Authoritarians

Bob Altemeyer wrote an "everyperson" account of his accumulated findings from a lifetime of research, titling it *The Authoritarians*.

It is freely available online. <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~altemey/> A markup copy can be found, in 2014, [here](http://chasegalleryconnect.org/FNC_C/Data/Brain-Neural/Political_and_Governance_Dimensions/Bob%20Altemeyer/Authoritarians/2006%20Authoritarians%20+++++.pdf). The only purpose of this companion document I (FNC) have derived from *The Authoritarians* is to summarize for memorization the terms and concepts Altemeyer used and to make his questionnaires (psychological tests) easier to use.

# Authoritarians

The defining characteristics of authoritanism are

* authoritarian submission ,
* authoritarian aggression, and
* run-away conventionalism in the underlying sentiment that everyone should be made to act the way someone’s interpretation of God’s laws dictates are the three defining elements of right-wing authoritarianism.

## Authoritarian Followers

People who are strongly inclined toward Authoritarian follower behavior exhibit more

1. Illogical Thinking
2. Highly Compartmentalized Minds
3. Double Standards
4. Hypocrisy
5. Blindness to Themselves
6. Profound Ethnocentrism
7. Dogmatism (The Authoritarian’s Last Ditch Defense)

Each of these is discussed in Chapter 3 of *The Authoritarians* (on pages 75 to 95).

### Authoritarian Followers, Right Wing (“RWAs”) – many

Authoritarian followers usually support the established authorities in their society, such as government officials and traditional religious leaders. Such people have historically been the “proper” authorities in life, the time-honored, entitled, customary leaders, and that means a lot to most authoritarians. Psychologically these followers have personalities featuring:

* a high degree of submission to the established, legitimate authorities in their society;
* high levels of aggression in the name of their authorities; and
* a high level of conventionalism.

#### Authoritarian Followers, Right Wing, Low Scoring (“low RWAs”)

Low scoring right wing authoritarian followers score below about 70 on the defining test below. These people are hardly right wing authoritarian followers at all.

#### Authoritarian Followers, Right Wing, High Scoring (“high RWAs”)

High scoring right wing authoritarian followers people who score above about 120 on the defining test below.

### Authoritarian Followers, Left Wing – few

Very few Authoritarian Followers are left Wing; they are either centrist or right wing.

## Authoritarian Leaders

Authoritarian leaders’ (Social Dominators’) defining characteristic is opposition to equality. They believe instead in dominance, both personal (if they can pull it off) and in their group dominating other groups. They endorse using intimidation, threats, and power to enrich themselves at the expense of others. This is the natural order of things, they believe. “It is a mistake to interfere with the “law of the jungle”, they argue. Some people were meant to dominate others.” “It’s a dog eat dog world in which the superior people get to the top.”

Authoritarian leaders are only a tiny part of the earth’s population, but they made a huge difference in how the world developed because authoritarian followers basically just follow. And low-RWAs are not inclined to join "movements".

## The Lethal Union

True, sufficiently skilled social dominators served by dedicated followers can make the trains run on time. But you have to worry about what the trains may be hauling when dominators call the shots and high RWAs do the shooting. The trains may be loaded with people crammed into boxcars heading for death camps.

## Double Highs

There’s just a small correlation between RWA and Social Dominance scores. But this small relationship is stuffed with significance.

The small correlation exists because 5 to 10 percent of my samples score highly on both tests. I call these folks “Double Highs,” and while you only find them by the handful, they are a fascinating group to study.

For starters, they win the gold medal in the Prejudice Olympics, whether you’re talking about prejudice against racial and ethnic minorities, hostility toward homosexuals, or men-who-hate-women-who-want-to-control-their-own-lives.

They seem to have piled the prejudice of the high RWA atop the prejudice of the social dominator and reached new depths.

“How can somebody score highly on both tests? One measures an inclination to submit to authority and the other measures a drive to dominate. How can one be a submissive dominator?”

The vast majority of people who score highly on the RWA scale can be called submissive followers, champing at the bit for their champion. But aspiring dictators can sometimes score highly on the RWA scale too.

Consider the first item on the measure: “Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.” Couldn’t an authoritarian follower and an authoritarian leader both agree with this? The follower would say, “Yes, yes. Oh please let him appear,” and the wannabe leader would say, “Yes, yes. Behold, here I am.”

So who are these Double Highs? Simply put, they are “religious” social dominators.

# Scales

## The [Right Wing] Authoritarian [Leader / Follower] (RWA) scale

It took eight studies, run over three years, involving over 3000 subjects and 300 items to get the first version of the RWA scale in 1973.

The RWA scale, found on page 10, is a personality test disguised as an attitude survey.

The RWA Scale – Right Wing Authoritarian (RWA)

This survey is part of an investigation of general public opinion concerning a variety of social issues.

You will probably find that you agree with some of the statements, and disagree with others, to varying

extents. Please indicate your reaction to each statement on the line to the left of each item according

to the following scale:

11

Write down a -4 if you very strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -3 if you strongly disagree with the statement.

Write down a -2 if you moderately disagree with the statement.

Write down a -1 if you slightly disagree with the statement.

Write down a +1 if you slightly agree with the statement.

Write down a +2 if you moderately agree with the statement.

Write down a +3 if you strongly agree with the statement.

Write down a +4 if you very strongly agree with the statement.

If you feel exactly and precisely neutral about an item, write down a “0."

(“Dr. Bob” to reader: We’ll probably stay friends longer if you **read this paragraph**.) Important: You

may find that you sometimes have different reactions to different parts of a statement. For example,

you might very strongly disagree (“-4") with one idea in a statement, but slightly agree (“+1") with

another idea in the same item. When this happens, please combine your reactions, and write down how

you feel on balance (a “-3" in this case).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Final Score Item | Translate +4 to value. And so on. | Choice in range -4 (strongly disagree) to +4 (strongly agree) | \_\_\_Id | Asserted |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 1 | The established authorities generally turn out to be right about things, while the radicals and protestors are usually just “loud mouths” showing off their ignorance. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 2 | Women should have to promise to obey their husbands when they get married. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_ 3 | Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 4 | Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_ 5 | 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 |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 6 | Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_ 7 | The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 8 | There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_ 9 | Our country needs free thinkers who have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_10 | Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_11 | Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_12 | The “old-fashioned ways” and the “old-fashioned values” still show the best way to live. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_13 | You have to admire those who challenged the law and the majority’s view by protesting for women’s abortion rights, for animal rights, or to abolish school prayer. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_14 | What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_15 | Some of the best people in our country are those who are challenging our government, criticizing religion, and ignoring the “normal way things are supposed to be done”. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_16 | God’s laws about abortion, pornography and marriage must be strictly followed before it is too late, and those who break them must be strongly punished. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_17 | There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_18 | A “woman’s place” should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past. |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_19 | Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the “rotten apples” who are ruining everything. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_20 | There is no “ONE right way” to live life; everybody has to create their own way. |
|  |  |  | \_\_\_21 | Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy “traditional family values |
|  | Add 5. |  | \_\_\_22 | This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just shut up and accept their group’s traditional place in society. |

Done them all, as best you could? Then let’s score your answers, and get an idea of whether you’re cut out to be an authoritarian follower. First, you can skip your answers to the first two statements. They don’t count. I put those items on the test to give people some experience with the -4 to +4 response system. They’re just “warmups.”

Start therefore with No. 3.

If you wrote down a “-4” that’s scored as a 1.

If you wrote down a “-3" that’s scored as a 2.

If you wrote down a “-2" that’s scored as a 3.

If you wrote down a “-1" that’s scored as a 4.

If you wrote down a “0" or left the item unanswered, that’s scored as a 5.

If you wrote down a “+1" that’s scored as a 6.

If you wrote down a “+2" that’s scored as a 7.

If you wrote down a “+3" that’s scored as an 8.

If you wrote down a “+4" that’s scored as a 9.

Your answers to Items 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19 and 22 are scored the same way.

Now we’ll do the rest of your answers, starting with No. 4.

If you wrote down a “-4" that’s scored as a 9.

If you wrote down a “-3" that’s scored as an 8.

If you wrote down a “-2" that’s scored as a 7.

If you wrote down a “-1" that’s scored as a 6.

If you wrote down a “0" or left the item unanswered, that’s scored as a 5.

If you wrote down a “+1" that’s scored as a 4.

If you wrote down a “+2" that’s scored as a 3.

If you wrote down a “+3" that’s scored as a 2.

If you wrote down a “+4" that’s scored as a 1.

Now simply add up your twenty scores. The lowest total possible would be 20, and

the highest, 180, but real scores are almost never that extreme. A group of 1000 Americans in 2005 averaged about 90.

## Religious Fundamentalism Scale

Test found on page 106. Discussion starts bottom of page 107.

## Personal Power, Meanness, and Dominance Scale

This is the beginning of the discussion starting on p165.

Social dominance scores correlate very strongly with these answers to the Power Mad scale. High scorers are inclined to be intimidating, ruthless, and vengeful. They scorn such noble acts as helping others, and being kind, charitable, and forgiving. Instead they would rather be feared than loved, and be viewed as mean, pitiless, and vengeful. They love power, including the power to hurt in their drive to the top. Authoritarian followers do not feel this way because they seldom have such a drive to start with.

This Table is found on p164:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | It’s a mistake to interfere with the “law of the jungle.” Some people were meant to dominate others. (Agree) |
| 2 | Would you like to be a kind and helpful person to those in need? (Disagree) |
| 3 | “Winning is not the first thing; it’s the only thing.” (Agree) |
| 4 | The best way to lead a group under your supervision is to show them kindness, consideration, and treat them as fellow workers, not as inferiors. (Disagree) |
| 5 | If you have power in a situation, you should use it however you have to, to get your way. (Agree) |
| 6 | Would you be cold-blooded and vengeful, if that’s what it took to reach your goals? (Agree) |
| 7 | Life is NOT governed by the “survival of the fittest.” We should let compassion and moral laws be our guide. (Disagree) |
| 8 | Do money, wealth, and luxuries mean a lot to you? (Agree) |
| 9 | It is much better to be loved than to be feared. (Disagree) |
| 10 | Do you enjoy having the power to hurt people when they anger or disappoint you? (Agree) |
| 11 | It is much more important in life to have integrity in your dealings with others than to have money & power. (Disagree) |
| 12 | It’s a dog-eat-dog world where you have to be ruthless at times. (Agree) |
| 13 | Charity (i.e. giving somebody something for nothing) is admirable, not stupid. (Disagree) |
| 14 | Would you like to be known as a gentle and forgiving person? (Disagree) |
| 15 | Do you enjoy taking charge of things and making people do things your way? (Agree) |
| 16 | Would it bother you if other people thought you were mean and pitiless? (Disagree) |
| 17 | Do you like other people to be afraid of you? (Agree) |
| 18 | Do you hate to play practical jokes that can sometimes really hurt people? (Disagree) |
| 19 | It would bother me if I intimidated people, and they worried about what I might do next. (Disagree) |
| 20 | I will do my best to destroy anyone who deliberately blocks my plans and goals. (Agree) |

Social dominance scores correlate very strongly 3 with these answers to the Power Mad scale.