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Exploration of the Victoroff Oppression Questionnaire
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Abstract: The Victoroff Oppression Questionnaire is examined and found to have good reliability. It also has consistent validity as a measure of what appears to be an antisocial view of the world, as scores on this instrument are consistently correlated positively with antisocial traits and negatively with pro-social measures.

Introduction:

The Oppression Questionnaire (OQ) is a 32-item scale measuring feelings of oppression within an individual taking the questionnaire (16 items) and attributes of oppression by a group perceived by this person as oppressive (16 items). The scale was written by Jeff Victoroff, M.D., a psychiatrist who has a private practice and teaches at U.S.C. in Los Angeles. The scale also asks by whom one feels oppressed (parents, the police, another government, another religion, etc.), and for what reason (my race or ethnic group, my religion, my sexual orientation, etc.).

When the present author met Dr. Victoroff, the OQ had been administered to only one sample, 52 14-year old children in the Gaza Strip. The author, skilled in questionnaire design, offered to do the present study to help explore the reliability and validity properties of the OQ. Dr. Victoroff kindly granted permission and provided his original data file for analysis as part of the present study. His data file consisted of item scores for the 32 OQ items and scores on the Beck Depression and Anxiety scales.

Method:

The present author created a 163-questionnaire in 5-option Likert scale format consisting of the following :

Items 1-80: The present author=s Social Disenfranchisement Scale. This scale measures the 5 Eidelson worldviews (Helplessness, Vulnerability, Injustice, Distrust and Superiority) at both

the individual and group level. It has been found to correlate positively with several global antisocial traits, including warmongering, and negatively with several pro-social traits: Human rights endorsement, Sustainability endorsement, and Positive Foreign Policy Endorsement.

The OQ (32 items).

The present author=s 12-item Terrorism Endorsement scale, which correlates .64 with violence-proneness.

The author=s 10-item Warmongering scale, which correlates positively with violence-proneness (.67), Social Disenfranchisement (.74), Military Dictatorship Endorsement (.57), Right Wing Authoritarianism (.59), Social Dominance Orientation (.46) and Religious Fundamentalism (.60), and negatively with human rights endorsement (-.51), sustainability endorsement (-.69) and endorsement of a positive foreign policy (-.74).

Four general national government orientation items: (e.g. AOur nation should be guided by the principle: >Might makes right; survival of the fittest.@).

5 government type endorsement items ranging from anarchy to participatory democracy.

5 items measuring the Big Five personality traits.

5 items measuring belief that one belongs to Aa group that is treated differently and unpleasantly because of my or our...

Race or ethnic group

Religion or spiritual beliefs

Gender

Sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, etc.)

Some other reason.@

These items were created to capture content informally solicited in the original Victoroff questionnaire.

10 items measuring mistreatment by parents, teachers, the police, another government, members of another religion, members of the opposite sex, etc. These items were created also to capture more content informally solicited in the original Victoroff instrument.

The 163-item instrument was administered to 35 church members in return for a lecture about the findings. The persons ranged in age from 27 to 87, mean 63.6, standard

deviation 14.0, and in education from 8 to 24 years (mean 15.9). 24 percent were males. They were from a mainstream church (one of these: Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian or Lutheran).

Findings.

The many scales and subscales measured in this study had generally acceptable spreads of scores and thus adequate reliabilities, as presented in the table below. Explanations follow the chart.

Basic Statistics of Scales Measured.

Scale	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Sd.	Alpha
SD Ind. distrust	35	10	27	17.2	16.9	.73
Gp. dist.	35	13	30	20.1	4.6	.67
SD Ind. helpless	35	16	25	19.4	2.6	.70
Gp. help.	35	8	24	14.4	4.7	.87
SD Ind. injustice	35	8	26	16.9	4.8	.79
Gp. Inj.	35	8	25	18.3	5.4	.78
SD Ind. vulnerab.	35	8	23	15.5	4.4	.83
Gp. vul.	35	9	24	16.1	4.6	.74
SD Ind. superior.	35	15	28	19.4	3.5	.77
Gp	35	16	29	21.9	2.6	.59
SD Individ. total	35	58	113	88.4	15.3	.92
SD Group total	35	62	117	90.9	17.0	.89
SD Total	35	120	229	179.3	30.5	.95
OQ Felt oppress.	34	16	48	34.5	9.9	.95
OQ Attributed	34	14	46	32.2	9.24	.95

oppression.						
OQ Total	34	30	94	66.8	18.7	.97
Terrorism End.	35	12	36	14.37	5.0	.91
Warmongering	35	10	29	13.7	4.9	.86
Big 5 Extroverts.	35	1	5	3.34	1.24	
A Agreeableness	35	2	5	4.06	.80	
A Conscientiousn.	35	2	5	3.83	.98	
A Emot. stability	35	2	5	3.94	.73	.89
A Openness	35	1	5	4.0	.87	
Authority Paranoia-8	35	8	32	14.2	6.53	.93
GayLes Persec-2	35	2	8	3.1	2.73	.86

The ASD@ scales are ASocial Disenfranchisement@, the present author=s term for the dimensions of the Eidelson worldviews. They are measured at the individual and group levels respectively, for a total of 10 scale measures and scores for total individual disenfranchisement, total group disenfranchisement and grand total disenfranchisement. The Cronbach alpha reliabilities of the total scores at the individual level (.92), group level (.89) and for the total SD scale (.95) are quite adequate.

The Victoroff basic scale scores are OQ Feelings of Oppression, OQ Attributes of oppressing organizations and a total OQ score comprised of these two. The reliabilites of these scales are all excellent in this study (.95, .95 and .97).

The reliabilites of the Terrorism scale (.91) and Warmongering scale (.86) are also good. The spread of scores for the Big Five measures also appear adequate. For example, the KR-21 reliability of the scale with the lowest spread (Emotional Stability, s.d. .73) is .89.

8 of the 10 items created to capture sources of oppression provided a very reliable measure of what the present author calls AAuthority Paranoia@, alpha .93.

The two items created to capture feelings of oppression related to gay or lesbian status and sexual orientation problems provide a reliable measure of this dimension (.86).

Thus, the OQ scales provide very reliable measures of the several content areas addressed by their items.

Validity Data.

To assess the validity of the OQ two data analyses were performed, correlations within the present study between the OQ scales and the other variables and a comparison of the mean item scores on the OQ for the present sample of U.S. churchgoers and Victoroff=s initial data sample of 52 14-year-olds living in the Gaza Strip in the Middle East.

Correlations for the present study are presented below, with * meaning significant at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level.

Correlations between Felt Oppression, Attributed Oppressiveness, Authority Paranoia and Gay/Lesbian Persecution versus Other Scale Variables.

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Felt Oppres.</u>	<u>Attrib. Oppr.</u>	<u>Authority Paranoia</u>	<u>Gay/Lesb. persecution</u>
1. SD Ind. distrust	.53**	.49**	.42**	.19
2. Gp. dist.	.39*	.22	.23	.28
3. SD Ind. helpless	.36*	.28	.31	.57**
4. Gp. help.	.58**	.56**	.38*	.37*
5. SD Ind. injustice	.51**	.50*	.47**	.09
6. Gp. Inj.	.80**	.79**	.53**	.31
7. SD Ind. vulnerab.	.51**	.53**	.47**	.19
8. Gp. vul.	.58**	.62**	.52**	.34*
9. SD Ind. superior.	.44**	.44**	.66**	.34*

10. Gp. sup.	.38*	.46**	.38*	.24
11. SD Individ. total	.63**	.60**	.61**	.31
12. SD Group total	.74**	.71**	.53**	.40*
13. SD Total	.73**	.70**	.60**	.38*
14. OQ Felt oppress.	1.00	.92**	.51**	.29
15. OQ Attributed oppression.	.92**	1.00	.48**	.27
16. OQ Total	.98**	.98**	.50**	.29
17. Terrorism End.	.37*	.41*	.52**	.21
18. War-mongering	.46**	.40*	.17	.13
19. Big 5 Extrovers.	-.20	-.22	.08	.14
20. A Agreeable-ness	-.33	-.38*	-.45**	-.27
21. A Conscientiousness	-.17	-.14	-.39*	-.21
22. A Emot. stability	-.36*	-.43*	-.28	-.10
23. A Openness	-.26	-.15	-.20	-.33
24. Authority Paranoia-8	.51**	.48**	1.00	.41
25. GayLes Persec-2	.29	.27	.41	1.00

Discussion of Validity correlations of Victoroff OQ scales with other primary measures (scale scores).

There are many significant correlations between the Felt and Attributed Oppression (OQ) measures and the sub-scales of the Social Disenfranchisement measures (rows 1-10) and summarized in the total scores (rows 11-13). The summary correlations of .63, .74 and .73 for Felt Oppression are quite substantial, as they are for Attributed Oppressiveness (.60, .71 and .70). The highest correlations are with the Group Injustice sub-scale of the Social Disenfranchisement battery (row 6), .80 and .79. These correlations appear to support the OQ scales as measures of feelings of injustice in particular and social disenfranchisement in general.

Social Disenfranchisement appears from other studies to be a measure of antisocial tendencies, not simply feelings of unhappiness or resentful views of the world caused directly by hard life experiences. Thus, we would expect the OQ scales to correlate with other variables that would reflect antisocial tendencies. And, indeed, this is the case.

For example, the OQ scales correlate significantly with Terrorism endorsement (row 17, .37* and .41*). Persons who feel oppressed and see social organizations as oppressive tend also to endorse terrorism as a response to that oppression. They also endorse warmongering as a response, as reflected in the significant correlations between the OQ scales and warmongering (row 18, .46** and .40*).

The antisocial element of the OQ scales is further reflected in negative correlations with the Big Five personality traits, which many studies have documented are associated with pro-social behavior, such as constructive job attitudes and success. In the present study, all the correlations are negative, three at a statistically significant level (rows 19-22).

The OQ scales also correlate significantly with the 8-item Authority Paranoia measure, which reflects a perception of persons in positions of authority as having mistreated oneself. The correlations are in row 24 (.51** and .48**).

Further evidence of the antisocial nature of the content measured by the OQ scales is evident in correlations between them and additional items included in this study, presented in the table below. The content of the questionnaire items included is as follows:

My national government should do what best serves the interests of...

- A B C D E 135. ...all the citizens of our nation considered together more than any one special interest group (business, labor, the elderly, etc.).
- A B C D E 136. ... our nation=s interests, at the expense of other nations, enforced by military action if necessary.
- A B C D E 137. Our nation should be guided by the principle: AMight makes right; survival of the fittest.@
- A B C D E 138. Our nation should be guided by the principle: ACooperate, compromise and help others; survival of the kindest.@

Please rate the five forms of government below as to how desirable you think they are. Use this code:

A	B	C	D	E
Very undesirable	Undesirable	Neutral	Desirable	Very desirable

- A B C D E 139. Anarchy. No government at all, just roving bands of armed bandits who rob, kill and do whatever they want.
- A B C D E 140. Military dictatorship, headed by a powerful military leader to controls everything and everyone in the country and prevents anyone else from replacing him.
- A B C D E 141. Monarchy, headed by a king or queen, with a supportive parliament of elected representatives. They run the country as they Abenevolently@ see fit.
- A B C D E 142. Tribal democracy. Elected officials run the government to serve the short -term economic interests of the special interest groups (Aeconomic tribes@) which helped them get elected.
- A B C D E 143. Public democracy. Elected officials run the government to serve the current and long-term best interests of the community overall, including sustainable programs such as conservation of resources and control of pollution and global warming. No one special interest group or groups are favored.

Correlations between Major Study Scales and Items about Government.

<u>Item</u>	<u>SD Ind</u>	<u>SD Gp</u>	<u>Felt OQ</u>	<u>Att OQ</u>	<u>Terrorism endsmt.</u>	<u>Warmon-gering</u>
135. All citizens vs. spec. inter.	-.17	-.20	-.20	-.20	-.11	-.11
136. Military action if necess.	.32	.47**	.47*	.31	.14	.01

137. Might makes right.	.28	.49**	.35*	.21	.33	.45**
138. Cooperate and compromise.	-.56**	-.58**	-.39*	-.36*	-.33	-.40*
139. Anarchy endorsement.	.24	.31	.28	.32	.80**	.35*
140. Military dictatorship endsmt.	.25	.37*	.28	.25	.64**	.58**
141. Monarchy endorsement.	.04	.18	.23	.37.	.34*	.02
142. Tribal democracy endsmt.	.39*	.52**	.38*	.34	.52**	.52**
143. Public democracy endsmt.	-.32	-.50**	-.37*	-.38*	-.57**	-.57**

By row we see that all of the six major scales correlated negatively but not statistically significantly with item 135, promoting government serving the community overall versus special interest groups. Felt Oppression and Social Disenfranchisement at the group level correlate significantly with item 136, reflecting a selfish, militaristic foreign policy. In item 137 we see that an even more aggressive militaristic foreign policy is endorsed by persons higher on Social Disenfranchisement at the group level (.49**), higher on Felt Oppression (.35*) and higher on warmongering (.45**). Item 138 reflects a converse foreign policy of cooperating and compromising with other nations, which is consistently disavowed by persons higher on all of the six scales.

In terms of government type endorsements, we see in items 139-143 data that is consistent with prior research findings by the author:
 Anarchy is endorsed by terrorists and warmongers.
 Military dictatorship tends to be endorsed strongest by warmongers and terrorists but also by persons higher on the other four scale measures.
 Monarchy is endorsed in this study by persons higher on terrorism.
 Tribal democracy, government serving special interest groups, tends to be rather consistently endorsed by persons higher on all of the six scales.
 In contrast, a new, hypothetical form of democracy serving the best interests of the community overall, as opposed to any special interest groups is consistently disavowed by persons higher on the six scales.

In summary, this data appears to document the felt oppression and perceived oppressiveness measured by the Victoroff scales as reflections of antisocial tendencies. Persons who feel oppressed and who see social organizations as oppressive tend to have antisocial attitudes about government.

Warmongering itself correlated with the other variables in a manner consistent with prior findings by the author:

Correlations between Warmongering and Other Variables.

Variable	Correlation
Social Disenfranchisement, Individual, Total score	.33
Soc. Dis., Group Total	.57**
Soc. Dis. Overall Total	.48**
Felt Oppression	.46**
Attributed Oppression	.40*
Total Oppression Score	.44**
Terrorism Endorsement	.33
Extroversion	.08
Agreeableness	-.24
Conscientiousness	-.08
Emotional Stability	-.06
Openness	.05

Comparing 34 U.S. Churchgoers to 52 Gaza Strip Teenagers= Oppression Scores.

Another way to explore the meaning of the Victoroff scales is comparing the scores of his data for 52 14-year olds living in the Gaza Strip in the Middle East with the churchgoers from Eugene, Oregon. If we view the OQ scales as likely to reflect external social and political conditions, we would expect the Gaza Strip persons to feel more oppressed than Eugene churchgoers. The two groups were compared, with data below:

T-Test comparison of Two Groups of 34 churchgoers
versus 52 Gaza Strip residents.

<u>Scale</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u> <u>U.S.</u> <u>Church</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Deviation</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u> <u>Gaza</u> <u>Strip</u>	<u>Standard</u> <u>Deviation</u>	<u>t score</u>	<u>Variance</u> <u>of mean</u> <u>differenc</u> <u>es</u>	<u>Signific</u> <u>ant?</u>
Felt op- pression	34	34.5	9.87	52	36.8	13.87	-.83	155	No
Attributed op- pressive- ness	34	32.2	9.24	52	34.3	12.17	-.84	123	No
Total op- pression	34	66.8	18.72	52	71.1	24.93	-.85	515	No

Thus, while it may seem strange, there is no significant difference between the American churchgoers and Gaza Strip teenagers. The Gaza Strip teenagers live in a country where the media report not infrequent terrorist bombings, etc., while no such events plague citizens of Eugene, Oregon. This suggests that the OQ scales do not reflect objective social reality so much as personal perceptions of social events, perceptions heavily personalized by underlying antisocial tendencies.

Perhaps if a child feels loved by his parents or other adults, family members and/or peers, he or she can weather community violence without feeling Aoppressed@. If the person has been mistreated by parents or others, he/she may then be predisposed to perceive social stress and political threat from the perspective of an antisocial, retaliatory person.

The Authority Paranoia scale created by 8 questionnaire items provides a measure of such apparent mistreatment and subsequent generalization to all authorities. The correlations between this scale and the other variables might help throw light on this issue. They are presented below:

Correlations between Authority Paranoia and other Variables.

Variable	Correlation with Authority Paranoia
Soc Dis. Individ. Total	.61**
Soc Dis. Group Total	.53**
Soc. Dis Grand Total	.60**
Felt Oppression	.51**
Attributed Oppression	.48**
Terrorism Endorsement	.52**
Warmongering	.17
Big Five Extroversion	.08
Big Five Agreeableness	-.45**
Big Five Conscientiousness	-.39*
Big Five Emotional Stability	-.28
Big Five Openness	-.20
Gay/Lesbian Paranoia	.41*

Thus, we see a strong correlation consistently between many measures of antisocial tendencies and authority paranoia. There are also significant correlations with two of the Big Five traits, complicating the picture. Similar correlations have been found by the author between antisocial behavior in general and these Big Five traits, especially Agreeableness. Perhaps genetically disagreeable and lazy persons elicit negative reactions from parents which escalate into significant perceptions by children of parents as Aoppressive@. This then generalizes to negative attitudes toward authority figures in general and toward government of benevolent and kindly type (public democracy). Government by minority control, especially military dictatorship, or no government at all (anarchy), is endorsed by socially disenfranchised, paranoid persons, perhaps as a fantasy expression of desires for rebellion or retaliation against what is perceived in other spheres as oppressive authority.

Anxiety, Depression and Felt and Perceived Oppression.

In Victoroff=s Gaza Strip sample, scores on the Beck Depression and Anxiety scales were available. The correlations between them and the OQ scores are presented below:

Scale	Beck Depression	Beck Anxiety
Felt Oppression	.29*	.31*
Perceived Oppression	.27	.28*

Thus, we see a positive relationship between felt and perceived oppression on the one hand and symptoms of emotional instability on the other. These findings are consistent with the correlations between oppression and the Big Five Emotional Stability score (-.36* and -.43*), above. Thus, low Emotional Stability, along with low Agreeableness and low Conscientiousness may contribute to the origins of problems with parents and other authorities, problems which then color perceptions of the world, seeing it as an oppressive place against which to rebel.

Conclusion:

The Victoroff scales have good reliability and validity as measures of felt and perceived Aoppression@. The present data suggest that this oppression seems to reflect an underlying antisocial disposition.

Thus, by implication, some persons apparently can live in a socially chaotic, physically dangerous community and not feel Aoppressed@.

Perhaps persons who do not have conflicts with authority stemming from childhood, or have been able to resolve or compensate for such conflicts, are able to weather life=s greater stressors without resentment and retaliation. By implication, terrorism and war does not necessarily generate a retaliatory response from oppressed persons. Only those with underlying anti-authority problems may be the ones most prone to counter-productive feelings and responses, such as excessive military action rather than other more peace-promoting responses.