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**THE POWER OF COMBINING RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM,  
SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION, AND LOCUS OF CONTROL TO  
PREDICT PREJUDICE TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS**

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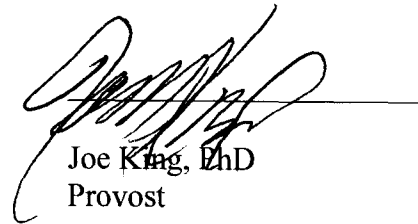
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**THE POWER OF COMBINING RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM, SOCIAL  
DOMINANCE ORIENTATION, AND LOCUS OF CONTROL TO PREDICT  
PREJUDICE TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS**

By

Bibb Allen Herrod

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University Montgomery

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Science

Montgomery, Alabama

December 14, 2013

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## Abstract

This study explores the predictive power of right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and locus of control for predicting prejudice towards immigrants. In the past, the personality constructs of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation have been used to effectively predict prejudice. Locus of control has also been used as a predictor of prejudicial feelings but with conflicting results. This study combines the three personality variables of RWA, SDO, and LOC as predictor variables on the outcome variable of Stephan's Threat Measure and Stephan's Prejudice Measure. The results showed us that the addition of LOC into the model did not better predict prejudice. The results have brought more clarity to subject of LOC and prejudice. Future studies could use a more varied sample of participants and explicit ask what kind of immigrant is being discussed.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	iv
List of Tables .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Predictors of Prejudice .....	2
Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Prejudice .....	2
Social Dominance Orientation and Prejudice .....	3
Locus of Control and Prejudice .....	3
Right-Wing Authoritarianism with Social Dominance Orientation Explored.....	4
Conflicting Studies Explored.....	5
Locus of Control with Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation .....	7
Summarization .....	8
Method .....	9
Participants .....	9
Procedure .....	9
Measures .....	10
Results .....	11
Discussion .....	14



## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

### The Power of Combining Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, and Locus of Control to Predict Prejudice Towards Immigrants

Immigration is currently an emotionally-charged issue, exacerbated by recently passed legislation in Alabama and Arizona that is extremely anti-immigration in nature. Prejudicial thinking towards immigrants has been a problem even since the start of America's multicultural founding (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999; Takaki, 1989). Negative feelings can occur whenever there are ethnic, racial, religious, or political differences. These types of feelings are termed prejudice. Allport defines prejudice as "...an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a group member." (Allport, 1954, p. 9) Historically, a portion of Americans viewed immigrants with suspicion and contempt. Some people feared the "outsider" would take their jobs and possibly their lives: This feeling is termed realistic threat. Some people feared that immigrants would replace all deeply held values of the host culture: This feeling is termed symbolic threat. Today, there are other viewpoints with positive and negative attributes intermingled. One theory argues that immigrants can be seen as a positive source of incoming change that can better America but only if the immigrants become hardworking individuals that will pull themselves up "by their bootstraps" to benefit our country and work towards the "American dream" (Katz & Haas, 1988). Another view argues that Americans see immigrants as a poorer people and more likely to commit crimes, yet consider these immigrants as socially disadvantaged who need help. However, the majority of Americans still perceive immigrants as a real or symbolic threat (Stephen et al., 1999). These viewpoints have been analyzed by psychologists via

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

testing that measures prejudice using different personality factors. The purpose of this project is to investigate whether LOC, RWA, and SDO together predict prejudice better than RWA and SDO do alone.

### **Predictors of Prejudice**

Several factors are useful as predictors of prejudice. Previously, locus of control (LOC) was thought to be an extremely influential factor but has become overshadowed by the factors of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) (Duckitt, 1984). More recently, psychologists that study prejudice focus on the personality factors of RWA and SDO for predicting prejudicial feelings (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998; Duriez & VanHiel, 2002; Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004; Heaven & Bucci, 2001; McFarland, 1998; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). These factors have been shown to be consistent predictors of prejudice (Dru, 2007). What has been rarely investigated, however, is the relationship of the factors of RWA and SDO with Locus of Control and their combined predictive power.

### **Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Prejudice**

Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) is a scale that was developed by Altemeyer in 1981 to better measure generalized prejudice than the previously used 1950's F-scale by Adorno (Altemeyer, 1981). The RWA scale focuses on three of the original nine traits of the authoritarian personality covered in Adorno's scale: conventionalism, authoritarian aggression, and authoritarian submission (Altemeyer, 1981). Duckitt (2010) stated that these traits covaried strongly to form a unitary social attitude dimension. This scale has been shown to effectively predict general prejudicial feelings for all outgroups that are

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

perceived as a threat: terrorists, drug dealers, security/safety disrupters, etc. (Cohrs & Ashbrock, 2009). In the case of homosexuality, RWA is the higher predictor of prejudice.

### **Social Dominance Orientation and Prejudice**

Despite RWA's high correlative power with prejudice, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is another factor of personality that in most cases is a stronger prejudicial predictor. The Social Dominance Orientation scale was first developed by Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) and is based on social dominance theory. This theory argues that groups and societies are organized in hierarchies of dominance and certain groups get certain advantages (or disadvantages) depending on the level of the group within the social structure (Pratto et. al, 1994). A person scoring high on the SDO scale would be one that supports this hierarchical system of social dominance. SDO has been shown to be the strongest predictor of general prejudice types except for prejudice towards homosexuality (Altemeyer, 1998).

### **Locus of Control and Prejudice**

Locus of control (LOC) is a construct that assesses the thoughts one has about who is in control of one's life. LOC has been shown to be a strong determinant of work ethic and performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they are in control of their own life's actions (Rotter, 1966). They have a strong sense of self-responsibility and tend to be self-reliant. Persons with an external locus of control believe that they are not responsible for the outcome of their own lives but that events are determined by factors that are beyond their control (i.e. a "higher" power, the government, or other unexplained phenomena). Persons having high

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

external loci of control tend to focus on others for solutions to their problems rather than themselves (Rotter, 1966).

Locus of control has also been theorized in the past to play a role in prejudicial behavior. Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) looked at external locus of control and how it related to feelings of helplessness in society. Agroskin and Jonas used this research in 2010 to come to a better understanding about how a perceived lack of control leads to ethnocentrism (prejudice).

### **Right-Wing Authoritarianism with Social Dominance Orientation Explored**

In past studies, research has been done to link personality factors with the factors of RWA and SDO (Heaven & Quirin, 2002; Sibley, Harding, Perry, Asbrock, & Duckitt, 2010). Countless studies have shown that scales of SDO and RWA, although both predictors of prejudice, measure different aspects of prejudice (Dru, 2007; Altemeyer, 1998; Heaven & Connors, 2001). SDO is theorized to measure an “active” prejudice (Altemeyer, 1998). The SDO scale seems to correlate with schemas that are about competition and survival of the fittest worldviews (Dru, 2007). Also, SDO is higher in those who are willing to commit discriminatory acts than those that have a high RWA score. Persons with a high RWA score are theorized to have a more “passive” prejudice (Altemeyer, 1998). They want others to conform to their way of life. Their search is for control, security, conformity, traditionalism, and ingroup norms. Together, these personality factors (RWA and SDO) are strongly predictive of prejudice. When these two factors were entered together into a regression equation, they accounted for over 50% of the variance for prejudice (Dru, 2007).

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

### **Conflicting Studies Explored**

The research that has been done on how one's locus of control affects right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, respectively, has resulted in differing conclusions. Cohrs and Asbrock (2009) say that a high RWA leads to prejudicial feelings. Diakonova and Gilgen in 1998 showed that having an internal locus of control is correlated with having a high RWA (therefore resulting in more prejudice). However, Duckitt in 1984 stated that having an internal locus of control results in less prejudice. These contradicting findings are puzzling.

Ojha stated in 1997 that an internal locus of control leads to having a less authoritarian personality (low RWA). Ojha's research does not line up with research that indicates that anti-authoritarian beliefs are associated with an external locus of control (McCollaun and Lester, 1995). McCollum and Lester had originally hypothesized that anti-authoritarian beliefs (low RWA) would line up with an internal locus of control, but their research showed the opposite effect. They thought that the authoritarian personality appeared to be characterized by a projection of internal desires onto others and, therefore, could be characterized by an external locus of control. However, after controlling for age and gender, this research showed that an anti-authoritarian orientation (low RWA) was associated with an external locus of control.

Also, Agroskin and Jonas (2010) showed that a perceived lack of control (external locus of control) leads to ethnocentrism and, therefore, prejudice. They stated that when there is a lack of control, a person feels the need to cling to whatever is most familiar to him or her. These feelings then lead to ethnocentrism. This process can be described as a control-restorative process (Agroskin and Jonas, 2010) and is exemplified when an out-

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

of-control feeling person seeks to reestablish control by latching on to a charismatic leader. The leader then champions the out-of-control person's cause, resulting in a created ingroup. This created group promotes feelings of togetherness and makes one forget about one's own shortcomings (Agroskin et al., 2010).

Another camp postulates that internal LOC results in higher RWA which results in more prejudice (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009). One explanation for this way of thinking is that those who are reared to have an internal locus of control also tend to be reared to have great respect for the authorities and the authorities' statutes. Perhaps in today's zeitgeist, people feel that they have more control over their environment (internal locus of control) and that this control should be exerted on others as well (RWA) (Diakonova & Gilgen, 1998). Persons with a high internal LOC believe that they can influence their surroundings and control their world. Persons high on the RWA scale also want to influence those around them and cause an effect in other people. Research has suggested that persons with high internal LOC will put themselves into positions that they will be able to control (Spector, 1982). Perhaps this is the reason for the higher number on the RWA scale. If persons would willingly choose to put themselves in positions wherein they have control, the increase of RWA score would be expected.

Additionally, these inconsistencies are seen in folk psychology ("gut instincts") and cause confusion. Folk psychology tends to agree with the postulations made by Duckitt in 1984 and not the ideas of Diakonova. According to folk psychology (in agreement with Duckitt), RWA would be more closely associated with an external locus of control rather than an internal locus of control. The reason for this belief is that the internal locus of control is about taking responsibility for one's own actions which does

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

not fit with Right-Wing authoritarianism. RWA's authoritarian submission personality factor (one of the three previously mentioned factors of RWA) seems to run counter to having an internal locus of control because this type person would be one that does not submit to any authority but his or her own. Also, folk psychology would suggest that someone who believes in a higher power's control would put more trust in the government, resulting in higher RWA. A possible reason for this supposed incongruence would be that a common aspect of high RWA and internal LOC is the desire for influence and control. These conflicting discoveries and ideas exemplify the need for further investigation of the relationship between LOC and RWA and their ability to predict prejudice.

### **Locus of Control with Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation**

RWA and SDO have been used together as predictors of prejudice. Yet, LOC has never been included with both of these predictive factors in the same study despite the fact that LOC correlates with both factors in other studies. The locus of control style that one would expect from a person with high RWA and/or high SDO is not consistent with some previous research findings (McCollaun et al, 1995; Diakonova et al., 1998). From the research gathered in this project, it is evident that the issue of LOC's relationship with RWA and SDO for predicting prejudice is not clear.

LOC is the measure of how one exhibits control and how one derives the source of that control. Both RWA and SDO have elements of control, but neither explore the source of perceived or actual control. A person's LOC is related to one's attitudes towards work and life, and it brings to bear a different aspect of prejudice – control,

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

whereas RWA involves authoritarian aggression, submission, and conventionalism. RWA expresses some elements of control through the submission to the control of an authority. SDO measures how much one believes that we need the hierarchical structure of “greater thans” and “less thans.” SDO has elements of control because the “greater thans” control the “lesser thans” through resources and power. However, with LOC, we can discover what type of locus corresponds with which prejudicial predictor. Exploring this relationship further can provide a better assessment of prejudice. If LOC combined with RWA and SDO is a stronger predictor of prejudice, we can have a better understanding of the components of prejudice.

### **Summarization**

In summary, RWA and SDO have been good predictors of all types of prejudice including prejudice towards immigrants (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). However, research has shown that the results involving LOC are conflicting. Individuals who score high on RWA scales tend to score high on scales measuring internal locus of control (Diakonova et al., 1998). However, those that score high on internal locus of control also score low on scales of prejudice (Duckitt 1984). Duckitt’s research agrees with the postulations of folk psychology. In contrast with Duckitt, those that score high on external locus of control tend to have anti-authoritarian attitudes (McCollaum et al., 1995). The current study suggests that there is a link between LOC, RWA, and SDO that has not been thoroughly investigated, and it seeks to explore this relationship further. We hypothesize that including LOC with the variables of RWA and SDO will better predict prejudice than using RWA and SDO alone.



## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Participants were 131 undergraduates at a mid-sized public university in the Southeastern United States. There were 59 males and 74 females. The sample was comprised of 60% Caucasian, 36% African-Americans, and 4% other ethnicities. The ages ranged from 17 to 41 and the mean age was 20 years old and the median age was 19. The religious affiliation for the sample was 72% Protestant, 15% no preference/no religious affiliation, 6% Catholic, 2% Muslim, 2% Agnostic/unsure, 1% Buddhist, and 3% preferred not to say. Among the religiously affiliated, 25% claimed very active, 38% claimed to be somewhat active, 20% were not very active, 9% were not active, and 7% said it did not apply or preferred not to say. Apart from weddings and funerals, 12% said they attended services more than once a week, 28% said they attended religious services once a week, 27% attended once a month, 19% attended a few times a year, and 13% said they never attended services. In terms of political views, 29% of all participants were unsure of their political choice, 19% said they were strong conservative, 17% said moderate, 10% said they were moderate leaning conservative, 9% said they were not so strong conservative, and 15% were more liberal in their political choices.

#### **Procedure**

Participants were recruited from students enrolled in general introductory psychology classes. Their participation fulfilled a research requirement of the class and an alternate assignment was provided for students who chose not to participate. The order of scale presentation was counter-balanced to prevent order effects. The participants were run in groups of 4-5.

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

### Measures

**Right Wing Authoritarianism.** Participants completed the 22-item RWA scale by Altemeyer (1981). The scale measures attitudes of conventionalism, (eg., “The ‘old-fashioned ways’ still show the best way to live.”), authoritarian submission (eg., “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.”), and authoritarian aggression (eg., “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.”). The RWA scale is a continuous scale. Higher scores on this scale indicate a greater degree of Right-Wing Authoritarianism. The scale is reliable as indicated by a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.88 (Agroskin & Jonas, 2010).

**Social Dominance Orientation.** Participants completed the 16-item SDO scale (SDO-6) by Sidanius and Pratto (1999). This scale uses a 7-point Likert scale for each item and participants rated their agreement with each item, 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree (Social Dominance, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This scale has a good reliability as indicated by a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.92 (Heaven et al, 2010).

**Locus of Control.** Participants completed the 23-item (plus an additional 6 filler items) forced-choice scale of Rotter’s (1966). This scale has been shown to measure people’s belief of the amount of control they have over their own lives. It has been cited a myriad of times by different studies and its validity is well established (e.g. Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Quick, Wright, Adkins, Nelson, & Quick, 2013; DeTienne, Agle, Phillips, & Ingerson, 2012). The locus of control scale is continuous. Scoring low on this test indicates that one has an internal locus of control and scoring high indicates an

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

external locus of control. This scale has good reliability as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70. (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006).

**Prejudice.** The aforementioned measures were used to predict prejudice, as measured by the Stephan prejudice measure and Stephan threat measure (Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). The threat measure is a 24-item test that measures a person's perceived threat of an immigrant and uses a 10-point Likert scale. The prejudice measure is a 12-item test that measures a person's level of prejudice and uses a 10-point Likert scale. These scales have good reliability as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 (Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, & Biagas, Jr., 2011).

### Results

Prior to running regression analyses, correlations among the three predictor variables were assessed. As can be seen in Table 1, none of the correlation coefficients exceeded .53, indicating that the three predictor variables were either moderately correlated (RWA and SDO) or not related (LOC with RWA and SDO). There was no significance with the variable LOC and any other variable.

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

Table 1

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the Three Predictor Variables*

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	Pearson Correlation Coefficient		
	SDO	RWA	LOC
SDO	—	0.41*	0.08
RWA	0.41*	—	-0.05
LOC	0.08	-0.05	—

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\*  $p < .0001$

Next, a multivariate regression was conducted using scores on the RWA scale, the SDO scale, and LOC scale to predict scores on the Stephan Threat Measure (STM) and Stephan Prejudice Measure (SPM). When LOC was included as a predictor of the two prejudice measures, the overall  $F$  was significant  $F(3, 105) = 19.95, p < .0001$ . As can be seen in Table 2, LOC did not contribute a significant amount of variation predicting prejudice.

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

Table 2

*Multiple Regression Analysis of the Variables*

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	Multiple Regression	
	<i>F</i> value of STM	<i>F</i> value of SPM
SDO	17.83*	27.27*
RWA	17.00*	7.00*
LOC	0.20	0.01

---

\*  $p < .0001$

When LOC was included as a predictor of the two prejudice measures, the overall  $F$  was smaller than when the LOC was omitted from the model  $F(3, 105) = 30.05$ ,  $p < .0001$ . As can be seen in Table 3, adding LOC into the model did not increase predictability of prejudice. Thus, the hypothesis that LOC, RWA, and SDO together would predict prejudice better than RWA and SDO alone is not supported.

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

Table 3

*Overall F Values of the Multiple Regression*

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Multiple Regression	
Overall <i>F</i> value	
STM without LOC	30.05*
STM with LOC	19.95*
SPM without LOC	28.86*
STM with LOC	19.07*

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\*  $p < .0001$

### **Discussion**

The goal of this study is to find evidence that LOC with RWA and SDO better predict prejudice than RWA and SDO alone. The results indicate that LOC in conjunction with RWA and SDO does not do a better job predicting prejudice than RWA and SDO alone do.

There are several possible reasons for this result. One such reason is simply that LOC is not a factor in predicting prejudice. The connections made in the literature between ethnocentrism, prejudice, and LOC with RWA and SDO may have been too tenuous. In Agroskin and Jonas' 2010 study, individuals who did not feel in control of their economic and political situation were more ethnocentric. Perhaps ethnocentrism only occurs when an individual feels out of control specifically in the area of economics and politics. In the current study, LOC does not increase predictability, perhaps because

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

perception of control is not an aspect of predicting prejudice. It seems that being in control or out of control of one's own life may not affect how one views immigrants. Originally, it was thought that LOC would add to the prediction of prejudice because LOC is about control, and a person not in control feels vulnerable to new things (Agroskin & Jonas, 2010). Individuals with an internal LOC feel that their own actions are in control of their lives and those with an external control feel that others' actions are in control of their lives. The connection between high internal LOC and low prejudicial feelings was supposed since the feeling of being more in control of one's life, would make one feel less threatened by outside cultural influences. Conversely, those with an external LOC would feel more threatened from outside sources. However, this postulation was not supported.

Another possibility for LOC not contributing to predicting prejudice is that Americans overall feel much more in control of their lives than in the past and there is less difference between internal and external LOC persons today than in the past (Diakonova and Gilgen, 1998). Also, LOC has a strong cognitive focus (Lefcourt, 1992) whereas prejudice is more unconsciously categorizing the world rather than blatantly doing so (Allport, 1954).

This study is not without its limitations. The study could have been improved by getting a more varied sample of participants. All of the participants were attendees of a southeastern university in Alabama who were largely Christian (78%). Of that 78%, 8% were Catholic and 92% were Protestant which does not match the national statistics (51% and 24% respectively). Many of these participants were unsure about their feelings on politics (29%) and because RWA seems to be closely affiliated with conservative beliefs

## PREDICTING PREJUDICE

(Altemeyer, 1998), it would possibly be more fitting to have more varied political views amongst the participants. The participants' not being sure of what they believe politically may be correlated to them not being sure about their feelings towards others, specifically immigrants. Their apathy in politics may also reflect a lack in care towards other people. This ambiguity and apathy in ideals may also be a cause for LOC not adding to the prediction. Also, priming the participants with a specific immigrant group to consider before taking the STM and SPM may bring about stronger results.

The previous research on LOC combined with RWA and SDO has been conflicting. Some studies showed that LOC has an effect and other studies did not show an effect. It now seems that feelings of prejudice and prejudicial threat are not related to how one perceives control in one's own life. This study brings about more clarity on this subject. With further study, it may be possible to discover if there are conditions under which LOC would actually have an effect on predicting prejudice with RWA and SDO.



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