded items, such as: *“Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else,”* and *“There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.”*

Militarism. Items were included to measure support for U.S. military policy. We asked participants their opinion on the government’s approach to foreign policy using the items *“Overall, in your opinion, the government’s approach to foreign policy [WORLDWIDE/In the MIDDLE EAST] is.”* Both items were scored on a 4-point scale (1- Too Assertive; 2- Not Assertive Enough; 3- About Right; 4- No Opinion). We also asked participants to indicate how they feel about government reliance on military strength using the items *“In general, does the United States rely on military strength too much, too little, or about the right amount to achieve its foreign policy goals [WORLDWIDE/In the MIDDLE EAST]?”* These items were measured on a similar 4-point scale (1- Too Much; 2- Too Little; 3- About Right; 4- No Opinion).

International Xenophobia. For the purposes of this study, we conceptualized international xenophobia as how dangerous participants viewed the world. In order to determine how dangerous participants viewed the world to be, we asked them to rate how much of a threat they felt other countries and groups were. We asked them *“In your opinion, how much of a threat does [Russia/China/North Korea/Iraq/Iran/ISIS] pose to the United States?”*

Self-Reported Political Identity. We asked participants to self-identify their political leanings on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Liberal*) to 7 (*Strongly Conservative*). We then recorded political identity into three levels of conservative: Low (Containing all participants who identified as Liberal), Neutral (Containing all participants identifying as Moderate), and High (Containing all participants who identified as Conservative)

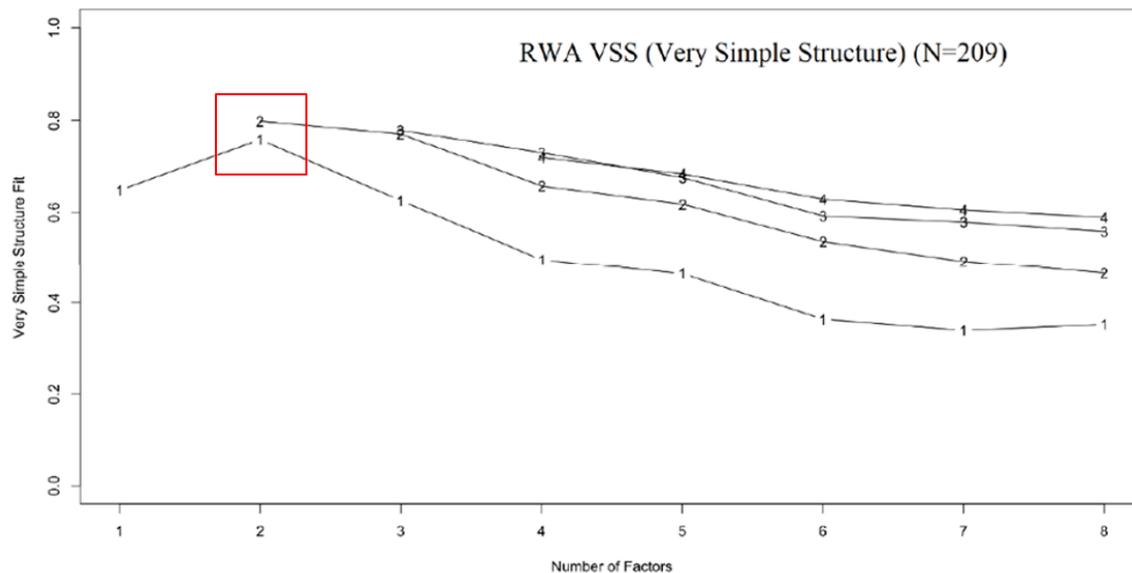
Results

Factor Analysis.

In order to determine the most adequate number of factors underlying the data, we used the Very Small Structure (VSS) Procedure (Revelle & Rocklin, 1976). The VSS determines the number of factors to retain in the model. It does so by looking at incremental addition of factors. As shown in the chart below, a 2-factor solution was the most adequate in terms of fit. VSS complexity 1 had a max of .76 with 2 factors, and VSS complexity 2 had a max of .8 with 2 factors. The BIC had a minimum of -538.41, with 2 factors.

Figure 1.

VSS Goodness-of-Fit Indices

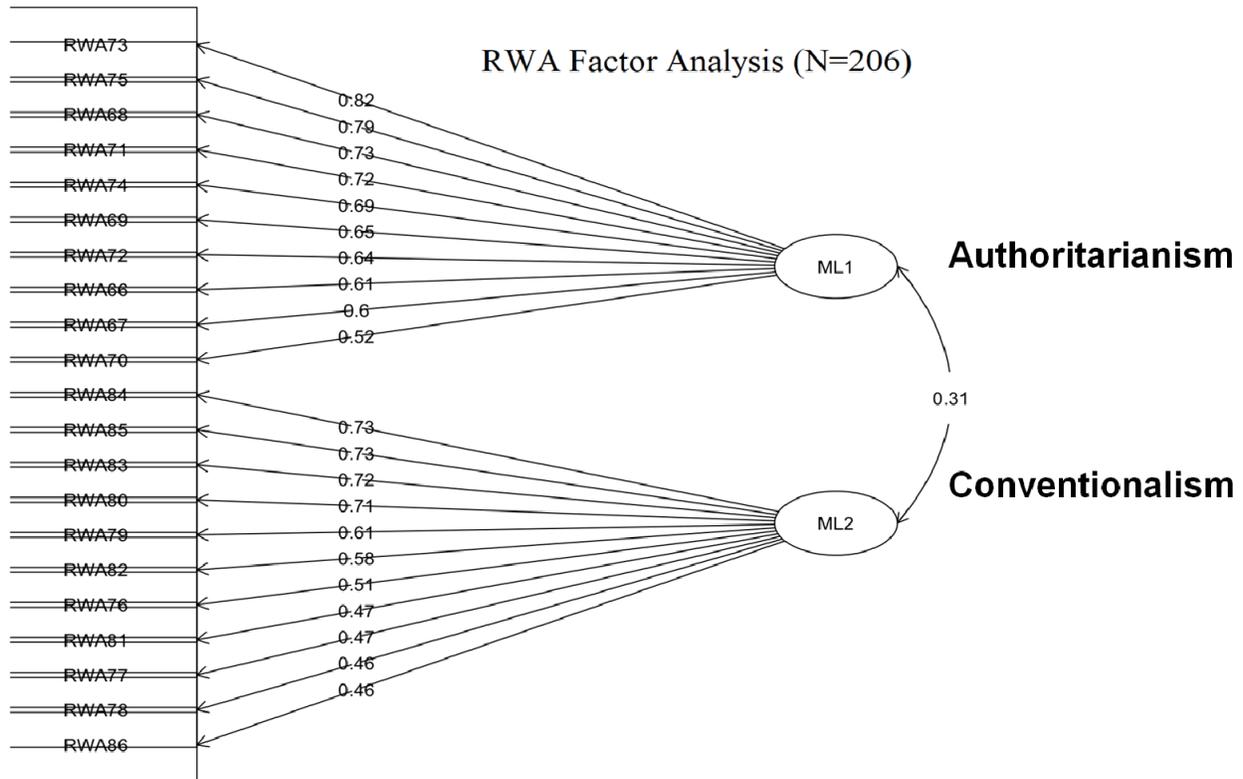


Goodness-of-fit indices consistently pointed to a two-factor model. Maximum Likelihood factor analysis indeed revealed two distinct factors: Authoritarian Aggression/Submission and Conventionalism, which were moderately yet significantly correlated ($r = 0.31$). The

Authoritarianism factor had a loading range of 0.52-0.80, and the Conservatism factor had a loading range of 0.46-0.80. The factor loading structure can be seen below:

Figure 2

Results of Maximum Likelihood Factor Analysis



Relation between RWA, Militarism and Xenophobia.

Correlational analyses showed that Authoritarianism and Conventionalism were positively correlated with self-reported Political Identity ($r = 0.32$ and $r = 0.33$; $p < .001$). Authoritarianism was also positively correlated with xenophobia ($r = 0.35$; $p < .001$), and with support for Militant U.S. foreign policy ($r = .25$; $p < .001$). Furthermore, Support for Militarism was positively correlated with Xenophobia ($r = .29$; $p < .001$). These correlations can be seen in the table below:

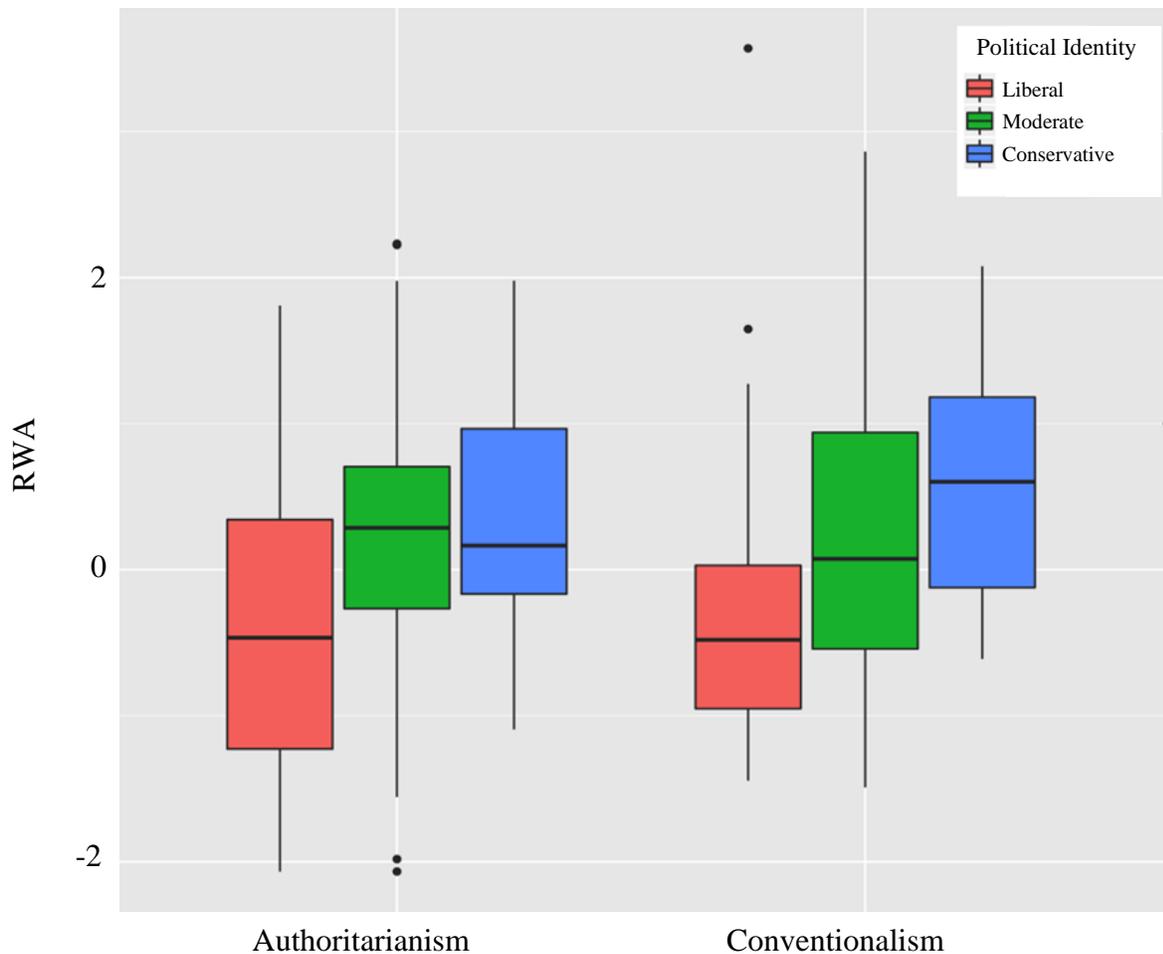
Figure 3*Correlation Table.*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|------|--------|----|
| Authoritarianism | -- | | | | |
| Conventionalism | 0.34** | -- | | | |
| Political Identity | 0.32** | 0.33** | -- | | |
| Xenophobia | 0.35** | 0.07 | 0.08 | -- | |
| Militarism | 0.25** | 0.13 | 0.03 | 0.29** | -- |

** $p < .001$

Political Identity.

As expected, political identity was positively correlated with both the Authoritarianism and Conventionalism factors. There were some slight differences between the two factors. Within the Authoritarianism factor, those who identified as “Moderate” ($n = 106$), or “Conservative” ($n = 15$) showed roughly the same amount of authoritarianism. This could be due to an acquiescence bias such that conservative participants were identifying as moderate in fear of being viewed negatively. It could also be that RWA is so sensitive that a person with even a slightly non-liberal attitude will be compelled to score higher on the RWA items. Within the Conventionalism factor, the relationship was more linear, with those identifying as liberal ($n = 84$) being the least conventional, and conservatives being the most conventional. Across both factors, as self-identified conservatism increased, so did endorsement of authoritarian ideals. This can be represented in the following boxplot:

Figure 5.*Political Identity and Right-Wing Authoritarianism.*

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships between Right-Wing Authoritarianism, support for militant U.S. foreign policy, and international xenophobia. Specifically, we aimed to see what role authoritarianism and international xenophobia played in support for militant U.S. foreign policy. We predicted that RWA would be positively related to both support for militarism, and xenophobia. Furthermore, we predicted that Support for militarism would be positively related to international xenophobia.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism.

As expected, we found that RWA was positively associated with political conservatism. Specifically, we found that as self-identified conservatism increased, both factors of authoritarianism increased. This further supports RWA being related to political ideology (Altemeyer, 1981; Altemeyer, 2007; Duckitt & Sibley, 2016; Jylhä et al, 2019; Womick et al., 2019).

As is the case in most studies examining the factor structure of RWA, our results indicate that a unidimensional factor structure was unsatisfactory in terms of fit (Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013; Mavor, Louis, & Sibley, 2010; Passini, 2017). Our results support a two-factor solution as most adequate in terms of fit (in line with Rattazzi et al., 2007). In line with the findings of Rattazzi et al., the two factors consisted of Authoritarianism and Conventionalism.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism and International Xenophobia.

These results show that Right-wing Authoritarianism was positively associated with a perceived danger of the world, whether that danger be real (i.e.- the direct threat of violence by ISIS) or imagined (i.e.- the indirect threat of China). This is supported by previous research (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005; Shaffer & Duckitt, 2013), showing that threatening situations, whether real or imagined, were significant predictors of RWA.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Militarist Political Attitudes.

We found that RWA was positively correlated to support for militaristic U.S. foreign policy. This is in line with research showing RWA as a significant predictor of support for military action (Crowson et al., 2006; Hastings & Shaffer, 2005).

RWA, Support for Militarism, and International Xenophobia.

Our results show that these three concepts were all positively associated with one another. Specifically, a person who scores higher on the RWA scale, was more likely to perceive the world as a threatening and hostile place, and therefore support more aggressive military action in response to those fears. These results lend support to previous studies showing these positive relationships (Crowson et al., 2006; Hastings & Shaffer, 2005; Merolla et al., 2011; Mounk, 2018; Shaffer & Duckitt, 2013).

Limitations and Future Research

Interestingly, even though our sample was ethnically diverse, we still found levels of Right-Wing Authoritarianism, xenophobia, and support for a more aggressive, militarist U.S. foreign policy. Although this provides an insight into how these concepts can be applied to non-white populations, it is important to note that our sample had a lower number of white participants, and we did not have the statistical power to meaningfully compare differences between white and non-white groups. Our sample also was skewed politically liberal, with 84 participants identifying as liberal versus only 15 identifying as conservative. More than half of the sample ($n = 106$) identified as politically moderate, suggesting there was an acquiescence bias. Furthermore, we intended to examine the relationships between RWA and white supremacy and white nationalism. Due to the low number of white participants, we were unable to explore these concepts in any meaningful way. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was prematurely halted.

Though our results show positive relationships between RWA, xenophobia, and support for militarism, we do not have a model that connects all the ideas together. Future research should incorporate a moderation analysis to determine if one of these is controlling the direction

of the others. Furthermore, future research should add to the sample size in order to allow testing of moderation or mediation in the model.

Based on previous research on nationalism and RWA (Osborne et al., 2017; Ozdemir & Ugurlu, 2019) and research on nationalism and white supremacy (Osborne et al., 2019; Whitehead & Perry, 2020), we would have predicted that white nationalism would have been related to RWA, so future research should try and incorporate these concepts. Given the current political landscape, research exploring these topics would be especially timely. Finally, given that this study was conducted using first-year psychology students at an extremely diverse urban university, it would be useful to conduct this study using a more representative community sample.

Conclusion

This study showed support for a two-factor (Authoritarian Aggression/Submission and Conventionalism) solution of Right-Wing Authoritarianism, supporting previous research, and further supporting the idea that RWA should not be examined as a unidimensional measure. We found a positive relationship between Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Support for Militarism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism and International Xenophobia, and the positive relationship between all three. Specifically, those with higher levels of RWA are more likely to perceive the world as a dangerous place and support military action to address those fears.

Although there is a large body of literature on Authoritarianism, this study was unique in that this line of research opens or can contribute to both public policy and social policies concerning prejudice and perceived threats from foreigners. In recent years, the weaponization of xenophobic fear has become salient and tragic. Considering the rise in hate crimes against Jews and Muslims, or the recent animosity toward Asian Americans due to COVID-related fears, this

research is timely. This study opens the way to looking at the relationship between prejudice in international relations and its relationship to prejudice on the domestic social arena through a social psychological lens.

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