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Authoritarianism and Attitudes Toward Contemporary Social Issues in the 1990s

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Three studies were conducted to examine the relevance of authoritarianism to contemporary social attitudes, with special emphasis on AIDS, drug use, and the environment. In Studies 1 and 2, students scoring higher on authoritarianism (measured by Byrne's balanced F scale and Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale, respectively) were more likely to endorse harsh, punitive sentiments and solutions to the problems of AIDS and drugs and less likely to endorse more egalitarian ones. These two issues are presumed to represent a threat to the "American way of life" and provide clear out-groups for authoritarian aggression. Regarding the environment, authoritarians express hostility toward the environmental movement, rather than toward polluters. In Study 3, authoritarianism was further related to attitudes on abortion, child abuse, homelessness, the space program, the trade deficit, political changes in the Soviet Union, and the purposes of colleges and universities. These results show that the concept of authoritarianism is applicable to attitudes on many important issues of the 1990s.

T he concept of authoritarianism and the widely used California F scale (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) were powerful analytic tools for understanding the relationship between personality and opinions on many significant social issues of the postwar era. The well-known finding of the Berkeley group was that authoritarians were prejudiced toward Jews, Blacks, and other minority groups (see Forbes, 1985, chap. 3, for a recent review; but see also Forbes, chap. 6, and Altemeyer, 1981, p. 33, for a caution). Other key features of the original authoritarian syndrome included intolerance for ambiguity, as well as the strong moralistic aggression toward violators of sexual mores and other conventional values. Furthermore, authoritarians believed and supported the policies of powerful authorities, as in the case of United States involvement in the Vietnam War (Izzett, 1971), and were also inclined to emphasize obedience, compulsion, and punishment (Elms & Milgram, 1966; Epstein, 1966). (See also the reviews of the authoritarianism literature by Brown, 1965, chap. 10; Cherry & Byrne, 1977; and Dillehay, 1978.)

Recent work by Altemeyer (1988) suggests that the key components of authoritarianism involve *authoritarian aggression, submission,* and *conventionality.* His Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale is a unidimensional measure of these three covarying attitudinal clusters. In contrast to the psychoanalytic approach adopted by the original Berkeley researchers, Altemeyer explains the formation of individual authoritarianism through principles of social learning. This different theoretical explanation serves as a line of debate between Altemeyer and those who have constructed F-scale measures based on more traditional interpretations of the Adorno et al. (1950) theory (Winter, 1990). As an example, Altemeyer believes that authoritarian aggression is not a result of repressed hostility but is, rather, a function of self-righteousness and teaching that "the world is a danger-

ous place" (Altemeyer, 1988, p. 146). Yet, despite these differences of theory, there is substantial empirical convergence among the correlates from both lines of research. For example, Doty, Peterson, and Winter (1991) have also implicated the role of threat and the perception of a dangerous world in the formation of authoritarian beliefs and behaviors. Their research, springing from the work of Fromm (1941) and Sales (1973), demonstrated increases in societal indicators of many of the main components of the original authoritarian syndrome during times of economic and political threat.[1]

The present study was designed to extend the construct validity of authoritarianism as an organizing dimension for attitudes about contemporary social issues that have recently dominated public consciousness and are likely to be critical for the 1990s and beyond. We focused on issues that pose a public threat because Altemeyer's (1988) work and our own (Doty et al., 1991) involve the role of perceived and actual threat in the activation of authoritarian ideology. The issues of AIDS, drug use, and the environment are examined in detail in Studies 1 and 2; Study 3 confirms these and also explores attitudes toward other contemporary problems. Thus we explore how authoritarian ideology is manifested in the current social climate of the United States, from where our sample is drawn. We suspect, however, that our findings would replicate in any country where AIDS, drugs, and the environment are major domestic issues.

In many respects, AIDS is a prototypic issue for arousing latent authoritarian sentiments, because in the popular mind it involves many sources of threat: unconventional sexual behavior, almost certain death, and uncertainty about who might have the disease (owing to the long incubation period). Further, AIDS arouses moralism: A recent Gallup poll (*The Gallup Report*, 1988, p. 37) reported that 43% of a United States sample agreed with the statement "I sometimes think that AIDS is a punishment for the decline in moral standards." Recent work by Witt (1989) provided evidence that punitiveness toward people with AIDS is based on the perception of AIDS victims as an out-group—a classic aspect of the authoritarian syndrome—rather than a lack of knowledge about AIDS.

Widespread drug use, though scarcely unique to the 1990s, has now grown beyond a segmented subculture of illegal behavior to emerge as a threat to the entire social fabric, domestic and international. The figure of the "crack dealer" has become a prototypic image of menace that should mobilize authoritarian desires to punish. Similarly, drug users should be targets of authoritarian aggression if they are perceived to bring about a decline in moral standards.

Concerns about environmental threat are slightly different. With the drought, heat, and "greenhouse effect" warnings of the summer of 1988, along with specific disasters at Chernobyl, Bhopal, Prince William Sound, and the Persian Gulf (among others), the environment has clearly emerged as a full-fledged potential threat in popular consciousness. So far, however, environmental issues do not seem to engage conventional morality, because there are few sharp, personalized images of threat or evil to punish. Few unambiguous solutions have been offered by even the most concerned environmentalists.

Of course, these are not the only social problems of the 1990s. Racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and oppression continue to plague most societies. When *The Authoritarian Personality* appeared, homelessness, domestic violence, child abuse, access to medical treatment, and care of the aging were largely the concern of specialists; each is now a major topic on the public agenda. Our present emphasis on AIDS, drugs, and the environment does not mean that these other problems are less important. Rather, we selected from this larger list two issues that, because they involved personalized threats, were plausibly related to authoritarianism (AIDS and drugs) and one where the threat, being less personalized, was not so clear (the environment). In Study 3 we present preliminary data about some of these other issues.

In summary, our research is designed to examine the relevance of authoritarianism to threatening contemporary social issues (especially, as elaborated later, the way in which social issues are discussed by political and media figures). In the process, we also explore the construct validity of a new measure of authoritarianism, Altemeyer's (1988) RWA Scale, in relation to a more traditional F-scale measure. It seems likely that authoritarian aggression, submission, and conventionality will be linked to attitudes toward people with AIDS, drug users, and pushers. Therefore, we hypothesize that high RWA scorers (as well as high F-scale scorers) will hold moralistic and punitive attitudes about AIDS and drug abuse, because these two issues involve conventional morality, a severe and dangerous threat, and (in the minds of many) an identifiable out-group that can be aggressed against. Although environmental issues are also threatening, they lack these characteristics (at least at the present time), and so we would not necessarily expect authoritarians to hold moralistic and punitive environmental attitudes.

STUDY 1

Method

Subjects and procedure. Subjects were 62 students (36 women and 26 men) in an upper-level undergraduate

psychology course at the University of Michigan enrolled during the winter term, 1989. They were told that the first author (not associated with the course) was interested in people's attitudes about current social issues and would like their help in filling out a questionnaire. They were further informed that participation in the study was voluntary, that they could leave at any time, and that later in the term the results of the study would be discussed. At this point, the professor of the course and the teaching assistant left the room while the first author administered the questionnaire.

Measures. Authoritarianism was measured by Byrne's balanced 22-item F scale (Cherry & Byrne, 1977, pp. 118-119), which is an adaptation of the original California F scale with reversed items to control for acquiescence.[2] (The RWA Scale was used in Studies 2 and 3.) Students were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale whether they personally agreed or disagreed with each of the 22 items (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). According to the original Cherry and Byrne instructions, statements left blank are to be scored as 4; however, we assigned the subject's mean value on all other items as a more sensitive measure of that subject's average tendency to agree. An example of an item keyed in the authoritarian direction is "What the youth needs most is strict discipline, rugged determination and the will to work and fight for family and country." An item keyed in the nonauthoritarian direction is "The prisoners in our corrective institutions, regardless of the nature of their crimes, should be humanely treated."

The next two pages of the questionnaire survey presented 13 attitudinal statements about social issues—5 involving AIDS, 4 about drug abuse, and 4 about environmental protection. Subjects responded on a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). Five of these statements advocated harsh, punitive sentiments or actions as solutions for AIDS and drug abuse, and 4 endorsed more egalitarian policies or sentiments for understanding and solving these issues. With the environmental issues, there were no clear out-groups to direct aggression against, and so they were not classified as authoritarian or egalitarian. These 13 items and their introductory instructions are reproduced in the Appendix, which also includes additional statements used in Studies 2 and 3.

Some items were taken from speeches by public figures, some were taken from newspaper articles, and others were constructed especially for this study. For example, Items 8 (quarantine everyone with AIDS) and 23 (keep AIDS kids out of school) were paraphrased from a newspaper account about a family with AIDS-infected children that was forced to move. Item 20 was based on a newspaper statement attributed to a govern-

ment official. Items 9 (Rambo-like crusade) and 3 (fines not enough—go to jail) were adapted from 1988 speeches announcing presidential candidacy by Delaware governor Pierre duPont and former Arizona governor Bruce Babbitt, respectively. Complete items are given in the appendix (Items 1-25 are as used in the second study); abbreviated items are used in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Two points about these social issues items should be emphasized. First, our intent was not to construct separate attitude scales for AIDS, drugs, and the environment (though we do routinely report internal reliabilities for each set of social issues items). Rather, our goal was to cull from real life the kinds of statements people freely make and read in the media. We wanted to study the relationships between authoritarianism and the naturalistic universe of discourse made by political and organizational leaders, as well as ordinary people. Consequently, a few of our real-world social issues statements blend authoritarian style and egalitarian content. For example, Item 3, "Fines aren't enough—it's time we told every polluter, 'If you poison our water, you will go to jail and your money will be spent to clean up the mess,' " is authoritarian in style (advocating tough, punitive actions) but arguably nonauthoritarian, perhaps even egalitarian, in content (preserving the environment). Such blending of disparate style and content, awkward as it may be for psychological analysis, is in this case a faithful representation of the way one prominent U.S. leader—a presidential candidate—framed his opinions about the issue in an important real-world setting. (Another example is the recent debate at many colleges and universities concerning whether students should be required to take courses on ethnic and racial diversity. Whereas the *content*, or goal, of such a plan—to reduce ethnic and racial tensions by increasing awareness about other groups of people—is certainly nonauthoritarian, the idea of requiring students to take such a course may be authoritarian in *style*. Awkward as this may be for attitude analysis, this is the way the issue has been framed in everyday discourse.) Rather than separating authoritarian style and content in this study, then, we chose to focus on attitudes in their naturalistic phrasing.

Second, the fact that we presented participants with the social issues immediately after the F scale deserves some comment. A potential pitfall of this research design may be that the measures will somehow have artifactually high intercorrelations because of subjects' attempts to appear consistent in their responses across instruments. As will be seen below, however, our results are so consistent with past research on authoritarianism that this does not seem to be a major problem. Moreover, administering the two instruments at the same time eliminates

TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics for Social Issues Items and Correlations With Byrne's Balanced F Scale, Study 1

Social Issues Item	M	SD	Correlation With Authoritarianism (N = 62)
AIDS: presumed "authoritarian" items			
8. Quarantine everyone with AIDS	1.68	0.86	.43***
20. AIDS plague passed to decent people	1.71	0.95	.32**
23. Keep AIDS kids out of school	1.55	0.78	.28*
AIDS: presumed "egalitarian" items			
12. AIDS reveals lack of compassion	4.42	0.93	-.23
19. AIDS victims have human feelings	5.47	0.62	-.34**
Drugs: presumed "authoritarian" items			
9. Rambo-like crusade	3.36	1.65	.48***
13. Comprehensive drug testing	2.11	1.18	.31*
Drugs: presumed "egalitarian" items			
6 Drug education best way	4.39	1.30	-.14
11. Drugs are escape—improve lives	3.68	1.39	-.33**
Environment			
3. Fines not enough—go to jail	4.45	1.35	.04
4. For environment, bypass due process	4.87	0.89	-.10
14. Educate, give incentives on environment	5.00	1.13	.03
15. Live in harmony with nature	4.29	1.34	-.08

NOTE: Scale values ranged from 1, *strongly disagree,* to 6, *strongly agree.* Social issues statements are given in full in the Appendix. Two-tailed tests of significance were computed. Because of missing data, the *N* for any given correlation may vary downward.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

error variance due to attitude change, mood shifts, or the influence of national events that might intervene between two separate test administrations.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The mean score for the F scale was 67.07, with a standard deviation of 13.29 and a range from 36 to 102. There were no significant sex differences in overall scores (male $M = 66.35$, female $M = 67.58$). Alpha for the scale was .71. Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the 13 social issues statements, as well their correlations with Byrne's F scale. Although there were a few sex differences in the magnitude of correlations, as well as in the mean scores on the social issues items, none of these differences was cross-validated in Studies 2 and 3.

Correlations between the F scale and social issues statements. Table 1 presents the correlations between subjects' scores on the F scale and their responses to the 13 statements. All correlations between authoritarianism and responses to the AIDS items were significant, as predicted, except for the "AIDS reveals lack of compas-

sion" item, which was nearly significant ($p < .10$). Although the sample as a whole responded in a relatively nonauthoritarian direction, high scorers on the F scale were more likely to agree with the harsh, punitive statements and were less likely to endorse the egalitarian sentiments concerning AIDS. (Alpha was .71 for the five AIDS items.)

Results for the drug items were a little less straightforward. As Table 1 reveals, high scorers on the F scale were likely to endorse the two authoritarian drug items: "We really need to have comprehensive drug testing of all teenagers in high schools" and "We need a Rambo-like crusade against drug smugglers and pushers." Only one of the two egalitarian drug items showed the expected significant negative correlation with the F scale, however. (Alpha was .16 for the four drug items.)

Correlations between subjects' F-scale scores and their responses to the four environmental items were all insignificant. As a group, the environmental items are quite heterogeneous, with a mean interitem correlation of .00.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 suggest that the authoritarian personality concept has explanatory power for understanding attitudes toward some contemporary problems involving threat. People scoring higher on Byrne's scale support harsh, punitive sentiments and solutions and reject more egalitarian sentiments and solutions about AIDS and drug abuse. As a reaction to these threats, they appear to view people with AIDS and drug smugglers and abusers as out-groups deserving of punishment. These results make sense in terms of previous research and theory. For example, threat has long been shown to increase authoritarian sentiments (Doty et al., 1991; Sales & Friend, 1973), and Adorno et al. (1950) originally developed the concept of the authoritarian personality to explain prejudice and the persecution of out-groups.

In the light of this previous research and theory, the generally insignificant results of Study 1 regarding the environment are not surprising. Environmental problems are only beginning to be discussed by government officials at national and state levels. Consequently, uncertainty may lead authoritarians to ignore the threat while their submissiveness and conventionality lead them to wait for respected "authorities" to articulate the "correct" attitude. And even if environmental problems pose a potentially grave threat for human survival, there is at present no clear out-group against which to direct authoritarian sentiment, because the very corporations that pollute the environment are at the same time also perceived as a fundamental part of modern industrial society.

Further, the F scale may not be distinguishing people's attitudes toward the environment because many low scorers may support tough-minded tactics for environmental defense. Proenvironmental groups such as Greenpeace or Earth First! have taken aggressive actions that may or may or not seem "authoritarian" but are surely challenges to established authorities. Thus, in the popular mind, many environmental activists place themselves in opposition to "establishment" businesses. Perhaps authoritarians would view the activities of such environmentalists as a greater threat to a conventional way of life than the actual damage being done to the natural world. If this interpretation is correct, those scoring higher on measures of authoritarianism may view environmental activists, not polluters, as an outgroup that needs to be punished.

Study 2 was designed to test all these alternative explanations of the relationship between authoritarianism and attitudes toward the environment, as well as replicate the results of Study 1.

STUDY 2

Method

Subjects and procedure. Subjects were 278 students (91 males and 187 females) in two undergraduate psychology courses at the University of Michigan enrolled during the fall term, 1989. The procedure for asking students to fill out the questionnaire was identical to that used for Study 1. Once again a lecture given later in the semester summarized the class results.

Measures. For this second study we used Altemeyer's (1981, 1988) 30-item balanced Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale, a more recent measure with excellent psychometric credentials.[3] (Items are given in Altemeyer, 1988, pp. 22-23, as amended for the "1986 version."). Again, we assigned a subject's mean score on all other items in cases where an item was left blank. Subjects answered on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 4 = *neutral,* 7 = *strongly agree*). The final part of the questionnaire presented 25 attitude statements, including the 13 used in Study 1 and 12 new items (reproduced in the Appendix). Once again subjects answered all attitude items on a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*).

To clarify the results concerning the environment, 9 of these 12 new questions tapped various environmental attitudes. Five items (numbers 7, 10, 21, 24, and 25) suggested further possible out-groups against whom authoritarians could direct aggression: environmentalists whose actions take jobs away from the American public, "overly sentimental" people concerned about "useless" species of plants and animals, and once again, corpora-

tions responsible for environmental pollution. (Items 24 and 25 were added only after the first group in Study 2 was tested, and so the *N* is 154 for these two items.)

Item #22 ("We don't know enough") attempts to test the hypothesis that because authoritarians feel uncertain about threats to the environment, they will not direct aggression against targets that are a fundamental part of American economy (conventionalism). Item 5 ("nuclear waste disposal") attempts to determine whether authoritarians are not worried about the environment because they trust "scientists" as authorities who are in charge and will solve any future problems (authoritarian submission). The final two new items were concerned with power and status aspects of the environment: that humans have a right to exploit the environment (#2) and that environmental movements will "reduce this country to a second-rate power" (#16). Although these two items do not fit easily under the rubric of authoritarian aggression, submission, or conventionalism, they are consistent with the original Berkeley theorizing about authoritarianism, and they do capture important sentiments used by people to justify exploitation of the environment.

Not all the drug items of Study 1 supported our initial hypotheses, and so we added three new drug items in Study 2. Two of these items broadened the range of egalitarian, liberal beliefs covered (Items 1 and 17); the third (Item 18) was included to tap authoritarians' presumed intolerance for ambiguity as well as their presumed belief that any illegal drug use at all is morally objectionable.

Results

Descriptive statistics. The mean score for the RWA Scale was 99.51, with a standard deviation of 25.29 and a range of 30 to 174. There was no sex difference (male mean = 99.74, female mean = 99.39). With an alpha of .92, the internal reliability of the RWA Scale compares quite favorably with the figures reported by Altemeyer (1988). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the 25 social issues statements.

Correlations between the RWA Scale and social issues statements. Table 2 also presents the correlations between subjects' scores on the RWA Scale and their responses to each of the 25 social issues items. All correlations between authoritarianism and responses to the AIDS items were significant in the predicted direction. As in Study 1, those scoring higher on the RWA Scale endorsed harsh, punitive sentiments and solutions for the threat of AIDS and did not endorse the more egalitarian items. Once again, the five AIDS items showed a moderately high alpha of .82.

The drug items followed the same pattern. The items used in the previous study were also related to the RWA

TABLE 2:   Descriptive Statistics for Social Issues Items and Correlations With the RWA Scale, Study 2

Social Issues Item	M	SD	Correlation With RWA Measure of Authoritarianism (N = 257)
AIDS: presumed "authoritarian" items			
8. Quarantine everyone with AIDS	2.27	1.17	.46***
20. AIDS plague passed to decent people	1.92	1.06	.52***
23. Keep AIDS kids out of school	1.77	0.92	.34***
AIDS: presumed "egalitarian" items			
12. AIDS reveals lack of compassion	4.28	1.22	-.28***
19. AIDS victims have human feelings	5.24	0.83	-.43***
Drugs: presumed "authoritarian" items			
9. Rambo-like crusade	3.20	1.45	.37***
13. Comprehensive drug testing	2.76	1.31	.48***
18. Stop marijuana as well as crack	3.98	1.69	.42***
Drugs: presumed "egalitarian" items			
1. Make drugs legal	2.83	1.44	-.30***
6. Drug education best way	4.50	1.11	-.19**
11. Drugs are escape—improve lives	3.92	1.28	-.29***
17. Spend money on treatment	4.23	1.09	-.32***
Environment			
2. Dominion over nature	1.83	0.92	.21***
3. Fines not enough—go to jail	4.61	1.11	-.01
4. For environment, bypass due process	4.43	1.19	.11
5. Need energy, build nuclear plants	2.43	1.10	.15*
7. Environmental issues exaggerated by special interest groups	2.25	1.03	.32***
10. Alaska oil spill, punish those responsible	4.07	1.18	-.01
14. Educate, give incentives on environment	5.03	0.76	-.10
15. Live in harmony with nature	4.55	0.99	-.01
16. Environmental movement reduce country to second-rate power	2.29	0.88	.32***
21. Environment blown out of proportion by sentimental people	2.02	0.99	.33***
22. Don't know enough to blame companies	2.34	1.08	.31***
24. When a company deliberately pollutes, should be harshly punished	5.41	0.84	-.02
25. Punish "environmentalists"	2.23	1.11	.32**

NOTE: Two-tailed tests of significance were computed. Because of missing data, the N for any given correlation may vary downward. Items 24 and 25 were added in the middle of Study 2, and so N = 154 for these correlations.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

scale in the predicted directions, as were the three new items. The weakest correlation was again the "drug education is the best way" item; however, the results for this statement are in the expected (negative) direction. The addition of three more drug items in this study increased the alpha to .61.

Again, the results for the environment items were complicated. As in Study 1, none of the original four items was related to the RWA Scale. However, seven of the nine new environment items did show significant relationships, in directions consistent with hypotheses put forward in the discussion of Study 1. High scorers on the RWA Scale were more likely to support the notion that environmental problems are "blown out of proportion by sentimental people" ($r = .33$, $p < .001$), that environmental problems are "exaggerated by special interest groups" ($r = .32$, $p < .001$), that "we have to punish some of the so-called 'environmentalists' " to save the economy ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), and that "the environmental movement will reduce this country to a second-rate power" ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, they believed that we "don't know enough about environmental problems to blame people or companies" ($r = .31$, $p < .001$) and that "human beings were given dominion over nature" ($r = .21$, $p < .001$). Finally, people scoring higher on the RWA Scale were in favor of continuing to build nuclear power plants because "our scientific authorities will surely figure out a safe way to get rid of nuclear waste" ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Neither of the remaining two new environment items reached significance. Alpha for the 11 environment items given to the entire Study 2 sample was .46.

Discussion

AIDS and drugs. Using two different measures, we have demonstrated relationships between people's authoritarianism and their attitudes toward AIDS and drug use. The results for AIDS are straightforward: those scoring higher on the RWA and F scales accept (are less likely to reject) harsh, punitive sentiments and solutions for dealing with the disease and reject (are less likely to support) more egalitarian statements.

Concerning drugs, high scorers on the RWA and F scales appear to have "authoritarian" attitudes toward both drug users and smugglers or dealers. We hypothesize that, because of authoritarian aggression and submission to "powerful authorities," they are more likely to endorse both "Rambo-like crusades" against drug smugglers and comprehensive drug testing, respectively. Furthermore, their condemnation of all illegal drugs as equally reprehensible—reflecting, perhaps, an intolerance of ambiguity or complexity—leads them to make few distinctions between different categories of drugs: "Occasional marijuana use" is as bad as "crack addiction."

The more "egalitarian" or liberal statements, in contrast, are rejected by the high scorers. They are less likely to want to spend money on treatment, preferring instead

the aggressive destruction of drug crops. They do not believe the drug problem can be solved by improving people's lives or spending money on drug education. Making drugs legal is also distasteful.

The environment clarified. In Study 2, several new statements were presented to subjects in an attempt to clear up questions about the environment that had arisen in Study 1. First, high scorers on the RWA Scale appear to feel uncertainty over how to solve environmental problems (Item 22). Even experts are unclear about the extent, causes, and consequences of environmental issues like the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer; is it any wonder, then, that authoritarians are unwilling to criticize conventional, established corporations? High RWA scorers are, however, concerned about "tender-minded" sentimentalists and environmentalists (Item 21) whose preservation efforts they perceive as threatening this nation's status as a first-rate power (Item 16). As a further manifestation of their power concerns, those scoring higher on the RWA Scale also perceived the environment as an exploitable commodity (Item 2).

The last two statements, added to the questionnaire only for the final group of subjects in Study 2, help to clarify, for the final time, the differences between high and low scorers on attitudes toward the environment. High scorers are concerned about power and status. They are *not* more likely to punish "establishment" corporations (Item 24), even when their environmentally destructive behavior is clear and deliberate (see also Item 10, on the Alaska oil spill). Rather, their authoritarian aggression is likely to be mobilized against environmentalists, who were described as "disrupt[ing] legitimate businesses" (Item 25). In sum, high scorers on the RWA Scale were no more likely than low scorers to respond aggressively toward those who do clear and critical damage to the biosphere. Instead, they seem to target environmentalists as a clear ("left-wing"?) outgroup against whom to direct aggression.

STUDY 3

Study 3 further confirms these findings and also presents data concerning a variety of other social issues: abortion rights, child abuse, homelessness, the space program, the trade deficit, political changes in the Soviet Union, the quality of public education, and diversity in the university.

Method

Subjects were 170 students (95 women and 75 men) from two undergraduate courses at the University of Michigan enrolled during the fall 1990 term. Procedures were the same as used in Studies 1 and 2.

TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations With the RWA Scale, Study 3

Social Issues Item	M	SD	Correlation With RWA Measure of Authoritarianism (N = 170)
26. Abortion a legitimate institutional concern	3.78	1.51	.38***
27. Antiabortion violence unjustifed	5.14	1.07	-.21**
28. Parents discipline children	2.04	1.19	.29***
29. Prevent child abuse	5.04	0.81	-.09
30. Homeless are lazy	2.59	1.29	.56***
31. Homeless are unlucky	4.13	1.05	-.38**
32. Space shows we lead in technology	3.22	1.27	.19*
33. Cut back on space, take care of needy	3.96	1.42	-.20**
34. Crack down on Japan's business practices	3.98	1.28	.31***
35. Blame selves for trade deficit	4.41	1.08	.04
36. Return to a core curriculum	2.66	1.20	.21**
37. University should have diversity	5.37	0.61	-.33***
38. Vigilant about changes in USSR	2.35	0.83	.27***
39. Welcome changes in USSR	4.97	0.88	-.02
40. Strong leaders to shape up schools	3.33	1.21	.03
41. Problems in schools reflect society	4.36	1.11	-.14
8. Quarantine everyone with AIDS	2.23	1.16	.43***
19. AIDS victims have human feelings	5.33	0.74	-.37***
11. Drugs are escape—improve lives	3.70	1.21	-.23**
13. Comprehensive drug testing	2.44	1.28	.20**
16. Environmental movement reduce country to second-rate power	2.30	0.89	.42***
25. Punish "environmentalists"	2.08	0.97	.56***

NOTE: Two-tailed tests of significance were computed. Because of missing data, the *N* for any given correlation may vary downward. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

We retained two statements each about AIDS, drugs, and the environment. The statements for the new social issues are reproduced in the Appendix (Items 26-41).

Results

The mean score for the RWA Scale was 97.41, with a standard deviation of 25.13 and a range of 37 to 189. There was no significant sex difference (male mean = 100.33, female mean = 95.11), and the internal reliability was again high (alpha = .92). Table 3 presents the mean responses to the 16 new items as well as the 6 older items.

Correlations between RWA and the AIDS, drug abuse, and environment items were once again significant in the predicted directions. Furthermore, the abortion, homelessness, space, and diversity items were all significantly correlated with the RWA Scale. Those who scored higher on Altemeyer's (1988) measure were significantly more likely to believe that abortion is a legitimate institutional concern of society (whatever their views about it as such), that universities need to emphasize a core

curriculum of common knowledge, that funding for the space program should be maintained so the United States can lead in new technological advances, and that the homeless are "lazy" individuals who do not "take advantage of opportunities" presented to them. They were significantly less likely to reject antiabortion violence, to believe that universities should be a place of diversity, to advocate a cutback on the space program in order to care for the needy, and to view the homeless as decent citizens who have suffered from bad luck and economic problems.

The remaining social issues items did not produce clear patterns of relationships to authoritarianism. High RWA scorers were more likely to agree that parents have a right to discipline children as they see fit, but they were not less interested in preventing child abuse. They believe that, to solve U.S. trade problems, Japan must be made to stop unfair business practices, but they are not less likely to blame themselves for the trade deficit. They advocate vigilance about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe but are not less likely to welcome changes in the Soviet Union. There were no relationships between authoritarianism and attitudes toward public schooling.

Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of authoritarianism continues to inform us about attitudes toward many important social issues of the 1990s. People scoring higher on measures of authoritarianism have characteristic attitudes toward people with AIDS, drug users and dealers, and environmentalists. From Study 3, we see that they also view the homeless as an out-group, responsible for their plight. With respect to women's sexuality and reproduction, they tend to accept both institutional control (submission) and violence (aggressiveness). Their view of the university involves a core curriculum (the conventional canon) rather than diversity. Finally, they support the space program in order to demonstrate U.S. technological advances. All these issues have only recently become major institutional concerns in our society, but the relationships between them and the RWA Scale are quite consistent with previous literature on authoritarianism, involving themes of aggression, submission, and conventionalism.

Items for three of the four remaining issues (child abuse, trade, and Eastern Europe) phrased in the presumed authoritarian direction were also related to the RWA Scale, but items for those three issues that were phrased in the presumed egalitarian direction (Items 29, 35, and 39) were unrelated to the scale. Child abuse (Item 29) may offend conventional morality to such an extent that both high and low RWA scorers agree that preventing it is important. Responses to Item 35 may indicate that people scoring higher on the RWA Scale are not adverse to blaming U.S. companies for economic shortsightedness—the difference between high and low

scorers being that the former also blame and direct aggression to the Japanese as an out-group. In addition, high RWA scorers may welcome changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Item 39) because they see them as an indication of the superiority of their own democratic system; they are, however, still wary of Soviet intentions (fear of a dangerous world), as evidenced by Item 38. Finally, the lack of significant relationships between the RWA Scale and the public school items is somewhat surprising but may be due to the fact that university students (who have already passed through primary and secondary education and who, for the most part, have no school-age children of their own) are simply not engaged with this issue.

In the broadest sense, this article explored the question of continuity over history in the relationship between personality and attitudinal structure. The classic dimension of authoritarianism (measured by the F scale and a more recent and improved measure, the RWA Scale) was related to the "new" social issues of the late 20th century. Although the interest of mainstream social psychologists in authoritarianism may have flagged in recent years, as measured by the number of references to the topic in the Handbook of Social Psychology[4] (Lindzey, 1954; Lindzey & Aronson, 1969, 1985), after 40 years authoritarianism has not gone away; it is alive and well as a dimension organizing attitudes about issues that authoritarians see as threatening the current stability of not only the United States but other countries throughout the globe.

OTHER FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The magnitudes of the correlations in Studies 1 and 2 for social issues items used in both studies were not overwhelmingly different, though the RWA Scale (used in Study 2) provided higher correlations than the F scale (used in Study 1) in seven of the nine cases. The RWA Scale also had a much higher alpha coefficient in both Studies 2 and 3. Taken together, these results confirm Christie's (1991) recent judgment that "the RWA scale is the best current measure of the essence of what the authors of The Authoritarian Personality were attempting to measure" (p. 552). The fact that both measures of authoritarianism were related to attitudes on AIDS and drugs suggests that they share much conceptual overlap even though Altemeyer reduced the conceptual framework of his measure to only three of the nine components of the original syndrome. Future work might profitably examine more explicitly the way in which the RWA Scale differs from other existing measures of authoritarianism. Altemeyer (1981) has already done much work in this area, but independent analyses by other researchers would bolster his case for a more

limited conceptualization as involving aggression, submission, and conventionality.

In addition, research could systematically examine the differential impact of style and content on authoritarian attitudes. Are those scoring higher on the RWA Scale more likely to support policy regardless of content if it is presented in such a way as to arouse authoritarian aggression? Or is content the real key in eliciting authoritarian sentiments?

Future research might also explore in greater depth relationships between specific threats and specific attitudes. For example, does growing up in a neighborhood with high drug traffic (presumably a greater threat) enhance the relationship between the RWA Scale and punitiveness toward drug dealers and users? Are authoritarian attitudes toward people with AIDS reduced if a person knows, or gets to know, someone who has tested HIV positive? How are attitudes toward the environmental movement altered among people who have contaminated drinking water, high levels of radon, or friends who died at Chernobyl? Taking into account these kinds of moderator variables would enhance our understanding of the threat-authoritarianism link, as well as provide possible strategies for altering misconceptions about AIDS, drugs, and the environment.

A final line of research could investigate ways of measuring authoritarianism in political leaders who espouse the types of social issues statements reported in this article. Recent work (Simonton, 1986; Winter, Hermann, Weintraub, & Walker, 1991) has demonstrated the utility of measuring the personalities of leaders by adapting standard psychological methods and tests for use "at a distance." In a time of resurgence of violent nationalism, the construction of such methods would be vital for understanding how authoritarianism operates among aspirants for high office.

APPENDIX
Statements About Social Issues Used in Studies 1, 2, and 3

(Note: Numbers after each statement indicate in which studies the item was used. Items 1-25 are in the order presented to subjects in Study 2. Items 26-41 were used only in Study 3.)

Below are some statements that different people have made about important contemporary social issues. Obviously these statements represent a wide range of views. Please indicate whether *you personally* agree or disagree with each statement, by circling the appropriate phrase beneath that statement. [Options were *strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree,* and *strongly disagree.*]

1. In the end, it's really impossible to prevent people from using drugs: we're better off making them legal so that they can at least be regulated. (2)

2. We should never forget that human beings were given dominion over nature; the environment is ours to use as we see fit. (2)

3. Fines aren't enough—it's time we told every polluter, "If you poison our water, you will go to jail and your money will be spent to clean up the mess." (1, 2)

4. Some environmental problems are so critical and so urgent that governments may have to bypass traditional ways of due process and democratic compromise, and impose strict regulations. (1, 2)

5. Since we need energy, we should keep on building nuclear power plants, because our scientific authorities will surely figure out a safe way to get rid of nuclear waste. (2)

6. Drug education, rather than punishment, is the best way to keep our schools drug-free. (1, 2)

7. Environmental issues are being exaggerated by overzealous special interest groups that don't really care about the jobs and lives of average working people. (2)

8. They should quarantine everyone with AIDS, just like they would do with the plague or chicken pox. (1, 2, 3)

9. We need a Rambo-like crusade against drug smugglers and pushers. (1, 2)

10. In cases like the Alaska oil spill, everything is very clear: the companies and people responsible should be treated with no sympathy. (2)

11. Most people who take drugs do so to escape from painful everyday lives; to solve the drug problem, we must try to improve their lives. (1, 2, 3)

12. The real tragedy of AIDS is that it reveals our distrust and lack of compassion for suffering fellow human beings. (1, 2)

13. We really need to have comprehensive drug testing of all teenagers in high schools. (1, 2, 3)

14. The best way to protect the environment is to educate people and corporations, and then give them real incentives to change their behavior. (1, 2)

15. We will solve our problems with the environment only when we realize that human beings should live in harmony with the rest of nature. (1, 2)

16. If it succeeds, the environmental movement will reduce this country to a second-rate power. (2, 3)

17. If we really want to win the so-called "war on drugs," we should spend more money on providing treatment programs for those who want to give up the habit, rather than sending soldiers abroad to destroy drug crops. (2)

18. There are no safe "recreational drugs:" it's just as important to stop occasional marijuana use as it is to stop crack addiction. (2)

19. In dealing with AIDS, it is essential to control our unreasonable fears, and to remember that AIDS victims are people, with human feelings and civil rights. (1, 2, 3)

20. AIDS is a plague that homosexuals pass on to the decent people. (1, 2)

21. So-called "threats" to the environment are blown way out of proportion by sentimental people who are overly concerned about obscure and useless species of plants or insects. (2)

22. Right now, we just don't know enough about the environment and environmental problems to blame particular people or companies. (2)

23. Children with AIDS shouldn't be allowed to attend school, because they put other children at risk; and anyway they probably only have a few years to live. (1, 2)

24. Usually environmental problems are quite complicated, but when a company deliberately pollutes in order to make high profits, the people responsible should be harshly punished. (2)

25. If our economy is going to survive, we have to punish some of the so-called "environmentalists" who unreasonably disrupt legitimate businesses. (2, 3)

26. Abortion is not only a matter of individual conscience, it is also a legitimate concern of many institutions of our society. (3)

27. No matter how strongly a person may oppose abortion, there can be no justification for violent demonstrations at health clinics. (3)

28. All this concern about child abuse nowadays may interfere with family life and parents' legitimate duty to discipline their children as they see fit. (3)

29. Preventing child abuse should be an urgent priority, because children, as the most helpless members of our society, are often in need of government assistance and protection. (3)

30. The homeless are basically lazy; they simply don't take advantage of opportunities and social programs that are already in place. (3)

31. The homeless are usually decent American citizens who have suffered from bad luck and the problems of our economic system. (3)

32. One of the most important reasons for funding the space program is that it shows the world that our country leads in new technology advances. (3)

33. We should cut back on the space program until we have taken care of people who are needy in our society. (3)

34. We've given Japan a free ride on military defense costs; now it's time to crack down on their unfair business practices in order to solve our foreign trade problems. (3)

35. We have no one to blame but ourselves and our short-sightedness for our staggering trade deficit with Japan and other countries. (3)

36. We need to return to a core curriculum—where all students learn a common body of knowledge about our heritage. (3)

37. The university should be a center of openness and diversity—diversity of students, values, courses, and opportunities. (3)

38. Although there may have been some changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe, we should now be especially vigilant, and give them aid only if they change their economic system to be like ours. (3)

39. Recent changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe should be welcomed, because they are a sign that we are getting over our distrust of each other. (3)

40. Educators in public schools have largely failed; it's time we brought in strong outside leaders to shape up our schools. (3)

41. Schools can be no better than the society they serve; the problems with public education only reflect wider social problems that need to be solved. (3)

NOTES

1. Other researchers have also found aspects of the classic authoritarian dimensions useful. For example, Sorrentino, Bobocel, Gitta, and

Olson's (1988) work on uncertainty orientation draws on the intolerance of ambiguity component of authoritarianism.

2. At the time of Study 1, we used the Cherry and Byrne measure because of its established credentials in the literature (e.g., Cherry & Byrne, 1977; Dillehay, 1978). Altemeyer's extensive data on the psychometric superiority of the RWA measure (Altemeyer, 1988; see also Winter, 1990) recommended its use in the later studies. The use of both measures in this research may be an advantage, as it enables us to delineate the converging nomological networks of the two measures.

3. Although Altemeyer's scale correlates quite highly with many older measures, he has explicitly labeled his measure the *Right-Wing* Authoritarianism Scale, thus leaving open the long-argued question whether there are also authoritarians of the left. Shils (1954) initially suggested this possibility; Eysenck (1954), Christie (1956), and Ray (1976) later argued the issue from different sides; and Rokeach (1960) attempted to develop a measure of dogmatism that would apply equally to left and right. In the judgment of Brown (1965, pp. 526-544) and Stone (1980), the existence of left-wing authoritarianism has not been demonstrated. DiRenzo's (1967, 1971) work with the Rokeach measure also failed to find a "dogmatic of the left." Recent research in the former Soviet Union has shown that Soviet authoritarians had attitudes and prejudices remarkably similar to those of their Western counterparts (McFarland, Ageyev, & Abalakina, 1990). In addition, they were against *glasnost* and supported traditional—that is, Communist—policies and practices. In the Soviet context, was this "left" or "right"? Perhaps the issue is ultimately a semantic one.

4. The number of references to either authoritarianism or the F scale declined from 0.94 references per 100 pages in 1954 to 0.93 in 1969 to 0.27 in 1985. References to Adorno et al. (1950) steadily dropped from 1.45 to 0.90 to 0.82 references per 100 pages from 1954 to 1969 to 1985, respectively.

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