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Gender, Sexuality, and the Authoritarian Personality

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ABSTRACT The political correlates of the authoritarian personality have been well established by researchers, but important linkages to other major constructs in psychology need fuller elaboration. We present new data and review old data from our laboratories that show the myriad ways in which authoritarianism is implicated in the important domain of gender roles. We show that women and men high in authoritarianism live in rigidly gendered worlds where male and female roles are narrowly defined, attractiveness is based on traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and conventional sexual mores are prescribed. As a construct, authoritarianism is not just relevant for understanding people's politics, but it also affects the most personal of domains—romantic partnerships, lifestyle goals, and basic attitudes about male and female relationships.

In their monumental volume, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) set out to understand the roots of fascism and anti-Semitism. Their inquiry dealt with the important political events of the day, including the Holocaust, World War II, and their aftermath. Other psychologists followed this lead and focused attention on the political implications of authoritarianism. As described by Brown (1965) and Winter (1996) in comprehensive textbook reviews, authoritarianism proved useful in the United States for organizing understandings of prejudice, obedience, and the reactionary politics of the 1950s (Elms & Milgram, 1966) and the emergence of a late 1960s protest culture (Izzett, 1971). Researchers used archival data to link

Thank you to Regina Kim for collecting the Korean data used in Table 2. Collection of the data reported in Table 3 was supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health (F31MH11468, T32MH19890, F32MH12068).

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feelings of social unrest and economic threat in the 1960s and 1970s to increased authoritarian attitudes and behaviors (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Sales, 1973). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, McFarland and his colleagues showed how the concept of authoritarianism was relevant for understanding the lives of citizens living in the communist Soviet Union and then Russia (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina-Paap, 1992). The 1990s and early 2000s saw research on the links between authoritarianism and eagerness in the United States for the use of military force in the Middle East (Doty, Winter, Peterson, & Kemmelmeier, 1997; McFarland, 2005; see also Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005, for German reactions to 9/11).

This kind of work by psychologists has steadily expanded our understanding of authoritarianism. Now, at the 60th anniversary of the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al., 1950), we know quite a bit about this aspect of personality. Contemporary researchers often use Altemeyer's (1996) measure of authoritarianism, which corrected many of the response bias flaws of the original F-Scale. In his highly influential volumes, Altemeyer (1988, 1996) defined three elements of authoritarianism. Those scoring high on authoritarianism (1) adhere strongly to conventional moral values, (2) are submissive to established authorities, and (3) are willing to aggress against others if they are perceived as unconventional or threatening. Inspired, in part, by Altemeyer's work, research on the political and nonpolitical correlates of authoritarianism continues into the 21st century. Investigators have established links between authoritarianism and the factors and facets of the Big Five (Akrami & Ekehammar, 2006; Heaven & Bucci, 2001) and the need for cognitive closure (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2006; Schultz, Stone, & Christie, 1997; Van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004). Researchers have begun to show how social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and authoritarianism work together to influence political and social attitudes (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006). Research has also shown how authoritarianism is related to parenting (e.g., Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007; Peterson & Duncan, 1999), low political knowledge (Mirels & Dean, 2006; Peterson, Duncan, & Pang, 2002), and identity (e.g., Duriez & Soenens, 2006). In the current article, we clarify the nomological network of authoritarianism even further by consolidating our research on the relationship of authoritarianism to gender and sexuality.

In describing our larger research program, it may be useful to discuss briefly Adorno and colleagues' (1950) focus on how authoritarians view the world according to ingroup and outgroup membership. As suggested above, when motivated by a leader to whom they submit, authoritarians can be aggressive toward outgroup members who by their very nature or through their behaviors violate conventional mores (Altemeyer, 1988). People who score high on authoritarianism privilege and reward group-consistent behaviors and punish inconsistent ones. Through obedience to sanctioned leaders, authoritarians try to maintain hegemonic relationships between individuals and groups of people (Winter, 1996, chap. 7). Biological sex is a commonly used way to categorize people into two primary groups: women and men, or girls and boys (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Definitions of female and male are often organized around gender-specific mutually exclusive characteristics for women (e.g., submissive, emotional, and dependent) and men (e.g., dominant, stoic, and independent). This kind of rigidity in categorization and the creation of distinctions are characteristic of authoritarian thinking. Indeed, according to Winter (1996, chap. 7), one of the key features of authoritarianism involves intolerance of ambiguity—a resistance to blending discrete emotions, perceptions, and ways of thinking (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949). It is our general thesis that authoritarians think of gender as a bipolar construct (Kelly, 1955/1963), meaning that they organize their experiences and expectations around immutable differences between women and men, rather than focus on similarities. This construction of gender is likely to have a variety of consequences for the authoritarian individual's sense of self, goals and ambitions, and social relationships (especially intimate relationships). Our goal in this article is to explore these consequences. (See also Duncan, 2006, for a related theoretical treatment of authoritarianism and gender.) We begin by examining attitudes about gender equality and gender roles. What do authoritarians think about ideologies that try to categorize gender as a permeable construct?

AUTHORITARIANISM AND GENDER ROLES

Previous research has shown that authoritarianism is correlated negatively with feminism and positively with sexist attitudes. Smith and Winter (2002) investigated student attitudes about the 1998 scandal

caused by U.S. President Bill Clinton's extramarital relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. This research showcased the ways in which gender, political party identification, authoritarianism, and feminism worked together and independently to predict attitudes about the Clinton-Lewinsky story. For example, authoritarianism was correlated with the belief that Clinton's affair with Lewinsky made him morally unfit to lead the United States. For the purposes of the current study, the bivariate correlates also showed that authoritarianism was negatively related to a measure of feminist attitudes. Investigating sexism more broadly in a sample of women, Sibley, Overall, and Duckitt (2007, Study 2) showed how hostile and benevolent forms of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) interacted with authoritarianism to help maintain gender inequality; they demonstrated that women's scores on benevolent sexism predicted hostile sexism scores 12 months later in participants who also scored high on authoritarianism. This interaction effect suggests that authoritarianism plays a part in perpetuating sexist attitudes (see also Haddock & Zanna, 1994, for evidence that authoritarian men in particular prefer "housewives to feminists"). In our own work, we have found similar relationships between authoritarianism and attitudes about women.

Duncan, Peterson, and Winter (1997) found that authoritarianism was related to the endorsement of traditional gender roles among women and men. For example, students who scored higher on authoritarianism (relative to students who scored lower) were more likely to favor items such as "I like being a traditional female/male" and rate as less important the women's movement. This pattern of correlates makes sense. Those who score high on authoritarianism are concerned about maintaining the status quo of their society, which might include wives staying at home to take care of children while husbands work. Patriarchal gender roles are deeply embedded in most cultures; thus, authoritarianism might operate across the globe to maintain gender differences. This would include, in Western countries, the denial of feminist identities and ideologies; feminism would be viewed as an attempt to upset the proper way women and men should act.

In Table 1 we present secondary analyses that further support the notion that authoritarians do not like challenges to traditional gender roles. Data from four studies are presented. The first study was initiated by Peterson, Smirles, and Wentworth (1997); data were

Table 1
Correlations Between Authoritarianism and Variables Concerning
Feminism, the Women’s Movement, and Gender Roles

Gender-Related Variables	Correlations With Authoritarianism	
	Women	Men
New Hampshire students		
Women’s movement important	-.28 ⁺	-.47*
I am a feminist	-.46*	-.34 ⁺
System blame	-.45*	-.45*
Collective orientation	-.29 ⁺	-.46*
Prochoice behaviors	-.28 ⁺	-.36*
New Hampshire parents (mothers/fathers)		
Women’s movement important	-.29*	-.24 ⁺
Prochoice behaviors	-.50***	-.21
Attitudes toward women		
Young and midlife adults (Michigan)	-.51***	-.54***
College students (NYU)	-.41***	-.31*
College students (Oregon)	-.43***	-.39***

Note. New Hampshire students ($n = 35$ women, $n = 33$ men); Parents ($n = 97$ mothers, $n = 58$ fathers); Michigan sample ($n = 81$ women, $n = 89$ men); NYU students ($n = 82$ women, $n = 58$ men); Oregon students ($n = 165$ women, $n = 106$ men). Parent data were collected during New Hampshire students’ first year of college. The mother or the father of each student was asked to return a survey, so each parent comes from a different household. For the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, lower numbers represent more traditional attitudes about women’s roles.

⁺ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

collected in 1994 and 1998 from New Hampshire college students and in 1994 from their parents. (See Peterson & Lane, 2001, for more sample information.) The data from students were longitudinal, tracking their university experiences from their freshman to senior year. According to the student responses, the sample was primarily White (81%), and most rated themselves as middle to upper middle class (87%). The data reported in Table 1 are newly analyzed and based on students’ senior-year responses ($n = 35$ women, $n = 33$ men) to the following items: how important is the women’s movement to your life (1 = *not at all important*, 4 = *extremely important*), I am a feminist (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), a two-item system blame scale (e.g., “Men have more of the top jobs because

our society discriminates against women”; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), a two-item collective orientation scale (e.g., “It is not enough for a woman to be successful herself. Women must all work together to change laws and customs which are unfair to all women”; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), and a six-item prochoice behaviors scale (sign a petition, contribute money, attend a meeting, write a letter or phone a public official, active membership in prochoice organization, or attended a rally or demonstration; 1 = *yes, student did this behavior*, 0 = *no, student did not do this behavior*). See Duncan (1999) for more details about these measures. In addition to the student data, we have information from parents ($n = 97$ mothers, $n = 58$ fathers) who filled out the importance of the women’s movement item as well as the six prochoice behavioral items in 1994 when their child was starting college.

Authoritarianism was assessed by Altemeyer’s (1988) 30-item right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale (7-point Likert-scaled items). The top part of Table 1 shows the correlates of RWA with the feminism items. Data for women and men are reported separately. Focusing on the correlations for students, authoritarianism in women and men was negatively related to all of the criterion measures. The magnitude of the correlates ranged from $-.28$ to $-.47$. For parents, mothers high on authoritarianism did not find the women’s movement important. They also did not behave in ways that supported a woman’s right to choose an abortion. Fathers high on authoritarianism also did not find the women’s movement important ($p < .07$). Unexpectedly, there was no significant (or trend) relationship between RWA and prochoice behaviors for fathers ($r = -.21$, $p = .12$). However, this null finding is an anomaly probably attributed best to low sample size ($n = 58$ fathers), given the consistent pattern of negative correlates for the other variables in both the student and parent samples. Fisher’s r -to- z transformation was used to test for differences in the magnitude of correlations for women and men. Only one significant difference was found; the magnitude of the correlation between authoritarianism and prochoice behaviors was higher for mothers ($r = -.50$) than for fathers ($r = -.21$, $z = 1.98$, $p < .05$).

These data demonstrate consistency within one sample of parents and their college-aged children, across a variety of constructs, that authoritarianism in women and men is related to traditional beliefs about women’s roles and their place in society. In the bottom half of

Table 1, we present data showing consistency across three different studies of a relationship between authoritarianism and another relevant construct—the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973). This scale measures attitudes about women's place in society and includes such items as "Intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men." Lower scores represent more traditional attitudes about women's roles. Authoritarianism was measured using a 10-item abbreviated version of Altemeyer's (1988) RWA scale that was developed and validated by Haddock, Zanna, and Esses (1993); they reported a correlation of .89 with the complete 30-item scale.

The first study recruited a community sample of young and mid-life women and men from a midsized city in Michigan for a study on romantic relationships. Information about this sample can be found in Zurbriggen (2000). Data from the 89 male and 81 female heterosexual participants are reported here. This was a mostly White (74%) sample with a high level of education (75% had at least a bachelor's degree). Ages ranged from 19 to 45; the mean age was 29.8 ($SD = 7.44$). For the second study, participants were heterosexual college students (58 men and 82 women) enrolled at New York University. This sample was mostly White (61%) and Asian American (15%) and ranged in age from 18 to 29 ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 1.86$). The third study involved 271 heterosexual students at the University of Oregon. This sample was mostly White (75%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (15%) and included 165 women and 106 men. Ages ranged from 18 to 51, but most participants were of traditional college age ($M = 19.4$, $SD = 2.72$).

Results were consistent across all three studies and for both genders. Men and women high in authoritarianism were less likely to endorse nontraditional roles for women. The correlations ranged from $-.31$ to $-.54$ ($M = -.43$); these are considered moderate to large by Cohen's (1988) standards. Fisher's r -to- z transformation was used to test for differences in the correlations for men and women; no significant differences were found (all z s < 0.70 , all p s $> .50$).

The data in Table 1 reinforce the point that individuals high in authoritarianism do not support feminist ideology. Presumably, attempts by feminists to highlight inequalities run afoul of authoritarian desires to maintain what have become conventional spheres of feminine and masculine gender roles. What is interesting is that authoritarianism seems to unite both women and men around this

issue. In Table 1, the magnitudes of correlates for women and men in 9 of the 10 sets of analyses did not differ according to Fisher Z-tests. Future work might profitably explore specific details of how authoritarian men (who are privileged in terms of gender) and authoritarian women (who are disadvantaged in terms of gender) view the benefits and costs of conventional gender roles.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND GENDER ROLES IN ONESELF AND ONE'S PARTNER

If authoritarians resist the upsetting of traditional gender roles, this should express itself in what they find attractive in potential partners. In other words, if marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman, authoritarians might have clear preferences for the gendered characteristics they find attractive in potential partners. At the very least, authoritarianism has been shown to be correlated with individual levels of masculinity and femininity. Lippa and Arad (1999) showed that authoritarianism in U.S. men is moderately negatively correlated with self-ascribed femininity. For women, this correlation was positive, although weak. Based upon other data in their study, Lippa and Arad concluded that authoritarian men are defensive about gender roles, denying femininity but not necessarily expressing masculinity. By contrast, in a sample of Israeli students, Rubinstein (1995), using a shortened version of Bem's (1974) Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), found that cross-typed (masculine) women scored lower on authoritarianism than the sex-typed (feminine) women and the undifferentiated women. There were no significant differences in authoritarianism for men depending upon BSRI classification. Considering these two studies together suggests that authoritarianism is moderately to weakly related to self-described femininity and masculinity. These results support the general idea that authoritarianism is correlated with the endorsement of gendered characteristics for women and men.

A related question concerns the characteristics valued by authoritarians in a dating or marriage partner. In Duncan, Peterson, and Ax (2003), we examined this question by asking unmarried, heterosexual women to rate their ideal husbands on a number of adjectives, including masculine and feminine. A 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = *extremely undesirable characteristic*, 5 = *extremely desirable*

characteristic). In another study, Peterson and Duncan (2007) focused on married women and asked them to rate their current husbands on similar kinds of adjectives on a 5-point scale (1 = *my spouse is hardly like the adjective*, 5 = *my spouse is a lot like the adjective*). Masculinity was assessed by summing five adjectives (aggressive, ambitious, clear-thinking, intelligent, and realistic). Femininity (labeled “loving” in the original article) was also assessed with five items (compassionate, friendly, gentle, warm, and understanding). As reproduced in Table 2, authoritarianism (assessed by Altemeyer’s 1996 RWA scale) was positively correlated with masculinity as a desired characteristic in a husband for the college women, whereas femininity was negatively correlated with authoritarianism. Similarly, the midlife authoritarian women rated their current husbands as possessing masculine characteristics and not feminine ones. Cause and effect cannot be determined in cross-sectional data, but the dating preferences of authoritarian women may make it more likely they will marry masculine and not feminine men.

We replicated these data in an East Asian context by sampling heterosexual male and female Korean students in the same way we assessed the U.S. college women. Surveys were translated into Korean and then back-translated into English before administration in Korean. More information about this sample can be found in Peterson, Kim, McCarthy, Park, and Plamondon (2010). As shown in Table 2, Korean women, like their U.S. counterparts, wanted to date masculine men but not feminine ones. By contrast, as expected, the Korean men desired feminine partners. RWA for men was not significantly related to masculinity in partners, although the negative correlation is in the right direction.

Overall, the data show that authoritarianism is related to the characteristics that heterosexual men and women find attractive in each other. As expected, the correlates reveal that authoritarian women want to marry masculine men and authoritarian men want to marry feminine women. Those scoring higher on authoritarianism may find it comforting to rely on feminine and masculine scripts to alleviate social pressures when it comes to relationships with romantic partners. Ambiguity is reduced and things may run smoother if both members of a couple have the same expectations about a relationship (e.g., that the man will work full time and the woman will provide primary care for children and home). How these expectations might translate into sexual activity is explored next.

Table 2
Correlations Between Authoritarianism and Desired Characteristics of Heterosexual Partners

Characteristics of Spouse or Partner	Correlations With Authoritarianism
U.S. college women	
Masculine characteristics	.40***
Feminine characteristics	-.30*
U.S. midlife women	
Masculine characteristics	.35*
Feminine characteristics	-.35*
Korean college women	
Masculine characteristics	.23 ⁺
Feminine characteristics	-.29*
Korean college men	
Masculine characteristics	-.16
Feminine characteristics	.34*

Note. The data for the midlife women ($N = 61$) were based on ratings of each woman's current spouse and were originally reported in Peterson and Duncan (2007). The ratings for the U.S. college women ($N = 100$) were based on the characteristics of their ideal husband and were originally reported in Duncan et al. (2003). The data for the Korean women ($n = 58$) and men ($n = 61$) are new and based on ratings of their ideal husband or wife, respectively.

⁺ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND SEXUALITY

Relatively little research has been conducted investigating the role that authoritarianism plays in sexual attitudes and behaviors (but see Altemeyer, 1996, chap. 7). However, there are good reasons to believe that authoritarianism is likely to affect sexuality. Institutions of authority typically have much to say about sex, resulting in many laws and moral strictures about sexual behavior and sexual partners (Greenland, 1983). In addition, authoritarians often react strongly to violations of sexual mores. One clear example of this is the robust relationship between authoritarianism and homophobia (Haddock et al., 1993; Whitley & Aegisdottir, 2000; Whitley & Lee, 2000). These findings are consistent with theorizing by the original Berkeley researchers who argued that authoritarians were overly concerned with sexual "goings-on." Adorno et al. (1950) showed in a preliminary way that those scoring high on authoritarianism seemed

sexually inhibited and interested in controlling other people's sexuality through extreme moralism and punitive reactions. A focused study of the relationship between authoritarianism and sexual attitudes and behaviors is warranted.

In conducting such an investigation, several predictions follow from Altemeyer's (1996) three-component reconceptualization of authoritarianism. Because authoritarians tend to have a rigid adherence to conventional beliefs, they should be more likely to hold conventional attitudes about sexuality. Because they readily submit to oversight and regulation by authority figures, they should be more likely to obey laws and rules concerning sexuality. And because they endorse harsh punishments for moral transgressors, they should be likely to denigrate and aggress against those who violate established sexual standards.

Table 3 presents new results from three studies that investigated the relationship between authoritarianism and a variety of sexual attitudes and behaviors, testing some of the predictions outlined above. Samples are identical to those presented in the bottom half of Table 1 (i.e., a community sample from Michigan and undergraduate samples from New York University and the University of Oregon). Sexual attitude measures included the Sociosexuality Inventory (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), which measures an acceptance of casual sex, without the requirement of emotional attachment or commitment, and the Sexual Conservatism scale (SC; Burt, 1980), which measures endorsement of traditional beliefs about sexuality. The SOI includes a mixture of attitudinal (e.g., "Sex without love is OK"), behavioral (e.g., "With how many different partners have you had sex on one and only one occasion?"), and fantasy (e.g., "How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current dating partner?") items. Sample items from the SC scale include "A woman who initiates a sexual encounter will probably have sex with anyone" and "Masturbation is a normal sexual activity" (reverse scored).

Two additional attitude measures relate to aggression or hostility in a sexual context. The Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale (ASB; Burt, 1980) assesses the degree to which participants believe women and men are hostile toward one another. An example item is "Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man." Burt's (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance scale (RMA) measures stereotypical and false beliefs about rape. An example item is "When

Table 3
Correlations Between Authoritarianism and Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors

Sexual Attitude or Behavior	Correlations With Authoritarianism	
	Women	Men
Michigan young and midlife adults		
Acceptance of casual sex (SOI)	-.45***	-.40***
Sexual conservatism (SC)	.63***	.70***
Adversarial sexual beliefs (ASB)	.46***	.39***
Rape myth acceptance (RMA)	.32**	.34**
Age at first masturbation	.26*	.11
Pornography use	-.07	-.28**
NYU college students		
Sexual conservatism (SC)	.71***	.54***
Adversarial sexual beliefs (ASB)	.30**	.09
Rape myth acceptance (RMA)	.26*	.20
Oregon college students		
Assertiveness: initiate sex	-.10	-.20*
Assertiveness: condom use	-.22**	-.01

Note. SOI: Sociosexuality Inventory. For the Michigan sample, $n = 81$ for women ($n = 71$ for age at first masturbation, $n = 76$ for pornography use); $n = 89$ for men ($n = 88$ for age at first masturbation). For the NYU sample, $n = 58$ for men; $n = 82$ for women. For the Oregon sample, n s ranged from 162 to 165 for women and from 104 to 106 for men. Some data were previously reported in Zurbriggen (2003).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble.”

Several sexual behaviors were assessed for the Michigan and University of Oregon samples. Michigan participants were asked about their use of pornography with a single-item measure; they were also asked about the age at which they first engaged in sexual intercourse, oral sex, and masturbation. University of Oregon students were administered a modified version of the Sexual Assertiveness Scale (Morokoff et al., 1997), which assessed self-reported assertiveness in initiating sex, refusing sex, and initiating condom use. Statistically significant results from these studies are presented in Table 3.

Results for sexual attitudes were consistent across the Michigan and NYU samples. Women and men who scored higher in authoritarianism

were less accepting of casual sex and endorsed conservative beliefs about sexuality. In other words (as predicted), they held conventional, traditional attitudes about sexuality. Women and men higher in authoritarianism also reported beliefs consistent with an adversarial model of sexual interactions. In romantic or sexual situations, the “opposite sex” is considered almost as an enemy, one with his or her own strategies, goals, and tactics, one who should not be trusted. This is consistent with authoritarian intolerance of ambiguity. Men are men, women are women, and the two are so clearly different (with opposing needs and goals) that they can be conceptualized as combative factions. It is also consistent with the authoritarian belief that the world is a threatening and dangerous place (Altemeyer, 1988, p. 184). Interestingly, the data reported here suggest that people high in authoritarianism perceive danger even in the realm of close interpersonal relationships, a realm in which many people find safety and comfort from the threats present in the external world.

The final sexual attitude measure, rape myth acceptance, was positively correlated with authoritarianism in both women and men. This relationship had been found previously for men (Begany & Milburn, 2002; Walker, Rowe, & Quinsey, 1993) but had not previously been demonstrated for women. The RMA scale focuses mostly on victim-blaming myths about rape, a set of beliefs centered around the notion that only “bad,” promiscuous women are at risk for rape, and that if they do get raped, it is deserved. This set of beliefs fits well with authoritarian intolerance of ambiguity and support for punishment for anyone who violates social norms. “Good” and “bad” women are easily distinguishable from each other, and authoritarian men and women both have a stake in being able to tell the two apart. Authoritarian men want a good woman for a romantic partner (and may not mind if bad women are assaulted). Authoritarian women, knowing that bad women deserve, and may receive, harsh punishment, want to be certain that they are not categorized as this type of woman.

Of the 14 correlations between sexual attitudes and authoritarianism in the two samples, two (the correlations for adversarial sexual beliefs and rape myth acceptance in the male NYU sample), while in the predicted direction, did not reach statistical significance. Walker et al. (1993) had previously reported smaller correlations (between RWA and variables related to sexual aggression) in a college sample than in a community sample; that pattern seems to be present in our

data as well. The sample size for NYU men was small ($n = 58$). In addition, when data for NYU men and women are combined, the partial correlations (controlling for gender) of RWA with both ASB ($r = .21, p = .01$) and RMA ($r = .23, p = .006$) were statistically significant. Thus, we believe the most likely explanation for the two nonsignificant correlations in the male sample is low statistical power.

In addition to sexual attitude measures, several sexual behavior measures were administered to two of the samples. These results, while not fully replicated across gender, are consistent with authoritarian adherence to a conservative code of morals concerning sexuality. Such a code dictates that premarital sex is wrong and that certain types of sexual behaviors (e.g., pornography use, masturbation, and the use of condoms or other birth control devices) are questionable or forbidden.

For men in the Michigan community sample, authoritarianism was associated with lower reports of pornography consumption. For women in this sample, authoritarianism was correlated with a later age of first masturbation. For the University of Oregon student sample, men higher in authoritarianism reported lower assertiveness in initiating sex and women reported lower assertiveness in initiating condom use during sex. All of these correlations are in the predicted direction. Some traditional codes of sexual behavior frown on masturbation (especially for women); thus, it would be less appealing to authoritarians and likely to be initiated at a later age. Authoritarians would be unlikely to perform a stigmatized act such as reading or viewing pornography (or, if they did, they would be unlikely to admit it). It also makes sense that they would indicate less likelihood or assertiveness in initiating (for virtually everyone in this sample, premarital) sex. And high-authoritarian women, in particular, would be unlikely to initiate condom use because, for them, this is a violation of both sexual and gender role norms. Having (premarital) sex is forbidden (for both men and women, but more so for women because of the sexual double standard). In addition, because condoms are within the man's purview, not the woman's, initiating condom use is a violation of appropriate female gender roles. Condoms may also be perceived as an accusation or admission of nonmonogamy (Hammer, Fisher, Fitzgerald, & Fisher, 1996; Marston & King, 2006), which could be considered a third violation of sexual or relational mores.

The RWA scale includes some items related to sexuality; thus, it is possible that correlations between RWA and sexual attitudes and behaviors might be due mostly to this content overlap. To test for this possibility, all analyses were run a second time with a revised measure of the abbreviated RWA that included only the 8 items (out of 10) that do not relate to sexuality. Some correlations were slightly stronger and some were slightly weaker, but these changes were small and substantive conclusions were unchanged. However, one significant p value became marginally significant in the revised analysis: The correlation between RWA and pornography use in Michigan young and midlife men dropped to $r = -.19$, $p = .08$.

These data were all obtained from heterosexual samples; a quantitative analysis of sexual minority participants was not possible because of their small numbers in these samples. The relationship between authoritarianism and sexual attitudes and behaviors for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals is an open question, deserving of study.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND GENDERED OUTCOMES IN CAREER, EDUCATION, AND FAMILY

We have shown that authoritarianism is related, in predictable ways, to attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, as well as to sexual attitudes and behaviors. Because authoritarianism also seems to be an important factor relevant to romantic relationships (see Table 2), it is reasonable to ask whether it can help predict the important life choices and decisions that individuals make when navigating these relationships. Many of the most challenging of such decisions revolve around issues of life-work balance, such as what career (if any) to pursue, whether to pursue advanced education, and how much time to devote to family.

Career and Education

As stated earlier, authoritarians seem to live in gendered worlds where men are masculine and women are feminine. Gendered attitudes like this may well have implications for the career and education outcomes of high and low authoritarians. More specifically, authoritarian women may not be interested in pursuing careers, expecting that their future husbands will be the primary breadwinners.

Research by Christopher and Wojda (2008) found that authoritarianism was positively correlated with traditional gender role expectations that women should stay home after marriage (e.g., “Women with families do not have time for other employment”). This correlation was mediated by benevolent sexism, suggesting that authoritarians place women on household pedestals where they can remain apart from the paid workforce.

In our previous work, we examined the open-ended responses of college seniors writing brief essays on their postgraduation life plans (Peterson & Lane, 2001). The prompt of the essay was as follows: “Think about the next 4 or 5 years. What are your general plans after you graduate from college?” We hypothesized that high-authoritarian men would be focused on career goals in their essays, as opposed to low-authoritarian men who might also write about other things such as travel or self-enrichment. Based upon late 20th-century gender roles, we hypothesized that authoritarian men would be focused on their roles as breadwinners; they would want to start their careers as soon as possible. Authoritarian women, however, in order to remain true to traditional gender roles, would focus on marriage and starting a family. In terms of education, women’s authoritarianism would be negatively related to the desire for post-BA study. Women scoring low on authoritarianism should be much more likely to view graduate school as an opportunity to advance in a more specialized career. For men, a post-BA education would be unrelated to authoritarianism; men high and low on authoritarianism would view further education as a logical step toward a fulfilling career. Although authoritarian men might have wanted to start their careers right away, some would pursue higher education as an important stepping-stone for career placement.

Peterson and Lane (2001) originally tested these hypotheses in the University of New Hampshire senior sample. As shown in Table 4, authoritarianism was positively correlated with the discussion of career goals in men’s essays, but not in women’s. A *Z* test comparing the magnitude of these correlations for women and men was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Also as expected, men’s scores on authoritarianism were uncorrelated with planning to attend graduate school. Women’s scores, however, were highly negatively correlated with discussions about post-BA educational plans. Again, these correlations for men and women were significantly different in magnitude ($p < .01$) according to a *Z* test.

Table 4
**Correlations Between Authoritarianism and Career Goals,
 Education, Marriage, and Parenting**

Criterion Variables	Correlations With Authoritarianism	Z Test Comparing Women and Men
New Hampshire seniors' focus on career goals		
Women	.04	2.02*
Men	.50*	
New Hampshire seniors' focus on post-BA education		
Women	-.57***	2.77*
Men	.05	
New Hampshire seniors' projections about marriage responsibilities		
Women	.47*	2.94*
Men	-.27	
Midlife women sample		
Happiness with marriage	.12	
Self-growth through marriage	-.06	
Positive affect about parenting	-.30*	
Self-growth through parenting	-.37*	

Note. Data for the midlife women ($N = 61$) were originally reported in Peterson and Duncan (2007). Data for the New Hampshire seniors ($n = 35$ women, $n = 33$ men) were originally reported in Peterson and Lane (2001).

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Unexpectedly, authoritarianism was not significantly correlated with marriage plans for women or men. (These correlates are not shown in Table 4.)

Thus, authoritarianism was related to differential career and education plans after college. In men, authoritarianism was related to focus on advancing immediate career goals, which may or may not have included further education. For women, authoritarianism was negatively related to interest in graduate education. The lack of correlates with marriage plans was perplexing, but further data asking directly about marriage and family sheds some light on this null finding.

Marriage and Parenting

In addition to the first essay asking about general life plans after college, the UNH seniors were also asked the following open-ended

question: “How does marriage change a person’s life?” Peterson and Lane (2001) content-coded these essays for (a) themes indicating that marriage was an idealized, loving partnership and (b) themes indicating the respondent viewed marriage as time to “settle down” and face new responsibilities. Authoritarianism was uncorrelated in both women’s and men’s responses with viewing marriage as a loving partnership. However, there was an interesting gender difference in how authoritarian women and men wrote about marriage as entailing new responsibilities. For women, authoritarianism was positively correlated with a focus on the responsibilities involved in marriage. For men, authoritarianism was negatively correlated with responsibility themes in essays. These correlations (shown in Table 4) were significantly different from each other according to a *Z* test. This pattern of results is consistent with what one might expect with knowledge of traditional gender roles, where women are expected to manage relationships and the domestic sphere. Extrapolating a bit, the authoritarian women seemed to be thinking about how marriage was going to impact their daily responsibilities as part of a married couple, whereas authoritarian men seemed to have the luxury of maintaining focus on the work world outside of the marital dyad.

As some of our previous work shows, the lack of any systematic relationship in women between authoritarianism and positive aspects of marriage seems fairly robust. Peterson and Duncan (2007) showed in a college-educated sample of late-midlife women ($M = 62$ years old; sample also used in Table 2) that authoritarianism was uncorrelated with open-ended responses to the following question: “We’re interested in your reflections on your life so far. What have you learned from your experiences living with a spouse or partner?” As shown in Table 4, authoritarianism in these midlife women was uncorrelated with any expressions about the happiness that marriage can bring, or with opportunities for self-growth through the marriage. So despite the fact that authoritarian individuals are invested in traditional feminine and masculine gender roles (e.g., Nagoshi et al., 2008), this does not seem to translate reliably into expected happiness in marriage (as shown by the college sample) or guarantee actual happiness (as shown in the married midlife women sample). However, the complete story is far from told. Research on married men is sorely needed. It may be the case that authoritarianism in men will also be unrelated to marital bliss. On the other hand,

authoritarian men with submissive wives may experience happiness in marriage because they are free to pursue their own hobbies without having to “waste” time on household tasks (e.g., housework and child care). It is also possible that, as they grow older, some authoritarian men may eventually experience disappointment with their marriage—perhaps realizing that there are some benefits to having a partner who contributes to income generation and who has similar interests. Future research on both men and women needs to investigate differences in marital happiness in matched and mismatched authoritarian dyads—the expectations of partners for each other is no doubt crucial for understanding how a marriage can hamper or actualize happiness and growth.

Another important domain to consider is parenting. One of the major normative tasks of a married couple is to rear children. Here, once again, traditional gender roles give mothers the primary responsibility for child care. Given gendered expectations, one would expect at first glance that authoritarianism would be positively correlated with enjoyment of parenting for women. On the other hand, if the evidence for marriage is used as a guide, parenting might be seen as a burden for authoritarian women. Less authoritarian women may expect substantial coparenting from their mates (especially if they select nonauthoritarian partners), which may give these mothers freedom to enjoy parenting more often and not be stuck all the time with the laborious or unpleasant aspects of parenting (e.g., changing soiled diapers). To investigate the relationship between authoritarianism and experiences with parenting, responses to the following open-ended question were content-coded in the midlife women sample: “We’re interested in your reflections on your life so far. What have you learned from your experiences raising children?” As described by Peterson and Duncan (2007), positive affect about parenting and self-growth through parenting were coded reliably. As shown in Table 4, authoritarianism was significantly and negatively correlated with positive affect about parenting and perceived self-growth through parenting.

It is surely an irony that the authoritarian women, who presumably are invested in fulfilling the social role of mother, report *less* positive affect and self-growth from parenting compared to their less authoritarian counterparts. Once again, research is necessary to show how authoritarianism might channel feelings about fatherhood. One might expect that men higher in authoritarianism would

find parenthood less comfortable and enjoyable than would men lower in authoritarianism. Although speculative, it seems likely that authoritarian husbands are uncomfortable with sharing child-care duties; this may explain why authoritarian mothers in general derive less satisfaction from parenting—the burdens are not shared equally. (Research has shown high correspondence between husbands and wives on authoritarianism scores; e.g., Altemeyer, 1996, p. 73, reported correlations in the .60 range.) On the other hand, some authoritarian men may relish the opportunity to act as a “law and order” presence in the household and enjoy the chance to socialize and channel children to follow the father’s particular interests and past accomplishments (e.g., perhaps in the domain of sports). Again, how well offspring meet and follow an authoritarian parent’s expectations may determine how much happiness a father (or mother) receives from parenting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Women and men high in authoritarianism live in a rigidly gendered world, one in which gender roles are narrowly defined and firmly enforced, attractiveness centers around traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity, conventional sexual mores are prescribed, and traditional life paths (e.g., concerning education and career) are embraced. These findings clearly support the relevance of authoritarianism for understanding not just the political attitudes and events for which it was originally theorized, but also the deeply personal terrain that comprises so much of life.

There was a remarkable consistency of findings across gender. Where differences did occur, these tended to be related to differences in gender roles. For example, the gender differences in the correlations concerning career, education, and marriage responsibilities were clearly predicted by a set of gender role expectations that the man should be the breadwinner and the woman should be the homemaker and caregiver. Thus, authoritarian women and men appear to be in agreement about this set of beliefs, even though this will lead them to different choices and decisions in their own lives. Interestingly, authoritarianism did not predict marital happiness for women but predicted unhappiness with parenting. This suggests that authoritarian women do not realize the benefits of happiness and self-growth from marriage and child rearing. Such a finding is worth

exploring further; what do authoritarian women do to improve their quality of life?

To provide an overview of a broad set of variables related to gender and sexuality, we focused on zero-order correlations. This has been a useful strategy in that it has clearly demonstrated the relevance and broad reach of authoritarianism for our understanding of intimate relationships. An important next step will be to construct and test a more complex causal model, one that incorporates many of the diverse variables discussed here. In previous research concerning gender and relationships, belief in traditional gender roles has been an important mediator for other relationships. For example, Bhanot and Senn (2007) found that belief in traditional gender roles fully mediated the relationship between acculturation and acceptance of violence against women in men of south Asian ancestry, and Whitley and Aegisdottir (2000) found that gender role beliefs partially mediated the relationship between authoritarianism and negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Another mediator that is likely to be of central importance is intolerance of ambiguity. We suspect that some of the relationships reported here are mediated by one or the other of these two variables.

Additional steps in a fuller program of research would include one or more of the following: (a) study sexual minority individuals; (b) fill in any missing pieces for one gender or the other; (c) study actual behaviors rather than memories, narratives, and attitudes; (d) do more studies of noncollege populations; (e) look cross-culturally, paying attention to how differences in gender role norms might affect patterns with authoritarianism; (f) do longitudinal studies; (g) do generational studies; (h) look at connections with the classic motive construct of *n* Affiliation-*n* Intimacy; (i) look at satisfaction and happiness; and (j) explore more fully what authoritarians think about sex. Some elaboration of these additional steps may be warranted. For example, in terms of (c), it would be especially interesting to document day-to-day behaviors of high- and low-scoring authoritarians on topics such as who cares for the children, washes the dishes, mows the lawn, and initiates sex. In terms of (h), authoritarians seem to follow gendered behavioral scripts. How might this influence the likelihood of establishing authentic connections and true intimacy with someone of the other gender? In terms of (i), are authoritarians happy when they follow rules about conventional behavior? Do those scoring high on authoritarianism need

public approbation for following rules, or is the internal knowledge that they followed rules sufficient to enhance levels of well-being and life satisfaction? How might authoritarianism interact with femininity to produce sacrificing women who are uninterested in seeking out self-interested benefits such as personal happiness? Finally, in terms of (j), among those who score high on authoritarianism, is there a connection between the repression of sexual impulses and their subsequent projection onto and condemnation of sexual minorities in society?

In addition to influencing the most personal of domains (e.g., how individuals structure their romantic partnerships), authoritarianism has broad social implications for understanding the interrelationships of gender roles and politics. In our research, we primarily explored how authoritarianism might impact people in the privacy of their romantic and sexual desires, life goals, and inner attitudes about gender. However, as shown in Table 1, the personal sometimes becomes political and legislated. Gay marriage is one clear example. Authoritarians should find gay marriage oxymoronic and oppose it because it mixes up and confounds a traditionally gendered institution rooted in female-male relationships. The way that authoritarianism impacts support for social policies concerning gender roles and appropriate behavior (e.g., laws concerning breastfeeding in public, whether or not to support working parents with parental leave policies, flextime work schedules, or on-site day care) as well as general attitudes about women and men remains an important area for future research and analysis.

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