

The Influence of Personality Organization on Right-Wing Authoritarianism

 Christine L. Hujing B.A & Matthew M. Yalch Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

- Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is characterized by strict obedience to authority and encourages aggression toward those who disobey or question it.
- One factor driving high levels of RWA is personality, specifically its pathological aspects.
- Pathological personality organization includes three dimensions: primitive defenses, problems in reality testing, and identity diffusion.
- RWA entails an unrealistic idealization of authority and splitting those who differ from it.
- Given this, we might expect RWA to be associated with primitive defenses and reality testing problems.
- However, there is little research on this.

METHODS

- Study participants were 392 workers on Prolific (age_{mean} 36 years; see Table 1).
- Measures: Inventory of Personality Organization (IPO), brief form of RWA scale.
- We examined the association between dimension of object relations and RWA using a Bayesian approach to multiple regression.

RESULTS

- Dimensions of object relations had generally large ($r_{\text{mean}} = .42$) bivariate associations with RWA.
- Primitive defenses and reality testing problems had positive and identity diffusion had negative relative associations with RWA (see Table 2).

DISCUSSION

- Findings underscore the roots of RWA in immature psychological development and to a lesser extent problems distinguishing reality from fantasy.
- These findings are consistent with simplistic and at times far-fetched messaging from authoritarian elements of U.S. electorate.
- In contrast, the negative association between identity diffusion and RWA may reflect a grounding effect of identifying with authority figures.
- Overall, findings may suggest that therapeutic intervention may lead to lower levels of RWA, although this is rarely an overt treatment goal.

Right-wing authoritarianism represents an underdeveloped and unrealistic view of the world and the people in it.

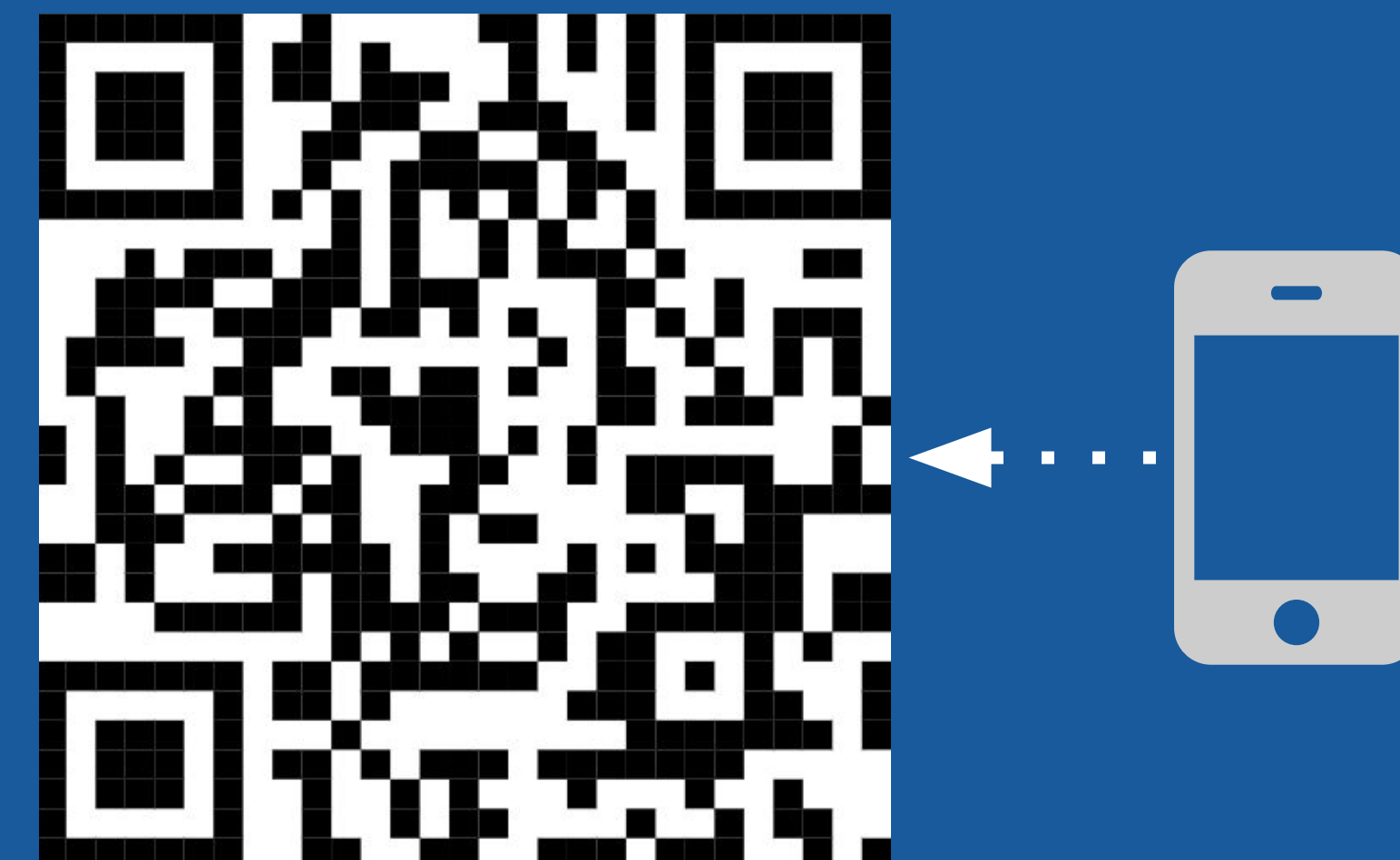


Table 1

Sample Demographics

	n (%)
Gender	
Male	192 (49%)
Female	198 (51%)
Race	
Asian	34 (9%)
Black	24 (6%)
White	299 (76%)
Multiracial	18 (5%)
Other	17 (4%)

Note. 1 person endorsed "other" and 1 person did not provide information about sexual identity.

Table 2

Correlations Between Study Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Right-Wing Authoritarianism	(.95)			
2. Primitive Defenses	.20	(.87)		
3. Identity Diffusion	.00	.78	(.92)	
4. Reality Testing Problems	.16	.68	.71	(.94)

Note. Cronbach's alpha on diagonal; all $r_s > .10$ statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Table 3

Relative Associations Between Dimensions of Personality Organization and RWA

	β	95% HDI	R^2
Primitive Defenses	.45*	[.29, .60]	.12*
Identity Diffusion	-.49*	[-.65, -.32]	
Reality Testing Problems	.20*	[.06, .34]	