



Right Wing Authoritarian responses to the Paris terror attacks

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Journal article currently under review with *Journal of Political Psychology*:
Sullivan, K. E., & Hutchings, P. B. (under review). *A Little More
Prejudiced, A Little More Authoritarian: The Immediate Impact of Terror
Attacks on Attitudes*. Psychological Science.

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Our research area

- ▶ Examining attitudes toward racial/national ingroups and outgroups
 - E.g., white British, non-white British, white foreign, non-white foreign
 - Implicit (subconscious) prejudice (e.g., IAT)
 - Explicit (conscious) prejudice (e.g., questionnaires)
 - The interaction between implicit and explicit prejudice
 - Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)

Authoritarian 'Personalities'

▶ Adorno et al. (1950)

◦ Fascism (F) scale

- Conventionalism (rigid adherence to certain values)
- Authoritarian submission (uncritical attitude to idealised moral authority)
- Anti-intraception (dislike of subjectivity and imagination)
- Superstition and stereotypy (fate; rigid categorical thinking)
- Power (exaggerated belief in strength and toughness)
- Destructiveness (generalised hostility)
- Projectivity (projection of unconscious emotional impulses onto others/the world)
- Sex (concern with sexual behaviours of others)

‘Attitudinal clusters’

▶ Altemeyer (1981)

◦ Right wing authoritarianism (RWA)

- Authoritarian submission – submission to, and acceptance of, perceived legitimate authorities (e.g., government, police)
- Authoritarian aggression – sanctioning of aggression by legitimate authorities against outgroups or ‘deviants’
- Conventionalism – adherence to tradition and established social norms (above and beyond the norm) e.g., ‘traditional family values’, ‘Protestant work ethic’

- ▶ Right Wing Authoritarianism not just about right wing views
 - High RWA scores also seen in Maoism, Stalinism etc.
 - RWA scores particularly responsive to real-world events (Altemeyer, 2003)

Explicit prejudice

- ▶ Conscious endorsement of prejudicial attitudes toward outgroups (Fazio & Olson, 2003)
 - Weak correlation with implicit (subconscious) prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2001; Son Hing et al., 2008)
 - **But...** prone to social desirability bias
 - People do not want to look as if they are prejudiced
 - People do not want to admit to themselves that they are prejudiced

October 2015

- ▶ Carrying out research on attitudes toward same-race/other race immigration
 - Online data collection of explicit prejudice measures (adapted version of Lepore & Brown, 1997); RWA scale (Altemeyer, 1981)
 - Lab-based data collection of implicit prejudice (IAT, Greenwald et al., 1998)
- ▶ Data from 138 participants
 - Anonymous data – unique ID code

Friday 13th November 2015

9.16pm

- ▶ Football match at Stade de France (France V Germany) with President Hollande in attendance
- ▶ Terrorists attempted to enter stadium armed with explosives
 - Stopped and detonated explosives outside of ground

Friday 13th November 2015

9.25pm

- ▶ Gunfire reported on corner of Rue Bichat and Rue Alibert
- ▶ Shooting of patrons inside and outside le Carillon restaurant
 - Media (Sky News etc.,) start breaking the story, social media (Twitter etc.,) show spike in 'on the ground' reports

Friday 13th November 2015

9.40pm

- ▶ Gunfire reported on Boulevard Voltaire
- ▶ Initial reports of possible attack around area of Bataclan Theatre



Friday 13th November 2015

10.00pm

- ▶ First reports of hostage situation inside Bataclan Theatre
 - Over 1,500 people attending concert/working inside building
 - Media outlets across the world now reporting on attack
 - Social media providing pictures, videos, messages (including from inside Bataclan Theatre)

Saturday 14th November 2015

12.23am

- ▶ Police storm Bataclan Theatre, killing three attackers
 - 89 innocent victims found dead inside theatre



Paris Terror Attack, November 2015

- ▶ All occurred in just over three hours
- ▶ 130 people dead, a further 368 injured
- ▶ Global news coverage almost continuously from outset
- ▶ #prayforparis and ability to incorporate French flag into profiles on Twitter and Facebook

► **Our study:**

- **Did the Paris attack influence people's RWA and explicit prejudice scores in the immediate aftermath?**
- Participants from our October study ($n = 138$) invited to complete study online
 - Attitudes and opinions relating to issues of ethnicity, religion, migration and authority
 - Study opened at 9.16am on Saturday 14th November (exactly 12 hours after start of Paris attack)
 - Study closed at 9.16pm on Sunday 15th November (48 hours after start of Paris attack)
- **36 hour window**

Explicit Prejudice

- ▶ Adapted from Lepore & Brown (1997)
 - 15 questions, reverse scoring etc.
- ▶ ‘The rights of immigrants should be restricted’
- ▶ ‘Those immigrants who do not have immigration documents should be sent back to their countries’
- ▶ ‘It makes sense for minority groups to live in their own neighbourhoods because they share more and get along better than when mixing with Whites’

Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly Disagree

6

7

Right Wing Authoritarianism

- ▶ Zakrisson (2005) Short version
 - 15 questions, reverse scoring etc.
- ▶ ‘There are many radical, immoral people trying to ruin things; society ought to stop them’
- ▶ ‘Situations in today’s society would be improved if troublemakers were treated with reason and humanity’
- ▶ ‘If society so wants, it is the duty of every true citizen to help eliminate the evil that poisons our country from within’

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

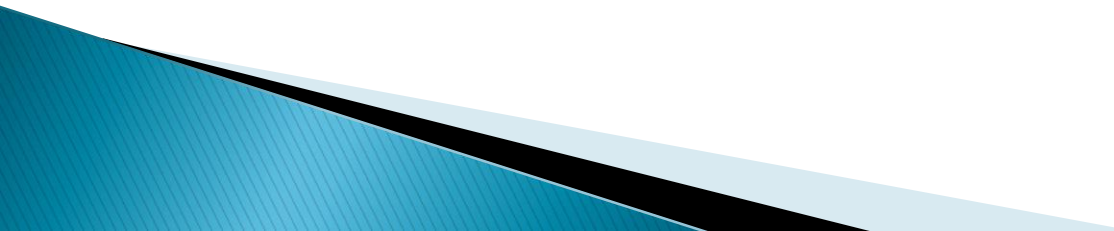
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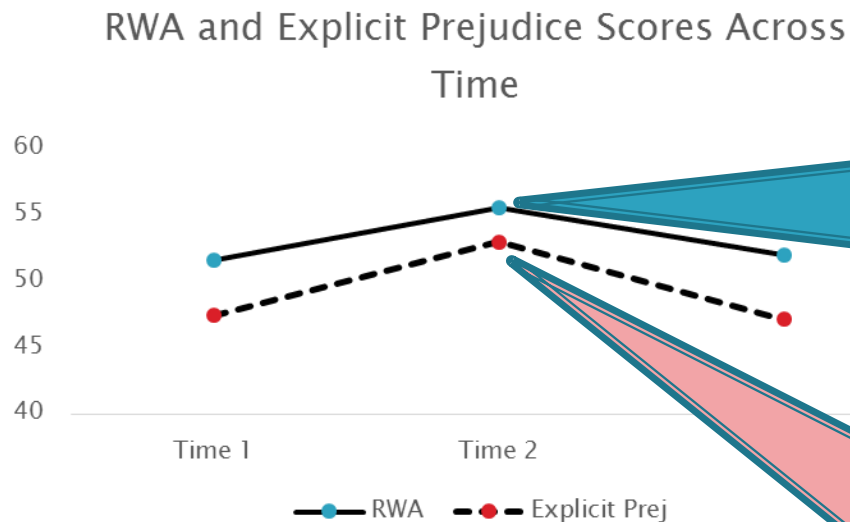
Strongly Agree

- ▶ Follow-up in October 2016 (identical to study carried out in October 2015) of original 138 participants (116 remaining)
 - ▶ Provided data at three time points:
 - Pre-attack
 - Immediate post-attack
 - 11 month post-attack
 - ▶ 46 participants completed the immediate post-attack study
 - Two self-reported non-white/non-British excluded
 - Two did not complete post attack study in October 2016 so excluded
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- ▶ Overall study:
 - 42 white British participants
 - 32 female; 10 male
 - (30% of original October 2015 sample)
- ▶ Range of both scales = 15 – 105
- ▶ Counterbalanced across scales
- ▶ Scores on both scales for 42 participants did not differ significantly from 138 in October 2015
 - No reason to suspect a sub-group
 - All alphas > .75
- ▶ Manipulation check – all aware of Paris attack

- ▶ Hypothesis: Expect an increase in RWA and EP scores immediately following Paris attack
 - Based upon Altemeyer (2003) findings of influence of events
 - Also seen for SDO (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2008; cf. Cohu et al., 2016)
 - Based upon findings of Van de Vyver et al., (2016) and Das et al., (2009)
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Time	RWA	Explicit
1 (October 2015)	51.62 (8.91)	47.45 (12.78)
2 (November 2015)	55.62 (8.39)	53.00 (14.17)
3 (October 2016)	52.00 (10.38)	47.17 (11.88)

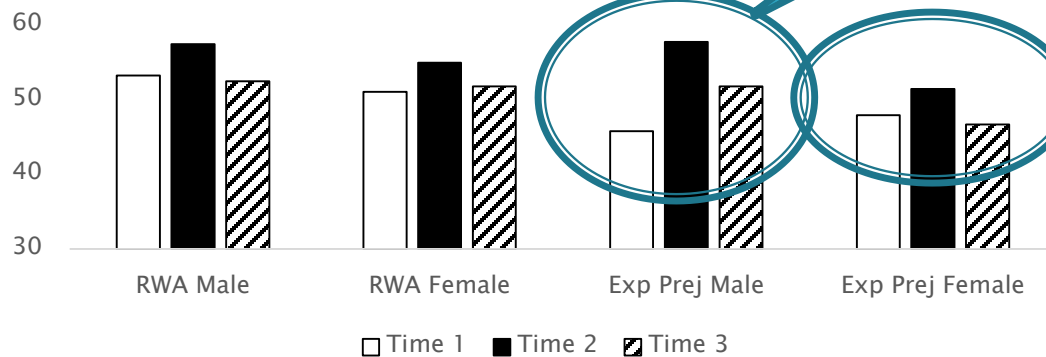


RWA significant effect of time $F(2, 82) = 3.34, p = .02$ (one-tailed), significant quadratic trend, $F(1, 41) = 10.05, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .2$ with T_2 sig higher than T_1 ($p = .02$) and T_3 ($p = .01$), no diff T_1 to T_3 ($p = .85$)

Explicit prejudice significant effect of time $F(2, 82) = 3.45, p = .04$ (two-tailed), significant quadratic trend, $F(1, 41) = 7.39, p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$ with T_2 sig higher than T_1 ($p = .04$) and T_3 ($p = .02$), no diff T_1 to T_3 ($p = .91$)

Gender Differences

RWA and Explicit Prejudice Scores Across Time
as a Function of Gender



significant quadratic trend
for males, $F(1, 9) = 6.83$, p
= .03, partial $\eta^2 = .43$

no significant
quadratic trend for
females, $F(1, 31) =$
2.98, $p = .10$, partial
 $\eta^2 = .2$

Conclusions

- ▶ Real-world events such as terrorist attacks appear to significantly increase RWA attitudes toward agreeing with more authoritarian measures
 - Not draconian, but possibly enough to be sympathetic to suggestions of 'increased security'
- ▶ Explicit prejudice appears to mirror RWA findings
 - But mainly for males?
 - Low sample size so need to be sceptical of this
- ▶ Not long-term, reverts to pre-levels over time
 - Fits with findings of Das et al., Cohu et al.

Limitations

- ▶ Small sample size (by necessity given the parameters of the study)
 - ▶ Unique event – elements will be unreproducible
 - ▶ Didn't measure Time 3 until 11 months later
 - Big window of reversion that we cannot pin down
 - ▶ Need to explore the male/female explicit prejudice issue in more detail
 - Artifact of study or valid finding? Will look to explore further
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Thank You For Listening

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