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Authoritarianism and Gender Roles: Toward a Psychological Analysis of Hegemonic Relationships

Lauren Duncan
Harvey Mudd College, lduncan@smith.edu

Bill E. Peterson
University of New Hampshire, bpeterso@smith.edu

David G. Winter
The University Of Michigan

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Lauren E. Duncan
Harvey Mudd College

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The authors examined the relationship between authoritarianism and gender-role identity, attitudes, and behaviors. Using Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale, they found that high scores on authoritarianism were related to traditional gender-role identity and attitudes, rating political events concerning women as less important, and rating feminists and women as having relatively more power and influence in society. Authoritarianism was also related to the expression of anti-abortion views in essays and using arguments based on conventional morality, submission to authority, and punitiveness toward women seeking abortions. Finally, high scores on authoritarianism were related to participating in pro-life rallies and not participating in pro-choice and women's issues meetings. The authors offer speculations about the connections between social structures and individual psychological mechanisms.

Over the past four decades, psychologists have developed a rich understanding of authoritarianism as a constellation of personality, attitudinal, and behavioral characteristics (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Brown, 1965). Although the original F scale, designed to assess authoritarian tendencies, has been criticized on a variety of psychometric grounds (Altemeyer, 1981), authoritarianism has proven to be a robust construct for understanding people's behaviors and opinions on many significant contemporary issues (Peterson, Doty, & Winter, 1993; Stone, Lederer, & Christie, 1993). Altemeyer's (1988) recent Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale, which assesses conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression, has impressive reliability and validity creden-

tials that address many of the psychometric deficiencies of earlier measures of authoritarianism (Christie, 1991).

Researchers have identified threat as an important antecedent of authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950; Fromm, 1941; Lipset, 1963; Rokeach, 1960). On the individual level, Adorno et al. (1950) found that threatening home environments were associated with higher F-scale scores. In the laboratory, Sales and Friend (1973) found that experimentally induced threat of failure also increased scores on authoritarianism. At the national level, archival research has shown that during times of economic contraction, political upheaval, and social threat, national indicators of authoritarianism rise sharply (e.g., memberships in authoritarian churches), in contrast to measurements taken during economic expansion and political and social stability (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; McCann, 1995; McCann & Stewin, 1987; Sales, 1972, 1973).

In addition, studies have documented the predilection of high scorers on authoritarianism to organize their world in terms of power hierarchies—specifically, in terms of in-groups and out-groups. In-groups are viewed as a source of traditional authority, whereas out-groups challenge that authority, through specific actions

or simply by their existence. Prejudice toward and concern about the actions of perceived out-group members are characteristic of high scorers on authoritarianism, perhaps reflecting a high level of felt threat from out-groups. Research using a variety of authoritarianism measures has supported this notion, showing high scorers on authoritarianism to be prejudiced toward Blacks (Adorno et al., 1950; Lessing, Barbera, & Arnold, 1976), Jews (Adorno et al., 1950), homosexuals (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; MacDonald, 1974; Smith, 1971), the visibly handicapped (Noonan, Barry, & Davis, 1970), and people with AIDS (Cunningham, Dollinger, Satz, & Rotter, 1991; Peterson et al., 1993). In addition, recent cross-cultural studies have found that authoritarianism predicts similar attitudes toward out-groups among people in Russia and the former Soviet Union (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalankina, 1992, 1993).

On the individual level, then, the salience of power hierarchies to more authoritarian individuals may be evidenced by preoccupations with in-group versus out-group distinctions. Although this notion can be supported in the psychological literature, it may be useful to adopt a more sociological perspective and emphasize connections between authoritarian psychology operating on the individual level and the maintenance of social structures. That is, how might social structures be represented in individual psychology, and, more speculatively, how might attention to in-group versus out-group distinctions (a key aspect of authoritarian psychology) contribute to the maintenance of traditional power hierarchies?

Authoritarian Attitudes and Hegemonic Structures

From a social psychological perspective, social systems are made up of a complex web of relationships between groups organized in strict hierarchies, or *hegemonies*. In these systems, dominant groups retain the power to define, position, and assign a relative ranking in the hierarchy for their own and subordinate groups (Apfelbaum & Lubek, 1979; Tajfel, 1984). Theorists suggest that dominant groups retain their superior position over subordinate groups by creating criteria for membership in their group that are often difficult, if not impossible, for subordinate group members to attain (e.g., criteria based on race or gender) while maintaining the illusion that criteria are attainable (Apfelbaum & Lubek, 1979; Becker, 1963; Domhoff, 1983). These perspectives argue that in a successful hegemony, unequal power relations are normalized over time and are associated with tradition and conventional values. Thus differences used to mark the hegemonic line become *essentialized* in dominant and subordinate group members, and both may be unaware of power differentials based on these markings (Foucault, 1978;

Gitlin, 1980). Authoritarian support for some conventions, therefore, not only may support traditional values on the individual level but also may reflect existing hegemonies on a societal level.

There are many different kinds of hegemonies possible—for example, those based on race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Social scientists and feminist theorists have suggested that gender is one such hegemonic construct. MacKinnon (1987), for example, argued that characteristics often attributed to women and men (hegemonic markers) are used to justify a dominant-subordinate relationship. Thus, in the past, arguments about women's supposed greater emotionality were used to justify why they were unfit to run for public office. Not only has recent research challenged this claim, but studies have also argued that subordinate group membership constrains behavior in predictable ways, which can be used to explain why some women have been found to be more emotionally expressive and submissive than men (Brody & Hall, 1993; Miller, 1986). In addition, similar arguments have been used to explain why men and women have been found to differ in nonverbal behavior (Henley, 1977; Lott, 1987), how women have been segregated into low-paying, low-prestige jobs (Jacobs & Powell, 1985), and why reform of sexual harassment and rape laws was necessary (Brownmiller, 1975; MacKinnon, 1979).

Authoritarianism and Gender Roles

Conceptualizing gender as a hegemonic relationship allows for speculation about the representation of existing power structures in individual psychology. Specifically, by examining the three dimensions of authoritarianism (*conventionalism, submission,* and *aggression*) specified by Altemeyer (1981, 1988), we can hypothesize relationships between individual authoritarianism and societal gender roles. First, conventionalism is defined as "a high degree of adherence to the social conventions which are perceived to be endorsed by society and its established authorities" (Altemeyer, 1981, p. 148). These conventions might include support for traditional gender roles, which emphasize separate spheres of influence for women and men (women in the home, men outside the home). Second, authoritarian submission is defined as "a high degree of submission to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives" (Altemeyer, 1981, p. 148), which might include behavior in accordance with traditional gender-role expectations. Finally, authoritarian aggression is defined as "a general aggressiveness, directed at various persons, which is perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities" (Altemeyer, 1981, p. 148), which might include aggression toward women

and men attempting to transcend traditional gender-role boundaries.

Indeed, studies have shown that authoritarianism is related to support of traditional gender-role ideology (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1954; Walker, Rowe, & Quinsey, 1993), traditional family structures (Altemeyer, 1988; Levinson & Huffman, 1955), and conventional sexual mores (Ritts & Engbretson, 1991). In addition, authoritarianism is related to holding negative attitudes toward feminism (Sarup, 1976) and feminists (Haddock & Zanna, 1994), devaluing women's problem-solving skills (Fry, 1975), and holding misogynist attitudes (Centers, 1963).

Previous research, then, paints a consistent picture of high scorers on authoritarianism as supporters of traditional gender-role attitudes. In the current study, we show further the consistency of authoritarian beliefs by examining the relationship between authoritarianism and three different domains of expression for support of traditional gender roles: identity, attitudes, and behaviors. In the course of documenting these relationships, we discuss in a more speculative manner the social structural context of authoritarianism—that is, not only how social structures might be reflected in individual psychology but also how authoritarian psychology could be seen to support existing social structures such as gender hierarchies.

HYPOTHESES

Gender-Role Identity

We hypothesize that, compared with their lower scoring counterparts, women and men scoring high on authoritarianism should have identities based more on submission to conventional authority. That is, they should be unwilling to challenge traditional gender-role identities; thus authoritarianism should be negatively correlated with self-identifying as a feminist. Although feminism is difficult to define, most feminists would agree that feminism is concerned with the attainment of gender equity through equal power in the political, economic, and social spheres (Unger & Crawford, 1992). These goals seem inconsistent with traditionally defined gender roles.

Attitudes and Perceptions

General attitudes about gender. High scorers on authoritarianism should explicitly endorse statements that support traditional gender roles for women and men. They should expect women to be nurturant, submissive, and reliant on men, and they should expect men to be dominant, aggressive, and provide for women and children (Lewis, 1976). More speculatively, one might expect that women's and men's different relationship to

the gender hierarchy would engage different aspects of authoritarianism consistent with their position in the hierarchy. Specifically, dominant positions in the hierarchy might be aggressively defended against perceived incursions by subordinate group members, and subordinate positions might be maintained by adopting an attitude of submissiveness. Thus we hypothesize that traditional gender-role acceptance will be associated especially with the *aggression* component of authoritarianism for men and the *submission* component for women.

In addition, social and historical events central to women (i.e., having an impact on women's lives) should be rated by high scorers on authoritarianism as relatively unimportant. Therefore, people scoring high on authoritarianism should rate events such as the women's movement and recent rulings restricting women's right to choose abortion as less important or personally meaningful than low scorers on authoritarianism.

Attitudes about abortion. When asked to express an opinion about a controversial issue of concern to women such as abortion, high scorers on authoritarianism should express views consistent with conventional morality, submission to authority, and aggressiveness toward transgressors (Sturman & Doty, 1992). Specifically, individuals scoring high on authoritarianism should express restrictive views on abortion and use arguments based on traditional religious morality, submission to such authority, and punitiveness toward women seeking abortions.

Perceptions of gender and power. As discussed earlier, research suggests that authoritarian ideology is activated by threat. Recent changes in society have effectively increased educational, career, and political opportunities for women, moving many women into men's traditional sphere of influence. To the extent that these changes upset gender norms, they may be perceived as threatening to high scorers on authoritarianism. For this reason, we expect that relative to the rest of the sample, high scorers on authoritarianism will perceive women and feminists to have too much influence in contemporary society. They should tend to exaggerate the power of women in general, and especially of feminists, or those attempting to change their position in the power hierarchy.

Social and Political Behaviors

Although political protests in general may be seen as challenging convention, those scoring high on authoritarianism may participate in political activism that engages a sense of conventional morality and appears to be sanctioned by some religious and political leaders. In this study, we hypothesize that high scores on authoritarianism will be correlated with participation in pro-life

rallies. On the other hand, participation in organizations or events that work to increase the power of women in society, such as pro-choice rallies and women's issues groups, should be negatively correlated with RWA scores.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

The above hypotheses were tested using questionnaire data collected from 251 undergraduates (138 women, 113 men) at the University of Michigan during three separate testing sessions in 1991 and 1992. Students completed the following measures during a 40-min session, in groups of 10 to 20.

Right-wing Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism was measured using Altemeyer's (1988) RWA Scale. Because of time constraints and because of the scale's excellent internal reliability, we used only 12 of the scale's 30 items, half worded in the nonauthoritarian direction to eliminate positive response bias (Items 3, 4, 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, and 27 from Altemeyer, 1988, pp. 22-23). The 12 items were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) All items with content related to traditional gender roles or family structures were excluded so as to minimize overlap with dependent measures; (b) each of Altemeyer's (1981) components of conventionalism, submission, and aggression were represented with 4 items (2 worded in each direction); and (c) within these constraints, and using RWA item scores collected earlier from another sample (270 University of Michigan undergraduates), the 12 items (out of 30) with the highest item-total correlations were chosen. The following is an example of an RWA Scale item:

> It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds.

Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The 12-item RWA Scale exhibited adequate internal reliability (alpha = .84). Mean RWA scores were 39.12 (*SD* = 11.67) for the sample as a whole, 40.63 (*SD* = 11.61) for men, and 37.91 (*SD* = 11.62) for women.

Feminist Identity

Following Gurin, Miller, and Gurin's (1980) procedure, participants were asked to identify to which (if any) of the following 14 groups they belonged: students, Caucasians, Latinos, environmentalists, women, liberals, Asian Americans, feminists, African Americans, men,

sororities/fraternities, conservatives, protesters, Native Americans. Identification scores with feminists were used in this study; 18% of the sample (40 women and 5 men) identified themselves as feminists.

Attitudes About Gender Roles

Traditional gender-role acceptance. We used the Passive Acceptance subscale of Rickard's (1989, 1990) Feminist Identity Scale (FIS) to measure attitudes toward female and male gender roles. The scale consisted of four Likert-type scaled items (from 1 to 7) and measured endorsement of conventional gender roles and behaviors (e.g., "I like being a traditional female [male]"). Duncan and Stewart (1995) adapted the FIS for use with men. In the present study, alpha for the scale was .61, and there were no gender differences in mean scores.

Importance of political events involving women. Following Stewart and Healy's (1989) procedure, participants were asked to rate the importance of seven social and historical events on a scale from 1 (*Not at all personally meaningful*) to 3 (*Very personally meaningful*). Duncan and her colleagues have interpreted this as a measure of political awareness and related it to higher levels of political activism among activists (Duncan, 1993), college students (Duncan & Stewart, 1995), and, in midlife women, to taking advantage of opportunities created by the women's movement (Duncan & Agronick, 1995). In the current study, we asked participants to rate the personal meaning or importance of the women's movement and recent court rulings about abortion that challenge women's right of choice. Women were significantly more likely than men to rate these two events as important (women's *M* for both events = 4.92, *SD* = 1.02; men's *M* = 3.68, *SD* = 1.08), $t(249) = 9.40$, $p < .001$.

Perception of power of women and feminists. Participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (*Far too little*) to 5 (*Far too much*), how much power and influence each of the 14 groups used in the Gurin et al. (1980) identification measure described above have in society. For the current analyses, we used ratings of the power and influence of women and feminists. Men rated women and feminists as having more power in society than did women (power of women: men's *M* = 2.20, *SD* = .68, women's *M* = 1.88, *SD* = .67, $t[247] = 3.88$, $p < .001$; power of feminists: men's *M* = 3.14, *SD* = .94, women's *M* = 2.61, *SD* = 1.06, $t[244] = 4.16$, $p < .001$).

Attitudes About Abortion Rights

Participants were asked to write an essay in response to the following question:

> People have a range of opinions about women's right to choose abortion. Some people feel that all abortions in the United States should be illegal. Others feel that

abortions should be an available option only to women whose lives are in danger, and in cases where the fetus is fatally deformed, or where the woman became pregnant as a result of a reported case of rape or incest. Still others feel that the decision to have or not to have an abortion should be up to each woman and her partner.

What are your feelings about women's right to choose to have an abortion? Please express your feelings and opinions, in any way you like, in the space below.

Answers were scored for four themes. First, *overall position on abortion rights* was coded on a 5-point scale on which 5 = abortion should not be allowed under any circumstance; 4 = abortion should not be allowed except under extreme circumstances (e.g., rape, incest, or when the mother's life is endangered); 3 = no opinion or unclear; 2 = abortion should be allowed with some minor restrictions; and 1 = abortion should be allowed with no restrictions (see appendix for examples). Second, *conventional morality* was coded as follows: 3 = reliance on God or religious beliefs, 2 = no mention or unclear views, and 1 = mention of a nontraditional moral code (e.g., consideration of contextual factors like poverty, child abuse, or drug abuse). Third, *submission to authority* was coded as follows: 3 = decisions about abortion should be legislated by government, 2 = no mention or unclear views, and 1 = decisions about abortion should not be made by government. Fourth, *aggression or punitiveness toward women* was coded as follows: 3 = woman should have to pay for her carelessness or her sexuality, 2 = no mention, and 1 = concerns about the pregnant woman's emotional state or physical safety. Two coders achieved .90 agreement on the four codes. There were no gender differences in mean scores for overall position on abortion, submission to authority, and punitiveness; however, men were more likely than women to use arguments based on conventional morality (men's M = 2.05, women's M = 1.77), $t(167)$ = 3.66, $p < .001$.

Behavioral Indicators

Students were asked to indicate whether they had participated in any of a list of 12 campus and community events during the past year, including pro-choice and pro-life rallies and women's issues meetings (e.g., women's studies and feminist groups). Women and men participated equally infrequently in pro-life rallies (4% each), and women participated in pro-choice and women's issues meetings more frequently than men (21% of women vs. 6% of men participated in each of these events).

Statistical Procedures

Correlation coefficients were computed between participants' RWA scores and all other variables. Correlations will be reported for men and women together and separately.

TABLE 1: Authoritarianism, Gender-Role Identity and Attitudes, and Perceived Power of Women and Feminists

	Scale		Correlation With Right-Wing Authoritarianism		
	Mean	SD	Total (N = 251)	Men (n = 113)	Women (n = 138)
Feminist identity	0.18	0.38	-.29**	-.25*	-.32**
Traditional gender-role acceptance	11.80	3.22	.40**	.23*	.51**
Rated importance of political issues involving women	4.37	1.22	-.34**	-.24*	-.44**
Perception of the power of women	2.03	0.69	.33**	.31**	.33**
Perception of the power of feminists	2.85	1.04	.42**	.31**	.49**

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

RESULTS

Results indicate that scores on authoritarianism were significantly related to rejecting nontraditional gender-role identity for women and men. As hypothesized, both women and men who scored high on authoritarianism were less likely to identify themselves as feminists (see Table 1). A similar pattern of results was found for the relations between authoritarianism and the attitudinal measures; high scorers on authoritarianism were more likely than low scorers to endorse traditional gender roles, rate as less important political issues concerning women, and rate women and feminists as having more power and influence in society. Results for men and women separately paralleled the results for men and women together, although the magnitudes of the relationships for women were generally stronger.

Furthermore, we examined the correlations between traditional gender-role acceptance and the three components of the RWA Scale. As hypothesized, only the four summed aggression items correlated significantly with traditional gender-role acceptance for men (r = .37, $p < .001$), whereas there was no relationship at all for the four summed conventionalism and four summed submission items (rs = .09 and .12, respectively, *ns*). For women, on the other hand, all three RWA components were significantly correlated with traditional gender-role acceptance (conventionalism: r = .34, submission: r = .50, aggression: r = .46; $p < .001$).

Table 2 indicates results for the essays on abortion. RWA scores were positively related to open-ended expressions of anti-abortion views and to using arguments based on conventional morality, submission to authority, and punitiveness.

TABLE 2: Authoritarianism and Attitudes About Abortion Rights

	Scale		Correlation With Right-Wing Authoritarianism		
	Mean	SD	Total (N = 175)	Men (n = 82)	Women (n = 93)
Anti-abortion position	1.97	1.31	.45**	.47**	.43**
Conventional morality	1.90	0.52	.25**	.20	.23*
Submission to authority	1.51	0.72	.46**	.50**	.42**
Aggression or punitiveness toward women	1.87	0.47	.24*	.27*	.22*

NOTE: Sample size is slightly less for these correlations because the abortion rights essay was added later in the study.
*p < .05. **p < .001.

TABLE 3: Authoritarianism and Social and Political Behaviors

	Correlation With Right-Wing Authoritarianism			
	Percentage Participating	Total (N = 251)	Men (n = 113)	Women (n = 138)
Pro-life rally	4	.17*	.21*	.13
Pro-choice rally	14	−.30**	−.19*	−.36**
Women's issues meeting	14	−.27**	−.04	−.35**

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

Table 3 shows the results for the behavioral indicators of political activity. Although participation in pro-life rallies was relatively rare, it showed a significant positive correlation with authoritarianism scores for men, and for men and women combined. Participation in pro-choice rallies was negatively related to scores on authoritarianism for women and men, whereas participation in women's issues meetings was negatively correlated with RWA scores for women only.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that people scoring high on authoritarianism are inclined to support the maintenance of traditional gender roles. At the most personal level, high scorers on authoritarianism demonstrated a rejection of nontraditional gender-role identity, as shown by the negative relationship between RWA scores and identification as a feminist.

Consistent with past findings, high scorers on authoritarianism were also more likely than low scorers to endorse traditional gender-role attitudes about men and women. Furthermore, the aggression component of authoritarianism, and not conventionalism or submission, was related to traditional gender-role acceptance for men, whereas all three components were related to traditional gender-role acceptance for women. This suggests that different psychological processes may be im-

portant for maintaining hegemonic lines in dominant and subordinate group members. Notions regarding identification with the aggressor (e.g., Bettelheim, 1958; Freud, 1948) may provide one theoretical avenue to guide research on this topic.

Compared with low scorers, high scorers on authoritarianism also rated as less important political issues and events concerning women and indicated their belief that women and feminists have more power and influence in society. Consistent with this, high scorers on authoritarianism tended not to participate in activism around issues of concern to women, but when they did, it was in support of positions accordant with attitudes expressed in the essay question (i.e., pro-life). The correlations between authoritarianism and identity, attitudes, and behaviors converge to suggest that high scorers on authoritarianism are ideologically coherent in their support for at least one type of hegemonic structure—traditionally gendered relationships.

We further studied the connections between individual psychology and social structure by focusing on a specific instance in which these linkages might be highlighted. We considered the question of abortion and found that high scorers on authoritarianism did not support the legal right for people to choose abortion and in essay responses tended to use arguments based on conventional morality, punitiveness, and submission to authority. How might these attitudes about abortion reflect support for traditional gender roles? One answer comes from empirical studies of activists on both sides of the abortion debate.

Ginsburg (1989), in her study of activists in Fargo, North Dakota, argued that the abortion debate acts as a "symbolic focus for mutually exclusive understandings" (p. 3) of gender roles and, as such, focuses or crystallizes deeply held beliefs about gender roles that often are not conscious or articulated. In interviews with activists on both sides of the issue, Ginsburg found that pro-life activists construed abortion as a symptom of widespread decaying moral values, which included the devaluation of women's traditional purview of nurturance and motherhood (Luker, 1984). The expression of a pro-life position, then, not only represents a desire to protect the sanctity of life but might also reflect desires to maintain traditional spheres of influence for women and men. Ginsburg found that the pro-choice position, on the other hand, was typically argued from the standpoint of personal freedom and concern for the safety of women; lack of choice was construed as a symbol of women's subordinate position in society. According to Ginsburg's argument, pro-choice supporters use the abortion issue as a symbolic focus for challenges to normative gender roles, whereas pro-life advocates use the same issue as a

symbolic focus for the preservation of normative gender roles.

Given this argument, it may be useful to examine authoritarianism as one psychological construct out of many that contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. There may be other personality variables that function in a similar manner—for example, aspects of midlife generativity, low scores on the Openness factor of the Big Five, and foreclosed identity development. People possessing these characteristics may share with high scorers on authoritarianism a focus on maintaining and preserving societal traditions. Establishing connections and distinctions between these variables would advance psychology's understanding of the conditions under which people embrace or resist change in societal mores and values.

Related to this, future research could also examine the way in which men and women high on authoritarianism differently adhere to traditional gender roles. We found that the pattern of correlates for men paralleled the pattern for women, although the magnitude of the results, in general, was stronger for women. In addition, for women, the conventionalism, submission, and aggression items of the RWA Scale were related to endorsement of traditional gender roles, whereas for men, only the aggression items were implicated. These results suggest that women have more invested (personally and ideologically) in maintaining or changing existing gender roles. If this is true, then we might expect that changing gender norms represent a larger threat to the identities of authoritarian women than they do for authoritarian men.

With regard to other social issues, might higher personal investments in the outcome of an issue affect the strength, rigidity, and quality of arguments used to support that position? For example, how would young-adult male authoritarians argue about gays in the military, and how would their arguments differ from those of female authoritarians? Further research is needed to answer these questions.

Finally, our study reaffirms the relevance of authoritarianism as an important psychological construct decades after the initial publication of research on the topic (Adorno et al., 1950). As oppressed groups work to increase their power in society, research on authoritarianism may contribute to an understanding of backlash, which can be an especially virulent reaction to these gains. More generally, this study indicates the importance of psychological factors in the maintenance of power hierarchies, which are the framework of oppressive systems, and may lead to a broader understanding of why social change is so slow to happen.

APPENDIX
Examples of Open-Ended Answers
to Abortion Essay Question

Overall position on abortion rights

Coded as 5: Abortion should not be allowed under any circumstance.

Example: "I feel that all life is sacred and that the life of a fetus is valuable and should not be sacrificed for any reason."

Coded as 1: Abortion should be allowed with no restrictions.

Example: "I think women should definitely be given the right to choose to have an abortion—no matter what the reason."

Conventional morality

Coded as 3: Mention of belief in a traditional moral code such as one based on God or religious beliefs.

Example: "People have no right to take away lives. Only God has the power to do so."

Coded as 1: Mention of a nontraditional moral code (e.g., one that considers contextual factors such as poverty, child abuse, drug abuse).

Example: "The upper class will always have enough money to obtain a sanitary, if illegal, abortion. My fears are that lower class women who persist in getting abortions after it is illegal will not have the money to pay for a 'good' abortion and may end up dying."

Submission to authority

Coded as 3: Decisions about abortion should be legislated by government; or restrictive laws are justifiable or good.

Example: "I feel that abortion should not be legalized."

Coded as 1: Individual should make choice; decisions about abortion should not be legislated by government.

Example: "I feel the decision . . . falls outside the jurisdiction of the state or any external group."

Aggression or punitiveness toward women

Coded as 3: Woman should have to pay for her carelessness or sexuality; blaming the woman.

Example: "I have *always* felt that pregnancy can be prevented and abortion has only given people an excuse to be careless about birth control. I firmly believe that [restrictive laws] will begin to instill some responsibility in people concerning careless sexual activity. It's the woman's fault not the unborn baby's!!"

Coded as 1: Concerns about the pregnant woman's emotional state or physical safety.

Example: "An unwanted pregnancy can be very harmful to both the mother and the baby if carried through."

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