Replications and Refinements

Under this heading are brief reports of studies providing data that substantiate, disprove, or refine what we think we know. These Notes consist of a summary of the study's procedure and as many details about the results as space allows. Addi-

tional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the author.

Authoritarianism and Candidate Support in the U.S. Presidential Elections of 1996 and 2000

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PREVIOUS RESEARCHERS IN POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY have suggested a link between a person's candidate preference and the degree of his or her authoritarianism (e.g., Byrne & Przybyla, 1980; Hanson, 1989). In the present research, I sought to replicate and extend these findings to the U.S. presidential elections of 1996 and 2000. Even though both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party encompass a range of political perspectives, on average Democratic candidates tend to be more liberal, whereas Republican candidates tend to be more conservative. Because authoritarianism entails adherence to conservatism (e.g., Eckhardt, 1991), I expected supporters of the Republican candidates to show higher levels of authoritarianism than supporters of the Democratic candidates.

Unlike earlier studies on the role of authoritarianism in voting preference in presidential elections, the present study used an empirical measure of authoritarianism that Altemeyer (1988) developed and that investigators now widely regard as state of the art (Winter, 1990). Hence, the present research is not susceptible to the methodological and conceptual criticism of the original F scale proposed

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by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950; see Meloen, 1994, for an overview of this debate).

In both 1996 and 2000, undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university volunteered to participate in the present survey approximately 6 weeks prior to the presidential election. I conducted the study in class, and no reward was promised or given. In 1996, participants were 155 students, all American citizens of voting age. I excluded a minority of participants (17 participants, or 11%) who said that they had no intention of voting, leaving a final sample of 79 females and 59 males (mean age 20.3 years, SD = 1.65 years).

In 2000, participants were 113 voting-age American students. Again, I excluded participants who did not intend to vote (8 participants, or 7%), and the final sample consisted of 64 females and 41 males (mean age 20.5 years, SD = 1.90 years). Both samples were predominantly (roughly 75%) European American.

All participants responded to a 10-item short version of Altemeyer's (1988) Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) measure that was originally developed by Haddock, Zanna, and Esses (1993). Investigators have found the short version to be highly correlated with the full version of the measure (r = .90; Haddock et al.; see also Kemmelmeier et al., 2003). With the present samples, the short version showed adequate reliability (both Cronbach's αs = .75). Participants recorded their response on a 9-point Likert-type scale with possible scores ranging from -4 = very strongly disagree to +4 = very strongly agree. Each participant's responses to the 10 items were averaged to yield an overall RWA score.

I used one item to assess voting preferences. For the 1996 election, participants chose between Democrat Bill Clinton, Republican Bob Dole, and Independent Ross Perot, or indicated that they had either no clear preference or preferred another candidate. For the 2000 election, participants chose between Republican George W. Bush, Democrat Al Gore, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, a no-preference option, and an "other" option.

In the 1996 election, 95 participants (66.9%) intended to vote for Bill Clinton, 38 (26.8%) intended to vote for Bob Dole, 3 (2.1%) intended to vote for Ross Perot, only 2 (1.4%) had no clear preference, and 0% preferred an "other" candidate. The critical comparison concerned Dole and Clinton supporters. As expected, Dole supporters scored higher on the RWA scale than did Clinton supporters (M = 0.31, SD = 1.11, vs. M = -0.88, SD = 1.13, respectively), F(1, 131) = 30.91, p < .0001, d = 1.07.

In 2000, 62 students (59.0%) preferred Al Gore, 33 (31.4%) preferred George W. Bush, 6 (5.7%) preferred Ralph Nader, 4 (3.8%) had no clear preference, and 0 (0%) chose an "other" candidate. The critical comparison between Bush and Gore supporters showed the former ones to be significantly more authoritarian than the latter (M = -0.13, SD = 1.32, vs. M = -1.02, SD = 1.29, respectively), F(1, 103) = 9.96, p < .01, d = .68.

As I had anticipated, in both years supporters of Republican presidential candidates were higher in authoritarianism than were supporters of Democratic

candidates. These findings confirm the critical role of authoritarianism in understanding political behavior (e.g., Lavine et al., 1999; Rickert, 1998) and social and political attitudes (e.g., Doty, Winter, Peterson, & Kemmelmeier, 1997; Kemmelmeier, Burnstein, & Peng, 1999; Peterson, Doty, & Winter, 1993).

The focus of the present study on college students limits the generalizability of the present results. However, other researchers have generally found consistent effects between college student samples and samples with greater diversity with regard to age and education (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988). Furthermore, the link between authoritarianism and social and political views that has been documented for student samples has also been found in nationally representative samples (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Raden, 1994). This pattern supports the idea that the present findings are applicable to people besides college students.

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