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An Inquiry on Ethnic Humor, Anomie, and Authoritarianism:

How Sociological and Psychological Factors Influence Ethical Perception of Ethnic Jokes
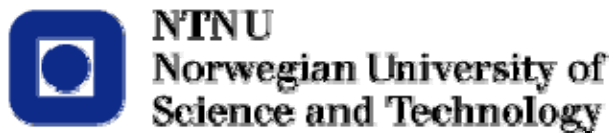
Master's thesis in psychology

Trondheim, Spring 2011

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social Sciences
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Summary of Papers

Paper I: **Validation of Moral Authority Scale-Revised in Persian: Criterion Validity and Internal Consistency**
Teymoori, A., Wan Shahrazad, W.S., Heydari, A., E. Fardzadeh, H. (in press). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 78: 819-928.

Paper II: **Relationship between Socioeconomic Status, Anomie, and Authoritarianism.**
Heydari, A., Teymoori, A., Nasiri, H., Ebad Fardzadeh, H. (2011). e-Bangi: *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7 (1), pp 000-000. *pkukmweb.ukm.my/e-bangi/papers/2012/arash012.pdf*

Paper III: **Socioeconomic Status, Perceived Parental Control, and Authoritarianism: On the Development of Authoritarianism.**
Heydari, A., Teymoori, A., Ebad Fardzadeh, H., Mokhtaran, R. (submitted).

Paper IV: **Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor (EATEH). Development of a New Scale.**
E.Fardzadeh, H. Heydari, Biegler, R., A., Pfuhl, G., Teymoori, A., (submitted)

Paper V: **Sociological Indicators of Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor.**
E.Fardzadeh, H. Heydari, Biegler, R., A., Pfuhl, G., Teymoori, A., (submitted)

Paper VI: **Why Some People Object to Ethnic Jokes? A Psychological Inquiry to Ethnic Jokes**
E. Fardzadeh, H. Teymoori, A., Biegler, R., Heydari, A., Pfuhl, G. (submitted)

Dedication

Dedicated to my mother and father for their insatiable love that lights my way and gives me the courage and strength to carry on.

Acknowledgements

A big expression of thanks deserves my supervisor, **Robert Biegler**. Robert's enthusiasm and dedication to science and more importantly, his ethical and philosophical thoughts toward humanity has had tremendous impact on my perception of science and its ends. This work could not be accomplished without kind support of **Gerit Pfuhl** as well. In practice, she was my second supervisor, though unpaid. I appreciate all of her kind support, critiques, and key points she gave me. Warmest thanks to my dear friends and colleagues **Arash Heydari** and **Ali Teymoori**.

Always an open door and good advice provided **Berit Johanneson**.

I also would like to warmly thank **Leif Edward Kennair** and **Odin Hjemdal** for their endless support. If I could successfully finish my thesis, it is only because of their generous help.

Haghish E. Fardzadeh

Trondheim, July 2011

Personal Statement

Hereby I declare that all articles in this thesis are original research articles carried out by me and my colleagues. On those papers where I am the first and corresponding author, I had the main responsibility in the research and I did most of the work (e.g. I proposed the original idea, research questions, design, and carried out the literature review and writing). I had less responsibility for Articles II and III, where I am neither the first nor the corresponding author. There, my contribution was literature review and writing.

Writing a Master's thesis is a huge challenge. I am so grateful to see all those difficulties have come to fruition and my thesis is accomplished. Writing journal article papers instead of a monograph seemed to be an inspiring choice for me. I decided to write journal papers to obtain the confidence, knowledge, and skills of carrying out and publishing research articles. I was also hoping that writing journal papers will give me a better background for the time I apply for PhD scholarships. Since I was very much afraid about how an article-base thesis should look like, I spent extra time to write all the journal papers in a publishable shape. Fortunately, all articles of this thesis are submitted to journals so far and I am glad that two of them have already been accepted for publication. Besides, I wrote my thesis based on PhD theses i.e. I tried to provide an overview toward the journal papers, write about their objectives and point out the most important results in different chapters. Although I could have finished a monograph with less work, accomplishing these journal articles gave me the confidence for obtaining a PhD.

Haghish E. Fardzadeh

Trondheim, Oct 2011

Summary

For over a century, jokes have been considered serious narratives indicating shared attitudes, beliefs, or conflicts that are ripped from the community's mind. Notably, people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes has been ignored in humor studies. The purpose of the current thesis is twofold: a) developing a scale for measuring people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor and b) exploring sociological and psychological factors that relate to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. In brief, paper I evaluates the reliability and validity of a Persian version of the Moral Authority Scale (MAS-R), and papers II and III explore how anomie, socioeconomic status, parenting style, and authoritarianism relate to each other. These articles do not directly touch on ethnic humor, but provide background for how sociological variables interact with each other and influence personality traits. Paper IV develops a new scale for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic humor and evaluates its reliability and validity. Article V and VI investigate how sociological and psychological variables relate to ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. In general, the thesis shows how psycho-social factors interact and influence perception of ethnic humor. Furthermore, this sheds light on the manifestation of ethnic rivalries expressed in ethnic humor.

Contents

Introduction

My interest in studying ethics of jokes began with a funny picture. A few years ago I came across the drawing below in a joke website depicting a pole dancer. The descriptions had it that in a classroom, primary school children were asked to draw their favorite future occupation and a little girl has drawn a stripper, saying "when I grow up, I want to be like mommy!"

Regardless of how funny the joke is and whether it is really drawn by a child, I got inspired by people's comments on this picture. Some people were so touched by the picture; they empathized with the child and felt sorry for such an honest and innocent illustration that touches on sexism. In contrast, others found the picture very funny and laughed at the idea of the picture. In addition, they also condemned those who objected to the picture, calling it dirty. By reading those comments I realized that people have different attitudes toward clean or dirty jokes. For me, however, the question was that what makes some people to enjoy a joke and others to find it cruel. The current thesis addresses this question.

1.1   Serious content of Jokes

Similar to any narrative, jokes differ in language structure and content. Whereas the structure of jokes has been studied in linguistics to find out how language tricks can fool the audience and bring laughter, psychologists have shown more interest in analyzing the content of jokes. Underscoring the dirty content of canny, sexist, and racist jokes has made social scientists see jokes not only as funny narratives but also as a serious topic. Over a century ago, Sigmund Freud (1976) sorted jokes into different classes and focused on *"tendentious jokes"* that he considered to include a purpose above the *"innocent humor."* In his point of view, what makes innocent humor funny are linguistic tricks that surprise or fool the audience, whereas tendentious jokes go beyond aesthetic facets of humor and implicitly reflect words, feelings, or beliefs that cannot be easily told. On the one hand, Freud linked the purposeful content of tendentious jokes to repressed desires such as sexual and aggression instincts and, on the other hand, to social needs such as freedom vs. authority, wealth vs. poverty, and the like. Freud saw in jokes a mirror of the psychological and sociological anxieties of the *"popular mind"*, i.e. jokes express anxieties and hidden conflicts but also wishes. His approach to humor has been followed by a large body of empirical research, not only in psychology, but also in sociology, anthropology, and linguistics as I will discuss later in the articles.

Jokes seem to be taken more seriously when they tease racial and ethnic groups. Racist and sexist jokes are a good example of this type of humor because they directly ascribe disgraceful or immoral stereotypes to a group of people. Additionally, bad-taste jokes have serious consequences that can hurt feelings of the mentioned ethnicities and encourages inter-group hatred (Asgharzadeh, 2007). An example of a bad-taste ethnic humor was publication of 12 cartoons in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten depicting the Prophet Muhammad in September 2005. Those cartoons teased the values of another ethnicity in a humorous way, however they were perceived as a "serious insult" by Islamic countries. That triggered a tremendous amount of hatred toward Denmark among Islamic countries, but also between the whole European Union and the

Middle-East (Douai, 2007; Kampmark, 2006; Soage, 2006). Jokes that are in bad taste can trigger aggressive behavior and other serious consequences.

If a dirty joke can cause cruel consequences, does it bring any moral responsibility to the teller? In recent decades, there has been spurt of interest in discussing the ethics of racist jokes among moral philosophers. They have tried to answer questions such as "on what ground dirty and clean jokes can be distinguished", "is it morally wrong to tell an ethnic joke?" and so forth (Cohen, 1999; Philips, 1984). However, so far empirical studies have largely ignored people's ethical perception of ethnic humor.

The work presented here contributes to theoretical arguments and empirical data regarding the ethics of jokes and people's perception of the ethics of ethnic humor. The thesis attempts to address questions as such "how do people perceive ethnic and racist jokes," "how often they find them morally questionable" "is there any gender difference regarding ethical perception of jokes," and eventually, "what psycho-social factors can predict ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes." The thesis takes a multi-disciplinary approach to look at psychological and sociological factors related to ethical perception of ethnic jokes.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Nearly half of population of Iran consist of ethnic minorities including Turks, Lurs, Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and other minorities (Hassan, 2007). These minorities are considerably diverse in religion, customs, and language. Research has shown that in recent years these ethnic minorities have developed stronger ethnic identities and became more pessimistic toward the out-groups (Fokoohi & Amoosi, 2009; Koutlaki, 2010; Moghadas Jafari, Sheikhavandi, & Sharifpour, 2008; Rabani, yazdkhasti, Hajiani, & Mirzaei, 2009; Shaffer, 2002). Such diversity of culture and ethnic identities have been remarked as rich background for ethnic humor (Apte, 1985, 1987; Davies, 1982, 1990; Mik-Meyer, 2007).

Ethnic jokes are a very popular type of humor in Iran. However, this can be considered a problem because of rudeness of these jokes that can make the mentioned ethnic group feel insulted and react negatively to the joke or to the teller. Asgharzadeh (2007) argues that some Iranian ethnic jokes are racial insults against peripheral ethnic groups and underscores that "… victims of this kind of abuse know very well that it is not just a joke" (p. 148). What is lacking here is an empirical study that examines people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. Do they really believe in the stereotypes of the joke? Do they take these jokes seriously? Do they find these jokes morally questionable? Yet, this field of study has been mostly neglected by social scientists as evident in the absence of published articles (Web of Science and other databases gave no results, nor did domestic research data bases).

The current thesis attempts to address these questions by studying people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. It touches on the psychosocial and sociological determinants of attitude toward jokes. More specifically, it aims to explore how sociological and psychological factors such as anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, empathy, authoritarianism, self-efficacy, and gender differences relate to one's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. Besides, the thesis also touches on interconnection of these variables to provide a better background for understanding how these sociological and psychological variables relate to each other.

1.3   Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Ethnic and Racist Jokes

Ethnic and racist jokes are hardly distinguishable. The term racist joke sounds harsher than ethnic joke and implies that compared to ethnic jokes, racist jokes ascribe more negative traits and characteristics to the target group. However, making such categories is not practical because we lack any reliable criterion for categorizing a joke as being racist (Cohen, 1999). For this reason, both ethnic and racist jokes are considered identical in the current thesis and defined as a "type of humor in which fun

is made of the perceived behavior, customs, personality, or any other traits of a group or its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity (Apte, 1985, p. 198)."

Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor

Ethical attitude toward ethnic humor pertains to individual's ethical perception and orientation toward jokes such as the extent to which an individual ethically questions racist jokes, finds them harmful and annoying, and behaviorally objects to this type of humor. Therefore, for measuring ethical attitude, both the teller's and the listener's perception and their objection regarding this type of humor need to be considered (for more details see paper IV).

Ethical attitude should be distinguished from terms such as moral reasoning (J. Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999; Rest, 1979) or moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1975; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1965). Moral judgment includes judgments regarding universal and impersonal principles such as human rights. Smetana (1999, p. 312) asserts that "morality … is based on concepts of welfare (harm), trust, justice, and rights. Moral judgments are proposed to be obligatory, universalisable, unalterable, impersonal, and determined by criteria other than agreement, consensus or institutional conventions." However, ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale is not analogous to moral judgment or morality. It assumes that ethics of jokes are up to individual rather than universal or impersonal terms. This is due to the fact that we have no criterion for making strict judgments regarding rightness and wrongness jokes and there are no universal principles to assess ethnic jokes. I define ethical attitude toward ethnic humor as one's feelings, perception, and behavioral reactions to ethnic humor (for detailed discussions in this regard, see Article IV).

Moral Authority

Moral authority refers to the internal or external sources that the individual considers while making a moral decision. In psychodynamic theory, moral acquisition is considered as the process of internalizing the external sources of power such as parents, educators, peers, and social norms. The concept of sources of moral authority is more specifically developed by Rachael M. Henry (1983, 1987). Henry's approach to moral

judgment underscores the content of moral judgment rather than cognitive form of moral thinking as proposed by cognitive psychologists such as Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1963, 1975, 1976, 1984; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). The content of moral judgment pertains to sets of sources that individuals care about while making a moral decision. Henry (1983, 1987) proposed five sources of moral authority influences, including a) family, b) media, peers and educators, c) society welfare, d) equality, and e) self-interest.

A decade later, White (1996a, 1996b, 1997) operationalized Henry's theory. He developed the Moral Authority Scale (MAS) which illustrates individuals' attribution to the mentioned sources. Importantly, the scale does not assess moral development, i.e. preferring one of the sources over another cannot be considered a clue to moral development.

Interpersonal Empathy and Ethnic Empathy

There is no general agreement among scholars on a single definition of empathy (Chi-Ying Chung & Bemak, 2002; Ickes, 1993; Levenson & Ruef, 1992). Both classic and modern studies in broad terms describe empathy as one's reaction to others' experiences involving affective as well as cognitive domains (Davis, 1994; Hoffman, 2001; Hojat et al., 2002; Smith, 1976; Spencer, 1870). The cognitive facet of empathy includes understanding other person's perspective, feeling, and experience, whereas the affective aspect involves an emotional reaction by joining the others' experience or feelings (Davis, 1983, 1994; Hojat et al., 2001). Many tests have been developed for measuring empathy (see for example (Ickes, 1993; Levenson & Ruef, 1992). On the one hand, empathy is related to moral, caring, and prosocial behavior because it involves giving help to someone who is in trouble or distress (Barnett, Howard, King, & Dino, 1981; Batson et al., 1999; Batson et al., 1995; Hoffman, 1977, 2001; Krevans & Gibbs, 1996; Shelton & Rogers, 1981) and who might belong to a different group (Batson et al., 1991). On the other hand, it has been found that empathy can influence an individual's attitude toward members of another group (Batson et al., 1997). Lack of empathy relates to intergroup aggression (Blalock, 2006; Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Wang et al., 2003),

social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999).

Empathy is a moral emotion and has a significant role in provoking moral behavior and altruism and is defined as a feeling of distress toward someone who is in trouble (Hoffman, 1979, 1990, 1994, 2001). Empathy tells us what others feel. Hoffman (2001) defined it as a "spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible ...... an affective response more appropriate to another's situation than one's own" (P. 3-4). Empathy is assumed not to be purely an emotion but also to include cognitive facets such as perspective taking. Perspective taking enables individuals to recognize people's emotions (Pizarro, 2000).

In the current study, the operational definition of empathy is evaluated by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). IRI was developed by Davies (1983) and is a multidimensional index. IRI assesses both cognitive and emotional facets of empathy and includes four subscales which are perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress. He explains these subscales as follow:

> "The Perspective-Taking (PT) scale assesses the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others; the Fantasy (Hofstede) scale taps respondents' tendencies to transpose themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of fictitious characters in books, movies, and plays. The other two subscales measure typical emotional reactions of the respondents: The Empathic Concern (EC) scale assesses "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others, and Personal Distress (PD) scale measures "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety and unease in intense interpersonal settings" (Davis, 1983, p. 114).

Anomie

The term anomie stems from *anomia*, the Greek term that pertains to "absence of law (Caruana, Ramaseshan, & Ewing, 2000)," which is assumed to result from separation of means and goals in the society (Agnew, 1980; see also Kapsis, 1978).

Durkheim (1951, 1984) illustrates anomie as a state of normlessness in which society's major values - specifically the dominant legal system - lose their validity for a subgroup and asserts that this pathological status reflects individuals' sense of moral groundlessness. In other words, anomie happens when a norm is challenged and people have few ethical values to rely on: "At the very moment when traditional rules have lost their authority, the richer prize offered these appetites stimulates them and makes them more exigent and impatient of control" (Durkheim, 1984; p. 214). This condition might happen under rapid social change such as economic recession or splendor, war, and fast population growth that make people feel distrust about satisfaction of their desires[1] (Konty, 2005). Similar to Durkheim, Merton (1968) also focused on social-structural aspects of anomie, but stressed the gap between culturally reinforced goals and institutional means as the cause of anomie. These social-structural theories of anomie point out that society has the ability to produce undesirable emotions such as anger, fear, and frustration and damages socio-moral norms that leads to deviant behavior, hedonism, and crime (Konty, 2005).

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism pertains to "a pattern of traits or generalized behavioral style characterized by high regard for authority, rigidity, conventionality, and contempt or disdain for those who are worse off" (Greenberg et al., 1990, p. 313). Since the 1950s, a variety of personality traits such authoritarianism, closed-mindedness, and conservatism have been addressed in studies of humor, saying that such traits influence perception, appreciation, and telling jokes (Middleton, 1959; Ruch, Ott, Accoce, & Bariaud, 1991; Saroglou, 2002; Surlin & Tate, 1976). Ever since, authoritarianism has been an interesting topic in humor research.

Objectives

I remarked at the outset of the thesis that ethical perception of jokes and especially, ethnic jokes have been ignored. Therefore, a large number of variables had to be considered for investigating people's perception of this type of humor. The thesis includes 6 articles that are interconnected. Since the experiments were carried out on Iranian people I first needed to establish the validity and reliability of the scales we used in the studies. Article I translated the Moral Authority Scale-Revised (MAS-R) to Farsi and evaluate its reliability and validity. To evaluate the validity of MAS-R, the internal consistency of the scale and its relation to authoritarianism, self-efficacy, empathy, and parent and peer attachment was investigated in two studies. The scale was meant to be used for validation of the ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH) scale in another study.

Articles II and III explore the interconnection of the sociological and psychological variables such as socioeconomic status, anomie, parenting style, and authoritarianism. These two articles do not touch on ethnic jokes but instead discuss the relation of the variables that were used in Articles IV, V, and VI. In fact, article II and III are meant to provide a rich theoretical and empirical background for illustrating how these factors can influence one's wellbeing, personality, and also ethical judgment of ethnic jokes. More specifically, article II examines the relation of socioeconomic status, anomie feelings and authoritarianism in Iran. Article II hypothesized that socioeconomic status influences authoritarianism both directly and also indirectly through a feeling of anomie. This was based on studies showing that anomie feelings are more common in lower social classes (Bell, 1957; Lee & Clyde, 1974; Menard, 1995; Merton, 1968; Teevan, 1975). In fact, the article aims to draw a model that shows how these three variables relate to each other. Since the study was conducted in Iran the results provide information regarding the generalizability of previous speculations about SES, anomie and authoritarianism in Iran.

Article III is a follow up to article II. It asks what sociocultural factors strengthen an authoritarian personality trait. Article III examines the cultural

background of authoritarianism in Iran. Studies carried out on authoritarianism in the Middle East are generally politically oriented, focusing on monarchy (Donno & Russett, 2004; Fish, 2003; Norton, 2001). However, here we center on sociocultural context of Iran and examine whether parenting style and socioeconomic status contribute to authoritarianism. In addition, carrying out a path analysis, we propose a model explaining how impersonal social factors such as socioeconomic status (as an indicator of social structure) and parenting style (as an indicator of family behavioral strategies) interact with each other and provide a background for developing authoritarian in individuals.

So far, the function of ethnic humor was of interest but not its ethical perception. In addition, philosophical discussions over ethics of humor have failed to establish boundaries for ethically acceptable or objectionable ethnic jokes. Yet, people's perception of the rightness and wrongness of this type of humor has been neglected. Similarly, sociological and psychological factors that might influence people's ethical attitude toward ethnic and racist jokes, e.g. factors that encourage or discourage people to tell and enjoy more of ethnic jokes have not been well-investigated. Articles IV, V, and VI address people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor and its related psycho-social factors. Article IV describes the development of the ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH) scale in detail and examines its reliability and validity. This article addresses the relation of EATEH to empathy and self-efficacy.

Articles V and VI were carried out in parallel with each other and use similar data pool. However, the decision of writing two articles with different focus was intended to avoid complication, a lengthy article, and to allow for a detailed literature review. Article V explores the relation of the sociological factors such as ethnocentrism, anomie, socioeconomic status, and national identity to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. Finally, article VI looks for psychological factors that influence one's perception of ethnic jokes evaluates the relation of psychological factors such as gender, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and ethnocultural empathy to ethical perception of ethnic humor.

Synopsis of results

Paper I: Validation of Moral Authority Scale-Revised in Persian

The validity and reliability of the scale was examined in two studies. The results show that the Persian version of MAS-R has a satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). The findings also provide support for the validity of the scale by acquiring significant correlations between MAS-R with authoritarianism, self-efficacy, and parent and peer attachment in study one and two. In the first study, authoritarian individuals scored significantly higher on the "external source" of moral judgment. In contrast, people with high self-efficacy significantly paid more attention to the "principle source" of moral judgment. These findings were in concordance with Van Ijzendoorn's (1989, 1997) and Crockroft's (1995) assertions that authoritarian individuals might ignore their self-interests in favor of authorities' expectations. In addition, similar to our results, people of higher self-efficacy are expected to have more internal motivation and show more prosocial behavior (Bandura, 1997, 2001; Maher & Rickwood, 1998). The second study provided further support for the validity of the scale. These results show that there is a significant relation between parent and peer attachment and moral judgment, as also found by (Laible & Thompson, 2000; Thompson, Laible, & Ontai, 2004).

Paper II: Relationship between Socioeconomic Status, Anomie, and Authoritarianism

Article II examines the relation of socioeconomic status, anomie feelings, and authoritarianism in Iran. Article II hypothesized that socioeconomic status influences authoritarianism directly and indirectly through a feeling of anomie. Indeed, significant relations were found between all the three variables, i.e. socioeconomic status (SES), anomie, and authoritarianism, in the expected directions. The negative correlation between authoritarianism and SES confirmed Lipset's (1959; 1960) theory in Iran. The correlation between anomie and authoritarianism also was significant but positive which indicates higher feeling of anomie is associated with higher authoritarian tendencies (see figure 2). The model suggests that anomie can mediate the relationship between SES and authoritarianism. This finding can extend working class authoritarianism

theory. Insecurity can produce a feeling of anomie and one of the harmful outputs of this feeling can be authoritarianism.
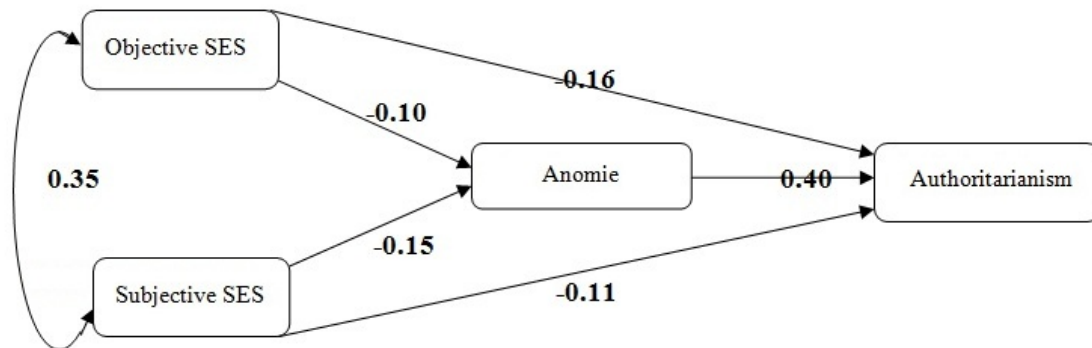

Figure 2: the relation between SES, anomie, and authoritarianism

Paper III – Socioeconomic Status, Perceived Parental Control, and Authoritarianism: Development of Authoritarianism.

Article III examined the cultural background of authoritarianism in Iran. Studies carried out on authoritarianism in Middle East are generally politically oriented, focusing on monarchy (Donno & Russett, 2004; Fish, 2003; Norton, 2001). Here, we center on sociocultural context of Iran and examine whether parenting style and socioeconomic status contribute to authoritarianism. The results of a survey on 460 university students support our hypotheses. Socioeconomic status was negatively related to parental control and authoritarianism. In contrast, parental control was positively related to authoritarianism. Path analysis demonstrated that parental control fully mediated the objective dimension of socioeconomic status and partially mediated the subjective dimension of socioeconomic status. These findings highlight the importance of parental control and socioeconomic status in developing authoritarianism in Iranian society (see figure 3).
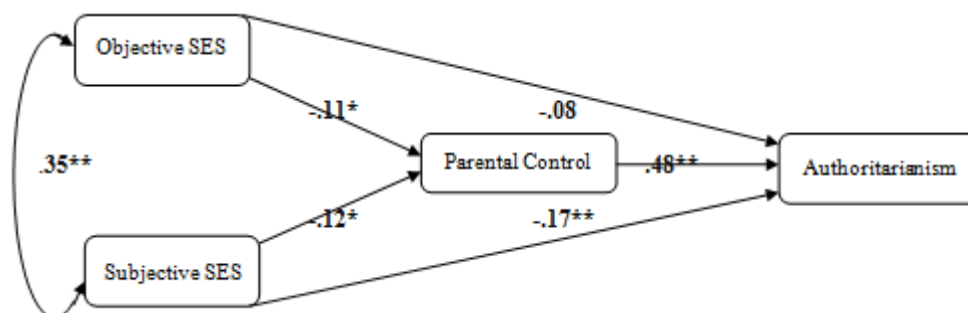

Figure 3: the relation between objective and subjective SES, parental control, and authoritarianism

IV – Socioeconomic Status, Perceived Parental Control, and Authoritarianism: Development of Authoritarianism.

Article IV aimed to develop a scale for measuring people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes and assess its validity and reliability. The EATEH is the first scale to touch on one's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, taking emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects into consideration. Cronbach's alpha supports the reliability of the test. In addition to the face validity of the test that was assessed by an item-total correlation, significant correlation between EATEH and subscales of Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and ethnocultural empathy support the convergent validity of the scale.

There were different ethical perspectives toward ethnic jokes. Some people perceived ethnic jokes as racist expressions, whereas others called them only a nice joke. Men have a less critical attitude towards ethnic jokes whereas women more often judged these jokes as less acceptable. Furthermore, we found that empathy and self-efficacy are good predictors of EATEH, i.e. moral emotions such as empathy let individuals develop criteria for distinguishing good and bad taste jokes.

V – Sociological Indicators of Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor: An Empirical Study on Persian Jokes

Article V explored the relation of gender, anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, and national identity to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. We found that EATEH is significantly related to the dimensions of ethnocentrism, anomie, SES, national identity, and gender. A significant proportion of the EATEH's variance was predicted by SES and anomie whereas ethnocentrism was still significant but played only a minor role. Further, on average men showed prejudice more openly than women.

VI – Why Some People Object to Ethnic Jokes? A Psychological Inquiry to Ethnic Humor

Article VI studied the relation of ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and ethnocultural empathy to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor to find out how these

psychological factors relate to EATEH. The findings were straightforward. Ethnic jokes are not merely jokes that are meant to be funny. Instead, attitude toward ethnic jokes showed a significant association with variables that indicate dogmatic attitude toward out-groups such as ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and also ethnocultural empathy and lack of it subsequently leads to ethnocentrism, respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was twofold. On the one hand, I aimed to develop a new scale for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes and investigate how sociological and psychological factors influence individuals' perception of the ethics of jokes. On the other hand, I addressed how sociological and psychological factors that in a way influence ethical attitude toward ethnic humor interact with each other. Next, a brief discussion since more detailed discussions can be found in the articles.

In general, humor research has paid little attention to attitude toward ethnic jokes and nearly no attention to ethical perception of this type of humor. Besides, previous studies were not promising in predicting people's attitude toward ethnic jokes. For example, Jaret (1999) in studying the attitudes of blacks and whites in US towards racist jokes proposed that general feelings and attitudes about ethnic humor "are not simple functions of demographic or structural variables like age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, or metropolitan residence. These variables are correlated less strongly with ethnic humor sentiments than they are with other frequently researched attitudinal variables such as opinions about drug use, gun control, abortion, or prejudice (p.402)." In addition, the hypothesis that ethnic humor is merely a type of humor and whether it contains hatred or not has been under dispute. Whereas some propose that ethnic jokes are ambiguous and indirect racial expressions, others have rejected this claim (Davies, 1982, 1990, 1998).

However, the data presented in my thesis sheds light on this topic. Not only psychological variables such as authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, self-efficacy, and empathy were found to be significantly related to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, but similar results were found for sociological factors such as anomie, socioeconomic status, and national identity. The articles of the thesis highlight two main issues. First of all, they support the assertion that ethnic jokes are not merely jokes, they carry a hint of hatred. The significant positive correlation of ethnocentrism and negative correlation of empathy support this acclaim which is in concordance with (Billig, 2001; Husband, 1988; Mintz, 1996; Oshima, 2000; Perreault & Bourhis, 1998, 1999). The gender

differences were in favor of women where men were found more positive toward ethnic humor.

The second main point that the thesis highlights is that ethnic humor is a psycho-social phenomenon and should not be limited to between group conflicts or prejudice. Ethnic humor has been addressed regarding prejudice and ethnocentrism in the literature. However, the findings of the thesis underscore that several psychological and sociological factors come to influence one's perception of this type of humor. Personality traits, social class, and society's function (e.g. in anomic status) can influence perception of ethnic jokes.

Limits and difficulties of the Study

In addition to the pilot surveys, 6 surveys were carried out and in total 1834 high school and university students were surveyed. For a Master project, I did not have the resources to repeat or rerun a survey, especially because all studies were self-funded. One of my primary intentions was to find out if there is any significant relation between moral judgment and ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. To do so, in the Article I we translated and evaluated the MAS-R scale for Iranian context. However, when we ran the last survey to explore how sociological and psychological factors relate to ethnic humor (Article V and VI), large proportion of participants left the MAS-R questionnaire blank. This happened as a result of a far too lengthy questionnaire that was meant to save time and money. Since the thesis consists of journal articles, I preferred not to mention the MAS-R as an analyzed variable in the last two articles. However, the reader might notice that the first article - Validation of Moral Authority Scale-Revised in Persian – is to some extent out of place in the thesis, since we did not mention the scale later in any article. I preferred to mention the article in my thesis since I spent considerable time and energy on it. My colleagues and I would like to rerun the survey in soon future and explore the relation of morality to ethnic jokes.

Legal and ethical aspects

All surveys in this thesis were conducted according to the Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste (NSD) and education organization of Iran. To guarantee the confidentiality of the data, no personally identifiable information was asked for. For all the surveys, participants only were asked to provide age and gender and they were assured that the data is taken only for research purpose. Participants were asked to take the questionnaires away, fill them out, and put them into a specific box so the tester could by no mean identify any of the participants.

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Journals' Acceptance Letters

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15 March 2011

Dear   Ali Teymoori, Wan Shahrazad bt. Wan Suleiman, Arash Heydari, Haghish Ebad Fardzadeh
I am pleased to inform you that after the peer review process has been completed, your full paper "Validity of Moral Authority Scale-Revised in Persian: Criterion Validity and Internal Consistency" to the **2nd   World Conference   on Psychology, Counselling and Guidance** has been selected for presentation. Papers are oral presentations lasting 15 – 20 minutes, plus some time for questions. Please submit your double checked full paper and sign copyright form in the attachments to wcpcg.editor@gmail.com. Please write to the subject line of the email quoting your paper ID in all correspondence.

It would be a pleasure to share with you that we are contracted with **Elsevier Ltd** for publishing WCPCG-2011 Proceedings. Your paper will be published in Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal (ISSN: 1877-0428) and at the same time indexed on the ScienceDirect, Scopus and Thomson Reuters Conference Proceedings Citation Index (Web of Science).

If you have any questions or problems, please do not hesitate to contact us, preferably by e-mail, quoting our reference Paper ID 4492 in all correspondence.

Thank you and looking forward to your participation in this event.
Yours sincerely,

Dr. Melahat Halat
Social Psychologist
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Date: October 14, 2011

Dear Arash Heydari, Ali Teymoori, Hedayat Nasiri, Haghish Ebad Fardzadeh

Thank you for your cooperation in performing all the changes requested by the reviewers. At the same time, we are glad to inform you that your paper entitled "*Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status, Anomie, And Authoritarianism*" was accepted for publication in ***e*-Bangi, journal of Social Sciences and Humanities. Volume 7, Number 1, 2012**

Looking forward to a good collaboration,

Sincerely yours,

ASSOC. PROF. DR. MOHD EKHWAN HJ TORIMAN
Editor-in-Chief
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Contributions (Articles I – VI)

ELSEVIER

Validation of Moral Authority Scale-Revised in Persian

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Abstract

The current study aims to assess the validity and reliability of the Moral Authority Scale-Revised (MAS-R) in Persian. Specifically, MAS-R examines "who" or "what" is more important during moral judgment. The instrument was translated using back-translation method and revised by three panels. The validity and reliability of the MAS-R were examined in two studies. Results yield that the Persian version of Moral Authority Scale-Revised has a satisfactory internal consistency. Validity was obtained when results showed that there were significant relationships between self-efficacy and principle source (society welfare and equality sources), authoritarianism and external source (family expectation and educators or peer sources) in the first study and between empathic concern, mother, father, and peer attachment with most of moral authority sources in the second study. These findings confirmed the applicability and validity of the Persian version of MAS-R in Iranian community.
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Keywords: moral authority, reliability, criterion validity;

1. Introduction

Psychologists have studied morality from different perspectives such as moral judgment (Kohlberg, 2008/1963), moral orientation (Gilligan, 1982), moral authority (Henry, 1983) and so on. During the second part of twentieth century, the cognitive school was the dominant approach to moral psychology. However, since the 80s, this approach has received a lot of criticisms not only because it stresses cognitive aspects and ignores emotions, but also because of its structural, impersonal, universal, and sequentially invariant model of moral development (Locke, 1979; Bandura, 1991; Henry, 1983, 1987). This body of research has led moral psychologists to pay more attention to other facets of moral development rather than merely focusing on cognition.

Henry (1983, 1987) proposed that moral decisions are based on the content of moral judgment. Content of morality refers to the notion of "who" or "what" is more important in moral decision making and more specifically, is about the attribution of moral authority to different sources of morality in which there is no priority between the sources. She identified five sources that have the most influential impact on individuals' moral authority including family expectations, educators, self-interest, society welfare, and equality between individuals (White, 2000) which established the basic foundations of the Moral Authority Scale (MAS) by White (1996a, 1996b, 1997).

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The present study aims to find the validity and reliability of the Persian version of MAS. In doing so, two studies were administered to evaluate the internal consistency of the MAS-R and the validity of the test by examining its correlations with self-efficacy and authoritarianism. In addition, study two throws more light on the validity of the scale by assessing MAS-R correlations with the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and with the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI).

2. Moral Authority Scale-Revised (MAS-R)

Moral Authority Scale (White, 1996b, 1997) includes six moral questions in which for each question respondents choose between "yes", "no" or "can't decide" and then answer open-ended questions to note their reasons. Next, subjects are asked to rate the influence of the five sources on their judgment, using a 10-point Likert-format scale for each of the moral questions. MAS measures five sources of moral authority which are family, media and teacher or educators, society welfare, equality, and self-interest sources. The total calculated score for each of the moral authority sources represents the individual attribution to that source in which the higher the score of that source, the stronger it influences moral judgment.

MAS-R has test-retest reliability for the subscales ranging from .75 to .93 over a period of four weeks and very high internal consistencies of subscales as well ranging from .95 to .98 (White, 1997). MAS-R has shown to have convergent validity with the second stage of DIT (Defining Issues Test) that shows the self-interest behaviors and also with the fifth stage and P index of DIT that touch on society's welfare and equality between individuals. In addition, MAS-R has found to have discriminant validity with *Vision of Morality Scale* (see White, 1997).

2.1 Translation

MAS-R was translated into Persian by back-translation method. It was translated into Persian by one of the authors and then it was back-translated to English by someone who had very good proficiency in both English and Persian languages and has never seen the questionnaire. Comparing the original and back-translated versions, the final version of translation the test was rewritten and validated by three panels.

3. First study

The first study aims to examine the internal consistency and validity of the MAS-R in Iran. To test eh validity, the correlation of the MAS with authoritarianism and self-efficacy was tested. In broad term, research has shown that authoritarian individuals pay more attention to authorities' expectations (Crockroft, 1995; Van Ijzendoorn, 1989, 1997) and thus, compared to other people, they are expected to express more external motives in moral decision making. Authoritarian people are assumed to be power oriented and obedient to norms and values of society who do not tolerate deviation from norms and authority (Adorno et al, 1950; Altemeyer, 1998; Napier & Jost, 2008). As a result, a positive correlation is expected to be found between the score of authoritarianism scale and external sources of moral authority.

Similarly, we expected to find positive correlation between self-efficacy and principle source of moral authority. Theoretically, self-efficacy is defined as the main belief one person has about his control and power over environmental events (Bandura, 1997) and has been shown to be related to internal motivations and prosocial behavior (Bandura, 1997; Maher & Rickwood, 1998). Bandura (2001) articulates that being highly self-efficient makes individuals more cooperative and helpful toward others (more prosocial) and also, more concerned about welfare of society. Interestingly, research has shown that self-efficient people –who think they have control and power in their environment- are more independent in problem solving (Bandura, 1991, 1997) and they also pay more attention to the equality of individuals and to public welfare in their moral judgments (Teymoori & Wan Sulaiman, 2010).

3.1 Participants and Instruments

Participants were 165 students (74 male, 82 female, 9 unknown) from one high school and two colleges in Semirom city of Esfahan and Abade city of Fars, Iran. Due to incomplete questionnaires, 6 of the subjects were purged from the analysis. Subjects' age ranged from 15 to 24 years (Mean age = 19.77, SD = 1.97). Participants responded to three questionnaires including a translated version of MAS-R, the Authoritarianism scale, and General Self Efficacy. No personal information was recorded except age and gender and the questionnaires were anonymous.

Authoritarianism Scale. The Authoritarianism scale is a self-report instrument which was developed based on the socio-cultural sphere of Iran by Heydari et al. (submitted) and includes 12 items. Respondents answer the items on a 5-point likert format from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

General Self Efficacy Scale. The General Self-Efficacy scale (GSE: Jerusalem and Schwarzer, 1981) includes 10 items. Previous studies have shown that the internal consistency of the scale ranges from .75 to .91. Luszczynska, Acholz and Schwarzer (2005) confirmed the validity of the scale by finding significant correlation between self-efficacy and socio-cognitive variables such as goal intentions, implementation intentions, outcome expectations, self-regulation, domain-specific self-efficacy, health behaviors, well-being, and coping strategies.

3.2 Results of First Study

Table 1 presents the intercorrelation of the sources with each other. All of the sources were positively and significantly correlated. The correlation with highest significant was found between the society welfare and equality sources of moral authority (r = .68, p < .01) which is in concordance with White et al (2004). Based on White and Matawie (2004) these two sources also can be combined to form another subscale named as the principle source of moral judgment. The second highest correlation was between family source and educators (r = .59, p < .01). White and Matawie (2004) point out that these two subscales can also be integrated as the external source of moral reasoning. The consistency of the finding of this study with original work of White and Matawie (2004) implies a good validity of the MAS-R in Persian language.

Table 1. Intercorrelation of moral authority sources

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Family source	-				
2. Educators source	.59*	-			
3. Society welfare	.36*	.26*	-		
4. Equality Source	.29*	.23*	.68*	-	
5. Self Interest	.51*	.41*	.52*	.52*	-

* p < .01,

To evaluate the internal consistency of the instrument, a Cronbach analysis was performed. Findings shows moderate to good internal consistency for all subscales (family source = .71, educator's source = .68, society's welfare = .59, equality source = .72, self-interest = .58) which implies the scale's reliability. The criterion validity of the MAS-R in Persian was evaluated by examining how the dimensions of external source and principle source of morality correlate with self-efficacy and authoritarianism. Significant correlations were found between external source of morality (family and educators or media or peer) with authoritarianism (r = .22, p < .01). In contrast, only principle source of moral authority (society welfare and equality sources) was significantly correlated with self-efficacy (r = .19, p < .05). The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Criterion validity of the MAS with self-efficacy and authoritarianism

	Self interest	External morality	Principle morality
1. Self-efficacy	.14	.16	.19*

2. Authoritarianism	.07	.22**	.01

* p < .05,   **p < .01

4. Second Study

The purpose of the second study is to provide further background regarding validity of MAS-R by correlating its subscales with two other instruments, IPPA and IRI that, respectively, measure parent and peer attachment and empathy. Parent and peer attachments have been noted influence the process of development and internalization of moral values. On the one hand, family provides the platform for the transmission of norms, rules, and values. However, such transmission to a large extent relies on a warm and supportive mutual interaction (see Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth et al. 1978). More specifically, security of attachment expands through lifespan from childhood to adulthood and influences the quality of individual's social interactions with others that subsequently might lead the individual to develop a different attitude toward other people (Ainsworth, 1991). As a result, securely attached individuals are assumed to be more concerned with others' welfare, empathic feelings, and prosocial behavior (Hoffman, 1975a, 1975b; Kochanska, Aksan, Knaack, & Rhines, 2004; Kochanska, Forman, Aksan, & Dunbar, 2005; Kochanska & Murray, 2000; Laibe & Thompson, 2000; Thompson, Laibe, & Ontai, 2004). Therefore, we expected to obtain positive correlation between attachment security and the principle source of moral authority scale.

Empathy is considered an important moral emotion that encourages altruistic, caring, and prosocial behavior (Hoffman, 1979, 1990, 1994a, 2001). Therefore, is seems to be reasonable to expect a negative correlation between empathy and self-interest source of moral authority scale.

4.1 Participants and Instruments

Two hundred twelve university students were randomly recruited from Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran. Due to incomplete questionnaires, 10 subjects were purged from the analysis. Participants were 95 males and 107 females ranging in age from 18-25 (M= 20.61, SD = 1.42). Participants were asked to respond to three questionnaires including MAS-R, Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), and Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). Similar to the previous study, no personal information was recorded except age and gender.

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). The IPPA is a self-report questionnaire that measures affective and cognitive facets of adults' attachment security with their mothers, fathers, and peers (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The IPPA assesses three important dimensions of attachment relationships with parent and peer including degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation. A test-retest assessment shows that IPPA has a reliability of .93 for the parent section and .86 for the peer section of attachment over a period of three weeks. The internal consistency of the scale was .87 for mother attachment, .86 for father attachment, and .92 for peer attachment. (see Armsden & Greenberg, 1987 for more details regarding validity of the scale).

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). IRI is one of the well-researched measures of empathy. This scale was developed by Davis (1983) to measure individual's differences in empathy. IRI is a multidimensional questionnaire that evaluates both cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy. Davis constructed four separate but correlated constructs that contains seven items each (28 items in total). The IRI's subscales are perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. The internal consistency of the subscales ranged from .71 to .77, and test-retest reliability of subscales was found to vary from .62 to .71 (M. H. Davis, 1983). The scale was validated by finding significant relationship between IRI subscales with other empathy scales, indexes of social competence, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others (Davies, 1983).

4.2 Results of Second Study

At first, a correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the relation between moral authority and attachment subscales. Findings show that different dimensions of moral authority were correlated with attachment. Attachment mostly was correlated with the principle source (society welfare and equality sources) of moral authority (Table 3). In addition, mother and father attachment were significantly correlated with family source as well which were expected.

Table 3. Correlation between Security attachment of mother, father, and peer with moral authority sources

	Family source	**Educators source**	**Society welfare**	**Equality source**	**Self Interest**
Mother Att.	.18*	.03	.18*	.20**	.15*
Father Att.	.34**	.09	.23**	.18**	.03
Peer Att.	-.08	.12	.21**	.17*	.10

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Findings show that only empathic concern subscale of IRI was correlated with most sources of moral authority except the educators source ($r = 18$, $p < .01$; $r = 29$, $p < .01$; $r = 29$, $p < .01$; $r = 18$, $p < .01$ for family, society welfare, equality and self-interest sources respectively). Whereas personal distress was only correlated with the external source of moral authority (family source: $r = .22$, $p < .01$; educators: $r = 18$, $p < .01$). The combined effect of empathic concern and attachment security could predict 16% of the variance ascribed to the principle source of morality, $R^2 = .16$, $B = 35.00$, $t = 3.53$, $p < .001$. Therefore, this result supports the claim that those who report secured attachment with parent and peer and also have high empathic concern, will score higher on principle source of moral authority scale, which implies they are more concerned regarding society's welfare and equality between people.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine the validity and reliability of MAS-R in Persian. Two studies were carried out with a battery of questionnaires each. Satisfactory internal consistency was obtained for subscales of MAS-R in the first study. Additionally, findings of the studies provided ample evidence for validity of MAS-R.

The first study demonstrated that the principle source of moral authority scale (equality and welfare) correlates significantly with self-efficacy whereas authoritarianism is significantly correlated to external source of moral authority. This result is in accordance with the Van IJzendoorn's (1989, 1997) and Crockroft's (1995) statements that authoritarian individuals obey authorities' expectations even at the cost of sacrificing their own interests (i.e. ignoring self-interest). Findings of this study show that authoritarianism does not correlate with self-interest source of moral authority scale. Similarly, self-efficacy was only found to be significantly correlated with the principle source of moral authority which is consistent with previous studies (Bandura, 1991, 2001).

Previous research has shown that attachment security supports early social, moral, and emotional development of individuals (Laible & Thompson, 2000; Thompson et al., 2003). In the second study, a significant correlation was obtained between security of mother, father, and peer attachment and moral authority sources, specifically with family source and principle sources. The obtained correlation of attachment security with family and principle sources demonstrates that parent's attachment relates to moral reasoning and individual's perception of society welfare and equality among people. This is consistent with the Thompson et al. (2003) findings regarding effectiveness of attachment security on internalization of morality and conscience development. Hoffman (1975a, 1975b, 1979, 1994) remarks that parenting styles, social experiences, and child-parent affective interaction have significant impact on moral development. Having supportive parents who establish warm affective interaction with their children helps children to develop secure attachment to their parents and consequently, makes them more open to parental norms and values and assists moral development and fosters conscience (Kochanska, Aksan, Knaack, &

Rhines, 2004; Kochanska, Forman, Aksan & Dunbar, 2005; Kochanska & Murray, 2000; Laible & Thompson, 2000; Thompson, Laible, & Ontai, 2003).

Similarly, the second study indicates that empathic concern had a significant correlation with most of the moral authority sources. This finding was consistent with Hoffman's (1979, 2000) notion about empathy as the emotional aspect of morality. In addition, regression analysis shows that empathic concern and parents and peer attachment can significantly predict the principle source of moral authority. The results of these two studies were consistent with previous literature and confirmed the criterion and predictive validity of the MAS-R-Persian, as well as its internal consistency.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, ANOMIE, AND AUTHORITARIANISM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationships between socioeconomic status, feeling of anomie, and authoritarianism. Three questionnaires including objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status, anomie, and authoritarianism were administered on 400 students in Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran. Results showed significant negative relationship between socioeconomic status and feeling of anomie and authoritarianism. In addition, significant positive relationship was found between anomie and authoritarianism. Regression analyses demonstrated that anomie has a mediation effect on the relationships between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism. These findings suggest that widespread feeling of anomie and authoritarianism in Iran are under influence of socioeconomic status.

Keywords: *SES, authoritarianism, feeling of anomie, Iran*

INTRODUCTION

For several decades, psycho-social indicators of authoritarianism have been cogently discussed which highlights the importance of this topic. For example, authoritarianism has shown to be associated with a variety of psychological factors (Dru, 2003; Rubinstein, 2003; Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004; Van IJzendoorn, 1989; Roccato & Ricolfi, 2005; Roccato, 2008), education, and parenting practices (Crockett & Meidinger, 1956; Simons, 1966; Scodel & Mussen, 1953; Scodel & Freedman, 1956; Duriez, Soenens, &Vansteenkiste, 2008). On the one hand, most of the studies are carried out in industrial countries which might not represent Middle-Eastern countries since we know from the literature that perception of authoritarianism is culturally dependent (Assadi, et al., 2007: Rudy & Grusec, 2001). On the other hand, less research has been carried out regarding psychology and sociology of authoritarianism in the Middle-East (Assadi, et al., 2007). Similarly, studies carried out on authoritarianism in Iran have often centered on politics and as a result, the sociocultural context of this phenomenon has been overlooked (Katouzian, 2001; Kamrava & Dorraj, 2008; Mackey & Entessar, 1997). In contrast, the current article touches on sociological factors such as socioeconomic status (SES) and anomie to discover their relation to authoritarianism.

Conceptualizing authoritarianism as a personality trait began with the influential book of Adorno et al., (1950), *The Authoritarian Personality*. They described authoritarianism as a type of personality consisting of nine characteristics: conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-interception, superstition and stereotypy, power orientation and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and excessive fixation on sexuality (p. 228). Recently, Altemeyer (1998) renewed the theoretical foundation of authoritarianism and characterized it as co-variations of three attitudinal clusters including conventionalism which refers to

deference to norms, submission to the authority, and intolerance to any deviation from norms.

Most of previous researches have well elucidated the distribution of authoritarianism within social classes and its association with psychological and social constructs; even though some mediating variables between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism have been proposed. Lipset (1959) proposed some of these variables that might have influence on authoritarianism such as low participation in political organization or in voluntary organizations of any type, occupational and economic insecurity, little reading and isolated occupations, and authoritarian family patterns. But as far as we know there were no empirical studies of the proposed mediating variables between SES and authoritarianism, except Scheepers et al. (1992). By reviewing the basic theories and previous literature, anomie is hypothesized to be a good mediating variable between SES and authoritarianism.

It is expected that SES affects authoritarianism directly and, through a feeling of anomie, indirectly. Moreover, the study was conducted in Iran for the first time. Thus, the result would give us clear information about the role of anomie in predisposition of individuals for authoritarianism and also it would clarify the generazibility of previous speculations about SES, anomie and authoritarianism in Iran.

SES AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the most researched concepts in sociology. Assuming that people of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be authoritarian, Lipset (1959; 1960) proposed that not only SES is associated with authoritarianism, but also it is the most important determinant of authoritarianism. Lower SES subsequently eliminates possibilities of better education, occupation, and yields lower participation in social activities and political organization. Lipset (1959, 1960) also points out that economic insecurity and instability which is a characteristic of lower SES families facilitates authoritarianism: "if elements which contribute to a lack of sophistication and detachment from the general cultural values constitute an important factor associated with lower- class authoritarian proclivities, a second and no less important factor is a relative lack of economic and psychological security. Economic uncertainty, unemployment, and fluctuation in total income all increase with more down the socio economic ladder. Economic insecurity clearly affects the political and attitudinal responses of groups" (p. 491). Lipset asserts that *working class authoritarianism* is not restricted to the western countries and generalizes his theory to include developing countries.

A body of research has supported Lipset's hypothesis by revealing significant correlation between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism (e.g. Lipsitz, 1965; Srole 1956; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Mcdill 1961; Sheepers, Felling & Peters 1992). In addition, authoritarian patterns are found to be more common in lower SES families (Assadi, et al., 2007; Floyd & Saitzyk, 1992; Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). Similarly, Kohn (1976 1977) and Kohn and Scholler (1969, 1978 and 1979) found that Low SES individuals are more authoritarian in their social attitude and their parenting behavior.

However, not all studies have supported Lipset's theory. For example, Lipsitz (1965) argues that low SES people are more authoritarian but this is more due to low educational level rather than other factors that Lipset (1959, 1960) proposed. Napier and Jost (2008) indicate that out of four psychological aspects of authoritarianism which are *conventionalism*, *moral absolutism*, *obedience to authority*, and *cynicism*, only obedience to authority and cynicism are common in low socioeconomic status. Rigby, Metzer, and Ray (1985) report different results in different areas and in some cases insignificant results for the association between occupational status and authoritarianism in Britain and three different regions of Australia. They point out that Lipset's theory of working class authoritarianism has lack of generalizability across cultures. Wright (1972) and Grabb (1980) also report insignificant association between SES and authoritarianism. Similar to Lipsitz (1965), Grabb (1979, 1980) concluded that education is the strongest determining factor of authoritarian attitudes rather than SES. The literature regarding the association of socioeconomic status and SES seems to be controversial and there is a need for more research especially in developing countries.

ANOMIE AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Anomie is sociological concept that pertains to a normless society in which major values become invalid to people (Durkheim, 1951, 1984). In anomie status people start to feel lonely, develop hostile perception toward others (i.e. everybody wants to abuse others to gain more benefit), loose their morals, and behave based on self-interest (Dean, 1968; Fischer, 1973; Tivan, 1975; Kapsis, 1978; Knoty, 2005). Anomie feelings lead the individual to feel angry and frustrated and emerge when the means and goals become separated in a society and people do not receive enough opportunities to reach their goals (Agnew, 1980; Kapsis, 1978). Durkheim (1897/1951) underscores mass society as the source of anomie and remarks that lack of integration in society can cause anomie. But how might anomie status relate to authoritarianism?

Arendt (1951) in her book entitled "*Origin of Totalitarianism*" articulates that totalitarianism originates from mass society. She believes that individuals' isolation and loneliness facilitate authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Authoritarianism provides a solution for escaping from common experience of normlessness, confusion, and societal rupture. Similarly, Fromm (1941) stresses that anomic individuals find authoritarianism to be a way to resolve their confusion. In his point of view, authoritarianism is an adaptation mode for lonely and isolated individuals. People in an anomic society find authoritarianism to be a potential way to overcome anxiety through assault and violence against dissident groups. Therefore, according to Fromm (1941), anomie might cause authoritarianism (see also Scheepers et al. 1992). Oesterreich (2005) considers authoritarian reaction as individuals' basic response to anxiety, stressful situation, uncertainty, and insecurity and he names it as "flight into security" (Oesterreich, 2005, p. 282). In general, these approaches to some extent rely on the idea that anxiety increases the tendency of relying on authorities who provide security for an individual or a group.

Some empirical studies have reported significant relationship between anomie and authoritarianism (Blank, 2003; Lutteman & Middleton, 1970; Mcdill, 1961; Mulford 1968; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Sheepers, Felling & Peters, 1992; Srole, 1956). However, the association of anomie and authoritarianism in the mentioned studies has been a sub-result where both anomie and authoritarianism are independent variables. Therefore, the potential mediating effect of anomie has been completely ignored (web of science brings no result).

SES AND ANOMIE

Merton (1938, 1968) interprets the concept of anomie as a discrepancy between cultural goals and legitimate means for reaching these goals. Culture advocates certain goals (for example: richness, high education, prestige, etc.) but legitimate means for fulfilling these wishes are not evenly available to people of different social statuses. Merton (1938, 1968) believes that the gap between the goals and means leads to frustration, anger, and anomie. On this ground, lower socioeconomic status individuals are apt to be more anomic since they lack more resources for reaching the success, as defined by cultural values. This hypothesis has been supported by a large body of research (Bell, 1957; Car & Hauser, 1976; Lee, 1974; Menard, 1995; Mizruchi, 1960; Rushing, 1971, Teevan, 1975).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Four hundred students were randomly chosen from Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran. They were told that the participation is voluntarily and assured about the anonymity of the data. 18 subjects were purged from the analysis due to incomplete answers and the rest including 182 males and 200 females, ranged in age from 18 to 29 (M=21.88, SD=2.33) were analyzed. It is noteworthy that governmental universities of Iran (including Shahid Chamran University) to some extent represent different socioeconomic statuses since the tuition fee is waived for all students and also there are some quotas for smaller cities and villages to facilitate higher education. Thus, we expect governmental universities to be more representative of ethnic and socioeconomic diversities of Iran.

Measurements

The data of the current research were collected by self-report questionnaires. Feeling of anomie, objective and subjective socioeconomic status, and authoritarianism questionnaires with a few demographic questions such as participants' age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status were required from students to fill out.

Feeling of anomie - There was no appropriate scale for measuring feeling of anomie in Iran and among a few existing valid and reliable scales, deviance behavior was available that could be used. But, according to Merton (1968), anomie is different

from deviance since deviant behavior is only one mode of adaptation to an anomic situation. Thus, for measuring feeling of anomie, 13 items from the Srole (1956) and Dean's (1968) scales of anomie were incorporated and translated into Persian. The answers were arranged on five point Likert format from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Psychology and sociology professors validated the scale in Persian language. Some of the items are as follows: "The only thing that one can be sure of today is that he can be sure of nothing", "there is little use writing to public officials because often they aren't really interested in the problems of the average man". Alpha Cronbach of the scale was 0.82.

Authoritarianism scale - After reviewing famous scales (e.g. Altemeyer, 1998 and Adorno et al., 1950), and based on socio-cultural and political spheres of Iran, 12 items were chosen to prepare an Iranian version of the scale. The items have minimal bias to participants. Like anomie, translation of the test was validated by 5 English language experts, and the content validity of the test was confirmed by experts. Some items are as follows: "people should obey their superiors whether or not they think they are right", "It is good that nowadays young people have greater freedom ''to make their own rules'' and to protest against things they don't like". Answers of items were on 5-pointLikert scale from 5 (strongly agree) to 1(strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.83.

Subjective Socioeconomic status scale - Subjective Socioeconomic Scale of Nabavi, Hosseinzade, and Hosseini (2009) was used that has 6 items. In this scale, series of questions about perception of individuals about their social class and self-evaluation about positions in social structure were asked. In fact, individuals should rate themselves into different social classes subjectively that could be different from their real social class. Example of items are "how do you think people evaluate your father's job?" and the answers were in 5-point likert format from 'very valuable' to 'very valueless'. "If people were classified into five social classes (very high, high, middle, low, and very low), in which social class do you consider your family". The answers were in 5-point Likert format as well from 'very high' to 'very low'. Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.71 (Nabavi et al. 2009). In addition, cronbach's alpha of the scale in the present study was 0.75.

Objective socioeconomic status - Objective socioeconomic status is a realistic evaluation of position of individuals in the society. Objective socioeconomic status is usually measured by standards of life quality such as income, wealth, and level of education (Ritzer, 2005). To assess the objective socioeconomic status, the participants' monthly income was asked in term of Toman (roughly 1000 Toman add up to 1 US$) which ranged between 100,000 to 1000,000 Taman (100 US$ to 1000 US$). After that, the income was divided by 100.000 to range them from 1 to 10. Moreover, educational level of father and mother was asked in years (e.g. 0 for illiterate, 12 for high school diplomas, and 18 for master degrees). Total score of the objective socioeconomic status was obtained by summing the score of income and mother and father education.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations of anomie and authoritarianism are presented in Table 1. According to Table 1, the mean score for authoritarianism is 30.87 and the mean score for feeling of anomie is 35.8, both higher than half of the total scores of the scales. These two descriptive statistics suggest that anomie and authoritarianism are high in the sample of the study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status, parental control and authoritarianism

	Object. SES	Subj. SES	anomie	Authoritarianism
Mean	23.15	15.86	35.08	30.87
Std. Deviation	11.48	4.34	9.28	8.33
Minimum	1	5	13	13
Maximum	46	25	65	59
Maximum score of the scale	50	25	65	60

Inferential Statistics

As Table 2 shows, all correlations among variables are significant in the expected directions. Both dimensions of socioeconomic status have significant correlations with authoritarianism. The correlations between objective and subjective dimensions of SES and authoritarianism are $r = -0.266$ ($p < 0.01$) and $r = -0.244$ ($p < 0.01$) respectively. Similarly, both dimensions of SES have significant correlations with feeling of anomie ($r = -0.159$, $p < 0.01$; $r = -0.188$, $p < 0.01$, for objective and subjective dimensions respectively). The lower socioeconomic status, the higher authoritarian tendencies and feelings of anomie among students. In addition, feeling of anomie and authoritarianism are significantly correlated ($r = 0.450$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 2. Correlations between SES, anomie and authoritarianism

	Subjective class	Anomie	Authoritarianism
Objective SES	r = 0.352**	r = -0.159**	r = -0.266*
Subjective SES	-	r = -0.188**	r = -0.244**
Anomie	-	-	r = 0.450**

** $p < 0.01$

To examine the casual relationships between variables according to our theoretical model, two regressions were carried out. In equation 1, anomie was regressed on subjective and objective dimensions of socioeconomic status and a significant result was obtained, $R^2 = .04$, $F (2, 379) = 8.95$, $p < .0001$. As shown in Table 3, objective SES was a significant predictor, $B = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $\beta = -.10$, $t = -1.98$, $p < .05$, and subjective SES was also a significant predictor of anomie, $B = -.32$, $SE = .11$, $\beta = -.15$, $t = -2.80$, $p < .01$.

Table 3. Standard multiple regression analyses between objective and subjective socioeconomic status (predictor variables) and anomie (dependent variable)

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	42.173	1.802	-	23.398	.000
Objective	-.086	.043	-.106	-1.980	.048
Subjective	-.322	.115	-.150	-2.803	.005

In equation 2, authoritarianism was regressed on subjective and objective dimensions of socioeconomic status and anomie. This equation explained 25.2 percent of the variance in authoritarianism, $R^2 = .252$, $F(3, 378) = 42.44$, $p < .0001$. According to Table 4, objective SES was a significant predictor, $B = -.11$, $SE = .03$, $\beta = -.16$, $t = -3.40$, $p < .01$, as well as subjective SES, $B = -.21$, $SE = .09$, $\beta = -.11$, $t = -2.30$, $p < .05$. Anomie also was found to be a significant predictor of authoritarianism, $B = .36$, $SE = .04$, $\beta = .40$, $t = 8.86$, $p < .0001$.

Table 4. Standard multiple regression analyses between objective and subjective socioeconomic status and anomie (predictor variables) and authoritarianism (dependent variable)

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	24.282	2.243		10.824	.000
Objective	-.118	.035	-.163	-3.408	.001
Subjective	-.213	.092	-.111	-2.309	.021
Anomie	.362	.041	.403	8.862	.000

Figure 1. Model for developing authoritarianism from socioeconomic status with mediating effect of anomie.
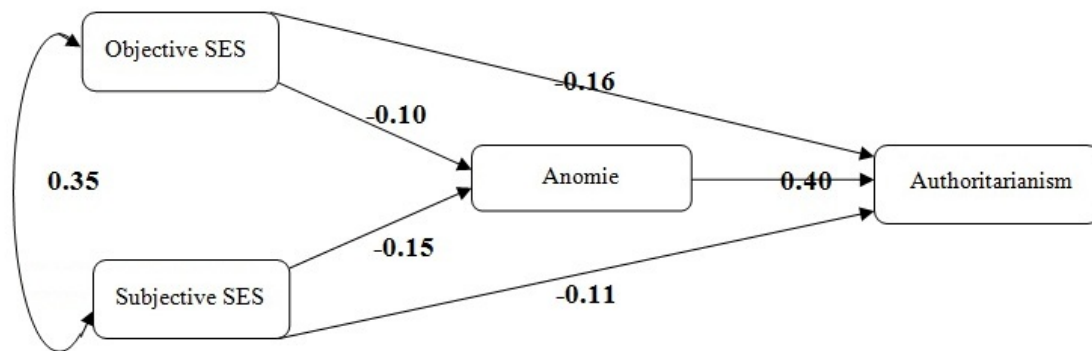
Discussion

In the current article we intend to examine the association of socioeconomic status, anomie, and authoritarianism as well as the mediating effect of anomie in SES's relationship with authoritarianism. The results support the hypotheses in the expected direction. Significant negative correlations between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism confirmed Lipset's theory (1959; 1960) in Iran. Finding significant negative correlations between socioeconomic status and feeling of anomie is also concordant with other studies (e.g. Menard, 1995; Carr &Hauser 1976). The correlation

between anomie and authoritarianism also was significant and positive which indicates higher feeling of anomie is associated with higher authoritarian tendency. Table 5 compares the obtained correlation between these two variables in current research and other studies.

Table 5. Correlations between anomie and authoritarianism in other studies and present research

Srole	Robert & Rokeach	McDill	Mulford	Lutterman & Middleton	Present study
0.45	0.47	0.67	0.43	0.24	0.45

Srole (1956) believes that for Fromm and Merton social dysfunction is the independent variable and "change in personality (Fromm) or modes of adaptive (Merton) is the dependent variable" (p. 716). In this study, these propositions were verified. The causal relationship between anomie and authoritarianism was cited in Srole's (1956) study. By referring to Fromm and Merton's views, Srole (1956) stated that:

> "To Fromm… escape reactions from socially generated "aloneness" and "helplessness" [i.e. individual anomie] may issue either in authoritarianism or "compulsive conformity". For Merton, "individual modes of adaptation" to dysfunctional "contradiction in the cultural and social structure" is differentiated on the basis of deviancy, including ritualism hypothesized as a dominant type" (Srole, 1956, p. 716).

Another important aspect of these findings relate to Iranian society. Authoritarianism has always been one of the main problems of Iran throughout its history, and this issue has been addressed only theoretically from political viewpoint by intellectuals of Iran. They are looking for authoritarianism roots within political elites. Precisely, it was found that authoritarianism reproduces itself in the context of socioeconomic status and also through the mediating effect of anomie. Thus, the findings help to explain the roots of authoritarianism in Iranian society and its reproduction mechanism within socioeconomic status. Unfortunately, these factors have not been given enough attention regarding the socio-political problems of Iran.

In addition, participants obtained high authoritarianism and anomie scores where the mean of authoritarianism and anomie was more than half of the maximum score of the scale. It implies the seriousness of these two problems in the Iranian community. Accordingly, Ji and Suh (2008), by comparing Korean students with American students, stated that Asian countries have more authoritarian submission and aggression. In fact, Korean students were more compliant to authority, more aggressive to out-groups and less conservative in their social beliefs in comparison with American students.

Moreover, high anomie score was obtained as well. This result can be explained by historical changes of Iran. After 1979 revolution, Iran has faced with major structural and cultural changes which have come along with rapid population growth, eight years war with Iraq, international blockades, expansion of the mass media, and qualitative expansion of higher education facilities. Society members need to adapt to the vast

major changes, and a feeling of anomie can be a consequence of lack of adaptation to these major changes. This explanation is consistent with Durkheimian approach toward anomie. According to Durkheim, rapid vast social changes can be a cause of anomie.

Beta coefficients suggested that anomie can mediate the relationship between SES and authoritarianism. This finding can extend working class authoritarianism theory. Insecurity can produce a feeling of anomie and one of the harmful outputs of this feeling can be authoritarianism.

Although Lipset's theory of authoritarianism has been considered in some empirical studies, we encountered a lack of investigation about variables mediating between these two constructs. In spite of doing some experimental investigations about the relations between anomie and authoritarianism, there is no unique experimental study about the relation between anomie and authoritarianism and their association with socioeconomic status; except for the implications of Sheepers et al.'s (1992) study for the relationship between anomie and authoritarianism that does not have a good theoretical explanation. The current study can help to fill this gap in the authoritarianism literature.

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Socioeconomic Status, Perceived Parental Control, and Authoritarianism: Development of Authoritarianism

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status, parental control, and authoritarianism in Iran. A sample of 460 students were surveyed from Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz. Results confirmed the hypotheses that objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status have negative correlations with parental control and authoritarianism. In addition, parental control was found to have positive correlation with authoritarianism. Path analysis demonstrated that parental control fully mediates the objective dimension of socioeconomic status and partially mediates the subjective dimension of socioeconomic status. These findings highlight the importance of parental control and socioeconomic status in developing authoritarianism in Iranian society.

Keywords: socioeconomic status, authoritarianism, parental control.

Introduction

Since the 50s, large body of research has been carried out on psychology and sociology of authoritarianism. These findings mostly represent Western industrialized culture. As a result, we have substantial pool of knowledge from Europe and America, but our understanding of authoritarianism in developing countries –including Middle Eastern countries- is considerably limited. Because of huge cultural differences between West and Middle East, especially regarding power perspectives, religious beliefs, and political systems, it seems reasonable to question whether western findings represent Islamic countries.

In broad terms, it has been frequently remarked that Middle Eastern countries value obedience to authorities rather than individual welfare or equality, which eliminate the possibility of establishing democratic society (Norton, 2001). In addition, having patriarchal cultural traditions in countries of this region has also strengthened

authoritarian tendencies in families and parenting styles. For example, cross-cultural research in Asia and Middle-East has shown that authoritarian parenting is more common among families of these regions as compared to Western culture (Assadi et al., 2007; Kazemi, Eftekhar Ardabili, & Solokian, 2010; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). Interestingly, authoritarian parenting is also considered to be linked to collectivist societies (Rudy & Grusec, 2001).

Studies carried out on Middle East are generally politically oriented, focusing on monarchy (Donno & Russett, 2004; Fish, 2003; Norton, 2001). However, in the current article we focus on sociocultural context of Iran and examine whether parenting style and socioeconomic status contribute to authoritarianism. In addition, carrying out a path analysis, we also attempt to propose a model explaining how impersonal social factors such as socioeconomic status (as an indicator of social structure) and parenting style (as an indicator of family behavioral strategies) interact with each other and develop authoritarian individuals. To do so, we shall begin with examining the context of Iranian society and continue with reviewing the literature of the main variables of the study, which are socioeconomic status, perceived parental control, and authoritarianism.

Background of Iranian Society

Literature on authoritarianism in Iran is mainly related to politics and there is relatively little research done on the cultural background of this phenomenon in Iran (Hosseinzadeh & Dalal Rahmani, 2010; Kamrava & Dorraj, 2008; Mackey & Entessar, 1997). According to historians, Iran has been ruled by monarchy until the twentieth century and as a result, Iranian culture has implanted authoritarian and patriarchal traditions (Mackey & Entessar, 1997; Sharifzadeh, 1992). For example, it is pointed out that Iranians' perception of leadership is a charismatic leader or a hero with exceptional qualities that makes him distinguishable from ordinary people (Dastmalchian, Javidan, & Alam, 2001; Kamrava & Dorraj, 2008; Mackey & Entessar, 1997; Palma, 2001). Hofstede's (2003) categorization of hierarchy vs. equality –which measures one's perception of power distance- gives the rank of 58 to Iranians (Hofstede, 2003, p. 87). Having a large perceived power distance implies that in families or institutions, members who have no or little authority accept the unequal distribution of power and respect authority of the powerful members. In this regard, Koutlaki (2010) articulates

that "Iranians acknowledge that some people within families and social groupings naturally command more authority and power, stemming from their position, seniority, or knowledge, and this authority is encoded in language… so collaborative, not authoritarian, decision-making is viewed positively in families and social groups. (p. 29)"

In addition, it is remarkable that authoritarian sociocultural context has substantial influence on parenting practices. Authoritarian parenting is described as parenting style where parents have remarkable disciplinary attitude, seeking obedience from their children, and being overly restrictive (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The study of Inglehart and Baker (2000), for example, shows that deference to family and authority are related. Inglehart (1997) points out that societies that put stress on deference to authority are more likely to emphasize loyalty to family as well. Because of a patriarchal cultural context, Iranian families have implemented considerable authoritarian patterns (Sharifzadeh, 1992). Touba (1979) also consider the authoritarian parenting as the dominant parenting style. In another study, Hojat et al., (1999) point out that Iranians believe that giving freedom to youngsters harms them. However, Alizadeh & Andries (2002) propose that recent sociopolitical changes in Iran have reduced authoritarian tendencies among Iranian families.

In general, Iranians are highly family and in-group oriented, sustaining high level of family loyalty (in-group collectivism) and showing low respect to institutional collectivism, which shows the importance of family and friend relations in Persian culture (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2003). Javidan at el., (2003) consider Iranians' family orientation as the most distinguishing feature of Iranian culture and argues that family members and friends have strong reciprocation and expect favors or special treatments from each other. As these research findings might suggest, there is a tremendous component of authority in the family relationships of Iranians. For example, it has been remarked that Persian culture values loyalty to family more than personal needs to the point that adolescents and young adults are expected to ignore personal wishes to avoid any conflict with parents' expectations. Compared to Western individualist values, this encourages dependence (Fathi, 1985; Fernea, 1991). Furthermore, Iranians are expected to respect elders to a remarkable degree and pay attention to the family's wishes regarding marriage, residence, business, and so on. Elders have remarkable authority in

making family decisions, including accepting or rejecting a marriage and solving interpersonal conflict and dispute (see Arasteh, 1970).

It is noteworthy that during the last decades Iran has gone through fast moving but uneven change that has resulted in a dual society that struggles between traditional and modern values. Assadi et al., (2007) stress that socioeconomic status is an important factor that should be taken into consideration in a way that people of higher socioeconomic status tend to be much more westernized than people of lower socioeconomic status who are considerably more traditional. In addition, their study shows that families with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to have authoritarian parenting compared to families with higher socioeconomic status.

Authoritarian personality and parenting practice

The essential role of parents in development of authoritarian personality/ attitudes has been discussed in many approaches of psychology. Adorno et al. (1950) in *The Authoritarian Personality* link authoritarian traits to early childhood and parenting practices. Based on their theory, which is also known as the Berkeley theory, parents who punish, threaten, and expect their children to obey unconditionally are more likely to raise authoritarian children. Children of these parents might repress their hate toward their parents, which turns into "over punitive superego" because of defense mechanisms such as reaction formation or displacement. Some empirical evidence has been provided for this approach. For instance, Duriez, Soenens, and Vansteenkiste (2007) found that authoritarianism is predicted by parenting practices and parental goal promotion. This approach has been questioned by Altemeyer (1981). Hyman and Sheatsley (1954) criticized this approach for methodological problems and also lack of strong evidence for a relationship between authoritarian attitude and having cruel parents.

However, none of the critiques denies the crucial role of parents in inducing authoritarian traits in children. For instance, Altemeyer (1988) considers a broader perspective explaining how parents raise authoritarian children. According to his point of view, which goes beyond psychodynamics, parents can develop an authoritarian attitude in their children by being a model for children to imitate and also by limiting the social environment of their children. He also adds peer, school, religion, and individual experiences to the equation as important factors, but insists that parents can

limit children's access to these sources and enrich sources that fit their perspective. Furthermore, underscoring parents (or other parental figures) as the primary authority figures who provide security for children, Oesterreich (2005) points out that individual experiences within the process of socialization have a key role in developing authoritarianism. In fact, authoritarian control of parents in the time of stress and insecurity fosters authoritarian mechanisms (i.e.to rely on authority) in children rather than teaching them to develop their own ability to cope with reality (see Oesterreich, 2005, p. 283).

Research also supports the association of parents' and children's authoritarianism (Crockett & Meidinger, 1956; Duriez, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2008; Scodel & Freedman, 1956; Scodel & Mussen, 1953; Simons, 1966). Similarly, Duckitt (2001) showed that a strict parenting style has a significant effect on Right Wing Authoritarianism. Still, few studies have examined how this disposition develops within individual context (Duriez, et al., 2007). The type of discipline, which the individuals were exposed to is important for growing authoritarian personality. Parents are the first authority figures that children confront; and in these relations, children learn how to encounter with power and power relations. The pattern developed in the relationship to the parents transferred to other authority figures and thus becomes crucial in forming the social and political beliefs of individuals.

Socioeconomic Status and authoritarianism

Lipset (1959) in an influential work *Democracy and Working Class Authoritarianism* stressed the influence of societal-structural factors on authoritarianism and highlighted socioeconomic status as an important determinant of authoritarianism. Based on his point of view, in general, people with lower socioeconomic status are more authoritarian than those with higher socioeconomic status. The origin of these attitudes springs from lower education, lower participation in social and political organizations, lower reading, lower wage and financial security, and having more authoritarian family patterns. Lipset believed that his theory that lower socioeconomic status produces authoritarianism is not restricted to the western countries and can be applied to other societies. In addition, social factors that are sources of anxiety and insecurity, such as socioeconomic status, could trigger authoritarian reaction in

individuals who find security in relying on the authority (Oesterreich, 2005). Therefore, it seems that low socioeconomic status should predispose some people more towards an authoritarian reaction to obtain security and escape from anxiety.

The follow up studies on Lipset (1959) study have been controversial. Some studies support the claim by finding significant correlation between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism (McDill, 1961; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1992; Srole, 1956). However, Lipsitz' (1965) results indicate that people with lower socioeconomic status are more authoritarian but, mainly because they have lower education. When level of education was controlled for, socioeconomic status was not related to authoritarianism. Wright (1972) repeated the study, using different scales, and did not find significant relationship between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism. Similarly, Grab (1980) also found insignificant relationship between class and authoritarianism and concluded that "education, rather than class membership, is the most influential factor in determining authoritarian attitudes" (p. 359).

In a recent study, Napier and Jost (2008) reviewed the literature and considered four different characteristics for authoritarian individuals including conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism. They found that authoritarianism was strongly associated with obedience to authority and cynicism in low socioeconomic status, but authoritarianism was not related to conventionalism and moral absolutism of individuals from low socioeconomic status. Their findings did not support Lipset's (1960) claim that economic liberalism is associated with authoritarianism in lower socioeconomic status. In contrast, other studies have shown significant correlation of socioeconomic status and authoritarianism (Srole, 1956; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Mcdill, 1961; Sheepers, Felling & Peters, 1992).

Socioeconomic Status and parenting practices

Socioeconomic status has been reported to be related to parents' child-rearing values and their parenting practices (Kohn & Schooler, 1969; Slomczynski et al., 1981; Wright & Wright, 1976; Heimer, 1997; Heimer & De Coster, 1999; Xiao, 2000; Brezina et al., 2004) Kohn (1977) and Kohn and Schooler (1969) believed that socioeconomic status has an important effect on parenting. This approach argues that people with lower

socioeconomic status are more likely to be required to obey authorities. As a result, working-class people develop obedience values and generalize them to their family environment and apply them in their parenting practices (Kohn, 1977). Thus, parents of lower socioeconomic status use more harsh discipline for parenting than higher socioeconomic status. This relation has been confirmed by some other researches as well (Gecas, 1979 ;Luster et al., 1989; ; Gecas & Nye, 1974) (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1976). Similarly, Hoff, Laursen, and Tardif (2002) found that lower social class has experienced more parental control (in Van Der Bruggen, Stams, & Bögels, 2008).

A study on Iranian society has shown that socioeconomic status influences parenting practices in Iran.

Theoretical model of present study

On the one hand, previous theoretical speculations (Lipset and Adorno's theories) and empirical research has shown that socioeconomic status and parenting are two important variables in explaining the origin of authoritarian personality. On the other hand, Kohn's theory and other empirical studies have emphasized the causal effect of SES on parenting practice. By combining these approaches, we can predict that parenting or in another word, perceived parental control mediates the relation between SES and authoritarianism as the conceptual model illustrates it (Figure 1). In figure 1, arrow 1 is taken from Lipset's (1959) theory that links socioeconomic status to authoritarianism. Arrow 2 represents Kohn (1977) and Kohn and Schooler (1969), which consider a relation between socioeconomic status and parenting style. Finally, arrow 3 is taken from Adorno's authoritarian personality perspective, which links parenting style to authoritarianism.
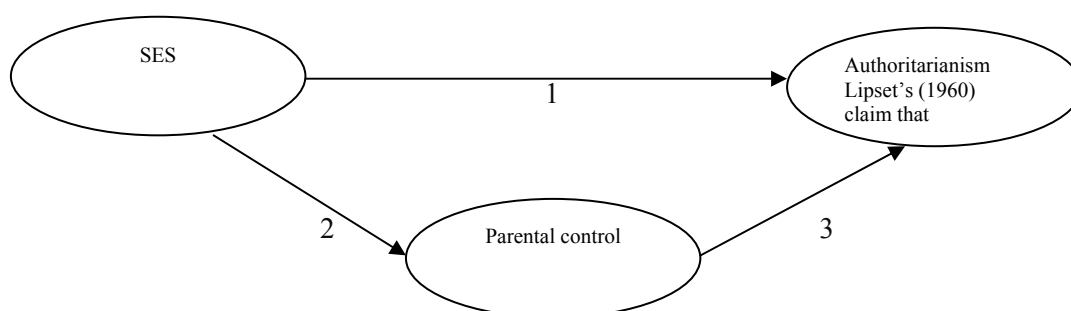

Figure 1. Proposed model for direct and indirect relation of SES, parental control, and authoritarianism

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A sample of 460 students was chosen through convenience method from Shahid Chamran University, Iran. The sample comprised 200 male and 260 female (Mean of age = 21.84, SD = 2.34). Three questionnaires were used including subjective and objective socioeconomic status, perceived parental control, and authoritarianism. Participants were recruited from seven faculties: Economics, Medical, Psychology, Religion, Engineering, and Agriculture. The questionnaires were distributed among the students in person. Participants were told that the participation is voluntary and all data will be anonymous and used for research purposes. The researchers also explained the main theme of the questionnaires to the participants. Subjects were asked to leave the questionnaire in a designated location after filling them in. The questionnaire package took around 15 to 20 minutes to be completed.

Research Instruments

Three questionnaires were used including subjective and objective socio-economic status, perceived parental control, and authoritarianism.

Objective Socioeconomic status. Objective socioeconomic status refers to the position of individuals within social structure and unequal distribution of society's properties; in this definition, socioeconomic status is defined in terms of the life standards such as income and wealth (Ritzer, 2005). To operationalize this variable, participants were asked to express their monthly income in term of Toman (roughly 1000 Toman is equal to 1 USD). The range of the responses was between 100,000 to 1000,000 Taman (100 US$ to 1000 US$), then the income was divided to 100.000 to range them from 1 to 10. Moreover, level of father's and mother's education was acquired in term of years. For example, if one of the parents has bachelor degree, the aggregate years of his/her education is 16 (elementary school = 5 years, secondary school = 3 years, high school = 4 years and bachelor = 4 years). Thus, the score of the educational level is within the following scale: doctor = 20, master = 18, bachelor = 16, diploma = 12, high school = 9, illiterate = 0. Finally, the income and the years of

education of father and mother were summed and the total score was taken to be an indicator of the objective socioeconomic status of the participants.

Subjective Socioeconomic Status. People develop a subjective perception of their social class. Ritzer (2005) points out that "social categories sharing subjectively salient attributes used by people to rank those categories within a system of economic stratification (P. 717)." Precisely, Individuals rate themselves into social classes subjectively that might differ from their objective socioeconomic score. To assess socioeconomic status from subjective dimension, Nabavi, Hosseinzade, and Hosseini's (2009/1387) 6-item scale was used. The scale measures individuals' perception and evaluation of their socioeconomic status by a series of questions related to subjects' perception of their social class and socioeconomic status; for example, "in your opinion, how do people evaluate your father's job?" Participants answered each question on a Likert scale from 5 (very valuable) to 1 (very valueless). Another item asks that "If people are classified into five social classes (very high, high, middle, low, and very low), which social class would your family belong to." The answers were again measured on a Likert scale from 5 (very high) to 1 (very low). Nabavi et al. (2009) reported an Alpha coefficient of 0.71 for the scale. In addition, internal consistency of this scale in the current study was 0.75.

*Perceived Parental Control***.** To assess this variable, a 10-item scale of Shek (2006), *Perceived Parental Control*, was used. Parker and Benson (2004) reported that adolescent's perception of the parent's behavior is a better and more valid predictor of adolescent behavior than the parent's report. Some of the Perceived Parental Control's items are as follow "my parent always wants to change my thoughts," "my parent thinks that his/her thoughts are more important than my thoughts," "my parent always wants to change me to fit their standards." The answers were in 5-point Likert-format ranging from "completely agree" to "completely disagree". The sum of the items' score is considered as indicator of parental control in which higher score implies having more restrictive and controlling parents. Shek (2007) reported good psychometric properties for perceived parental control scale including convergent validity resulting from significant negative correlation with wellbeing and positive correlation with parental

endorsement of traditional parental belief. He reported internal consistency of .88 and .90 in two different occasions. The scale was translated into Persian, and psychology and sociology professors' opinion were used to validate the scale in Persian language. For the reliability, Cronbach alpha of .85 was obtained.

Authoritarian scale. Authoritarianism is a 12-item scale developed and validated by Heydari et al. (Submitted manuscript). The items were chosen from F-personality scale of Adorno (1950) and Right Wing Authoritarianism scale of Altemeyer (1998a). Selection of items was based on the socio-cultural context of Iranian society as well as current political sphere of Iran. Some items are as follows: "people should obey their superiors whether or not they think they are right" and "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn." Participants responded the items on 5-point Likert scale from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Heydari et al. (submitted) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.88 for the scale.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status, parental control, and authoritarianism. According to Table 1, the mean scores of the parental control, authoritarianism, and subjective dimension of the socioeconomic status were more than half of the total scores of the scale.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status, parental control and authoritarianism

Variables	Obje. SES	Subj. SES	Parental Cont.	Authoritarianism
Mean	25.67	16.88	29.93	31.52
Std. Deviation	9.43	4.52	8.31	8.90
Minimum	-0.58	-0.64	0.13	0.58
Maximum	1	5	10	12
Maximum score of the scale	45	25	50	60

Note: If any notes, place them under the table.

As a first step in testing the hypotheses, the Pearson correlation was used to explore the association of variables. The results are summarized in Table 2. Objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status were significantly and negatively

correlated with authoritarianism (r = -.19, p < .01; r = -.38, p < .01, respectively) and parental control (r = -.15, p < .01; r = -.30, p < .01, respectively). In fact, the lower individuals' socioeconomic status (both objectively and subjectively), the higher the parental control and authoritarianism that were reported. The correlation of subjective socioeconomic status was stronger than the objective dimension. Moreover, parental control had a high and significantly positive correlation with authoritarianism (r = .55, p < .01) implying that individuals who score higher on authoritarianism scale are more likely to report having restrictive parental control. Another noteworthy result of correlation was the significant positive correlation of objective and subjective socioeconomic (r = .35, p < .01).

Table 1. Correlation of objective and subjective socioeconomic status, parental control, and authoritarianism

Variables	*Obje. SES*	*Subj. SES*	*Parental Cont.*	*Authoritarianism*
Obje. SES	-	.35**	-.15**	-.19**
Subj. SES	-	-	-.30**	-.38**
Parental Cont.	-	-	-	.55**

Note: ** = p < .01,

Regression analysis and mediation effect

To determine the unique contribution of each variable on variation of authoritarianism and the mediation effect of parental control for objective and subjective socioeconomic status association with authoritarianism, multiple regression analysis was used. At first, parental control was regressed on objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status. As it is shown in Table 3, both objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status were significant predictors of parental control. , B = -.09, SE = .05, β = -.12, t = -1.99, p < .05, and subjective dimension was also a significant predictor, B = -.20, SE = .10, β = -.13, t = -2.12, p < .05, towards parental control.

Table 3. Standard multiple regression analyses between objective and subjective socioeconomic status (as predictor variables) and parental control (as dependent variable)

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
Obje. SES	-.092	.046	-.118	-1.99	.03
Subj. SES	-.203	.096	-.125	-2.12	.04

Note: R^2= .040

Next, objective and subjective dimensions of socioeconomic status and parental control were entered as predictor variables and authoritarianism was entered as dependent variable. The full model predicted 31 percent of total authoritarianism variation R^2 = .31, The parental control has the most unique contribution in this equation, B = .58, SE = .05, β = .48, t = 9.93, p < .001 and the unique effect of subjective dimension of socioeconomic status was significant at this equation too B = -.33, SE = .09, β = -.17, t = -3.40, p < .01, but effect of objective dimension of socioeconomic status on authoritarianism was not significant individually. Based on the criteria of mediation effect given in Barron and Kenny (1986) and Hair et al. (2006), parental control partially mediates the subjective dimension of socioeconomic status effect on authoritarianism while it fully mediates the objective dimension of socioeconomic status impact on authoritarianism.

Table 4. Standard multiple regression analyses between objective and subjective socioeconomic status and parental control (as predictor variables) and authoritarianism (as dependent variable)

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig
Obje. SES	-.078	.049	-.081	-1.594	.112
Subj. SES	-.338	.099	-.173	-3.405	.001
Parental con	.581	.058	.478	9.938	.000

Note: R^2= .31

At last, the final model for the association of socioeconomic status effect on authoritarianism via parental control with their Beta coefficient is shown in Figure 2.
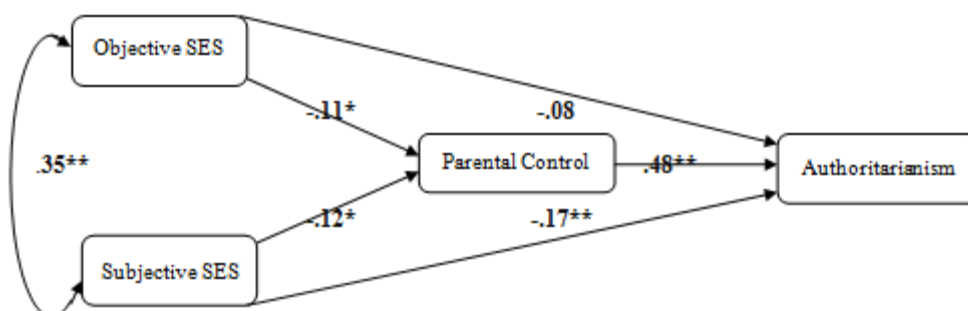

Figure 2. Model of SES, parental control and authoritarianism with Beta Coefficient
* = p < .05, ** = p < .01.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the interrelationships of SES, perceived authoritarian parenting and authoritarianism in Iran. We found that scores of perceived parental control and authoritarianism scale were relatively high implying seriousness of these two problems in Iranian society. Some studies suggested that authoritarianism is relatively high among Asian countries; for example, by comparing Korean students with Americans', Ji and Sub (2008) asserted that Asian countries have more authoritarian submission and aggression. Precisely, they found that Korean sample was more compliant to authority, more aggressive to out-group and less conservative in their social beliefs in comparison with Americans.

A model was proposed for developing authoritarianism in socioeconomic status via the influence of perceived parental control. Parental control played the most important role in this model and is considered a key construct to predict authoritarianism. Based on our results, perceived parental control fully mediates the objective SES and partially the subjective SES's association with authoritarianism.

The result supports research reporting significant association between family environment and childhood experience with authoritarianism (Duriez et al., 2007; Rusby, 2010) and theoretically it is in harmony with Adorno et al.'s (1950) proposition. Moreover, the effect of subjective SES on authoritarianism is in accord with Lipset's theory. However, this result is in contradiction with the findings of Wright (1972) and Grab (1980) that reported no association of SES with authoritarianism. This contradiction to some extent can be explained by less well known scales that Wright and Grab used to assess authoritarianism.

The reverse relationship of socioeconomic status with parental control confirmed Kohn (1977) and Kohn and Schooler's (1969) proposition. This finding is also in accord with previous research that found individuals from lower socioeconomic status reporting higher parental control compared to middle and high socioeconomic status (Assadi, et al., 2007; Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002: in Van Der Bruggen, Stams & Bogels, 2008). Moreover, Floyd and Saitzyk (1992) articulate that higher

socioeconomic status was related to fostering independence and lower socioeconomic status demonstrates more parental control and was associated with negative behavior as well. With different design and perspective, by investigating Brazilian mothers and daughters, Lins-Dyer and Nucci (2007) illustrated that daughters from low socioeconomic status reported higher maternal control in comparison with middle socioeconomic status and accordingly mothers of low social class have claimed higher control over personal and conventional issues of daughters in comparison with middle class mothers. In fact, in lower social class, parents' behavior is harsh and punitive in the time of children's disobedience and parents exert more control on children since parenting style in lower social class is more parent-centered and parents consider themselves as authority, which children should comply and obey (Brooks, 2004).

Even though, the model was hypothesized by Lipset that proposed authoritarian family pattern in lower social class predisposes individuals for authoritarianism. This hypothesis confirmed empirically in the current study. Brooks (2004) has well stated that "social position partly prescribes the settings children live in, their parents' childrearing practices and the psychological characteristics of their parent" (p. 96).

Oesterreich (2005) remarks that social factors such as socioeconomic status trigger insecurity and individuals need to cope with that insecurity and anxiety feeling. As a result of early childhood experiences and the process of socialization of the children, which parenting practices and parental control are at stake, it is determined what reaction can take place by the person whether the capacity to cope with reality was developed or s/he should take an authoritarian strategy to obtain security and adaptation with the insecure and unsafe situation. However, Oesterreich consider authoritarian reaction more based on the situation, which many things could have influence on its occurrence.

The current study showed that authoritarian parenting is one of the factors, which dispose members of lower social classes toward authoritarianism. Further studies need to find out what other factors can mediate the association of socioeconomic status with authoritarianism like societal participation, societal and cultural capital, and religiosity and so on.

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Paper IV

The Scale of Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor (EATEH): Development, Reliability, and Validity

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Abstract: Current interest in theorizing about ethnic jokes has been centered on sources and functions of this type of humor, ignoring people's ethical perception toward ethnic jokes. In addition, philosophical discussions over ethics of humor have failed to establish boundaries for ethically acceptable or objectionable ethnic jokes. Here we show that in contrast to the philosophical inquiries, psychological factors such as empathy and self-efficacy can make individuals to develop firmed ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. The purpose of the current article is twofold. First, we developed a scale for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes and evaluate its validity and reliability. Using exploratory factor analysis, 15 items with high factor loading were extracted, i.e. resulting in good psychometric properties and high Cronbach's alpha. Further, the item-total correlational analysis showed strong internal consistency. Second, we addressed the relation of perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and self-efficacy to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH). Multiple regression analysis showed that on their own, empathy subscales and self-efficacy account for a notable amount of variance in EATEH implying good content and predictive validity of the scale. However, EATEH has considerable unique variance that these factors cannot explain. This in turn shows that ethical attitude towards jokes is best measured with our newly developed scale. We discuss how much one can conclude from the attitude towards ethnic jokes for moral judgment in general.

Keywords: Ethical Perception of Jokes, Empathy, self-efficacy, Iran

During recent years, there has been a considerable amount of research reported on the progressive transformation of traditional racism to more subtle and covert forms. (Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000; Liu & Mills, 2006; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Some individuals appear non-racist or tolerant, although they still have hidden negative beliefs about other ethnic and racial groups. Furthermore, there are inter-cultural diversification and reoccurring hateful conflicts among a variety of ethnic groups. Hence, it has been suggested to pay more attention to people's ethical attitude toward other ethnic and racial groups, since acceptance of other cultures appears not to be enough to decrease ethnic rivalries (Sue & Sue, 1990). On this ground, it seems there is an emerging demand for research on subtle denigration of racial and ethnic groups under the veil of benign humor -which is embodied in ethnic humor- and people's ethical attitudes toward such statements. In the

present research, we explore people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor which is a novel but important topic in the field of ethnic humor.

How do people ethically judge ethnic jokes? How often do they object to ethnic jokes? To what extent do they believe in joke stereotypes? Does believing in the stereotype of jokes (e.g. Jews are canny) ethically justify telling or enjoying the racist joke? If hurting people's feelings is a moral pejorative, then telling ethnic/racist jokes that mock peripheral groups through disgraceful stereotypes could be – at least to some extent- morally questionable (Philips, 1984). Surprisingly, these questions have been largely ignored by both psychologists and sociologists. This is partly because, traditionally, research on ethnic jokes has centered on popularity and similarity of ethnic jokes, functions of ethnic jokes, and psychological sources of ethnic humor such as in-group adulation, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and intolerance of the life-styles of others to explain why very similar humorous narratives exist in various cultures (Apte, 1985; Davies, 1982, 1990, 1998; Freud, 1976; Laineste, 2005; Raskin, 1985). As a result, research carried out on people's attitude toward ethnic jokes has remained limited. For example, a survey carried out in the Unites States revealed that 55% of respondents agreed that jokes teasing blacks are more offensive and also showed that blacks and women, as compared to whites and men were more likely to call such jokes as offensive (Jaret, 1999). However, because of general lack of interest in studying ethnic jokes (Best, 2007; Billig, 2001; Mik-Meyer, 2007; Mulkay, 1988), people's ethical perception of this type of humor has been left unexplored.

There is an increasing need to study people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. For example, in September 2005, the publication of dozen cartoons in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten depicting the Prophet Muhammad triggered heated controversies not only in Denmark but also in European Union and Islamic countries. Those caricatures –which theoretically were a regular type of ethnic humor teasing values of another ethnic group in a humorous way- provoked enormous hatred and have had serious unpleasant consequences, even until today (Douai, 2007; Kampmark, 2006; Soage, 2006). Besides the potential threat of ethnic humor to increase ethnic conflicts, research has shown that humor itself can promote prejudice and sexism and make individuals feel freer to actualize the humor in their practice (Ford, Boxer, Armstrong,

& Edel, 2008). Nevertheless, the literature of humor research lacks inquiries on people's ethical perceptions of jokes, specifically ethnic jokes.

Conceptualizing Ethnic Jokes

Ethnic humor is defined as a type of humor in which fun is made of "the perceived behavior, customs, personality, or any other traits of a group or its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity" (Apte, 1985, p. 198). This definition also stands for racist jokes, since ethnic and racist jokes are hardly distinguishable. Compared to racist joke, ethnic joke seems to be a broader term which not only targets races, religions, languages, and identities, but also includes other types of ethnic humor that do not fit the definition of racist jokes. For example, within the same region or city that people are identical in race, religion, and language, people might tease each other by ascribing different stereotypes (e.g. by suburbs). Many examples of such jokes can be found in Iran, although targets of most of these jokes only vary in ethnicity, i.e. race and religion are the same among the protagonists of the jokes. Furthermore, the term racist joke implies that these jokes include negative and hateful content but ethnic joke might be also told regarding a favored peripheral ethnicity and include positive ethnicity.

The term "racist joke" implies harshness, immorality, disgracefulness compared to ethnic humor, but practically ethnic and racist jokes are inseparable. There is no clear and reliable criterion for separating these two types of humor, as we will discuss in detail at the next section. For these reasons, both ethnic and racist jokes are considered identical in the current article; however we prefer using the term ethnic jokes on this ground that it is a more general term than racist jokes.

Humor and veiled hatred

The abrasive content of this type of jokes can hurt feelings of the mentioned ethnicity and make them feel offended. Surveying people's attitude about racist and sexist jokes have shown that the target group of such jokes are more likely to consider these jokes an indirect insult than others (Jaret, 1999).

There have been heated arguments regarding relation of ethnic jokes to hatred and racism and the relation between content and the degree of seriousness of ethnic humor, respectively. In principle, this field of study was initiated by Sigmund Freud's

book "Jokes and their relation to the unconscious" which provides one of the major theoretical backgrounds for ethnic and sexist humor studies. Sigmund Freud (1976) points out that not all types of jokes, but some of them that he named *tendentious jokes*" contain a purpose above innocent humor which is mostly based on language tricks and aesthetics. He remarked that tendentious jokes reflect repressed psychological desires such as sex and aggression instincts and also, social needs such as freedom, wealth, and poverty: "The popular mind, which created these stories, and others like them, is torn by similar conflict" (p. 151). In his point of view, humor provides a context for releasing some of these anxieties in a less morally questionable way.

In contrast to the Freudian approach, Davies (1982, 1990, 1998) developed a two-sided theory of ethnic humor that considers less explicit hatred in the humor. Davies (1990) remarked that jokes are primarily jokes that are meant to be fun and not a directly hostile or racist narrative. In his view, ethnic humor basically clarifies the inter-group boundaries and decreases ambiguity by targeting social, geographical, and moral boundaries: "Ethnic jokes police these boundaries. They mock groups who are peripheral to the central or dominant group or who are seen by them as ambiguous. They ascribe to these groups traits which the group telling the jokes does not wish to recognize among its own members (p. 383)". He (1990) also stressed that people might not believe jokes' stereotypes to be true and asserts that the peripheral ethnicity that is targeted by ethnic humor might be hated or liked. In brief, Davies questioned the link between hatred and humor and instead suggested that jokes also have some other social functions such as clarifying ethnic boundaries that consequently makes living in a multi-cultural society easier.

Although Davies emphasized the functions of jokes (see for example Beermann & Ruch, 2009; Laineste, 2005; Purcell, Brown, & Gokmen), empirical research on the relation of humor and hatred (or seriousness of the content of jokes) has provided more support for the Freudian approach. A body of literature has portrayed ethnic humor as a displacement of intergroup violence and aggression that can be a source of pleasure in ethnic jokes (Billig, 2001; Husband, 1988; Mintz, 1996; Oshima, 2000; Perreault & Bourhis, 1998; 1999 for opposite argument see Davies, 1990). In addition, racism also

has been seen as a source of enjoyment in ethnic humor i.e. people might enjoy expressing hatred in ethnic jokes (Billig, 2001; Husband, 1988).

Ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes

So far, we discussed the definition of ethnic humor and the link between ethnic jokes and hatred, racism, and sexism. Next, one needs to find out whether people develop any notion that such jokes are ethically questionable or not. This requires measuring the ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. Our main aim was to develop a measure for assessing people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, including both jokes about their own ethnic group and out-groups. As measured by the new scale, ethical attitude toward ethnic humor pertains to individual's ethical perception and orientation toward jokes such as the extent to which an individual ethically questions racist jokes, finds them harmful and annoying, predicts how they influence feelings of the target group, and behaviorally objects to this type of humor. Therefore, measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, individuals' reasons, feelings, and their objections (behavioral reactions) regarding this type of humor have been taken into consideration.

However, there are some difficulties limiting ethical inquiries toward jokes. First of all, this type of humor people is widespread and accepted i.e. it is a cultural phenomenon, practiced by many (Apte, 1985, 1987; Davies, 1982, 1990, 1998). This popularity reflects that in general, telling ethnic joke is acceptable among people. Therefore, content of jokes can be justified in terms of their popularity i.e. if an ethnic joke crosses moral boundaries the teller would not feel very anxious or guilty about telling such a joke, provided that it is popular. Another difficulty in studying the ethics of jokes is the fact that philosophical inquiries on ethics of jokes have mostly failed to set up ethical boundaries for humor or a clear distinction of clean and dirty jokes. A joke that appears to be impolite to an individual in a specific situation might be quite acceptable to another. Cohen (1999) remarks that it is not easy to categorize clean and dirty ethnic humor or accuse it of being racist. He discussed the ethics of ethnic jokes and admits that there is no clue for drawing a boarder among acceptable and non-acceptable ethnic jokes: "*some jokes on some occasions, and maybe some jokes on all occasions, are, as we say, "in bad taste," and should be thought of as morally objectionable. But it is very, very difficult to say just what this moral defect is* (p. 75)".

Therefore, an ethical attitude toward jokes sounds more situational and intuitive. It is up to the individual to put himself into the shoes of the mentioned ethnic group to see if the joke hurts.

Furthermore, people tend to differentiate between humorous and serious assertions and simply deny both the content and purpose of jokes. Joke-tellers, for example, can always claim that "it was not serious." In this regard, Mulkay (1988) separates rules of "serious" and "humorous" discourses, as two different modes of interactions and remarks that "humor discourse" certainly can carry serious content that is always deniable (see also Brunner & Costello, 2002; Drew, 1987; Kotthoff, 2000). On these ground, rather than absolute morals, studying ethics of jokes should be based on attitude and perception of ethnic jokes which is the base of the new measure of ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, developed in the current article.

The purpose of the present article is twofold. Primarily, to develop a new scale for measuring people's ethical attitude toward ethnic and racist jokes and evaluate its reliability and validity. This aspect of the realm of ethnic jokes has not been studied yet and the current study will provide a background for further research on this topic. Second, it is intended to explore the link between people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes with empathy subscales and self-efficacy to see if these variables predict one's ethical perception of this type of humor.

Study 1
Instrument Development, Reliability Estimation, and Exploratory Factor Analysis

The impetus for the development of the Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor Scale was the rudeness of ethnic and racist jokes that simply can hurt feelings of the mentioned ethnicities, as well as the previously discussed limitations with the associated measures. In order to construct the items of the scale, a comprehensive literature search on ethics of jokes and people's attitude toward racism, ethnic prejudice, and ethnic jokes served as the major theoretical background of current research. However, no suitable scale was found for measuring people's ethical reasoning toward ethnic jokes within the literature we reviewed, suggesting this field of research has been largely

ignored. The purpose of this study was to develop items for assessing ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, investigate the factor structure and internal consistency of those items, and finally, evaluate its reliability.

Method

Scale development and item generation procedure. Studies carried out on attitude toward prejudice, for example, have considered cognitive (beliefs), emotional (empathy), and also behavior-oriented facts for measuring attitude toward prejudice (Jackman, 1977; Wang et al., 2003). On this ground, in constructing the items, three dimensions were taken into account, which are: (a) ethical attitude (b) behaviorally objecting to this type of humor, and (c) the belief regarding whether the humiliating stereotypes are true. Therefore, the scale was developed in a way to obtain information such as "to what extent people believe in the stereotypes", "to what extent they condemn jokes toward an out-group" or "jokes toward their own community, city, or country", and also, "how wrong they find this type of humor". In addition, the new scale touches on behavioral facets as well by asking subjects "how funny they find this type of humor", "how often they tell ethnic jokes", and "how frequent they object toward them".

The scale deals with individual's perception toward harmfulness of ethnic humor and objections and behavioral reactions toward this type of humor. It mainly assumes that those who believe ethnic jokes are morally wrong to tell and behaviorally object when they hear a bad taste ethnic joke probably have a more negative attitude toward this type of humor compared to those who remain indifferent when they hear it. The ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale requires subjects to provide their opinion about ethnic jokes and rate to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement on a 7 point Likert-type format in a way that "strongly agree" is given 1 point and "strongly disagree", 7 points. Items were phrased both negatively (7 items) and positively (8 items) to minimize response bias. Having negative phrases reverse-scored, each individual's score for ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes was calculated by summing up the item score. Higher scores indicated a more positive attitude toward ethnic humor i.e.

"this type of humor is ethically very Ok to tell". One's score on the scale is the total sum of all the items. The score, thus, can range from 15 to 105 points.

In developing the items, careful attention was paid to minimize items' length and syntactic complexity. Apparently, brief and concise statements eliminate specious interpretations. Primarily, out of the generated items, 21 items which were more compatible with the criteria of the measurement were selected and ordered by chance to cancel out any sequence effects. The scale, however, makes no value judgment about the "racist attitude" or "moral maturity" of an individual. Rather, it collects self-perceived information about different facets of ethnic jokes that can determine one's ethical attitude toward this type of humor. For example, individual A may respond that he/she finds ethnic jokes funny, does not find it ethically questionable, and denies that ethnic jokes can hurt feelings of others, whereas individual B may point out that this type of humor can hurt others' feelings but are not very much ethically wrong to tell.

Participants and procedure. Participants were 214 individuals from Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran. Participants ranged in age from 15-60 (Mean = 26.91, SD = 4.96) and 74 of the participants were male and 140 were female. They were asked to fill out the 21-item questionnaire of the EATEH. To evaluate the face validity of the scale, one item was added at the end to the questionnaire asking the general attitude toward ethnic humor i.e. whether this type of humor is generally acceptable or should be thought as morally objectionable.

Data analysis and results of Study 1

Exploratory factor analysis. The items were considerably intercorrelated and therefore, a principal component analysis with promax (oblique) rotation seemed to be more suitable for the analysis (Field, 2009). All analyses performed throughout this article are carried out by SPSS 18.0. In extracting the components, we checked both Kaiser's and Cattell's methods, i.e. eigenvalues above 1.0 and scree plot (Cattell, 1966; Kaiser, 1958). The scree plot suggested that one to three components can be extracted, but retaining one component seemed to be more reasonable since the point of inflection was on the second component (that proposes one factor). These three potential factors,

in order, accounted for 55.9, 9.4, and 7.4 of the total variance and 72.6 of the total variance, all together.

Since neither Kaiser's nor Cattell's methods were satisfactory, we analyzed the data set with promax (oblique) rotation three times by giving a limit of one, two, and three factors. Eventually, the one-factor structure was chosen and the other components were ignored. The choice was partly because of the scree plot that was implying only one factor, and also, the one factor structure had the highest internal consistency compared to other suggested structures. The one-factor analysis was more interpretable since the multi-component structures that SPSS suggested did not fulfill the prior sketch of the subscales and was difficult to interpret. All items with factor loading less than .50 were removed from the questionnaires, resulting in 15 remaining items out of the original 21 items (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The selected component had an eigenvalue of 8.38, accounting for 55.9% of the total variance. Table 1 represents factor loadings, communalities, item-total correlations, means, and standard deviations of the scale. Besides, Cronbach's alpha which represents the internal consistency of the scale was found to be .94.

Normative information and internal consistency. As Table 1 shows, the scale has a mean of 53.24 for the total with standard deviation of 22.73. Dividing the total mean by the number of items indicates that on average, people rate all items about 3.55 which, on the 7 point likert-scale, indicating a somewhat negative ethical attitude toward ethnic humor.

Instrument Reliability. Cronbach's alpha which represents the internal consistency of the scale was found to be .94. this alpha suggests that the scale has a good reliability (Field, 2009).

Face validity. To evaluate the face validity of the scale, we asked participants to assert and rate their general perception of ethical acceptance of ethnic jokes on a 7-point Likert format. The question was: "*in general, to what extent do you find ethnic jokes ethically OK to tell?*" A Pearson correlation between the scale's total score and this item revealed a significant result ($r = .79$, $P < .0001$).

Table 1. Items of ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes

Item	Item-total correlation	Factor Loading	H^2	M	SD
α = .94				53.24	22.73
When I hear a joke teasing an ethnic or racial group, I feel such jokes should not be told.	.85	.88	.78	3.29	2.05
I feel very sorry that people often humiliate each other's races and ethnicities.	.79	.84	.70	3.02	1.97
A solution should be found for the problem of insulting ethnic and racial groups.	.80	.85	.72	2.79	1.98
I avoid telling a joke that makes fun of a race or an ethnicity.	.75	.80	.64	3.43	2.06
I don't care if I hear a joke teasing my ethnic or racial group.*	.56	.61	.37	4.68	2.17
It feels like jokes that make fun of an ethnic or racial group are funnier.*	.68	.72	.52	3.79	2.07
I think jokes only mean to make fun and it is permissible to laugh at members of an ethnic or racial group.*	.82	.85	.73	3.69	2.24
Sometimes I object to an ethnic or racial joke, even though it is not referring to my ethnicity.	.63	.69	.47	3.69	2.11
I think people should entirely avoid telling jokes about other ethnicities and or racial groups.	.78	.82	.68	3.18	2.07
I believe that ethnic jokes hurt feelings of the mentioned ethnic and racial groups.	.62	.68	.46	2.77	1.65
Making jokes about other racial and ethnic groups is a kind of insulting their social and ethnic boundaries.	.78	.82	.68	3.39	2.05
I often laugh when I hear a joke teasing my ethnic or racial group.*	.66	.70	.48	4.78	1.96
I usually tell my friends jokes about my own ethnicity or racial group.*	.69	.73	.53	3.69	2.15
I think stereotypes ascribed to different ethnic or racial groups might be true.*	.50	.54	.29	3.70	1.97
For me, ethnic and racial stereotypes that jokes humiliate are evident and observable. *	.53	.56	.32	3.44	1.89

*Items with reversed scoring.

Descriptive Statistics. In general, the participants reported moderate attitude toward ethnic jokes which was slightly negative. The Pearson correlation between level of education (measured by years of education) and ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes was negative, $r = -.12$, $p < .05$. However, age shows no significant correlation with ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, $r = -.07$, $p > .05$.

In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, with Amos 18) was used to confirm the validity and reliability by evaluating the factor loading, fitness of the one-factor model, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The resulting model was fitted based on theoretically sound correlations between errors. Those modifications resulted in acceptable fit indices except the P value (Figure 1 & Table 2). Two of the factor loadings were close to acceptable but not above 0.50 (item 14 = 0.47; item 15 = 0.49). Therefore we conducted the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE: as one indicator of convergent validity) to see whether the scale has reliability and validity when we include the two items or whether we should exclude them. A high value of AVE ($>.5$) indicates that the latent variable has high convergent validity and high value of CR ($>=.7$) indicates that the scale has good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2006). The AVE of 0.521 was obtained implying adequate and satisfactory convergent validity of the scale and also Composite Reliability of 0.944 was obtained indicating very good reliability of the scale. Therefore, based on satisfactory AVE and CR values, the two items were retained at the scale and confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the validity and reliability of the 16-item scale of EATEH as well.

Chi-square (df) = 232.15 (99); P value
(>=0.05) = .000; Relative Chi-Sq (<=5) = 2.34;
CFI (>=0.9) = .948; NFI (>=0.9) = .914; IFI
(>=0.9) = .949; TLI (>=0.9) = .938;
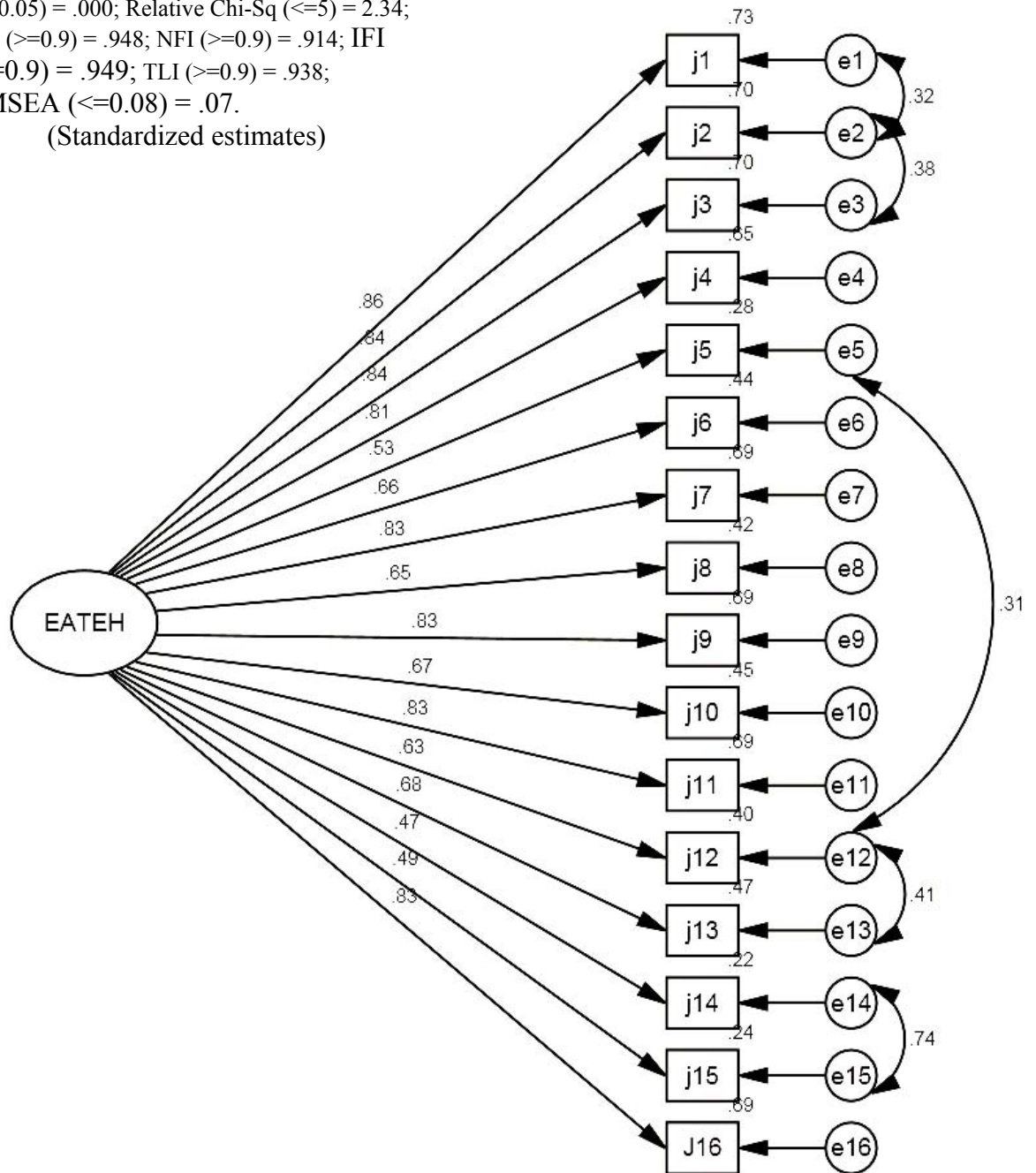RMSEA (<=0.08) = .07.
          (Standardized estimates)

Figure 1. CFA for Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor scale

Table 2: Fit indices for CFA of EATEH variable

CMIN & CFI

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	37	132.15	99	.000	2.34
Saturated model	136	.000	0		
Independence model	16	2703.18	120	.000	22.52

Baseline Comparisons & RMSEA

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI	RMSEA
Default model	.914	.896	.949	.938	.948	.079
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000	
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.318

Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA); Number of parameters in the model (NPAR); Chi-square statistic (CMIN); Normed Fit Index (NFI); Relative Fit Index (RFI); Incremental Fit Index (IRI); Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI); Comparative Fit Index (CFI); Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

Study 2

The purpose of study 2 was to examine the validity of the ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale. The validity of the scale is examined by investigating its relation to moral-related psychological factors such as self-efficacy, authoritarianism, and empathy. Specifically, of particular interest to this study was to determine whether (a) degree of one's empathy can predict ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, (b) ethical attitude is correlated with personality factors such as authoritarianism and self-efficacy, and (c) the EATEH score varies between genders. We hypothesized that the ethics of ethnic humor are influenced by a persons' perspective taking and emotional concern, which are two aspects of empathy. Both these empathy factors may positively correlate with EATEH.

The variables of this study were extracted from studies carried out on prejudice, racism, and people's attitude about other ethnic groups. These studies often considered a variety of factors such as empathy, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Batson et al., 1997; Glover, 1994; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Research also reveals that when a situation or accident provokes moral-related emotion such as empathy toward an individual of an out-group, this influences people's attitude toward that group positively (Batson, et al., 2002; Batson, et al., 1997).

Hoffman (2000) points out that empathic feelings are more likely to be triggered for an individual under distress. Do we empathize with an individual or ethnic group when instead of distress delight feelings such as laughter are evoked? How about racist jokes? What factors influence our ethical attitude toward ethnic and racist humor? We addressed these questions in the current study.

Methods

Participants and procedure. The total sample was 500 students who were randomly chosen from ten high schools of Ahvaz, Iran. Nine of the participants were purged from the analysis due to incomplete answers. Participants consisted of 284 males and 194 females and 13 students did not mention their gender. They range in age from 14 to 18 with mean age of 16.14 and standard deviation .99. The ethnic distribution of the sample was as follows: 177 Fars, 173 Lor, 2 Kurd, 103 Arab, 8 Turk, and 28 did not mention their ethnicity.

Instruments and data coding. In addition to EATEH, subjects responded to three more questionnaires including Authoritarianism Scale, Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), and General Self Efficacy.

Authoritarianism Scale. The Authoritarianism Scale has 12 items that were developed based on the socio-cultural sphere of Iran by Heydari et al. (Submitted). Answers to items were in a 5-point Likert format from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

General Self Efficacy Scale. General Self-Efficacy (GSE) scale was developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (2005) and contains 10 items. The internal consistency is given as .75 to .91. Luszczynska, Acholz and Schwarzer (2005) confirmed the psychometric validity for the scale by finding significant association between self-efficacy and socio-cognitive variables such as goal intentions, implementation intentions, outcome expectations, self-regulation, domain-specific self-efficacy, health behaviors, well-being, and coping strategies. The Persian version of the GSE was provided by Nezami, Schwarzer, and Jerusalem (1996). The validity of GSE was also confirmed by Rajabi (1385/2006) in two different areas of Iran. Rajabi found a Cronbach alpha of .84 and .80 for

Chamran University and Marvdasht Azad University students respectively, and significant association with Rosenberg Self Esteem scale.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). This scale to measure individuals' differences in both cognitive and emotional facets of empathy (Davis, 1983). The test includes four subscales, which are perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. The Internal consistency of subscales ranged from .71 to .77, and test-retest reliability of subscales was from .62 to .71 (M. H. Davis, 1983). For validity of the test, he found significant relationship between IRI subscales with other empathy scales, indexes of social competence, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others. Validity of IRI in Persian has been examined by Teymoori and Shahrzad (In press) and also similar internal consistency has been found as well.

Results of the Second Study

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum) were computed for the EATEH, IRI subscales, authoritarianism, and General Self Efficacy scales. The results are given in Table 3. Result of descriptive statistics shows that participants generally have slightly negative attitude toward ethnic humor as well as high personal distress and authoritarian tendency.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of all measured scales

Variables	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Age	16.14	.99	14	18
1. EATEH	41.59	18.20	15	105
2. EC	14.06	6.54	7	35
3. PT	14.51	6.12	7	35
4. PD	18.35	7.35	7	35
5. Authoritarianism	34.26	9.27	15	60
6. Self-Efficacy	27.02	6.80	10	47

First, we examined the associations between the variables with Pearson correlation (Table 4). Among the empathy subscales, Perspective Taking is negatively correlated to Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor ($r = -.27$, $p < .0001$) and Personal Distress was positively related to EATEH ($r = .22$, $p < .0001$). The higher the Perspective Taking was,

the more negative someone was towards ethnic humor. The higher personal distress score was, the more positive someone was towards ethnic humor. Empathic Concern does not have a significant relationship with EATEH. Moreover, authoritarianism is positively correlated with EATEH (r = .35, p < .0001) implying that the higher the authoritarian tendency of individuals, the more positive attitude a person is taken toward ethnic jokes. Finally, there was a significant negative relationship between Self Efficacy and EATEH (r = -.14, p < .01). A higher score in self-efficacy is associated with a negative attitude toward ethnic jokes and disliking of ethnic humor.

Table 4. Correlation between empathy subscales, authoritarianism, self-efficacy, and EATEH

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ethic of Jokes	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. EC	-.04	-	-	-	-	-
3. PT	-.27**	.80**	-	-	-	-
4. PD	.22**	.01	-.11*	-	-	-
5. Authoritarianism	.35**	-.05	-.06	.37**	-	-
6. Self-Efficacy	-.14**	.31**	.32**	-.21**	-.25**	-

Next, t-tests were conducted to see whether there are any gender differences in the ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, empathy, self-efficacy, and authoritarianism of the participants. Because the Levene's test for equality of variances was significant in EATEH, personal distress, and self-efficacy, equal variances were not assumed in the differences of gender in these constructs and subscales. The T-test was modified to correct for unequal variances. The results showed that men and women had significant differences in ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, t (470.66) = 4.06, p < .0001, in which the mean of males is significantly higher than the mean of females EATEH (male: M = 44.15, SD = 20.72 & female: M = 37.94, SD = 12.66). Gender made no difference to Emotional Concern, perspective taking, Personal Distress, Authoritarianism, and Self efficacy.

Moreover, it is intended to see to what extend empathy subscales, authoritarianism and self-efficacy account for variance in ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. To do so, standardized regression analysis was used and EATEH was entered as dependent variable and perspective taking, personal distress, authoritarianism and self-

efficacy were entered as independent variables. The full model was significant, R^2 = .19, $F(4, 486) = 28.86$, $p < .0001$ in which 19% of the variance of ethical attitude toward ethnic humor was predicted by two subscales of empathy, authoritarianism and self-efficacy variables. The combination of predictor variables had a significant effect on EATEH, $B = 24.40$, $t = 4.87$, $p < .0001$, indicating that individuals who reported having high perspective taking, low personal distress, lower level of authoritarianism, and high self-efficacy took a more negative attitude toward ethnic humor. In addition, perspective taking ($B = -.76$, $\beta = -.26$, $t = -5.96$, $p < .0001$) and authoritarianism ($B = .62$, $\beta = .31$, $t = 7.02$, $p < .0001$) accounted for a significant proportion of variance of EATEH individually, while the unique effect of personal distress and self-efficacy were not significant. Notably, authoritarianism had the most significant effect on EATEH ($\beta = .31$) and perspective taking was the second most significant predictor of EATEH ($\beta = -.26$).

Table 5. Multiple regression analyses, using, Perspective taking, Personal Distress, authoritarianism and self-efficacy as predictor variables and EATEH as dependent variable.

Variable	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Constant	24.40	5.01		4.87	.001
Perspective Taking	-.76	.13	-.26	-5.96	.001
Personal Distress	.20	.11	.08	1.84	.067
Authoritarianism	.62	.09	.31	7.02	.001
Self-Efficacy	.12	.12	.05	1.04	.300

$R^2 = .19$, R^2 adj. $= .18$, $F (4, 486) = 28.86$, $p < .000$

General Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a scale measuring people's ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes and assessing its validity and reliability. Because of lack of research on ethics of ethnic humor, more attention was paid to relatively close fields of study such as attitude toward racism, ethnocentrism, and the like, where one's feelings, ideas, and behavioral reactions were measured (Batson, et al., 1997; Pedersen, Beven, Walker, & Griffiths, 2004). The EATEH is the first scale to touch on one's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, taking emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects into consideration. Cronbach's alpha and item total correlation support the reliability of new scale of Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor. The evidence for the validity of the test

was provided by the second study. Significant correlation of EATEH with subscales of IRI, authoritarianism, and self-efficacy support the criterion validity of the scale in which high perspective taking and self-efficacy as well as low score in personal distress and authoritarianism are associated with a more negative attitude toward ethnic humor. The ability of putting one's self into the shoes of others would make the individual more critical toward teasing other ethnic groups. Moreover, ethical attitude was predicted by the research variables showing that the test has good predictive validity as well. Individuals with higher ability of perspective taking, empathic feelings, self-efficacy, and in contrast, a weaker authoritarian tendency, are more likely to be negative toward ethnic humor, i.e. to disliking teasing others.

Demonstrating negative correlation between self-efficacy and ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes is also consistent with Bandura's proposition about characteristics of self-efficient individuals. Bandura (2001) asserted that being highly self-efficient makes individuals more cooperative, helpful, careful about each other's welfare, and encourages prosocial activities. Bandura said that the self-efficient individuals rely on themselves while maintaining efficient societal functioning.

As it mentioned earlier, Freud (1976) believed that telling jokes and humor in general is a way of releasing stress in an acceptable and less morally questionable way. Consistently, we found that high personal distress, which is an indicator of anxiety, is positively related to EATEH. Authoritarianism is also related to a more positive attitude toward ethnic humor, which is consistent with the previous literature. Many studies showed that authoritarianism is related to ethnocentrism, racism, prejudice, and negative attitude toward minorities (Lutterman & Middleton, 1970; Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1990).

Previous research has shown that bad-taste jokes or humorous teasing is viewed as a high risk action and is often associated with aggressive behavior. Since males are assumed to be verbally and behaviorally more aggressive than females (Harris, 1992; Hyde, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, cited in Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006) and teasing is considered an aggressive behavior, it was expected to find more positive attitude toward ethnic humor in males (see Li & Zhu, 2008). For example, a study by

Jaret (1999) revealed that men, as compared to women, had a more positive attitude toward jokes teasing blacks. Similarly Carretero-Dios and Ruch (2010) found that males consider sexual, black, and women-disparagement humor less offensive than females. Our results also support these findings. We found that males score significantly higher on EATEH showing that they assert less concern toward ethics of jokes.

Empathy has been more studied regarding caring emotions while seeing someone in distress and feeling the same, but the relation of empathy and ethnic humor has not been well-demonstrated. Our results revealed that from the IRI subscales that measure four factors of empathy, only perspective taking and personal distress were significantly correlated with EATEH. Therefore, people who are more emotionally sensitive and have higher abilities in considering others' points of view are more likely to have a negative attitude toward ethnic jokes.

Demonstrating that empathy can predict ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, this finding is in concordance with previous research on empathy. On the one hand, a large body of research has demonstrated that empathy is related to moral, caring, and prosocial behavior because it involves giving help to someone who is in trouble or distress (Barnett, Howard, King, & Dino, 1981; Batson et al., 1999; Batson et al., 1995; Hoffman, 1977, 2001; Krevans & Gibbs, 1996; Shelton & Rogers, 1981) and who might belong to a different group (Batson et al., 1991). On the other hand, it has been found that empathy can influence individual's attitude toward members of another group (Batson, et al., 1997) whereas lack of empathy relates to intergroup aggression (Blalock, 2006; Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Wang, et al., 2003), social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999).

In addition, empathy has been considered critical to all human relationships and communications (Duan & Hill, 1996; Omdahl, 1995) including both interpersonal (Hoffman, 1977, 1981, 2001; Kim, Kaplowitz, & Johnston, 2004) and intercultural communications (Broome, 1991). For instance, Broome (1991, p. 235) indicated that "Empathy is associated with many important aspects of communication behavior, e.g., formulating communicative intentions and goals, devising strategies to accomplish

communicative purposes, and constructing messages consistent with communicative strategies. These and other communication behaviors are usually seen as influenced by communicators' attempts (or lack thereof) to consider the perspective of the other person". This research considers the ability to empathize with others as a potential factor in reducing conflict and promoting mutual understanding among different ethnic groups of multiethnic societies (Batson, et al., 1995; Carrell, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990; Wang, et al., 2003).

Conclusion

Since ethics of jokes and, especially, people's ethical perception of this type of humor have not been well-investigated, more attention should be paid to this line of research. For this purpose, the newly developed scale can certainly be useful. Our scale is the first instrument for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. The instrument considers variety of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors to estimate the overall ethical attitude of individuals toward ethnic jokes.

The instrument is appropriate for research regarding racism, ethnocentrism, prejudice, as well as research in personality. It is interesting to investigate whether there is any relation between ethical attitude toward ethnic humor and variables related to ethnic prejudice and personality traits. For example, as is mentioned at the outset of the article, recent research has shown that "racism has gone below the surface" since expressing racist statements is considered inappropriate or immoral. It is interesting to explore whether ethnic jokes are a hidden way of expressing prejudice toward the out-group.

In addition, the scale overcomes some of the current difficulties in studying humor. Philosophical inquiries regarding ethics of jokes end up at the point where the content of jokes can always be covered by saying that it is merely a joke. However, the current scale to some extent resolves this issue by measuring how one feels, thinks, and reacts to ethnic jokes.

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Sociological Indicators of Ethical Attitude toward Ethnic Humor: An Empirical Study on Persian Jokes

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Abstract

People's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH) is not well-investigated. The present article explores the relation of gender, anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, and national identity to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. 500 high school students were surveyed from 10 high schools of Ahvaz, Iran. We found that attitudes toward jokes are significantly related to the dimensions of ethnocentrism, anomie, socioeconomic status, national identity, and gender. A significant proportion of the EATEH's variance was predicted by socioeconomic status and anomie, whereas ethnocentrism was still significant but played only a minor role. Further, on average men show prejudice more openly than women.

Keywords*: ethnic jokes, anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, national identity, Iran.*

1. Introduction

Compared to psychologists, sociologists have had little interest in studying unserious social discourse such as joke and humor (Mulkay, 1988). As a result, less attention has been devoted to the sociology of ethnic jokes (Best, 2007; Davies, 1998). Since the 1980s, however, there has been increased interest in studying the origin and function of ethnic jokes (Martin, 1998). Sociological research on ethnic jokes has centered on sources of ethnic humor, which are "ethnocentrism, in-group adulation, out-group resentment, prejudice, and intolerance of the life-styles of others (Apte, 1985)." In addition, sociological studies have shown interest in studying the functions of ethnic jokes in multiethnic society (see below). Yet, people's perception of the rightness and wrongness of this type of humor has been neglected. Similarly, sociological factors that might influence people's ethical attitude toward ethnic and racist jokes – i.e. factors that encourage or discourage people to tell and enjoy ethnic jokes- have not been well-investigated. In the current study, we aim to address questions such as how do people ethically judge ethnic or racist jokes? Do they have any notion that telling such jokes

might be ethically wrong? What sociological factor can predict people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor?

To address these questions we surveyed Iranians. Iran is home to 74 million people who are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, and religiously diverse. The core ethnic group is Persian with over 51 per cent of Iran's population, as compared with Turks, Lurs, Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and other minorities who constitute less than half of population of the country (Hassan, 2007). In broad terms, Iranian ethnic rivalries have been less discussed during the recent decades but explicit ethnic prejudice has remained evident in this country (Amirahmadi, 1987; Asgharzadeh, 2007; Van Gorder, 2010). Research has shown that globalization and feelings of discrimination have isolated peripheral ethnic groups in Iran leading them to develop stronger ethnic identities and be more pessimistic toward the out-groups (Fokoohi & Amoosi, 2009; Koutlaki, 2010; Moghadas Jafari, et al., 2008; Rabani, et al., 2009; Shaffer, 2002). Such diversity of religions, customs, and ethnic identities have been pointed out by sociological studies as an ample background for ethnic humor, which is a popular type of joke in Iran (Apte, 1985, 1987; Davies, 1982, 1990; Mik-Meyer, 2007).

Ebad Fardzadeh et al., (Submitted) developed a new questionnaire for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH). They found that people have different ethical perspectives toward ethnic jokes. Some people perceive ethnic jokes as racist expressions, whereas others might call them only a nice joke. Further, they found that moral emotions such as empathy makes individuals develop criteria for distinguishing jokes that are in good or bad taste. That is in contrast to the philosophical and theoretical arguments that struggle in setting a criterion for specifying a border between good and bad taste. The current article is a follow up on that research; however, it attempts to address sociological factors that influence people's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. More specifically, it aims to explore how social elements such as ethnocentrism, anomie, socioeconomic status, and national identity, relate to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. We consider these factors one by one to discuss the literature and illustrate how these factors might relate to ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes.

1. Ethnocentrism & Ethnic Humor

Ethnic humor is defined as a "type of humor in which fun is made of the perceived behavior, customs, personality, or any other traits of a group or its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity (Apte, 1985, p. 198)." Ethnic humor in Iran, the subject of the current research, humiliates peripheral ethnic groups by naming their ethnicities or their cities. Regardless of the target (ethnicity or city), Persian ethnic jokes ascribe canny, cruel, and immoral traits and stereotypes to people of different ethnic groups and cities and humiliate them. For example, people of major cities of Iran such as *Tehran*, *Isfahan,* and *Rasht* are being teased for *shrewdness*, *being calculating* (conservative and opportunistic), and *being disloyal*, whereas in *Tabriz, Abadan,* and *Ghazvin* people are considered *stupid*, *dishonest*, and *rapists* (see Koutlaki, 2010, p. 181). For example, Asgharzadeh (2007) articulates that Persian ethnic jokes include racial insults against peripheral ethnic groups and argues that "… victims of this kind of abuse know very well that it is not just a joke" (p. 148)

Because of hateful, racist, and insulting expressions that are often found in ethnic jokes, the link between ethnic jokes and racism, prejudice, and ethnocentrism has been addressed by much research. Relating ethnic jokes to ethnocentrism, racism, prejudice, and hatred implies, according to psychodynamic theory, that these jokes carry serious hints of hatred (Best, 2007; Lowe, 1986). Sigmund Freud (1976) classified jokes into various types and focused on "*tendentious jokes*" that he considered to include a purpose above the "*innocent humor.*" Linking purposeful content of tendentious jokes to repressed desires such as sexual and aggression instincts and, on the other hand, social needs such as freedom vs. authority, wealth vs. poverty, and alike, Freud illustrates the psycho-social conflicts of *popular mind* as the source of jokes: "The popular mind, which created these stories, and others like them, is torn by similar conflict (p. 151)." Although Freud did not specifically analyze ethnic humor in detail, his approach has been frequently used in interpreting the purpose and function of ethnic humor.

Based on psychodynamic theory, ethnic humor is viewed as a defense mechanism that helps to express belief and attitudes that cannot be expressed directly (releasing suppressed energies) to a group of people. For instance, Oshima (2000)

remarks that humor works out as a defense mechanism: "humor functions as a displacement of the violence and aggression which are both part of the human instinct. This applies also to the function of ethnic humor in multi-ethnic society" (p.41). Similarly, Billig (2001) argues that people may enjoy expressing hatred in racist jokes (see also Husband, 1988).

Contrary to this approach, Davies (1990) asserted that ethnic humor should not be considered as directly hostile or racist expressions. He asserts two sets of crucial boundaries for each ethnic group: 1) social and geographical boundaries that identify the members and 2) moral boundaries that explain the accepted rules among the members (Davies, 1982). In his opinion, ethnic humor determines the socio-cultural boundaries and reduces the ambiguity or the threat by attacking these boundaries: "Ethnic jokes police these boundaries. They mock groups who are peripheral to the central or dominant group or who are seen by them as ambiguous. They ascribe to these groups traits which the group telling the jokes does not wish to recognize among its own members (p. 383)". Davies emphasizes that there is no direct relationship between the content and purpose of the joke because jokes are first and foremost jokes. He also indicates that ethnic jokes target peripheral groups that might be hated or liked and thus, ethnic humor is not necessarily emerging from hatred.

Although there is a debate among scholars to what extent ethnic humor represents racism or hatred, it seems that there is a general agreement that ethnocentrism and prejudice are major sources of ethnic jokes (Mintz, 1996). Research also has shown that ethnocentrism and social identity are central to ethnic prejudice (Perreault & Bourhis, 1998, 1999). Therefore, it is crucial to include this variable in studying people's attitude toward ethnic jokes.

2. *National identity & ethnic jokes*

Identity has been well-investigated regarding prejudice and racism (Hopkins, 2001). In the realm of humor, identity is one of the main boundaries that ethnic jokes target. In a sense, jokes that humiliate the language, dress, habits and beliefs of an ethnic group, are denigrating their identity (Davies, 1982; Vucetic, 2004). Specifically, jokes that are told regarding stereotypes of other countries, such as jokes that Scandinavians tell about

each other, highlight commonly accepted national stereotypes. Gundelach (2000) points out that narratives denigrating national stereotypes serve to strengthen "the relevance of the nation as a social entity (114)." In his point of view, jokes are one of the commonly used forms of narratives that the Scandinavians use when they recount what is typically Danish, Norwegian or Swedish.

What we intend to examine in the current study is the relation between national identity and ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. If national stereotypes are a way groups identify others groups' life styles, identities, traits, etc., then they are more likely to believe in the stereotype of the humor (see Billig, 1995). As a result, believing in a stereotype (e.g. Jews are canny) makes one more reluctant to object to the humor because one finds it very much close to reality and reality is not something we may object to.

3. Anomie

Exploring the potential relation of anomie feelings to ethnic jokes demands in depth discussion since these two concepts have not been linked together (web of sciences yields no result). The term anomie stems from *anomia*, the Greek term that pertains to absence of law (Caruana, et al., 2000). In sociology, anomie has been addressed on the one hand at the micro level of analysis, underscoring individual's perception, feelings, and values toward dominant normative order (Rushing, 1971), and on the other hand at the macro level of analysis, centering on impersonal and structural characteristics of the society such as normlessness. Here we briefly review the central theories of anomie and discuss how anomie might relate to ethnic humor in a multi-ethnic society.

The social-structural theories of anomie (i.e. macro level) were developed by Durkheim and Merton underlining moral groundlessness and separation of means and goals as sources of anomie (Agnew, 1980; see also Kapsis, 1978). Durkheim (1951, 1984) describes anomie as a state of normlessness in which society's major values break down or become invalid to people. Durkheim asserts that this pathological status reflects individuals' sense of moral groundlessness that happens when a norm is challenged and people cannot find an appropriate substitute: "At the very moment when traditional rules have lost their authority, the richer prize offered these appetites

stimulates them and makes them more exigent and impatient of control" (Durkheim, 1984; p. 214). Anomie is assumed to occur under rapid social changes such as economic recession or splendor, war, and fast population growth that make people feel frustrated and unsatisfied regarding their desires[1] (Konty, 2005). Similar to Durkheim, Merton (1968) focuses on social-structural dimensions of anomie, but emphasizes the gap between culturally reinforced goals and institutional means as the cause of anomie. These two theories agree that society's characteristics can produce undesirable emotions such as anger, fear, and frustration and damages socio-moral norms that leads to deviant behavior, hedonism, and crime (Konty, 2005), though they disagree on some points. First and foremost, while Durkheim underlines invalid norms as the main source of anomie, Merton illustrates anomie as a characteristic of a maladaptive society and lists five types of adaptation, which are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion (for more details see Caruana, et al., 2000). Moreover, unlike Durkheim who states that anomie occurs periodically over time but uniformly throughout the society, Merton claims that anomie can occur as a permanent feature of a society (Bernard, 1995, p. 86). Merton names two essential elements for social norms, which are *culturally defined goals* and *institutionalized (legitimated) means* that actualize the goals (Merton, 1968). When there is excessive cultural emphasis on some goals but available opportunities are poor, people do not reach those goals (or satisfy the valued needs) and as a result the society becomes anomic.

Since the 1950s, more attention has been paid to micro-level anomie, centering on psychological facets of anomie and the way anomie influences individuals' mutual interaction (Menard, 1995; Orru, 1987). In contrast to macro-level theories that center on the societal-structural sources of anomie (Konty, 2005), MacIver could throw some light on the psychological aspects of anomie. MacIver (1950, quoted from Orru, 1987) describes anomie as the collapse of individual's *sense of attachment to society* and asserts three situations that cause detachment: 1) culture clash that occurs when a system of values becomes invalid for individuals; 2) capitalistic competitiveness; and 3) rapid social change. Srole (1956) elaborated MacIver's theory by focusing on individual-level anomie that he named *anomia*. According to Srole, anomia pertains to "self-to-other distance" or "self-to-other alienation (Srole, 1956, p. 711)." Srole

distinguished five dimensions of psychological sense of anomie to explain the degree of an individual's integration with the society, which are as follow: (1) The belief that the society's leaders are ignoring individuals' needs; (2) Perceiving social order as being unpredictable; (3) The notion that people are retrogressing from their goals; (4) The feeling that life is meaningless; (5) The perception that the individual's personal relationships are not predictable or supportive.

Discussing how feelings of anomie might relate to ethnic humor is important since, to our knowledge, these two concepts have not been linked to each other. At the micro-level, anomie creates an imbalance between individual's self-interest and other people's interest. Such a psychological perception of anomie i.e. "imbalance between social and self-interests (Konty, 2005, p. 110)," causes normlessness, a feeling of being abandoned, frustration, a variety of conflicts, and selfishness (emphasize one's own interests) that consequently break down individuals' attachment to their society and isolate them from others (Cao, 2007; Farnworth & Leiber, 1989; Konty, 2005; Menard, 1995; Winslow, 1968). At the macro scale, anomie weakens the society's moral boundary and makes individuals feel lost because of lack of valid norms and values.

Such a normless society provides a background for hatred or distrust that shows itself in different ways. For instance, it biases the individual towards a hostile perception of his world in which "other" become enemies who try to take advantage of him (Fischer, 1973; Kapsis, 1978). For example, anomie has been linked to crime and deviant behavior (see Cao, 2007; Durkheim, 1951; Farnworth & Leiber, 1989; Konty, 2005) and also to ethnocentrism and prejudice (McDill, 1961; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Scheepers, et al., 1992; Srole, 1956).

Therefore, on the one hand, anomie feelings might encourage ethnic jokes to reduce interpersonal and intergroup ambiguities. As Davies (1982) remarks: "[ethnic jokes] express the problems and anxieties caused by the conflicting norms and values inevitably found in large societies dominated by anomic impersonal institutions such as the market place and bureaucracy (p. 383)". On the other hand, anomie feelings bias individuals to be selfish, hateful, isolated, and insecure, and consequently they are more likely to have prejudiced and racist thoughts, which are linked to ethnic humor (McDill,

1961; Roberts & Rokeach, 1956; Scheepers, et al., 1992; Srole, 1956). However, very little attention has been paid to anomie as a potential source of ethnic humor.

4. *Socioeconomic Status*

Characterizing the way socioeconomic status influences individuals and families' social being has been one of the main concerns of sociological studies (Dos Santos, 1970; Ekehammar, Sidanius, & Nilsson, 1987). The concept of "social class" or "socioeconomic status" was developed to include the process of ranking individual's and families' social position by wealth, occupation, education, and a variety of other factors (Martineau, 1958). This concept is chiefly focused on individuals' interaction in their social context (Bodenhausen, Macrae, & Garst, 1998; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2001). Interaction of an individual with a specific social category shapes individuals' perception of themselves and others' social status and also generates stereotypes that work as expectancies for the social environment (Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). For example, members of low socioeconomic class are expected to have lower income, lower education and knowledge, lower participation in political organizations, and more isolated occupations and economic insecurity (Lipset, 1959).

Socioeconomic status influences racial prejudice (Jones, 1997; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). This phenomenon is described as social class prejudice, which pertains to "negative attitude toward one's social class out-group (Weeks & Lupfer, 2004, p. 977)." Further, middle and upper-class people prefer to interact with their equals and judge the working class with disdain (Giles, Gatlin, & Cataldo, 1976; Laumann & Guttman, 1966). Moreover, ethnic minorities are more likely to be found in the lower social classes than upper classes (Herring, 1989; Jones, 1997; Pettigrew, 1981, 1985; Runciman, 1972; Triandis & Triandis, 1960; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). Therefore, such class separation between ethnic groups might strengthen inter-group conflicts and consequently, reinforce prejudice (Wilson, 1980). In studying inter-group or racial prejudice, it is necessary to consider socioeconomic status as well as ethnicity (see also Jones, 1997).

2- Rationale of the study

As noted at the outset of the article, sociological studies have ignored individuals' perception of ethnic jokes and mainly examined the social sources and functions of this type of humor. In the current study, we attempt to examine the way socio-cultural factors such as anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, and gender differences relate to people's ethical attitudes toward ethnic jokes.

We expected to find a negative correlation between anomie and ethnocentrism with ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, mainly because these variables make individuals care less about other people. In addition, a body of research has shown that women are less likely to express prejudice and more likely to show empathy toward others (Basow, 1992; Johnson, et al., 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999). Therefore, we expected to see a higher mean for men on ethnocentrism, anomie, and attitude toward ethnic jokes. Finally, we hypothesize that socioeconomic status is positively correlated with ethical attitude toward ethnic humor, on the grounds that people of lower socioeconomic status have more anomic feelings and also might be more oriented toward taking prejudicial viewpoints.

3- Method

3.1. Participants and procedure

500 students were chosen by the cluster method of sampling from ten high schools of Ahvaz, Iran. Nine of the participants were purged from the analysis due to incomplete answers. Participants consisted of 283 males and 194 females and 14 students did not mention their gender. They ranged in age from 14 to 18 with mean age of 16.14 and standard deviation .99. The ethnic distribution of the sample was as follows: 177 Fars, 172 Lors, 2 Kurds, 103 Arabs, 8 Turks, and 29 did not mention their ethnicity. The ethnic diversity of the sample shows that the sample is not homogenous and only to some extent represents the ethnic diversities of the Iranian society. The subjects participated voluntarily and were assured anonymity.

3.2.   Instruments

Participants completed seven different scales: (1) Ethnocentrism scale, (2) anomie scale, (3) subjective socioeconomic status scale, (4) national identity scale, and (5) attitude toward ethnic jokes.

3.2.1.   *Ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes (EATEH)*

We used a recently developed scale for measuring individuals' perception toward harmfulness of ethnic humor and objections and behavioral reactions toward this type of humor (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted).The ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale includes 15 self-report items and requires subjects to provide their opinion about ethnic jokes and rate to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement on a 7 point Likert-type format (i.e. from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). The scale makes no value judgment about "moral maturity" or "racist attitude" of people. Instead, it collects self-perceived information about different joke-related issues that can determine one's ethical attitude toward this type of humor.

This instrument has shown to have criterion validity by its significant relationships with empathy, authoritarianism, and self-efficacy. It also has predictive validity since a significant amount of its variance was explained by perspective taking, empathic feeling and experiences, empathic perspective taking, empathic awareness, acceptance of other cultures, personal distress, authoritarianism, and self-efficacy. In addition, it has a good construct validity as the items obtained satisfactory factor loading (.50 to .85) and also confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the one factor model of EATEH; moreover, Average Variance Extracted (AVE: as one indicator of convergent validity) of 0.52 demonstrated adequate and satisfactory convergent validity of the scale. For reliability of the scale, an alpha coefficient of 0.94 and also Composite Reliability of 0.944 were obtained indicating the scale is very reliable (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted).

3.2.2.   *Anomie*

To measure anomie, the nine-point revised instrument of Srole (1956) was translated into Persian. Since the 1960s, this scale has been used in sociological studies for

measuring anomie (McDill, 1961; Mizruchi, 1960; Scheepers, et al., 1992). To maximize the variance, the original scale was elaborated by replacing yes/no responses with a Likert scale, as found in Caruana, et al. (2000). All the scale's items were described at either end by 1 (Strongly Agree) and 5 (Strongly Disagree). The scoring was applied such that the higher the sum of the scale, the greater are the individuals' anomie feelings. To determine the validity of the translated questionnaire, 40 participants were surveyed and an Alpha coefficient of 0.66 was obtained. The scale is shown to have predictive validity through its significant association with authoritarianism and socioeconomic status (Heydari et al., 2011).

3.2.3. *Subjective socioeconomic status*

The participants also were asked to report their socioeconomic status. That included a subjective perception of social class. Research has shown that compared to objective socioeconomic status, subjective perception of social class is a better predictor of psychological health and well-being of individuals (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; S. Cohen et al., 2008; Mirowsky & Ross, 2000). Interestingly, the correlation coefficient of objective and subjective socioeconomic status has been found to differ from one ethnicity to another, ranging from 0.2 to 0.5 (Ekehammar, et al., 1987; Ostrove, Adler, Kuppermann, & Washington, 2000). Subjective socioeconomic status was measured by 6-item questionnaire constructed by Nabavi, Hosseinzade, & Hosseini (2009). The scale is a subjective measure of socioeconomic status using 6 positively keyed items in a five-point answer format (1 = "Very Valueless"; 2 = "Valueless"; 3 = "Somewhat Valuable"; 4 = "Valuable"; 5 = Very Valuable") and has alpha coefficient of 0.77.

3.2.4. *Ethnocentrism*

The scale used in the present article for measuring ethnocentrism was developed by Navah et al. (2010) to measure ethnocentrism within the sociocultural context of Iran. The scale consists of two five-item subscales, which measure unfavorable attitude toward out-groups (out-group ethnocentrism) and favorable attitude toward in-group (in-group ethnocentrism). The predictive validity of the scale was obtained through its significant association with authoritarianism, $r = 0.51$, $p < .01$, and socioeconomic status,

r = 0.14, p < .05 (Navah, et al., 2010). The scale requires the respondents to rate the answer the items in five-point Likert format, ranging from 5- "strongly agree" to 1- "strongly disagree." The scales have each a Cronbach's alpha of .85.

3.2.5. *National Identity*

Since there was no reliable measurement of national identity in Iran, we developed a new scale for measuring this variable. Several items were generated and handed to 10 social psychology experts in Shahid Chamran University, Iran. The lecturers were asked to evaluate the face validity of the items, considering socio-cultural context of Iran. After implementing the offered corrections, six items were selected that seemed to be most relevant. A Likert scale was used for the measurement ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. To examine the validity and reliability of the scale, 180 individuals were surveyed using the scale. Factor analysis suggests that the scale would be at its best when extracting only one factor and the following six items (see table 1). The scale has Alpha coefficient of .84.

Table 1. *Items of national identity scale*

Alpha 0.89	Factor loading
I am proud of being Iranian	.65
In case of invasion, I will fight for my country to defend it	.718
When national sport teams of my country succeed I feel honored.	.815
I wish I was born in another country*	.725
I do my best to help developing my country.	.751
Sometimes I feel ashamed that I am an Iranian*	.81
I don't care how rich and historical the civilization of Iran is*	.824

* Items with reversed scoring

4- Results

Descriptive statistics (Means and standard deviation) for age, anomie, socioeconomic status, ethnocentrism, National Identity, and EATEH are given in Table 2. Sense of anomie, ethnocentrism, and national identity are relatively high among the participants, whereas EATEH is relatively low (i.e. average of positive attitude toward ethnic jokes) in the sample. In addition, subjects perceived their own social class as being between middle and upper class (M = 15.86, SD = 4.62).

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of all measured scales*

	M	SD	Min	Max
Age	16.14	.99	14	18
Socioeconomic status	15.86	4.62	5	25
Anomie	29.96	7.37	9	45
Ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes	41.59	18.20	15	105
In-group ethnocentrism	18.38	5.08	5	25
Out-group ethnocentrism	14.62	5.33	5	25
National identity	19.95	7.26	7	35

T-tests were carried out to explore whether there are any gender differences in the ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes, SES, anomie, two dimensions of ethnocentrism, and national identity of the participants. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances test was significant in EATEH, anomie, and national identity. Equal variances were not assumed in the differences of gender in these constructs and subscales. There, the T-test was modified to correct for unequal variances. The results revealed that male score significantly higher than females on EATEH, $t(470.66) = 4.06$, $p < .0001$ (male: M = 44.15, SD = 20.72 & female: M = 37.94, SD = 12.66). In addition, there were significant gender differences in in-group oriented ethnocentrism ($t(476) = 2.15$, $p < .05$), out-group oriented ethnocentrism ($t(476) = 3.1$, $p < .01$), and national identity ($t(443.09) = -1.98$, $p < .05$). Males scored higher on ethnocentrism scale indicating that men are more likely to be ethnocentric, whereas females obtained higher scores on national identity.

Next, the Pearson correlation was used to explore the association between the measured variables, as summarized in Table 3. Based on Table 3, SES had a negative significant relationship with EATEH ($r = -.50$, $p < .01$), anomie ($r = -.49$, $p < .01$), in-group ethnocentrism ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$), and out-group ethnocentrism ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$). Anomie, in-group ethnocentrism, and out-group ethnocentrism had positive significant correlation with EATEH ($r = .49$, $r = .32$, $r = .35$, $p < .01$, respectively). The higher the scores in anomie and ethnocentrism the more positive an attitude would be required to tell ethnic jokes. In contrast, national identity had positive significant correlation with

EATEH (r = -.34, p < .01) implying that whenever the national identity is strong, one is more likely to have a negative attitude toward ethnic jokes.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients between EATEH, SES, anomie, in-group ethnocentrism, out-group ethnocentrism, and national identity

Variables	EATEH	SES	Anomie	In-group Ethnocentrism	Out-group ethnocentrism
1. EATEH	1	-	-	-	
2. SES	-.50*	-	-	-	
3. Anomie	.49*	-.49*	-	-	
4. In-group ethnocentrism	.32*	-.35*	.40*	-	
5.Out-group ethnocentrism	.35*	-.31*	.38*	.59*	
6. National identity	.34*	.28*	-.27*	-.22	-.29

* $P < 0.01$

Finally, we looked to what extent SES, anomie, ethnocentrism, and national identity account for variance in ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. To do so, standardized regression analysis was used and EATEH was entered as a dependent variable, while SES, anomie, in-group ethnocentrism, out-group ethnocentrism, and national identity were entered as independent variables (Table 4). The full model was significant, R^2 = .38, F (5, 482) = 59.05, p < .0001 in which 38% of the variance of ethical attitude toward ethnic humor was predicted by SES, anomie, ethnocentrism, and national identity variables. The combination of predictor variables has significant effect on EATEH, B = 40.58, t = 6.89, p < .0001. In detail, SES, B = -1.10, β = -.28, t = -6.57, p < .0001, anomie, B = .68, β = .27, t = 6.25, p < .0001, national identity, B = -.42, β = -.17, t = -4.31, p < .0001, and out-group ethnocentrism B = .34, β = .10, t = 2.14, p < .05 accounted for a significant variance of EATEH individually while the unique effect of in-group ethnocentrism was not significant. As it can be seen, the SES has the most significant effect on the people's ethical perception (β = -.28) and the next significant predictor is Anomie (β = .27).

Table 4. Multiple regression analyses, using SES, anomie, in-group ethnocentrism, out-group ethnocentrism, and national identity as predictor variables and EATEH as dependent variable.

Variable	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Constant	40.58	5.89		6.89	.000
SES	-1.10	.17	-.28	-6.57	.000
Anomie	.68	.11	.27	6.25	.000

National identity	-.42	.10	-.17	-4.31	.000
In-group ethnocentrism	.09	.16	.03	.56	.577
Out-group ethnocentrism	.34	.16	.10	2.14	.033

$R^2 = .38$, R^2 adj. $= .37$, $F (5, 482) = 59.05$, $p < .000$

5- Discussion

The study attempted to explore what sociological factors make some people condemn ethnic humor and others enjoy it. The relation of a variety of sociological factors such as socioeconomic status, anomie, national identity, and ethnocentrism to ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes were examined.

The basic findings are straightforward. Substantial individual differences were found in the attitude toward ethnic humor. Since ethnic jokes are very popular in Iran, we expected to see a general positive attitude toward this kind of humor. Our previous research (Ebad Fardzadeh et al.,submitted) showed that those who have positive attitude toward ethnic jokes are more likely to believe in the stereotypes employed by the jokes. This indicates that ethnic jokes are not merely jokes. They include a hint of prejudice, especially for those who really find them acceptable. The significant correlation between ethnocentrism dimensions and attitude toward ethnic jokes support this assertion.

Previous research also demonstrated that men tend to express prejudiced attitudes more than women (Altemeyer, 1998b; Kite & Whitley Jr, 1998; Whitley Jr, 1998, 1999). Similarly, we found significant difference between men and women in EATEH. On average, men obtained a significantly higher score on ethical attitude toward ethnic humor than women showing that they are less critical toward ethnic jokes. The findings of this research are in concordance with a study by Lundell (1993), which indicates that men are more likely to enjoy dirty jokes than women. This can be related to Ekehammar et al., (2003) who argued that women seem to express implicit prejudice and men explicit prejudice terms. He defines implicit prejudice as misjudging a person who is described in an "ambiguous story" in an impression formation task. How about ethnic and racist jokes? Can we consider them to be implicit jokes? Is there any cultural difference in type of racist expressions across gender? Apparently, ethnic jokes are not explicit forms of racial statements and might be considered as implicit prejudice.

However, more research is needed to find out how women and men differ on ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes.

According to our findings, the overall average of participants' scores on sense of anomie was relatively high. This result was expected based on the social background of Iran[1] and the few relevant domestic research articles (Arash Heydari, 2010; A Heydari, et al., 2011). Anomie and socioeconomic status were significantly correlated with EATEH (see also Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted). Similarly, significant correlation was found between anomie and socioeconomic status. The explanation for this finding comes from the theory of anomie, which assumes that lower social classes have limited access to legitimate means and subsequently cannot fulfill their social needs and hence would be more frustrated and anomic (Bell, 1957; Arash Heydari, 2010; Lee & Clyde, 1974; Menard, 1995; Mizruchi, 1960; Rushing, 1971; Teevan, 1975). Similarly, both anomie and socioeconomic status have been considered to be related to prejudice and ethnocentrism (Giles, et al., 1976; Jones, 1997; Laumann & Guttman, 1966; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004), which was evident also in our study.

In general, previous research has shown that socioeconomic status does not significantly relate to attitude toward ethnic jokes (Jaret, 1999; Middleton, 1959). For example, Jaret (1999) in studying attitudes of blacks and whites in US toward ethnic jokes writes that general feelings and attitudes about ethnic humor "are not simple functions of demographic or structural variables like age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, or metropolitan residence. These variables are correlated less strongly with ethnic humor sentiments than they are with other frequently researched attitudinal variables such as opinions about drug use, gun control, abortion, or prejudice (p.402)."

However, the results of our study show such assertions to some extent might be culturally dependent since in our study attitude toward ethnic humor was significantly related to a variety of sociological variables. Besides, our findings support the idea that ethnic jokes are not merely jokes that are meant to be funny and bring laughter. Instead, attitude toward ethnic jokes shows a significant association with variables that induce dogmatic attitude toward out-groups such as ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, anomie, and low socioeconomic status. In addition, the EATEH scale shows that people who

have a positive attitude toward ethnic humor believe in the stereotypes of the ethnic jokes and laugh at them (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted).

Given our results, it is necessary to do more research on the relation of anomie and ethnic humor. Contrary to the ethnocentrism that causes between-group prejudice, anomie is a more general term that relates to the structure of the society rather ethnic conflict. We believe that this study opened a broader frame to the realm of jokes by discussing ethnic humor as a phenomenon that is related to the structure of the society as well as inter-group matter. We suggest further research on anomie and attitude toward ethnic jokes to find out if individual-societal conflict can contribute to ethnic humor. Of course, it would be interesting to see if similar results can be found in other cultures to compare to this set of data.

Notes

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[1] During the last four decades, Iran has gone through rapid socioeconomic transitions such as revolution (1979), 8 years of continuous war against Iraq (22 September 1980 to 20 August 1988) very fast population growth (Roughly 30 million at 1979- about 70 million at 2009), and recession. Such changes are considered unfavorable for every society, which might result in anomic status.

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Why Some People Object to Ethnic Jokes? A Psychological Inquiry to Ethnic Humor

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Abstract

People's ethical attitude varies towards ethnic humor. The present article explores the relation of gender, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and ethnocultural empathy to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. 500 high school students were surveyed. Findings indicate that gender, ethnocentrism, ethnocultural empathy's subscales, and authoritarianism are related to ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. Authoritarian and ethnocentric individuals were found to have more positive attitude toward ethnic humor. In contrast, people with higher ethnic-empathy had more negative attitude toward ethnic jokes calling them unethical. The study shows that ethnocentrism, ethno-cultural empathy, and authoritarianism can significantly predict one's ethical perception of ethnic humor.

Keywords: ethnic jokes, authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, ethno-cultural empathy.

1. Introduction

Ethnic humor is described as a "type of humor in which fun is made of the perceived behavior, customs, personality, or any other traits of a group or its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity" (Apte, 1985, p. 198). In recent decades, there has been a spurt of interest in studying origins and functions of ethnic jokes (Martin, 1998). However, more attention has been paid to sources of ethnic humor such as "ethnocentrism, in-group adulation, out-group resentment, prejudice, and intolerance of the life-styles of others" (Apte, 1985). As a result, people's attitude toward this type of humor has been generally ignored. In our

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previous articles, we have attempted to develop a new scale for measuring ethical attitude toward ethnic humor (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted) and explore its relevant sociological factors that might encourage or discourage telling ethnic jokes (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted). In the current study, we aim to focus on psychological factors that might influence ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. We ask questions such as why some people consider ethnic jokes racist whereas others find them acceptable. What personality factors influence perception of ethnic jokes?

To address these questions, we study Iranians' attitude toward ethnic jokes. Iran is a multi-ethnic country with a population of over 74 million people. Nearly half of the population are Persians and the other half are Lurs, Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Baluchis, Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, and other ethnic and religious minorities (Hassan, 2007). During the last century, ethnic rivalries have always been a challenge for Iranian governments. A considerable amount of hatred and prejudice has remained evident between different ethnicities of Iran (Amirahmadi, 1987; Asgharzadeh, 2007; Van Gorder, 2010). In addition, research findings indicate that as a result of globalization and feeling of discrimination, ethnic minorities in Iran have developed strong ethnic identities and became more pessimistic toward other ethnic groups (Fokoohi & Amoosi, 2009; Koutlaki, 2010; Moghadas Jafari, Sheikhavandi, & Sharifpour, 2008; Rabani, yazdkhasti, Hajiani, & Mirzaei, 2009; Shaffer, 2002). Theoretically, such ethnocultural diversity provides ample background for raising ethnic humor (Apte, 1985, 1987; Davies, 1982, 1990; Mik-Meyer, 2007).

Our previous studies on Iranian ethnic jokes have provided support for this expectation. Ethnic jokes are a very popular type of humor in Iran and people often believe the stereotypes mentioned in humor (Ebad Fardzadeh, et al., submitted). Iranian ethnic jokes usually target peripheral ethnicities and make fun of their traditions, customs, interests, cloths, and accent. Similar to ethnic jokes in other countries, Persian ethnic jokes ascribe cruel, canny, and immoral traits to the target groups (see Koutlaki, 2010, p. 181). In this regard, Asgharzadeh (2007) considers Persian ethnic jokes to include racial insults and points out that "… victims of this kind of abuse [targets of ethnic jokes] know very well that it is not just a joke" (p. 148).

Granting all this, however, we found substantial individual differences in ethical attitude toward ethnic humor i.e. whereas some people find ethnic humor very much acceptable, others could see it as clearly racist or hateful (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., (Submitted).

We also found that empathy significantly influences individual's attitudes toward ethnic humor. In another study, we found a variety of sociological factors that were significantly related to attitude toward ethnic humor (EATEH). Here, we follow up on that research and address psychological factors influencing people's ethical perception of ethnic humor. To do so, we focus on authoritarianism, ethnocultural empathy, and ethnocentrism and explore if these psychological factors relate to EATEH.

1.1. *Ethnocultural empathy*

There is no general agreement among scholars on a single definition of empathy (Chi-Ying Chung & Bemak, 2002; Ickes, 1993; Levenson & Ruef, 1992). More recently, there has been an attempt to extend the definition of empathy to include cultural differences, suggesting that ethnocultural empathy can be separated from general empathy (Wang et al., 2003). These terms, however, are relatively new to the psychological literature. General empathy is a feeling toward someone in distress or a sense that tells us of others' feelings (Hoffman, 1979, 2001). Ethnocultural empathy underscores a sort of empathic concern directed toward people of various ethnic groups, other than the individual's own ethnicity (Quintana, 1994; Quintana, Castañeda-English, & Ybarra, 1999).

Both classic and modern studies consider one's reaction to others' experiences as being affective as well as cognitive (see for example (M. H Davis, 1994; Hoffman, 2001; Hojat et al., 2002; Smith, 1976; Spencer, 1870). The cognitive facet of empathy includes understanding another person's perspective, feeling, and experience, whereas the affective aspect involves emotional reaction by joining the others' experience or feelings (M. H Davis, 1983, 1994; Hojat et al., 2001). Empathy is related to moral, caring, and prosocial behavior because it involves giving help to someone who is in trouble or distress. Further it has also been found that empathy can influence individual's attitude toward members of another group (Batson et al., 1997). Lack of empathy, though, relates to intergroup aggression (Blalock, 2006; Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Wang, et al., 2003), social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), and prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999).

In addition, empathy has been considered critical to all human relationships and communications (Duan & Hill, 1996; Omdahl, 1995) including both interpersonal (Hoffman, 1977, 1981, 2001; Kim, Kaplowitz, & Johnston, 2004) and intercultural communications

(Broome, 1991). For instance, Broome (1991, p. 235) indicates that "Empathy is associated with many important aspects of communication behavior, e.g., formulating communicative intentions and goals, devising strategies to accomplish communicative purposes, and constructing messages consistent with communicative strategies. These and other communication behaviors are usually seen as influenced by communicators' attempts (or lack thereof) to consider the perspective of the other person". This research background has led scholars to consider the ability to empathize with others as a potential factor in reducing conflict and promoting mutual understanding among different ethnic groups of multiethnic societies (Batson et al., 1995; Carrell, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990; Wang, et al., 2003). Thus, it seems important to understand how empathy relates to telling ethnic or racist jokes.

1.2. *Ethnocentrism*

Taking the hateful and insulting content of ethnic jokes into consideration, the potential link between ethnocentrism, racism, and prejudice with ethnic jokes seems to be very reasonable. This hypothesis has been largely addressed in humor studies. On the one hand, hatred has been considered a reason for teasing or humiliating others, given that jokes can contain serious content that is easier to express in humorous way (Best, 2007; Lowe, 1986). Sigmund Freud (1976) was one of the firsts to assert that jokes can include serious messages. He distinguished different categories of jokes and focused on "*tendentious jokes*" that he argued to contain a purpose above the "*innocent humor*". In general, Freud proposed that tendentious jokes are linked to unconscious and can be interpreted regarding repressed instincts such as sex and aggression or social desires such as will for wealth, freedom, power, intelligence, and alike. He stated that "The popular mind, which created these stories and others like them, is torn by similar conflict (p. 151)."

Freud's approach to jokes has been largely addressed to interpret ethnic jokes. In general, in psychodynamic theory ethnic humor is considered a defense mechanism that provides a way to express beliefs that cannot be told directly or are not publicly acceptable. In other words, ethnic humor helps to release suppressed prejudice beliefs toward out-groups. For example, Oshima (2000) points out that : "humor functions as a displacement of the violence and aggression which are both part of the human instinct. This applies also to the function of ethnic humor in multi-ethnic society" (p. 41). Similarly, Billig (2001) argues that people may enjoy expressing hatred in racist jokes (see also Husband, 1988). Davies (1982, 1990) indicates that ethnic humor targets "social and geographical boundaries" and "moral

boundaries" or peripheral groups: "Ethnic jokes police these boundaries. They mock groups who are peripheral to the central or dominant group or who are seen by them as ambiguous. They ascribe to these groups traits which the group telling the jokes does not wish to recognize among its own members (p. 383)". Although the assertion that "ethnic jokes are direct hostile expressions" is under dispute, there is a general agreement that ethnic humor relates to prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism (Mintz, 1996; Perreault & Bourhis, 1998). Therefore, we included this variable in studying people's attitude toward ethnic jokes.

1.3. *Authoritarianism*

Authoritarianism pertains to "a pattern of traits or generalized behavioral style characterized by high regard for authority, rigidity, conventionality, and contempt or disdain for those who are worse off" (Greenberg et al., 1990, p. 313). Since the 1950s, a set of personality traits such as authoritarianism, closed-mindedness, and conservatism have been addressed in studies of humor, saying that such traits might influence perception, appreciation, and telling jokes (Middleton, 1959; Ruch, Ott, Accoce, & Bariaud, 1991; Saroglou, 2002a; Surlin & Tate, 1976). Ever since, authoritarianism has been an interesting topic in humor research on many grounds (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950).

For example, authoritarianism has been shown to be negatively correlated with perspective "taking humor" which is people's tendency to take themselves and others less seriously (Lefcourt, 1996; Lefcourt, Davidson, Shepherd, & Phillips, 1997). Dogmatism - which is highly related to authoritarianism- also has been found to be a negative indicator of being humorous and enjoying humor (Dixon, Willingham, Chandler, & McDougal, 1986) in contrast to "openness" which is a positive predictor of using more humor in quality and quantity (Ruch & Kohler, 1998). Conservative people are also more likely to enjoy clean jokes whereas liberals enjoy more dirty jokes (Wilson & Patterson, 1969). In general, humor is considered a mature defense to stress and anxiety because it helps the individual to stay involved with others and their tasks by avoiding depression or anger (S. Freud, 1910; Lefcourt & Shepherd, 1995; Yovetich, Dale, & Hudak, 1990), whereas authoritarian people are less likely to get benefit of humor when they face stresses (Adorno, et al., 1950).

Besides, it has been remarked that authoritarian individuals show more aggressive, dominant, and self-centered style of interaction in their interpersonal interactions in which they look for their own goals and display less empathy (Frewen & Dozois, 2006; Little &

Garber, 2000; Raghavan, Le, & Berenbaum, 2002). They are also found to use a more aggressive style of humor (Frewen, Brinker, Martin, & Dozois, 2008; Middleton, 1959). Furthermore, authoritarianism has been mentioned as a predictor of anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice (Lefcourt, 1996; Thomas & Esses, 2004) and authoritarian people are considered to have more hostility toward those who are worse off than themselves (Lefcourt & Shepherd, 1995). How about the relation of authoritarianism to ethical perception of jokes? We will explore this question in the current article.

2- Rationale of the study

In the current article, we focus on individuals' attitudes toward ethics of jokes and explore if gender, authoritarianism, ethnocultural empathy, and ethnocentrism significantly relate to EATEH. We expected authoritarianism and ethnocentrism to be positively correlated with ethnic humor i.e. those who are more authoritarian or ethnocentric are more reluctant to criticize ethnic jokes. In contrast, we expected a negative relation between ethnocultural empathy subscales and EATEH. We also looked at whether there are any gender differences in EATEH. Based on the literature we also expected to find a negative relation between the authoritarianism scale and the ethnocultural empathy scale. Gender differences were also expected in authoritarianism and ethnocultural empathy scale. It has been shown that men are more likely to develop authoritarian traits, express prejudice and in contrast, are more reluctant to show empathy as compared to women (Basow, 1992; Johnson, et al., 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999). In addition, men were found to appreciate dirty jokes more than women (Lundell, 1993). Therefore, we expected to see a higher mean for men on authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and lower mean on ethnocultural empathy subscales.

3- Method

3.1. Participants and procedure

A sample of 500 high-school students, who were chosen by the cluster method of sampling from ten highschools of Ahvaz, Iran filled out the questionnaires. Participants were 14 to 18 year-old (M = 16.14, SD = .99) and included 283 males, 194 females (14 subjects did not

specify their gender). The subjects were told that the participation is voluntary and assured the anonymity of the questionnaires and confidentiality of the answers.

3.2. Instruments

Participants were handed four different scales: (1) ethnocentrism scale, (2) ethnocultural empathy scale, (3) authoritarianism, and (4) ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes.

3.2.1. *Ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes*

The ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale (EATEH) measures people's ethical perception of rightness and wrongness of ethnic humor (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted). The scale consists of 15 self-report items where subjects rate their opinion toward ethnic jokes on a 7 point Likert-type format (from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"). The scale merely collects self-report information about ethical perception of ethnic jokes and people's behavioral reactions to this type of humor and does not provide any value judgment regarding moral maturity or moral development of individuals. The instrument has been shown to have criterion, predictive, and construct validity by having significant relationships with perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and self-efficacy and considerable amount of the EATEH being predicted from these variable. The scale has an alpha coefficient of 0.94, AVE value of 0.52, and a Composite Reliability of 0.944 (Ebad Fardzadeh et al., submitted).

3.2.2. *Authoritarianism*

Authoritarianism is a 12-item scale developed and validated based on F-personality scale of Adorno (1950) and Right Wing Authoritarianism scale of Altemeyer (1998a) by Heydari et al., (submitted). Items were developed considering the socio-cultural context of Iran. Some items are as follows: "people should obey their superiors whether or not they think they are right". "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn". Participants responded the items on a 5-point Likert scale from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The scale has an alpha coefficient of 0.88. Research using this scale has shown predictive validity for the scale through its association with socioeconomic status and parental control (Heydari et al., submitted). Similarly, significant relationship was acquired between this scale and anomie which fulfill the predictions (Heydari et al., 2011).

3.2.3. *Ethnocentrism*

For measuring ethnocentrism Navah et al.'s (2010) scale was used which measures ethnocentrism within the sociocultural context of Iran. The scale includes two five-item subscales which measure in-group ethnocentrism (favorable attitude toward in-group) and out-group ethnocentrism (unfavorable attitude toward out-groups). The scales require the respondents to rate the items based on Likert format, ranging from 5- "strongly agree" to 1- "strongly disagree" and has a Cronbach's alpha of .85. Similarly, the criterion validity of the scale was obtained through its significant association with authoritarianism, r = 0.51, p < .01, and socioeconomic status, r = 0.14, p < .05.

Cultural Empathy Scale (SEE)

The Ethnocultural Empathy Scale (SEE) is a self-report instrument developed by Wang et al., (2003) that measures individual's level of empathy toward other racial and ethnic groups different from one's own. SEE includes 4 subscales which are Empathic Feeling and Expression, Empathic Perspective Taking, Acceptance of Cultural Differences, and Empathic Awareness. SEE has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Predictive validity with general empathy and attitudes toward people's similarities and differences has confirmed the scale's validity. The scale was translated to Persian using the back-translation method.

4- Results

Out of the 500 questionnaires only 9 got purged from the analysis due to incomplete answers. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (Means and standard deviation) for age, authoritarianism, EATEH, and dimensions of ethnocentrism and ethnocultural empathy. Descriptive findings reveal that ethnocentrism in both dimensions, authoritarianism and ethnocultural empathy subscales' scores are relatively high among the participants whereas EATEH was relatively low (i.e. negative attitude toward ethnic jokes) in the sample. To explore gender differences we carried out t-tests for the authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, four dimensions of ethno-cultural empathy, and EATEH scales. The Levene's Test for equality of variances test was significant for EATEH and empathic feeling and experiences, i.e. no equal variances in gender differences were assumed. The T-test was modified to correct for unequal variances. The results revealed that male and female have significant differences in EATEH, t

(470.66) = 4.06, p < .0001, in which the mean for males is significantly higher than females EATEH (male: M = 44.15, SD = 20.72 & female: M = 37.94, SD = 12.66).

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of all measured scales*

	M	SD	Min	Max
Age	16.14	.99	14	18
EATEH	41.59	18.20	15	105
Emp.Feeling.Exerience	45.59	10.94	15	83
Empathic.Perspective Taking	20.95	6.73	7	42
Acceptance.Other.Culture	14.41	5.12	5	30
Empathic Awareness.	13.08	4.54	4	24
Authoritarianism	34.26	9.27	15	60
In-Group Ethnocentrism	18.38	5.08	5	25
Out-group Ethnocentrism	14.62	5.33	5	25

In addition, there were significant gender differences in Empathic Feeling and Experience (t (473.64) = -3.90, p < .0001), empathic perspective taking (t (476) = -2.01, p < .05) and empathic awareness (t (476) = -2.07, p < .05) and in all of these subscales females obtained higher scores than males. Similarly, significant gender differences were found in in-group ethnocentrism (t (476) = 2.15, p < .05) and out-group ethnocentrism (t (476) = 3.1, p < .01) where males scored higher, indicating that men are more likely to be ethnocentric. No significant gender differences were found in acceptance of other cultures and in authoritarianism scales.

Pearson correlation was used to examine the associations among variables (Table 2). The results were summarized in Table 2. All of Ethno-cultural Empathy subscales are significantly negatively related to EATEH (Empathic Feeling and Experience: r = -.49, Empathic Perspective Taking: r = -.37, Acceptance of Cultural differences: r = -.35, Empathic Awareness: r = -.34, all p's < .0001). The higher the score on ethno-cultural empathy's subscales, the more negative an attitude toward ethnic humor is taken. Empathic Feeling and Experience, Empathic Perspective Taking, Acceptance of Cultural differences, and Empathic Awareness subscales of Ethnocultural empathy have significant negative correlation with authoritarianism (r = -.42, r = -.37, r = -.27, r = -.23, all p's < .001 respectively), in-group ethnocentrism (r = -.36, r = -.36, r = -.25, r = -.27, all p's < .001 respectively), and out-group ethnocentrism (r = -.41, r = -.34, r = -.27, r = -.29, all p's < .001 respectively).

Authoritarianism, in-group and out group ethnocentrism, as expected, have significant positive correlation with EATEH (r = .35, r = .32, r = 35, p < .001), indicating that more ethnocentric and authoritarian individuals are more likely to have a positive attitude toward

telling ethnic jokes. In addition, authoritarianism has positive significant correlation with in-group and out-group ethnocentrism ($r = .31$, $r = 31$, $p < .001$).

Table 2. Correlation between EATEH the four dimensions of ethno-cultural empathy, the one dimension of authoritarianism, and the two dimensions of ethnocentrism

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. EATEH	-	-	-	-	-	-	
2. Empathy.Feeling.Experience	-.49**	-	-	-	-	-	
3. Empathic.Perspective Taking	-.37**	.64**	-	-	-	-	
4. Acceptance.Other.Cultures	-.35**	.47**	.62**	-	-	-	
5. Empathic Awareness.	-.34**	.55**	.37**	.26**	-	-	
6. Authoritarianism	.35**	-.42**	-.37**	-.27**	-.23**	-	
7. In-group ethnocentrism	.32**	-.36**	-.36**	-.25**	-.27**	.31**	
8. Out-group ethnocentrism	.35**	-.41**	-.34**	-.27**	-.29**	.31**	.59**

** = p < .001

Next, standardized regression analysis was used and EATEH was entered as dependent variable and Empathic Feeling and Experience, Empathic Perspective Taking, acceptance of cultural differences, and empathic awareness, authoritarianism, and two dimensions of ethnocentrism were entered as independent variable (Table 3). The full model was significant, $R^2 = .31$, $F (7, 483) = 29.94$, $p < .0001$ in which 31% of the variance of ethical attitude toward ethnic humor was predicted by the research variables. In addition, empathic feeling and experience, $B = -.46$, $\beta = -.28$, $t = - 4.86$, $p < .0001$, and acceptance of other cultures, $B = -.51$, $\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.97$, $p < .01$, authoritarianism, $B = .27$, $\beta = .14$, $t = 3.19$, $p < .01$, and out-group ethnocentrism, $B = .33$, $\beta = .10$, $t = 2.01$, $p < .05$ accounted significantly for the variance of EATEH individually while the unique effect of empathic perspective taking, empathic awareness, and ethnocentrism subscales were not significant.

Table 3. Multiple regression analyses using four dimensions of ethno-cultural empathy, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism as predictor variables and EATEH as dependent variable.

Variable	B	SE	β	T	Sig
Constant	52.60	6.39		8.23	.001
Empathy.Feeling.Experience.	-.46	.09	-.28	-4.86	.001
Empathy.Perspective.Taking.	.11	.15	.04	.73	.467
Acceptance.Other.Cultures.	-.51	.17	-.14	-2.97	.003
Empathic.Awareneness.	-.32	.18	-.08	-1.74	.082
Authoritarianism	.27	.08	.14	3.19	.001

In-group ethnocentrism	.29	.17	.08	1.65	.099
Out-group ethnocentrism	.33	. 17	.10	2.01	.045

R^2 = .31, R^2 adj. = .29, F (7, 483) = 30.67, p < .000

Finally, the 7 variables were entered as independent variable using the Stepwise method to see which variable accounts for the most significant effect on the variance of the EATEH. We found that four of the constructs showed significant results (Table 4). In the first model, empathic feeling and experience loaded most strongly on EATEH, R^2 = .24, F(1, 489) = 155.04, p < .0001, predicting 24% of the EATEH variance. When out-group ethnocentrism was added to the model, an additional 3% of the variance was explained. BY including authoritarianism another 2% of variance in EATEH was explained. Finally, the acceptance of cultural differences contributed significantly with 1% of explained variance: The remaining three factors, empathic perspective taking, empathic awareness, and in-group ethnocentrism did not significantly add to the explained variance of EATEH, variance in dependent variable. Thus, the variable empathic feeling and experience is the major contributor (β = -.49).

Table 4. Stepwise regression analyses using Empathic Feeling and Experience, Empathic Perspective Taking, Acceptance of Cultural differences, and Empathic Awareness, authoritarianism, and out-group ethnocentrism as predictor variables and EATEH as dependent variable.

	R^2	Adj. R^2	B	SE	β	T	Sig.
Step 1:	.24	.24	78.81	3.07		25.64	.001
Emp.Fee.Exprie			-.82	.06	-.49	-12.45	.001
Step 2:	.27	.26	64.30	4.57		14.06	.001
Out-group ethno.			.61	.14	.18	4.23	.001
Step 3:	.29	.28	51.53	5.81		8.87	.001
Authoritarianism			.29	.08	.15	3.50	.001
Step 4:	.30	.29	54.42	5.90		9.39	.001
Acc.Other.Cultu			-.47	.15	-.13	-3.02	003

Discussion

We addressed the relation of ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and ethno-cultural empathy to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. We were also interested in gender differences. In general, we found that the participants scored high on ethnocentrism. That agrees with

previous research which found that ethnic minorities in Iran develop strong ethnic identities as well as an unfavorable attitude toward other ethnicities (Fokoohi & Amoosi, 2009; Koutlaki, 2010; Moghadas Jafari, et al., 2008; Rabani, et al., 2009; Shaffer, 2002). Similarly, the authoritarianism score was high among participants, which is in concordance with the literature on Asian countries and Iran (Heydari et al., submitted a and b; A Heydari et al., 2011; Ji & Suh, 2008; Navah et al., 2010).

Ethnic jokes were expected to relate to racism and prejudice. Hence, we expected a significant relation between EATEH and the ethnocentrism scale. Both in-group and out-group ethnocentrism had a significant positive relationship with EATEH. The higher one's ethnocentrism score, the more positive and accepting the individual would be regarding ethnic jokes. This proves that ethnic jokes are not merely jokes but include a hint of prejudice, especially for those who really find them acceptable. This indicates that those who score higher on EATEH are more likely to believe in the stereotypes mentioned in the ethnic jokes (see also Ebad Fadzadeh et al, submittded). Hatred or aggression is considered to stimulate ethnic jokes (Best, 2007; Sigmund Freud, 1976; Lowe, 1986). Our data also showed that hatred, ethnocentrism, racism, and prejudice are sources of ethnic jokes (Billig, 2011; Husband, 1988; Mintz, 1996; Oshima, 2000; Perreault & Bourhis, 1998). Furthermore, our data revealed that out-group ethnocentrism predict one's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor.

When we look at authoritarianism we found that it had a significant negative relation to ethical attitude toward ethnic humor scale but a positive relation to both dimensions of ethnocentrism. Authoritarianism is related to prejudice, ethnocentrism, racism, and closemindedness, sexism, and negative attitude toward minorities (Adorno, et al., 1950; Lefcourt, 1996; Lutterman & Middleton, 1970; Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1990; Thomas & Esses, 2004). Accordingly, being authoritarian might influence one's attitude towards telling jokes (Middleton, 1959; Ruch, et al., 1991; Saroglou, 2002b; Surlin & Tate, 1976). Lefcourt and colleagues found that authoritarian individuals do not consider others' points of view when it comes to jokes (Lefcourt, 1996; Lefcourt, et al., 1997). Similarly, authoritarian individuals are claimed to be more self-centered, more aggressive, less empathic, and more likely to take an aggressive approach in their interpersonal interactions and also in their style of humor (Frewen, et al., 2008; Middleton, 1959; Middleton & Moland, 1959). We found support for both claims in our data.

Empathy makes individual put themselves into the shoes of others and be concerned about others' feelings. Accordingly all of the ethno-cultural empathy subscales were significantly negatively correlated with EATEH. Individuals with higher ethno-cultural empathy had a more negative attitude toward ethnic jokes. Being highly empathic could help develop a negative attitude toward ethnic humor because empathy makes the individual concerned, predict how the joke is perceived by the mentioned group and whether it hurts their feelings. The correlation of ethnocultural empathy subscales (Empathic Feeling and Experience, empathic perspective taking, acceptance of cultural differences, and empathic awareness) and attitude toward jokes is also compatible with studies on prejudice, namely, pointing out that those who empathize less, express more prejudice (Blalock, 2006; Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Wang, et al., 2003). The ethno-cultural empathy subscales are about the extent to which individuals feel empathic about other ethnicities and are able to put themselves in their shoes (Davis, 1983, 1994; Hojat, et al., 2001). Thus, it seems logical that those who have a higher ethno-cultural empathy are more respectful towards other cultures, are less humiliating, open to the customs and traditions of other cultures, and subsequently develop more and firm ethical perception about telling ethnic humor. Many asserted that less empathy would lead to intergroup conflict and aggression (e.g. Blalock, 2006; Struch & Schwartz, 1989; Wang, et al., 2003) and prejudice (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Johnson, Brems,& Alford-Keating, 1997; Whitley Jr, 1999). In general, previous studies demonstrated that higher empathy enhances the mutual understanding and decreases conflicts (Batson et al., 1995; Carrell, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990; Wang, et al., 2003). Consistent with previous findings, the current study has found the same result but in different context, that is to say, higher socio-cultural empathy is related to negative attitude toward telling ethnic jokes and also it suggests that empathic feeling and experience subscale is the most significant predictor of one's ethical attitude toward ethnic humor. But note that acceptance of other culture had a significant unique contribution to one's EATEH score as well.

Based on the findings of the current article and on the literature on prejudice, we conclude that empathy and ethnocentrism can be considered important components that influence ethical attitude toward ethnic jokes. Here, we found that the ethno-cultural empathy subscales, authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism predicted a significant and notable proportion of people's ethical view to this type of humor.

Men are, compared to women, more likely to be aggressive, authoritarian, ethnocentric, and prejudiced toward others (Altemeyer, 1998b; Davis, 1980; Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2003; Kite & Whitley Jr, 1998; Whitley Jr, 1998, 1999). Furthermore, men were found to enjoy dirty and sexist jokes (Lefcourt & Shepherd, 1995; Lundell, 1993; Thomas & Esses, 2004). Our findings from Iran are very much comparable with these Western studies. We found that men scored significantly higher on the EATEH scale, indicating that they care less about the ethics of ethnic jokes than women do. Similarly, significant gender differences were found in ethnocentrism and ethno-cultural empathy scales, where men seem to favor their group more than women (in-group ethnocentrism subscale). In contrast, women showed more empathy toward other ethnicities. These significant differences are compatible with previous studies that have shown a higher score on self-report measures of empathy for women (Basow, 1992). Empathy was found to be negatively correlated with prejudice expression (Johnson, et al., 1997) and men tend to express prejudiced attitudes more than women (Whitley Jr, 1999). Both reported effects were also seen in our data.

In sum, we found that ethical attitude toward ethnic humor can be predicted by some psychological variables. Our findings, first and foremost, show that ethnic jokes are not merely jokes that are meant to be funny and bring laughter. Ethnic jokes have a hidden side and are accepted by a distinct type of people. A caveat is the lack of relevant literature on ethical perception of jokes. Our operationalization of ethical attitudes may stimulate further research on ethical perception toward ethnic humor and to investigate what makes individuals to enjoy this type of humor. It is our contention that individuals' ethical perception of jokes can play a significant role in attitude toward ethnic jokes and subsequently on their social interaction.

Notes

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