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Authoritarianism: Validation of the
Balanced F Scale Through Observer Ratings

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In conducting this study, our purpose was to further our understanding of the relationship between authoritarian attitudes and behavior. The Authoritarian Personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levison, and Sanford, 1950) provided the major impetus for virtually all contemporary studies related to the authoritarian personality. Adorno and his associates at Berkeley identified the following nine traits as central to the authoritarian personality. Authoritarian individuals rigidly adhere to conventional values (conventionalism), submit to and obey the the proponents of these values (authoritarian submission), and advocate punishment for those who violate conventional values (authoritarian aggression). Furthermore, authoritarians are likely to exhibit an overly negative view of mankind (destructiveness and cynicism), oppose any reliance on subjective feelings (anti-intracception), and are readily accepting of supernatural determinants of behavior and categorical thinking (superstition and stereotypy). The authoritarian is preoccupied with power relationships and exaggerates assertion of strength and toughness (power and toughness). Finally, he or she is overly concerned with sexual issues (sexuality) and projects his or her own sexual and aggressive motives on those around him (projectivity).

A scale designed to measure the authoritarian personality evolved jointly with the concept of authoritarianism. The intent of the Adorno group was to develop a scale that would measure prejudice without appearing to measure it and without mentioning the name of any minority group. The Fascism (F) Scale, in measuring prejudice, theoretically tapped the underlying beliefs and attitudes that were

the basis of the authoritarian personality. The scale contained items which were based on the researchers' conceptualization of the syndrome rather than a statistical analysis of a large pool of potential items. All items were worded in the same direction with greater agreement indicating higher authoritarianism. A major criticism of the F scale has been its one-direction wording, with critics charging that acquiescence (the tendency to agree with any statement regardless of content) confounded results from the measure. The criticism led to attempts to balance the F scale. Byrne (1974) developed the balanced F scale used in our study by selecting items which correlated with the original scale, an approach that eliminated the confounding influence of acquiescence.

Authoritarianism research has been reviewed and a new conceptualization proposed in a text which became available during the course of our study. Right-Wing Authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981) outlines the proposed concept of authoritarianism and introduces a measure designed specifically for the proposed conceptualization. The measure contains items which retain psychological content nearly identical to the original F scale. However, Altemeyer avoids the general approach of the Berkeley investigators and limits the personality traits of the authoritarian he seeks to measure. The measure was not available for our study, but our findings were evaluated in terms of Altemeyer's construct.

Altemeyer (1981) expressed three major criticisms of the Berkeley model of authoritarianism. He recognized more than nine distinguishable traits, citing the fact that superstition and stereotypy

The specific purpose of the present study was to investigate the use of observer ratings in validating personality characteristics of authoritarians. Studies using observer ratings of subjects' personas as the criterion against which to validate authoritarianism questionnaires are almost nonexistent. Although the technique has proved both reliable and valid in validating other psychological measures, I located only two previous authoritarianism studies in which it was used. These studies were quite different from the present one and offer no substantive findings. Ray (1976) used peer ratings in attempts to validate a new scale designed to predict authoritarian behavior. Our interest is in validating the balanced F scale. Titus (1968) conducted a study which again focused on behavior of authoritarians and no relationship was found between F scale scores and high ratings on the behaviors. Our study focused upon defining personality dimensions of the authoritarian personality. Observer and self-ratings of the subject on a newly constructed personality measure was used in an attempt to clarify traits of the authoritarian. The self-ratings provided the personal perception of the authoritarian while observer ratings provided insight into personality dimensions which the authoritarian represses or distorts. Also, the personality measure used provides more accurate self and observer ratings than have been achieved on past personality measures.

METHOD

Subjects

College students enrolled in basic psychology courses at a small state university in southeastern North Carolina participated in the

study. Forty males and forty-five females completed all requirements of the study for course credit.

Measures

The measure selected for establishing an authoritarianism score was a version of the balanced F scale developed by Byrne (1974). Included in the scale are items which correlated with the original F scale. Byrne retained only those items which provided the appropriate logical and psychological reversal of response. The correlation between this scale and the original F scale was .84, an indication that it is possible to measure authoritarianism while eliminating the confounding influences of acquiescence.

Byrne's balanced F scale contains twenty-two items. The items are scored on a five-point scale with extremes of strong agreement to strong disagreement. A subject's score is the arithmetic difference between the ratings for authoritarian items and the ratings for non-authoritarian items. Authoritarianism is reflected in a relatively high score while the non-authoritarian has a relatively low score.

The balanced F scale was presented in an omnibus personality measure labeled General Attitudes Toward Life. The GATL contains ten assorted measures of personality with each measuring one or more dimensions of personality. Presenting the balanced F scale in this manner disguised our purpose to a certain extent.

Other aspects of the subject's personality were assessed through self and observer ratings using the Stratil Personality Assessment System (SPAS). The SPAS consists of two interrelated tests which

were used for the study. Forms AQ and CQ were used to ascertain abstract and concrete correlates of the subject's personality. Both tests are based on the same theoretical analysis of personality dimensions, a feature which allows the forms to be used together or independently.

Form AQ of the SPAS contains 110 abstract descriptions of personality traits, and Form CQ contains 110 concrete descriptions of common situations and responses. The subject proceeds through the test by sorting item cards into ten piles ranging from "Most Characteristic of Me" (Level 9) to "Least Characteristic of Me" (Level 0). When he or she finishes sorting the cards, the level number assigned to each item is recorded on the answer sheet. The Q-sort procedure (Stephenson, 1953) used in these tests renders a more refined and accurate discrimination between items than true-false or traditional rating procedures. The presentation of concrete situations and responses in Form CQ also allows subjects to provide a more realistic report of their personality by comparing these situations with relevant memories of their past behavior.

The SPAS is designed to define an individual's personality along fourteen dimensions. The list below briefly describes each dimension.

1. Global is a measure of the person's overall attitude toward himself/herself.
2. Ascendancy is the tendency to strive for control over other people's attitudes and behavior.
3. Industriousness is the tendency to strive for success on adaptively significant tasks requiring a relatively high level of competence and exertion.

4. Adventurousness is the tendency to respond humorously to threatening information and to strive for unfamiliar and romanticized rewards.
5. Gregariousness is the tendency to spend a lot of time communicating with other people.
6. Intimateness is the tendency to reveal the primitive, egocentric, or idiosyncratic aspects of one's attitudes to trusted others.
7. Altruism is the tendency to act with the conscious intention of benefiting others rather than oneself and to accept the possibility that such action may be punishing to oneself. It is a combination of kindness and unselfishness.
8. Authenticity is the tendency to display information in a way that is intended to produce accurate interpretations in others.
9. Approvingness is the tendency to respond with positive evaluations to external stimuli (especially other people).
10. Amenability is the tendency to accept and comply with pressures from external authority.
11. Conventionality is the tendency to share the attitudes of the typical person in our society.
12. Prudence is the tendency to readily acknowledge dangers and to defend oneself against them through relatively passive acts.
13. Orderliness is the tendency to arrange qualities or objects in a manner that is uniformly consistent with a given principle or theory.
14. Concordance is the tendency to maintain an attitudinal system that is well integrated, devoid of internal conflict, and prone toward positive self-evaluation.

Procedure

The various personality measures were administered in several sessions during the fall semester. The General Attitudes Toward Life scale, a measure containing several personality measures, was

administered with the balanced F scale as one of its components. Subjects were administered Forms AQ and CQ of the Stratil Personality Assessment System to complete the self-report process. Three acquaintances were selected by each subject to provide observer ratings of the subject's personality. Subjects delivered Form AQ to each acquaintance and the results were returned in a sealed envelope to the experimenter.

Scores were computed for each subject on the balanced F scale and Forms AQ and CQ. These self-report measures were correlated with social desirability and each dimension of the SPAS. Correlations were computed for the two sexes separately and combined. Observer ratings were summed for each subject and correlated with social desirability and each dimension of the SPAS.

An analysis was conducted to determine any discrepancy between self and observer ratings. A score for the difference between the subject's report and his or her acquaintances' report was computed for the subject on each dimension. This score, the Self-Observer Discrepancy Index, was then correlated with the balanced F scale.

An analysis of the two sexes combined yielded significant correlations on three dimensions of the SPAS. The total scores on conventionality, prudence, and orderliness were positively correlated with the balanced F scale (Table 1). Authoritarians reported identification with conventional social and political beliefs and also described their personality as conventional. Their values and attitudes are also similar to those of mainstream society. Authoritarian conventionality is illustrated by item correlations reported

by the subjects (Table 2, Items 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

Table 1. SPAS Dimensional Correlates: Sex Combined

	AQ SELF	CQ SELF	TOTAL OBSERVER	SELF-OBSERVER DISCREPANCY
Gregariousness	.06	.22*	.09	.16
Altruism	-.06	-.15	-.25*	.12
Conventionality	.29*	.20	.15	.15
Prudence	.26*	.33*	.20	.13
Orderliness	.36*	.23*	.24*	.09
Concordance	.03	.03	.19	.22*
Social Desirability	.21*	.09	.00	.18

N= 85

SPAS Dimensional Correlates: Males

	AQ SELF	CQ SELF	TOTAL SELF	TOTAL OBSERVER	SELF-OBSERVER DISCREPANCY
Approvingness	.08	.02	.06	-.28	.33*
Conventionality	.49*	.24	.41*	.06	.36*
Prudence	.42*	.37*	.46*	.24	.15
Orderliness	.42*	.38*	.44*	.24	.14
Global	.36*			-.09	.31*

N= 40

SPAS Dimensional Correlates: Females

	AQ SELF	CQ SELF	TOTAL SELF	TOTAL OBSERVER	SELF-OBSERVER DISCREPANCY
Altruism	-.09	-.39*	-.30*	-.25	.00
Prudence	.15	.31*	.25	.14	.12

N= 45

*Significant at $p \leq .05$ level

Table 2. Self Correlations of Items on Form AQ

1. Inclined to keep things in an orderly arrangement	.29
2. Neat	.40
3. Inclined to dress in a careful and precise manner	.35
4. Inclined to maintain clean living quarters	.24
5. Inclined to take a lot of precautions against illness	.26
6. Has a personality that is very conventional	.27
7. Has no interest in improving his (her) occupational skills	.26
8. Romantic	.23
9. Inclined to present a true image of himself (herself) to others	.25
10. Worthy of a lot of respect from other people	.21
11. Inclined to dress in a careless and disorganized manner	-.24

12.	Inclined to maintain dirty living quarters	-.24
13.	Has an attitude toward life that is different from the mainstream of society	-.23
14.	Has a personality that is very unconventional	-.27
15.	Holds social and political beliefs that are very unconventional	-.22
16.	Holds values that are different from the mainstream of society	-.26
17.	Has a wide range of interests	-.21
18.	Inclined to disobey authority	-.28
19.	Inclined to take no precautions against illness	-.22
20.	Unromantic	-.31
21.	Dislikable	-.22
22.	Inclined to seek little companionship	-.25
23.	Inclined to use little or no deception in his (her) communications	-.23

The prudence dimension of the SPAS is concerned with the authoritarian's cautious nature and wariness of possible dangers. Authoritarians reported positive correlations on Form AQ ($r = + .26$, $p \leq .05$) and Form CQ ($r = + .33$, $p \leq .05$) with the total scores for prudence. Item analysis of Form AQ shows their concern with illness (Table 2, Items 5, 19) while Form CQ reveals their fear of theft and a reluctance to go to sleep in a motel without a safety latch (Table 3, Items 1, 5).

Table 3. Self Correlations of Items on Form CQ

1.	You live in a house five miles from the closest town. Before leaving on a four-day vacation, <u>you lock all the windows, inform the sheriff of your absence, and ask a neighbor to watch for burglars.</u>	.34
2.	A local organization is holding an open-house supper. <u>You decide to attend with several of your friends.</u>	.29
3.	You're getting ready to go on a picnic. <u>Before leaving, you make sure that your hair is properly combed and your shirt (or blouse) is carefully tucked into your shorts.</u>	.30
4.	As you're driving down the highway, you approach a truck loaded with high explosives. <u>For the sake of safety, you slow down and leave a wide space between you and the truck.</u>	.23

5. You're staying in a motel room in a strange city. Although you locked the door before going to bed, you don't bother to bolt the door or hide your money. -.33
6. You're with a group of people whose attitudes are typical of our society. You find that their religious beliefs are quite different from yours. -.21
7. You belong to a group that is attempting to solve a practical problem. You take the initiative in making suggestions and directing the discussion. -.22
8. Your community's water supply is running low, and the mayor has ordered all residents to cut back on consumption. You ignore this order because you think the mayor is exaggerating the problem. -.27
9. Over the years you've collected a number of important personal papers. But you've never bothered to organize them in any systematic way. -.22
10. You're comparing yourself with some people who are highly respected in your local area. It's clear that you have none of the admirable traits possessed by these people. -.28

Orderliness was another SPAS dimension on which authoritarians reported positive correlations overall for both Form AQ ($r = + .36$, $p \leq .05$) and Form CQ ($r = + .23$, $p \leq .05$). The dimension encompasses the authoritarian's maintenance of clean living quarters, neat appearance, and a general tendency to organize things (Table 2, Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12). Concrete support for this tendency is provided with a positive correlation of a Form CQ item stating organization of a suitcase ($r = + .30$, $p \leq .05$) and a negative correlation with one expressing no organization of important papers ($r = -.22$, $p \leq .05$).

The global dimension of Form AQ consists of items which provide a measure of the person's overall attitude toward himself or herself. Likeable, worthy of other people's respect, and valuable to society

are examples of items in the global dimension. A social desirability measure was computed by correlating observer global ratings with all observer items and selecting those that had the highest correlation. Authoritarians reported their desire to present a favorable image with a positive correlation on the social desirability measure ($r = +.21$, $p \leq .05$). In the item analysis of Form AQ, authoritarians reported an inclination to present a true image to others ($r = +.25$, $p \leq .05$) but contradicted that item with a report of not always avoiding the use of deception in their communications ($r = -.23$, $p \leq .05$).

Male and female self-reports were also analyzed separately. High authoritarian males reported positive correlations on the dimensions of conventionality, prudence, and orderliness. High authoritarian females reported the same tendencies but only the dimension of prudence yielded a significant correlation. High authoritarian females reported a greater lack of altruism ($r = -.30$, $p \leq .05$) than males, a finding supported largely by Form CQ ($r = -.39$, $p \leq .05$). Male authoritarians did not report non-altruistic behaviors on Form CQ, indicating instead, a favorable attitude about themselves with a positive correlation on the global dimension ($r = +.36$, $p \leq .05$).

The observer correlates of the balanced F scale from Form AQ provided information about the observers' perceptions of authoritarians. Of the three central dimensions reported by authoritarians, only orderliness was validated by the observers ($r = +.24$, $p \leq .05$). Nonetheless, item analysis showed that observers perceive conventionality and prudence in the authoritarian personality (Table 4,

Items 3, 6). Observers also perceived a lack of altruism in authoritarians ($r = -.25$, $p \leq .05$). Items 8, 9, 10, and 11 from Table 4 illustrate the content of this finding. There were no significant observer correlates when the authoritarians were analyzed separately by sex.

Table 4. Observer Correlations of Items on Form AQ

1. Inclined to keep things in an orderly arrangement	.24
2. Neat	.22
3. Inclined to take a lot of precautions against illness	.24
4. Has a lot of pent-up frustration	.23
5. Inclined to dress in a careless and disorganized manner	-.29
6. Holds values that are different from the mainstream of society	-.24
7. Has very little pent-up frustration	-.25
8. Willing to give a lot of free help to other people	-.29
9. Inclined to be deeply concerned about other people's welfare	-.34
10. Inclined to be interested when other people talk about their accomplishments	-.29
11. Inclined to spend a lot of time in casual conversations with other people	-.25

Results from the analysis of the Self-Observer Discrepancy Index revealed one significant finding when scores were analyzed with the sexes combined. The correlation of this index on the concordance dimension with authoritarianism was $r = + .22$. This is illustrated on Form AQ by the fact that observers perceived authoritarians as possessing a lot of pent-up frustration ($r = + .23$, $p \leq .05$) but self-ratings by the authoritarians on the dimension showed no such effect ($r = + .03$). Analysis by sex using the SODI revealed high authoritarian males rated themselves higher than did their acquaintances on the dimensions of approvingness ($r = + .33$, $p \leq .05$), conventionality ($r = + .36$, $p \leq .05$), and global ($r = + .31$, $p \leq .05$).

The SODI yielded no significant discrepancies in the analysis of female authoritarians.

DISCUSSION

Authoritarians described themselves as highly conventional, prudent, and orderly. This pattern was also perceived by observers, but to a lesser degree. The observer was, however, quite aware of a lack of altruism in the authoritarian personality that was acknowledged by the female authoritarian but not by the male authoritarian. Observers also perceived greater conflict within the authoritarian, but self-reports indicated a basic contentment in this type of personality. The self/observer discrepancies were especially evident in the male authoritarian, with significant differences on three dimensions. The male authoritarian presented himself as more approving and conventional than observers perceived him. He also presented himself as more globally attractive than observers perceived him.

The discussion of the results will proceed with an examination of the degree to which they validated Altemeyer's conceptualization of three attitudinal clusters combining to form the right-wing authoritarian. First, Altemeyer portrays the right-wing authoritarian as an individual basing his actions upon conventional traditions and customs. The right-wing authoritarian is submissive to authorities who enforce conventional values and aggressive toward those individuals who oppose conventional values or are approved as targets by the authorities. Conventionality, as the core of the right-wing authoritarian's personality, was validated by strong endorsement of conventional content items on the SPAS. Authori-

arians reported possession of a conventional personality, values, and political beliefs. Altemeyer concludes that the right-wing authoritarian's conventionality is based largely upon traditional biblical teachings, a conclusion that received some support from findings on Form CQ of the SPAS. The item placed the authoritarian in a group of people with conventional attitudes, but having religious beliefs quite different from the authoritarian. The item was significantly rejected by authoritarians.

Altemeyer's second cluster, authoritarian submission, is expressed in a general acceptance of statements and actions by authorities perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives. Authorities are trusted to a great extent and the right-wing authoritarian is willing to obey instructions without added inducement. The right-wing authoritarian assumes officials are in the best position to make decisions and that ordinary citizens have no right to criticize whatever actions the authorities might take. Protests against the establishment are wrong and possibly damaging to society. Results on the SPAS provided solid support for Altemeyer's conceptualization of authoritarian submission. The authoritarian doesn't resent bureaucratic regulation and shows no inclination to disobey authorities.

The remaining cluster in Altemeyer's proposed construct is authoritarian aggression. It is a general aggressiveness which is revealed when the authoritarian perceives such actions to be sanctioned by established authorities. The altruism dimension of the SPAS proved useful in validating this aspect of the right-wing

authoritarian personality. The dimension covers actions an individual might take to benefit others at the risk of hurting one's self. It includes showing concern for others and offering free help to those in need. Although correlations of items for this dimension were not significant as reported by the authoritarians, they did provide an indication of the authoritarian's lack of altruism with a correlation in the negative direction. Nonetheless, observer ratings were useful in verifying the authoritarian's lack of altruistic tendencies. It is possible that observers, having witnessed aggressive actions by the authoritarians, were more objective in citing their lack of altruism. The observers viewed the authoritarians as lacking in concern for others, unwilling to give free help, and uninterested in the accomplishments of others. The significant lack of altruism in the authoritarians is an indication that, in certain situations, they would aggress against unconventional individuals or groups.

The Self-Observer Discrepancy Index showed that authoritarians exaggerated their concordance when compared to observer ratings. Recall that concordance is defined as maintaining an attitudinal system that is well integrated, devoid of internal conflict, and prone toward positive self-evaluation. Although the correlation was significant for the sexes combined, the finding is more applicable to male authoritarians. Male authoritarians showed significant discrepancies on three dimensions when compared with observer ratings and there were none for female authoritarians. Male authoritarians exaggerated their approvingness, conventionality, and global

attractiveness. Approvingness on the SPAS measures the subject's tendency to positively evaluate external stimuli, especially other people. The male authoritarian is approving of individuals who endorse conventional attitudes and opinions. Therefore, he perceived himself as an extremely approving individual, supportive of and offering encouragement to individuals with whom he identifies. Observers, however, perceived the male authoritarian's rejection and disapproval of people who hold values that differ from his. The observers considered these actions by the male authoritarian in their evaluations and rated him as less approving than he imagined himself to be. Conventionality is especially important to male authoritarians, so much that he exaggerated the possession of the trait beyond the level his actions indicated. His preoccupation with presenting himself as the typical person in society led him to distort his perception of his personality. He exaggerated his global attractiveness because he is convinced of the soundness of his mental health. He is worthy of other people's respect, a citizen valuable to society. It is individuals like himself that make this a great country. However, the observer was again more discerning of contradictions in the male authoritarian personality. The male authoritarian isn't always certain of the appropriate actions to maintain his image of sound mental health. In such situations, he is frustrated and will resort to deception in an attempt to reassert his facade of mental stability. These conflicts were obvious to observers who recognized the inner turmoil of the male authoritarian and reported his lack of concordance.

The study was successful in showing that observer ratings are useful in authoritarianism research. Observer ratings verified personality dimensions that were reported by authoritarians and also revealed discrepancies in the authoritarian's self-perception and the image projected to others. The study also supported Altemeyer's proposal to refine the original concept of authoritarianism. However, it suggested that his refinement may be too narrow since orderliness emerged as a significant dimension. Ideally, the present study would be replicated using Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale. The results should provide stronger correlations on the personality dimensions of the SPAS. With these more clearly defined, firmer conclusions could be drawn regarding the authoritarian personality.

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