

# Differentiating Between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton Voters Using Facets of Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social-Dominance Orientation: A Brief Report

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## Abstract

Historically, much of the research on right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation has proceeded from the assumption that they are unidimensional. Recently, researchers have begun to seriously consider the possibility that they are multidimensional in nature and should be measured as such. Several studies have examined the unique relationships between right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation facets and social and political outcome measures of interest. However, there have been no efforts to include the full slate of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation facets as predictors in the same model. This is problematic when investigating the discriminant validity of these facets, given the potential empirical overlap among the facets both within and across scales. We included facets of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation as predictors of U.S. voters' intentions to vote for Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election. Data were collected in September 2016. We found evidence for the discriminant validity of several of the right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation facets.

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**Introduction**

Over the years, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) have played an important role in understanding and predicting outcomes of interest to social and political psychologists. RWA is defined as a constellation of three interrelated attitudes: (a) authoritarian submission, or the tendency to submit uncritically to perceived social authorities; (b) authoritarian aggression, or the tendency to exhibit aggressiveness against groups or persons perceived to violate social norms and conventions—this under the assumption that aggression is sanctioned by legitimate authorities; and (c) conventionalism, or the tendency to strongly adhere to conventional social norms and morals (Altemeyer, 1981). SDO, on the other hand, refers to the “value that people place on nonegalitarian and hierarchically structured relations among social groups,” where there is “general support for the domination of certain socially constructed groups” over others (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 61).

Historically, scales that have measured RWA and SDO have treated these concepts as being unidimensional in nature. Nevertheless, various researchers (e.g., Duckitt, Bizumic, Krauss, & Heled, 2010; Jost & Thompson, 2000) have argued that existing measures of RWA and SDO insufficiently operationalize these constructs given a number of method confounds associated with them. The RWA Scale (and derivatives from it), according to critics, contains a number of double- and triple-barreled (Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013) items that give the appearance a single factor is being measured (at least with respect to the positively worded items). Moreover, they argue, the negatively worded items in the scale are all single-barreled and tap the theme of “conventionalism”, thus introducing an additional method confound between the direction of item wording and item content. Similarly, critics have argued that the SDO Scale contains a confound between the direction of item wording and item content, with the positively worded items appearing to capture a theme of “group-based dominance” and the negatively worded items capturing a theme of “anti-egalitarianism” (Jost & Thompson, 2000, p. 212).

Recently, there has been substantial progress in the conceptualization and measurement of RWA and SDO. Duckitt et al. (2010) revised the RWA concept within their Authoritarianism-Conservatism-Traditionalism (ACT) framework and developed a new scale using single-barreled items measuring each facet of RWA (this while also revising the names of the RWA attitudinal clusters). Within their ACT framework, Authoritarianism (ACT-A) supplanted Altemeyer’s (1981) original Authoritarian Aggression facet, whereas Conservatism (ACT-C) supplanted Altemeyer’s Authoritarian Submission

facet. Finally, Duckitt et al. (2010) renamed (with some reconceptualization) Altemeyer's Conventionalism facet, Traditionalism (ACT-T). Relying on their new ACT framework, Duckitt et al. (2010) and Duckitt and Bizumic (2013) demonstrated that there may be value-added in measuring RWA from a multidimensional perspective. Confirmatory factor analyses of the ACT Scale suggested the presence of three correlated factors across multinational contexts. Moreover, they found that the RWA/ACT facets exhibited discriminant validity when predicting various social and political outcome variables.

Pivoting off of Jost and Thompson's (2000) critique, Ho and colleagues reconceptualized SDO as a multidimensional construct, with subdimensions of SDO reflecting different strategies for achieving group-based hierarchies. They argued that the positively worded items in their earlier versions of the SDO Scale measured endorsement of a strategy of "active subjugation of some groups by other groups" (Ho et al., 2012, p. 585), whereas the negatively worded items actually measured endorsement of the strategy of "exclusion" from intergroup equality (via the use of legitimizing myths). Ho et al. (2012) tested this assumption by reanalyzing data involving earlier versions of the SDO Scale and found that SDO-D (dominance; positively worded items) and SDO-E (anti-egalitarianism; negatively worded items) were uniquely related to a variety of outcome measures. Ho et al. (2015) presented a revised measure of SDO, one with balanced SDO-D and SDO-E subscales and confirmed many of the findings from the Ho et al. (2012) study.

### *Current study*

Given the limited amount of research involving the newly developed ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> scales, we sought to further test the discriminant validity of their subscales in predicting an outcome of considerable interest to U.S. citizens—intentions to vote Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. We collected data for this study from U.S. adults in September 2016. Given the differences in platforms and rhetoric of the candidates, we reasoned that persons endorsing Donald Trump would score higher on the ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales than those expressing the intention to vote for Hillary Clinton.

Mr Trump campaigned on a platform promising to stop illegal immigration, to bring back "law and order," and to deal harshly with troublemakers in society—which we reasoned would appeal more to persons scoring higher on the ACT-A (Authoritarianism), ACT-C (Conservatism), and SDO-D (Dominance) subscales. Moreover, Mr Trump reached out to Evangelical leaders in an effort to gain support from Christian conservatives, leading us to expect that persons scoring higher on ACT-T (Traditionalism) might be more inclined to indicate an intention to vote for him as opposed to Clinton (who did not reach out to this group). Finally, given that Mrs Clinton campaigned on a platform of increasing social equality for women, persons of color, the poor, people with disabilities,

and persons in the LGTBQ community, we reasoned that persons scoring higher on SDO-E (anti-egalitarianism) would be less likely to indicate an intention to vote for her, as opposed to Mr Trump (who was noted throughout his campaign for making insensitive, and at times threatening, remarks in reference to some of these groups).

## Methods

### *Participants and recruitment*

Data collection for this study took place from September 1–September 22, 2016. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling, where students enrolled in the first author's research methods classes were asked to forward an email containing a study description and survey link to persons in their social networks. The first author asked the student recruiters to solicit individuals in such a way as to maximize variation in terms of age (minimum of 18), gender identification, ethnic/racial identification, political orientation, educational level, and geographic location. A total of 296 individuals responded to the survey, with 261 providing survey responses on the variables of interest in our study and meeting our criteria of being at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen. The remaining cases were eliminated from consideration in our study.

Of the 261 participants, 76.2% identified themselves as female and 78.9% identified themselves as White. Approximately, 7.7% of the sample indicated having a high school education only, whereas the remainder of the sample reported having at least some college education. Ages in our sample ranged from 18–78 ( $M = 37.31$ ,  $SD = 13.37$ ); 57% of the sample indicated living in Oklahoma, the state from which our study originated.

### *Measures*

*Authoritarianism-Conservatism-Traditionalism (ACT) Scale.* The ACT Scale was first developed by Duckitt et al. (2010) as a multidimensional measure of RWA. Participants responded to items on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Example items include “What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity” (Conservatism), “The old-fashioned ways and the old-fashioned values still show the best way to live” (Traditionalism), and “The facts on crime and the recent public disorders show we have to crack down harder on troublemakers, if we are going to preserve law and order” (Authoritarianism). We used the 18 items (6 items per subscale that are balanced for direction) identified by Duckitt et al. (2010) for use as a short-form of the ACT Scale. Cronbach's alphas for the ACT subscales are as follows: Authoritarianism (.774), Conservatism (.816), and Traditionalism (.851).

**SDO<sub>7</sub> Scale.** The short form of the new SDO<sub>7</sub> scale presented in Ho et al. (2015) was utilized in this study. This scale contains eight items, with four per subscale (SDO-D and SDO-E), balanced for wording. Example items include “An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom” (SDO-D, pro-trait) and “Group equality should not be our goal” (SDO-E, pro-trait). Participants responded to survey items using a Likert-type format ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s alpha for the SDO-D Scale was .652. Alpha for the SDO-E scale was .767.

**Voter intention.** Participants were asked to indicate the Presidential candidate for whom they intended to vote in the election. Participants were given the options of Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Gary Johnson (Libertarian candidate), Jill Stein (Green Party candidate), Other, and Do Not Intend to Vote. Results indicate 69.4% of the sample intended to vote for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.

## Results

### *Descriptive statistics and correlations*

The means for our SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales each fell below their scale midpoints of 4 (SDO<sub>7</sub>-D:  $M = 2.778$ ,  $SD = 1.113$ ; SDO<sub>7</sub>-E:  $M = 3.109$ ,  $SD = 1.223$ ). On the other hand, the means for the ACT subscales fell around their scale midpoints of 4 (ACT-A:  $M = 4.158$ ,  $SD = 1.074$ ; ACT-C:  $M = 4.128$ ,  $SD = 1.206$ ; ACT-T:  $M = 3.834$ ,  $SD = 1.356$ ). Predictably, the SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales and ACT subscales correlated more highly within their respective scales than across them (see Table 1). Moreover, the ACT subscales correlated more highly with the ACT

**Table 1.** Correlations among ACT and SDO measures and voter intention.

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 SDO <sub>7</sub> -D	–	.588	.429	.418	.264	.423	.880	.372
2 SDO <sub>7</sub> -E		–	.407	.276	.337	.393	.902	.444
3 Authoritarianism			–	.678	.575	.854	.469	.509
4 Conservatism				–	.582	.871	.385	.380
5 Traditionalism					–	.855	.339	.519
6 ACT (full scale)						–	.457	.540
7 SDO (full scale)							–	.454
8 TC intention								–

Note: TC intention = intend to vote for Trump (coded 1) versus Clinton (coded 0). ACT: Authoritarianism-Conservatism-Traditionalism; SDO: social dominance orientation. All  $r$ 's significant,  $p < .01$ .

full scale than with the full-scale SDO<sub>7</sub>. The SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales correlated more highly with the SDO<sub>7</sub> full scale than the ACT full scale.

**Predicting voter intention: Logistic regression**

We carried out a binary logistic regression to predict intention to vote for Hillary Clinton (coded 0) or Donald Trump (coded 1) based on scores on the SDO<sub>7</sub> and ACT subscales. We also included gender identification (coded 0 = male, 1 = female) and racial identification (coded 0 = non-White, 1 = White) as covariates in the model. As noted above, persons indicating an intention to vote for either of these candidates comprised 69.4% of the sample.

The results indicated that the regression model was a good fit to the data (Model  $\chi^2(7) = 98.683, p < .001$ ; Hosmer-Lemeshow  $\chi^2(8) = 6.588, p = .582$ ; Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .561$ ). The model correctly predicted who would express an intention to vote for the two candidates with an accuracy rate of 80.7%: 80.2% of participants indicating an intention to vote for Clinton was correctly predicted to do so, whereas 81.2% of those indicating an intention to vote for Trump were correctly predicted to do so by the model.

Table 2 contains the regression coefficients and odds ratios for our logistic regression. Fully standardized ( $\beta$ ) coefficients were calculated using formula #5 in Menard (2011), allowing for assessment of the relative contributions of the predictors in explaining variation in voter intention. In the context of this study, the odds ratios represented the multiplicative change in the odds of expressing an intention to vote for Donald Trump over Clinton when the value of a predictor increased by one raw score unit (holding the remaining predictors

**Table 2.** Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients and odds ratios from logistic regression.

Predictor	<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$	<i>P</i>	Odds ratio
Gender	-.817 (-.366)	.477	-.094	.044 (one-tailed)	0.442
Racial ID	1.911 (.824)	.562	.211	.001	6.758
SDO-D	.168 (.096)	.245	.051	.492	1.183
SDO-E	.432 (.643)	.226	.143	.028 (one-tailed)	1.540
Authoritarianism	.714 (.793)	.299	.207	.017	2.041
Conservatism	-.256 (-.275)	.276	-.083	.353	.774
Traditionalism	.882 (1.206)	.211	.323	<.001	2.416

Note: Racial ID: racial identification (coded 0 = non-White identification, 1 = White identification); Gender = gender identification (coded 0 = female, 1 = male). Fully standardized ( $\beta$ ) coefficients were calculated using formula #5 in Menard (2011), allowing for assessment of the relative contributions of the predictors in explaining variation in voter intention.

constant). A positive odds ratio, therefore, signified an increasing likelihood that an individual would express the intention to vote for Trump relative to Clinton (where  $\text{odds} = P(T)/P(C)$ ) as scores increased on a given predictor. A negative odds ratio signified a decreasing likelihood of voting for Trump relative to Clinton as scores increased on a predictor.

Gender ( $p = .044$ , one-tailed) and racial identification ( $p = .001$ ) were significant predictors of intention to vote for Trump (over Clinton) in the model. These results indicated that persons identifying as female or non-White were less likely to indicate an intention to vote for Trump, as compared to Clinton. SDO-E was a significant ( $p = .028$ , one-tailed) positive predictor of intention to vote for Donald Trump, with persons expressing greater levels of anti-egalitarianism preferring him to Hillary Clinton. Persons scoring higher on Authoritarianism (ACT-A) and Traditionalism (ACT-T) expressed significantly greater ( $p$ 's  $\leq .017$ ) intention to vote for Donald Trump over Clinton. No significant differences were found in terms of voter intentions with respect to SDO-D (group-based dominance) or ACT-C (conservatism). An examination of the fully standardized regression coefficients revealed that Traditionalism was the strongest predictor in the model, followed by (in order) racial identification, Authoritarianism, Anti-Egalitarianism, and gender.

### Supplemental analyses

We ran an additional logistic regression analysis with the full-scale versions of the ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> included as predictors of voter intention (along with the gender and racial identification variables). This regression model was a good fit to the data (Model  $\chi^2(4) = 86.687$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Hosmer-Lemeshow  $\chi^2(8) = 4.607$ ,  $p = .851$ ; Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .508$ ). The model correctly predicted who would express an intention to vote for the two candidates with an accuracy rate of 82.3%. Both the full-scale ACT ( $b = 1.313$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .528$ ) and SDO<sub>7</sub> ( $b = .550$ ,  $p = .01$ ;  $\beta = .221$ ) emerged as significant predictors in the model.

Finally, we tested two additional models with either the ACT or SDO<sub>7</sub> facets included as predictors (along with the gender and racial identification variables). As in our primary analyses, ACT-A and ACT-T emerged as significant ( $p$ 's  $\leq .001$ ) predictors; yet ACT-C did not ( $p = .353$ ). On the other hand, both SDO<sub>7</sub>-D ( $p = .027$ , one-tailed) and SDO<sub>7</sub>-E ( $p < .001$ ) emerged as significant predictors in its model.

## Discussion

Research on RWA and SDO has historically measured these constructs using instruments that have treated them as unidimensional in nature. Recently, RWA and SDO have been reconceptualized and operationalized using multidimensional perspectives. RWA has been reconceptualized by Duckitt et al. (2010)

as incorporating facets of Authoritarianism, Conservatism, and Traditionalism (within their ACT model). SDO has now been reconceptualized by Ho et al. (2012, 2015) as having facets of SDO-D (dominance) and SDO-E (anti-egalitarianism).

Using newly developed measures of RWA and SDO, we sought to test the discriminant validity of the ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales, which were developed to measure the aforementioned facets. We found that several of the ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales contributed to our ability to predict voters' intentions to vote for either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. Specifically, persons scoring higher on SDO-E (Anti-egalitarianism), ACT-A (Authoritarianism), and ACT-T (Traditionalism) were significantly more likely to indicate an intention to vote for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton. These findings were consistent with our hypotheses based on the campaign platforms and rhetoric exhibited by these two candidates in the lead-up to the election.

Notably, ACT-C (Conservatism) and SDO-D (Dominance) did not emerge as significant predictors in our primary regression model. Although these variables did exhibit zero-order correlations with intentions (with  $r$ 's = .38 and .37, respectively), they nevertheless failed to account for additional variation in voter intentions after controlling for the other ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> facets. Although this study did not support the discriminant validity of the ACT-C and SDO-D facets, perhaps other studies might find evidence of their discriminability using other outcome measures of interest. Indeed, research by Duckitt et al. (2010) and Ho et al. (2015) do provide evidence for their discriminant validity—albeit not using the full slate of ACT and SDO<sub>7</sub> subscales included in the current study.

Before concluding, we would like to suggest (what we consider) a plausible explanation for why ACT-C failed to emerge as a significant predictor in our regression analyses. The ACT-C purportedly measures a person's "uncritical, respectful, support for existing societal authorities and institutions" (Duckitt & Bizumic, 2013, p. 843). Despite his celebrity status over the span of many years, Donald Trump could hardly be viewed as representing a conventional authority in society during the run-up to the election. Prior to his campaign, Mr Trump was a recognizable media personality who (among other things) had had a longstanding involvement in beauty pageants (e.g. Miss USA; Miss Universe) and starred in his own popular reality-television show, *The Apprentice*. During the Presidential campaign, Mr Trump was noted for his impropriety and lack of adherence to norms concerning "proper" social behavior, such as when he used profanity during campaign rallies, mocked a reporter with a disability, and made sexist remarks about Carly Fioriona (an opponent during the primary) and Meghan Kelly (a Fox News host who co-moderated a primary debate). Although occurring after our data were collected, Mr Trump made headline news with a 2005 videotaped exchange with a reporter in which he made



highly inappropriate sexual remarks—remarks that, at the time, garnered the ire and rebuke of Republican leaders in Congress. Collectively, these factors may have led persons scoring higher on ACT-C to perceive Mr Trump in a manner more similar to that of persons low on ACT-C—i.e. a person who does not represent a legitimate authority for whom one should vote. Perhaps if Donald Trump had entered the election by presenting himself more as a conventional authority, ACT-C may have emerged as a significant predictor, alongside the other ACT facets, in our regression analyses.

## Conclusion

We recommend researchers consider measuring RWA and SDO from a multidimensional perspective in future studies. Duckitt and colleagues and Ho and colleagues have provided useful theoretical rationales for treating RWA and SDO as multidimensional and have now provided tools to be able to measure their conceptualizations. Measuring RWA and SDO at the facet level may provide researchers with an opportunity for a more fine-grained approach to understanding how these ideological dimensions relate differentially to various outcomes within social and political psychology. Moreover, inclusion of facet scales may add to our understanding of the mechanisms underlying social and political outcomes of interest.

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