

Authoritarianism and Fear of Deviance

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Two studies ($N = 217$) examined the relation between right-wing authoritarianism and a battery of self-report measures of various fears. The results suggest that high authoritarians are no more fearful of most types of threats (e.g. animals, failure, interpersonal situations) than low authoritarians. High authoritarians are, however, more afraid of situations involving social deviance.

The publication of *The Authoritarian Personality*, by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950), was a landmark event in personality and social psychology. The book was arguably the first, and certainly the most influential, systematic investigation of how personality shapes attitudes and belief systems. It proposed that prejudice, ethnocentrism, and the predisposition to accept right-wing ideology and fascist governments, were deeply rooted in the psychology of the individual. After a long decline during the later decades of the 20th Century, the study of authoritarianism has been greeted with renewed interest in the past few years. Indeed, a great number of contemporary social and political issues, such as increased opposition to immigration, debates over how to handle suspected terrorists, and proposed constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage all point to the continued relevance of the authoritarian personality today.

According to Altemeyer (1996), authoritarianism can be defined as the co-variation of three specific psychological tendencies. These include submission to authority, aggression toward individuals targeted by authority, and adherence to social conventions established by authorities. Stated another way, authoritarians are submissive toward authority figures and the norms of ingroups, and aggressive toward deviants and the members of outgroups. Decades of research support this interpretation of the construct (but see Kreindler, 2005) and indicate strong to moderate correlations with racial prejudice, anti-homosexual attitudes, punitive jury decisions, and many related attitudes and behaviors (Altemeyer, 1996; Stone, Lederer, & Christie, 1993). The authoritarian potential for prejudice, hostility, and aggression is well documented, yet there has been considerably less empirical research on their other emotional tendencies. One conspicuous gap in our knowledge

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concerns the level and varieties of fear that authoritarians experience. This is rather surprising considering the frequency with which fear is mentioned in theories and discussion about authoritarianism.

Like any emotion, fear is associated with subjective experience, physiological arousal, and behavioral expression. Fear is similar to the related feeling of anxiety, but differs mainly by having an identifiable trigger or eliciting stimulus. Fear should be viewed as an acute emotional reaction, rather than as a generalized state or mood. It can be understood as an alarm system that is linked to the fight or flight response, having been shaped by evolution to protect organisms from environmental threats (Ohman, 2000). Another useful distinction is that fear leads to the specific behaviors of escape and avoidance from threats, whereas anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable (Epstein, 1972). Building from Plutchik's (1980) theory, fear is the central component of a causal chain that begins with a threatening stimulus and ends with either feelings of safety, or perhaps, lingering anxiety.

Fear has been long suspected as a core characteristic of authoritarians. According to the original formulation of the theory, the syndrome is a consequence of overly harsh and threatening parents (Adorno et al., 1950). This psychoanalytic interpretation suggests that fear and resentment repressed during childhood lead to hostility, which is later displaced onto more acceptable targets, such as minority groups. By this theory, authoritarians view the world as a "jungle" (p. 411), a highly threatening place that is greeted with distrust and suspicion. The original psychoanalytic approach suffers from both a lack of falsifiability and insufficient empirical confirmation (Altemeyer, 1996). Nevertheless, there is evidence that authoritarians are indeed more likely to believe that the world is a fearsome, dangerous place (Altemeyer, 1996; Duckitt, 2001; Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007). This confirms the general outlook of authoritarians, if not the early childhood origins of the syndrome.

A related hypothesis is that authoritarianism is the result of cultural fears and anxieties, rather than threatening parents. Fromm (1941) adopted this approach in his early study of the authoritarian character. In this seminal work, Fromm suggested that feelings of powerlessness and fear in modern society lead to authoritarian submission and conformity. A series of archival studies have provided support for this hypothesis, at least at the group level. Sales (1972) demonstrated that authoritarian churches are more likely to gain members during times of social and economic stress, whereas more liberal churches gain members when times are good. Other research suggests that people shift toward authoritarianism during times of crisis and threat (Doty, Peterson &

Winter, 1991; Rickert, 1998). These studies have enormous contemporary significance. It is likely that the democratic process that began in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union has now been lost in a reactionary movement to restore order and economic stability. One could also use this context to understand the domestic and international policies of the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

In an innovative test of the relation between threat and authoritarianism, Feldman and Stenner (1997) analyzed data from the 1992 National Election Studies pre-post election survey. These researchers measured child-rearing values as a proxy for the predisposition toward authoritarianism, and found an interaction with political threats that yielded authoritarian attitudes. Not all of the predicted interactions were statistically significant, but there was a strong tendency for authoritarians who perceived a large distance between themselves and the major political parties to demonstrate more racism against African Americans. Another substantial finding was that authoritarians with negative attitudes toward political candidates were more likely to value order over freedom. It is noteworthy that these interactions were much stronger than the main effects of authoritarianism and perceived threat. Thus the experience of fear may not cause authoritarianism, so much as activate an existing propensity for it. Stenner (2005) has recently expanded this argument and suggested that threats may actually decrease authoritarianism in individuals with more tolerant, libertarian dispositions.

Eigenberger (1998) provided the most direct test of the association between fear and authoritarianism by examining the relationship between the *Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale* and the *Fear Perception Index (FPI)* in a large sample of college students. The RWA Scale is the most widely used contemporary measure of authoritarianism. The FPI is a 108-item instrument designed by Eigenberger to measure a variety of different fears and anxieties. It is actually an elaboration of an earlier scale, the *Fear Survey Schedule* (Wolpe & Lange, 1977), which was developed to assess the severity of phobias in clients undergoing behavior therapy. The FPI added 55 items designed to measure fears of an interpersonal or social nature. Eigenberger's (1998) factor analysis of this scale led to the development of three broad subscales: Alienation and Interpersonal Fear, Basic Natural Aversions, and Deviance. These correlated with the RWA Scale at $r = .46$, $r = .29$, and $r = .59$, respectively. Eigenberger concluded from these data that fear correlates with authoritarian attitudes. He further suggested that fear, particularly interpersonal fear, may be an evolutionary precursor of authoritarianism. This argument was utilized by Kreindler (2005) in her contention that

authoritarianism is a function of interpersonal dynamics within an ingroup, not hostility toward an outgroup.

It may be premature, however, to conclude that authoritarians fear interactions with other people, or have a general predisposition toward fear. In one study, for example, authoritarianism was not correlated with general negative affect or neuroticism, the personality trait most closely associated with fear and anxiety (Butler, 2000). In particular, authoritarians were no more likely to report feeling “scared,” “nervous,” or “afraid” than individuals with low RWA scores. Likewise, a meta-analysis by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) found weak to nonexistent correlations between neuroticism and various measures of conservatism and authoritarianism. These researchers did, however, find evidence of a link between authoritarianism and fear on certain measures, e.g. lexical decision tasks. The overall mean effect size between fear and political conservatism ($r = .18$, $d = .38$) was much smaller than in Eigenberger’s results.

These findings are not entirely consistent with each other, but it is important to realize that fear, threats, and even authoritarianism itself have been defined and measured in a variety of ways in these studies. Furthermore, we should recall that threats may or may not lead to fear, and fear is a transient emotional reaction that subsides when an individual feels safe again (Ekman, 1994; Plutchik, 1980). Also, as Altemeyer (1999) suggests, authoritarians may be both fearful and low in self-awareness. As a result, they may lack insight into their emotional states, including their feelings of fear. This may lead to an underestimation of their true scores on tests of negative affect, and personality tests such as neuroticism. Measuring and controlling for self-reflection, along with authoritarianism and fear or threat, could allow a test of this hypothesis.

Another possibility is that authoritarians are not *generally* more anxious or fearful, but that they fear certain kinds of threats more readily. Feldman (2003) theorizes that authoritarians are essentially people who value social conformity over personal autonomy. We also know that, in terms of the Big Five model of personality, authoritarians score low on the trait of openness to experience (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). That is to say, they have a preference for familiar events and activities over novel or unusual ones. If authoritarians are invested in the established norms and the status quo, it is likely that they feel disproportionately threatened by anything that contradicts them. This implies that the key threat for them is not interpersonal situations in general, but situations involving social deviance. Deviance refers to behavior that has the potential to be greeted with disapproval, punishment, condemnation, or hostility (Goode, 1990). These reactions are hallmarks of authoritarianism. A fear

of deviance interpretation is consistent with the view that authoritarianism stems from perceptions that the social world is a dangerous place (e.g. Altemeyer, 1996; Duckitt, 2001), and it also explains why Eigenberger's (1998) largest correlation was the one between RWA and social deviance.

The studies described below investigate the relation between fear and authoritarianism, with a particular emphasis on the magnitude and specificity of the relationship between the two constructs. The first study follows the general procedures of Eigenberger (1998), and the second study replicates the first with different measures and an attempt to control for insight and self-awareness. The general hypothesis is that authoritarianism is primarily associated with fear in response to social deviance.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants. The participants in the first study were 123 introductory psychology students (40 males and 83 females) recruited from a small, public university in rural Minnesota. All of the participants were volunteers who completed the questionnaires at the beginning of their regularly scheduled class periods. The mean age of the sample was 19.81 ($SD = 3.54$).

Procedure. The instrument used to assess fear was an 86-item, modified version of Eigenberger's *Fear Perception Index*. The present version omitted a number of vague social anxieties (e.g. having too many choices, having to live with doubts) but added several new fears (e.g. cancer, blindness). The intention was to maximize the clarity and the breadth of the instrument, while reducing the amount of time needed to take it so as to minimize test fatigue. The instructions asked the participants to imagine each stimulus and rate how much they would fear it on a five-point scale from "not at all" to "very much." Each participant was given the 86-item fear scale, followed by a shortened 12-item version of Altemeyer's *Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale*. This short form was developed after pilot testing for items that correlated the most with the full test. The scale contained items 6, 7, 10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 28, and 29 from the full measure (Altemeyer, 1996). These items were placed on a five-point scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Results and Discussion

A principal components analysis revealed a three-factor solution similar to Eigenberger's, which accounted for 32% of the variance. A six-factor solution provided a somewhat better description of these data

and accounted for 42% of the variance. After varimax rotation, the factors were I. *Modern Worries*, e.g. cancer, germs, accidents, robbery, terrorists; II. *Fear of Deviance*, e.g. unconventional people, other races, homeless people, prostitutes; III. *Interpersonal Fear*, e.g. public speaking, being criticized, sexual inadequacy, looking foolish; IV. *Failure and Isolation*, e.g. divorce, gaining weight, being lonely, loss of a loved one, failing a class; V. *Fear of Death*, e.g. the dark, ghosts, horror movies, funerals, dead people, and VI. *Animal Phobias*, e.g. bats, snakes, spiders, mice.

Items that loaded highly (>.30 magnitude) and uniquely (>.05 difference) on a particular factor were combined to form subscales. The Modern Worries subscale consisted of 15 items and had a reliability of $\alpha = .90$. The Fear of Deviance subscale was also composed of 15 items and had a reliability of $\alpha = .87$. The Interpersonal Fear subscale originally had 11 items and a reliability of $\alpha = .80$, but “dentists” was removed after an item analysis indicated that the remaining 10 item scale would have a slightly improved reliability of $\alpha = .81$. The Failure and Isolation subscale consisted of 9 items with a reliability of $\alpha = .81$. The initial Fear of Death subscale had 12 items, $\alpha = .82$. Item analysis led to the removal of “dogs” and “storms” leaving the scale with 10 items and a reliability of $\alpha = .83$. Finally, the Animal Phobia subscale consisted of 5 items, $\alpha = .71$, which is acceptable considering the small number of items on the measure (see Burisch, 1997). The factor loadings for each item and the full list of items that were included on the subscales are available from the author.

Authoritarianism ($\alpha = .81$) was significantly correlated with Modern Worries, $r(123) = .24$, $p < .01$, and Fear of Deviance, $r(123) = .40$, $p < .001$. Authoritarianism was not related to Interpersonal Fear, $r(123) = .09$, ns, Failure and Isolation, $r(122) = .09$, ns, Fear of Death, $r(123) = .14$, ns, or Animal Phobias, $r(121) = -.02$, ns. A simultaneous multiple regression analysis was conducted with the six composite fear scales as predictors and RWA as the criterion variable. The model was significant at $F(6,113) = 4.28$, $p < .01$, with $R = .43$ and $R^2 = .19$. However, the only fear variable that emerged as a significant predictor when the others were controlled was Fear of Deviance, $t(119) = 4.12$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .45$. The partial correlation between Modern Worries and RWA, controlling for Fear of Deviance, was $r(123) = .03$, ns. The partial correlation between Fear of Deviance and RWA, controlling for Modern Worries, was $r(123) = .34$, $p < .001$.

Some researchers have suggested that authoritarianism is associated with death anxiety. This view arises out of experiments testing Terror Management Theory, which find that increasing mortality salience tends to result in more authoritarian attitudes, such as negative attitudes toward

dissimilar others and outgroups (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeder, Kirkland, & Lyon, 1990). In the present study, the single item measuring fear of “your own death” was weakly and non-significantly associated with RWA, $r(124) = .13$, ns. It is possible that existential anxieties about death are subtly related to authoritarianism, but they may be less accessible, and thus less measurable in self-report scales. Death anxiety is also qualitatively different from the more immediate and concrete types of fears that were the central focus of this analysis. Although this study offers little support for the association between death anxiety and authoritarianism, it may not be a sufficiently sensitive test of the hypothesis.

The results of Study 1 indicate that authoritarianism is associated primarily with fears of social deviance. The conclusions must be considered preliminary, however, because the number of participants is marginal for an analysis of this size (see Comrey & Lee, 1992). This could account for a number of anomalies in the data, such as the fear of dogs, storms, and masturbation loading on Factor V, which otherwise consists of fears related to death and spiritual phenomena. Because of the limitations of this study, different measures and statistical analyses were selected for a conceptual replication in Study 2.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants. The participants in the second study were 94 students (40 males and 54 females) recruited from general studies classes at a small, public university in rural Minnesota. All of the participants were volunteers who completed the questionnaires at the beginning of their regularly scheduled class periods. The mean age of the sample was 20.59 ($SD = 2.26$). These participants represent a broad, roughly representative sample of students at the university. International students were excluded from the data collection.

Procedure. This study used the most recent version of the *Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale* (Altemeyer, 2006). Students responded to 20 items on a nine-point scale from “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree.”

The *Fear Questionnaire* (Marks & Mathews, 1979) was used to measure fear in Study 2. This instrument is a well established and widely used clinical measure of fear. Participants are asked to rate 15 situations by how much they would avoid each due to fear or other unpleasant feelings. Ratings are made from 0, “would not avoid it,” to 8, “always avoid it.” The *Fear Questionnaire* is typically divided into three separate, five-item subscales, namely Agoraphobia, Blood-Injury Phobia, and Social Phobia.

In order to maintain continuity with the first study, four additional items with excellent loadings from the principle components analysis were added to the end of the *Fear Questionnaire*. The items, in order of presentation on the questionnaire, were: 1. injections or minor surgery, 2. eating or drinking with other people, 3. hospitals, 4. traveling alone or by bus, 5. walking alone in busy streets, 6. being watched or stared at, 7. going into crowded shops, 8. talking to people in authority, 9. sight of blood, 10. being criticized, 11. going alone far from home, 12. thought of injury or illness, 13. speaking or acting to an audience, 14. large open spaces, 15. going to the dentist, 16. terrorists, 17. people of other races, 18. snakes, 19. funerals or undertakers. At the end of the *Fear Questionnaire*, three final questions asked the participants how safe they feel, how safe they would feel visiting a large city, and how safe they would feel in a foreign country. These last three ratings were made on a five-point scale, from “not safe” to “safe.”

To explore Altemeyer's (1999) hypothesis that authoritarians are less aware of their thoughts and feelings, participants also took the *Self-Reflection and Insight Scale* (SRIS; Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002). This is a 20-item instrument that measures two domains of private self-consciousness, self-reflection and insight. It was designed to be an improvement over the *Private Self-Consciousness Scale* (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), and correlates with diary keeping as well as related self-report measures (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002). Participants respond on a six-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The SRIS was given at the end of the packet of questionnaires, and eight of the participants overlooked or did not complete the measure.

Results and Discussion

Internal reliability for the *Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale* was much improved compared to Study 1, with $\alpha = .92$. The mean of RWA was 85.16 ($SD = 30.45$), which is comparable to parameters given by Altemeyer (2006). Coefficient alpha for the three subscales of the *Fear Questionnaire* were as follows: agoraphobia, $\alpha = .80$, blood-injury phobia, $\alpha = .78$, and social phobia, $\alpha = .71$. The reliability of the twelve item self-reflection subscale of the SRIS was $\alpha = .89$. For the insight subscale, $\alpha = .79$.

Authoritarianism was not significantly associated with agoraphobia $r(93) = .04$, ns, blood-injury phobia, $r(94) = -.01$, ns, or social phobia, $r(94) = .03$, ns. The three phobia subscales were, however, significantly related to each other, $r = .64$ to $r = .76$, all $p < .001$. When the items on the *Fear Questionnaire* were analyzed separately, the only significant correlation with authoritarianism was for “people of other races,” $r(94) =$

.25, $p < .05$. This supports the hypothesis regarding the specificity of the authoritarian fear of deviance. The RWA Scale was not correlated with either self-reflection $r(87) = -.07$, ns., or insight, $r(88) = .04$, ns. Partial correlations controlling for insight and self-reflection did not alter the relation between authoritarianism and fear.

The fear with the highest mean value in the sample was “terrorists,” with a mean of 5.70 ($SD = 2.73$) on a scale of 0 to 8. This was followed by “snakes” ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 2.97$), and “being watched or stared at” ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 2.40$). Thus, with the exception of terrorists, all the fear ratings averaged below the midpoint of the scale. The item with the lowest fear rating was “eating or drinking with other people” ($M = .37$, $SD = .85$).

The participants generally reported feeling safe, $M = 4.37$ ($SD = .72$). When asked how safe they would feel if they visited a large city or a foreign country, they reported $M = 3.57$ ($SD = 1.00$) and $M = 2.96$ ($SD = 1.10$), respectively. Pearson correlations between authoritarianism and perceived safety were $r(92) = .14$ for current feelings of safety, $r(93) = -.13$ for visiting a large city, and $r(93) = -.19$, $p < .10$ for visiting a foreign country. None of these correlations were statistically significant, though there was a trend in the data for authoritarians to report that they would feel less safe in a foreign country. Because foreigners are likely to deviate from the norms of one's own culture, this non-significant trend could be a manifestation of authoritarians' previously demonstrated fear of deviance. It is also consistent with the common finding that authoritarians are highly ethnocentric (Adorno et al., 1950).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

These data indicate that authoritarians have a tendency toward fear, but that their fear is rather specific, and primarily associated with deviance. If interpersonal fear were the precursor to right-wing authoritarianism, as Eigenberger (1998) suggests, we should find a significant correlation between authoritarianism and the interpersonal fear measures. This is not found in the present research, in either sample. When regression and partial correlation analyses are used, the modest relationships between the RWA Scale and the various measures of fear in Study 1 are eliminated, with the sole exception of social deviance. In Study 2, the only statistically significant correlation with RWA scores is with “people of other races,” which also expresses social deviance.

It is instructive to take a closer look at the people and situations that frighten authoritarians. Items that correlate highly with Social Deviance in Study 1 are people with AIDS, sexual arousal, male nudity, mental illness, forbidden desires, other races, other people's blood, prostitutes, unconventional people, ugly people, strangers, homeless people, foreign-

looking people, Satanism or witchcraft, and other religions. These items cluster conceptually as well as empirically, reflecting a diverse set of experiences beyond the comfort zone in much of mainstream American culture. Given that authoritarians score low on the personality trait of openness (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), it is perhaps no great surprise that they feel threatened and react fearfully to people and situations that are outside of their preferred range of experience.

If deviance and not interpersonal relations is the most distinctive fear of authoritarians, how are we to explain the substantial correlation ($r = .46$) that Eigenberger (1998) found between authoritarianism and his measure of alienation and interpersonal Fear? A close examination of the items loading on this scale reveals several that may indicate vague anxieties rather than discrete fears (e.g. looking foolish, making mistakes). Additionally, given that authoritarians admire strength and disapprove of weakness (Stone et al., 1993), a few of the items could be natural concerns for them regardless of the social context (e.g. feelings of inferiority, feelings of being weak, being punished by God). Finally, some of the items on this factor appear to be specifically related to social deviance (e.g. becoming sexually aroused, exposing hidden wishes, being thought of as odd). Thus, it is not entirely clear what the *Alienation and Interpersonal Fear Scale* is measuring, or how to interpret its correlation with RWA.

Kreindler (2005) suggests that authoritarianism is not a feature of personality *per se*, but rather a consequence of group dynamics. According to her Dual Group Process Model, RWA accounts for prejudice against ingroup members, whereas Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) accounts for prejudice against outgroup members. Kreindler argues that because authoritarians identify strongly with their ingroup, they are prone to fear social rejection and isolation. The present data, however, indicate that authoritarians are no more likely than non-authoritarians to fear public speaking, being criticized, looking foolish, getting divorced, gaining weight, or other common objects of interpersonal fear. Thus, these results appear to be inconsistent with a key inference of the Dual Group Process Model of prejudice.

Both Eigenberger's (1998) data and the data presented here demonstrate that situations involving social deviance are disproportionately feared by authoritarians. This conclusion is consistent with Feldman and Stenner's (1997) finding that political and social threats, not personal threats, lead to the strongest effects on authoritarian attitudes. The specificity of the finding is also compatible with the view that right-wing ideology is motivated social cognition (Jost et al., 2003). By this approach, certain environmental stimuli lead to fear, which then creates the motivation for a right-wing belief system. Deviance may be

particularly threatening to authoritarians because it violates conventional, traditional ways of life. Indeed, the more conventional and restricted one's lifestyle is, the more potential there is for a threatening discrepancy to emerge. This is reminiscent of classic social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). People with salient differences in appearance or behavior are likely to say and do things that fall into the "latitude of rejection" for authoritarians. Because deviant behavior suggests the possibility that other ways of living may be the right way, it is potentially threatening, and may lead to defensive reactions and fear. High ego-involvement on social, moral, and religious values could only intensify this response.

The results of these studies may be useful to researchers investigating the effects of threat on authoritarian behavior. Various types of threats have been examined in this literature, including political threats (Feldman & Stenner, 1997), economic threats (Rickert, 1998), threats to self-esteem (Sales & Friend, 1973), and the war on terror (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005). An appreciation for the level of fear produced by deviant groups on behavior could focus attention on manipulations that would have the greatest chance of eliciting authoritarian responses in future research.

An important limitation of this research is its reliance on questionnaire responses. Although we can assume that participants are willing to report their emotional states with reasonable accuracy, sitting in a classroom rating a long inventory of fear-inducing stimuli is hardly the same as experiencing actual or simulated threats under more realistic conditions. Future investigators may want to examine these relations in the laboratory where fear can be manipulated and measured with much greater precision. A laboratory procedure would also enable a clearer distinction between fear and anxiety, which may overlap to some degree in questionnaire studies. As it stands, we are left wondering to what extent authoritarians experience differences in their actual fear response, and to what extent these data indicate beliefs, anxieties, or other aversions.

Another concern regarding these studies is the question about causality in correlational data. Does fear of deviance lead to authoritarianism, or does an authoritarian outlook make an individual more likely to fear deviance? The motivated social cognition approach suggests that the former is correct. On the other hand, recent research by Sibley and colleagues (Sibley et al., 2007) suggests a different answer. This study used longitudinal Structural Equation Modeling and found that belief in a dangerous world predicted subsequent authoritarianism. They also found a somewhat weaker tendency for authoritarian attitudes to predict subsequent beliefs in a dangerous world. If we assume that

beliefs about danger are associated with fear, this strongly suggests a pattern of reciprocal causation between the authoritarian personality and fear. Threats may propel us toward authoritarianism, but once this viewpoint is embraced, other threats may lead to additional fear and anxiety. In other words, authoritarianism may be an ineffective coping strategy for threats and fear.

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