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**StarMan Publishing**

Surprise, AZ  
<http://starman.com/starpub>

602.228.2891 [george@starman.com](mailto:george@starman.com)

**George K. Staropoli**  
Publisher

## **EARLY HOA-PUBLIC SURVEY REPORT**

**George K. Staropoli**

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### **People make a community, not CC&Rs, bylaws, rules or amenities**

#### **Objective**

This unique survey avoids the pitfalls of the many “satisfaction surveys” in which respondents answered questions about their HOA with a few personal questions dealing with “liking,” “friendly,” etc. It seeks a broader understanding of the people who live within the HOA, the members, and what makes them ‘tick.’ In doing so we can perhaps get a better handle on how to resolve the continuing dissatisfaction by many members.

Under the allegation that HOAs are a democracy, then it is the people who make the community whether its accepting, or not, the amendments to the CC&Rs and bylaws, or new rules. For good or bad, the community reflects the attitudes and views of the membership. If the reserves are not adequate, whose fault is that? If fines are outrageous or the BOD is not transparent, who’s fault is that? The collective membership’s fault!.

Why then are there serious problems with the HOA property? In “Part 1, The Cultural Dynamics of HOA-Land” in *The HOA-Land Nation Within America*,<sup>1</sup> I addressed some of the conditions and factors influencing member conduct. This survey goes a little deeper and looks at the role of authoritarianism<sup>2</sup> guiding member behavior.

Using psychologist Bob Altemeyer’s RWA scale<sup>3</sup> (Right Wing Authoritarian Followers, not political designation) the respondents were identified (by a Score) as to their standing as an Authoritarian Followers (AF): authoritarian persons cannot exist without substantial followers. The primary intent of the research was to determine why so many HOA members blindly followed their HOA.

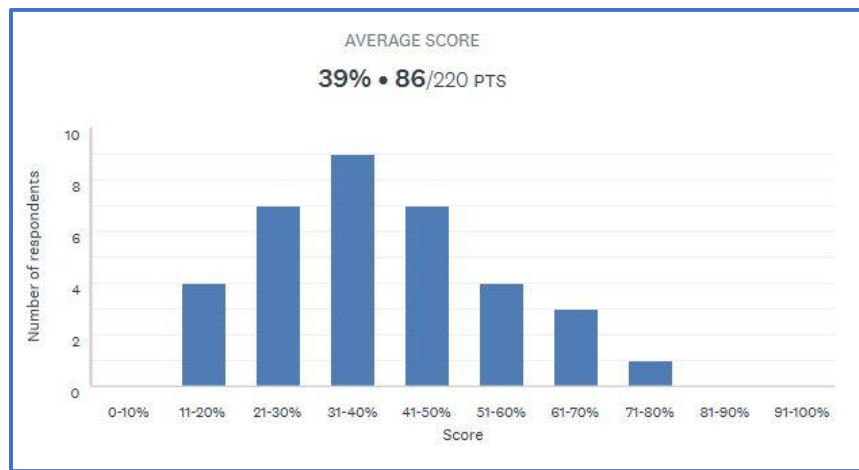
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For the record, I am not a psychologist, psychiatrist, or sociologist. I am skilled in statistical analysis and in conducting social research. (See *My Life* and *Take the Deal* on my website, starman.com).

### **Survey Methodology**

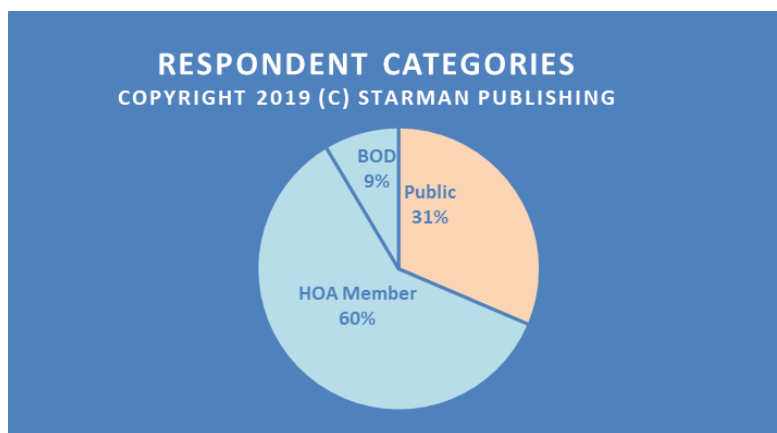
The general public was invited to take the survey by means of social media -- Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn – and by direct email invitation. The limited response at this time shows meaningful results that should be examined in more detail. Figure 1 shows a normal distribution of all Scores that lends validity to an unbiased response. “50%” represents the dividing line between decreasing and increasing RWA.

The average Score of 39% indicates “slightly less” RWA for the entire group.



*Figure 1.*

The relative number of responses is shown by category in Figure 2 with over 2/3 HOA members and 31% Public, or non-HOA members. The poor showing of BOD (board members) is disappointing.



*Figure 2*

## **Results**

The three categories were compared in three different manners, from bottom to top in Figure 3: Total HOA vs. Total Public in regard to “cultural” questions only (questions 1 - 20, no HOA); HOA BOD vs. HOA non-BOD with respect to HOA questions only (questions 23 - 30); HOA BOD vs. HOA non-BOD with respect to 3 select questions (Q. 23, 24, 30) concerning the strictness of the HOA, which would indicate the intensity of any RWA that may exist in the HOA.

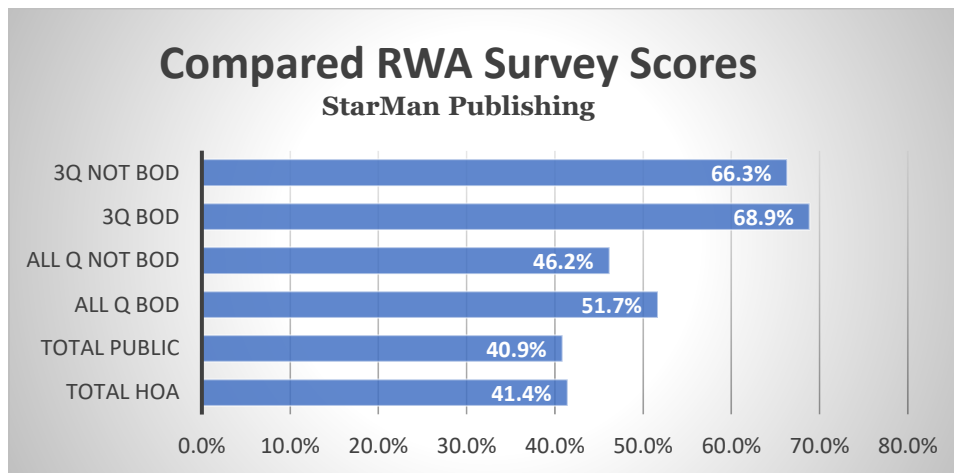


Figure 3

In all 3 comparisons there was no significant difference between the compared groups -- they are all “in the same boat.” In other words, the degree or presence of AF was about the same in each group. HOA members were no different from the general public and BOD members no different from non-BOD members with respect RWA scores. All Scores indicated borderline RWA or slightly less RWA and no substantial difference in authoritarianism scores.

However, when it came to the “strictness” questions a substantial jump in RWA occurred above both the other overall comparisons, which is highly noteworthy. All the HOA members had a moderately strong feeling for strict enforcement (values 1 – 5), and were not significantly different:

Q23: The authority of the BOD (Board of Directors) must be upheld and its positions fully supported. (3.2)

Q24: Proposed BOD amendments to CC&Rs or bylaws should always be approved (3.68)

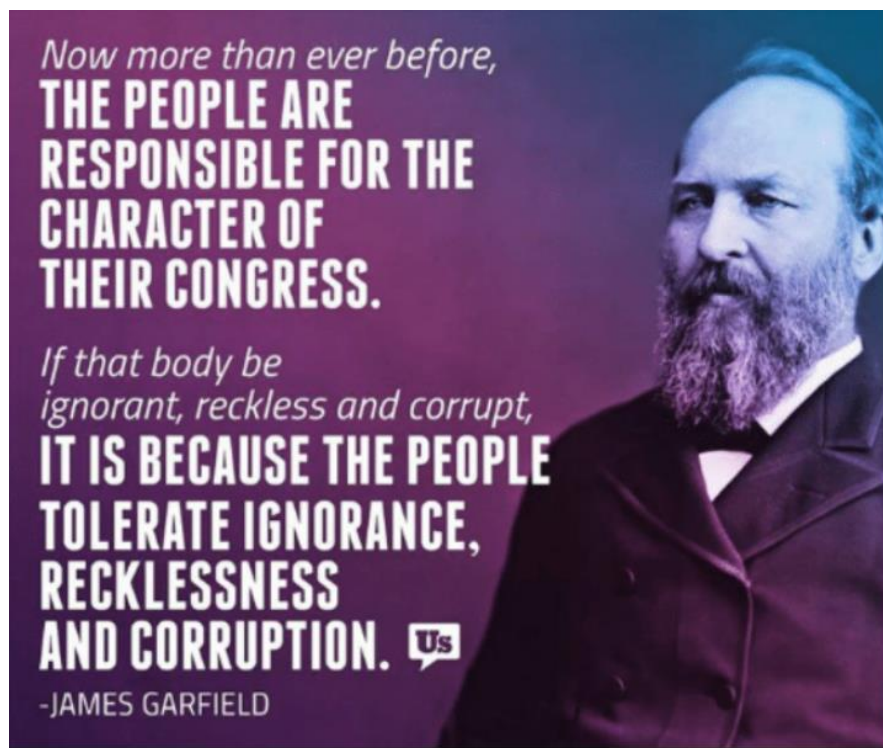
Q30: BOD violations should be fined and penalized. (3.0)

All three questions had a moderately strong RWA value indicating that it was not just one aspect of HOA functions causing the authoritarianism result.

## **Conclusions**

First, remember that the survey deals with AF and not leaders. Leaders exist because of followers. Followers exist because of coercion or intimidation or by more subtle means as indoctrination, peer pressure, group think, etc.<sup>4</sup> Or, as Altemeyer argues, as a result of an innate nature to follow.

The premise behind this survey is well stated by President Garfield in Figure 4 and applied to HOA BOD governments. The results suggest that the reason for the failure of members to act according to democratic principles and values is the degree to which the “community” is affected by Authoritarian Followers.



It is evident to many HOA members that autocratic authoritarians run many HOAs, under the pretense of a democracy, as shown by the RWA scores with respect to the “hardline” dictatorial HOA functions – the 3 Questions. They reveal the presence of AF and support these feelings of oppression. Otherwise the results indicate that the HOA society is comprised much like that of the general public who do not live in an HOA.

Stepping outside the bounds of the survey, the AFs are given mechanisms and means to advance their views of what the HOA culture should be. The governing documents and pro-HOA statutes give the followers a strong hand in shaping the HOA to their way of thinking. The hostile HOA environment promotes DoubleSpeak (from “1984”)

whereby a person holds two conflicting views at the same time: authoritarian HOAs are democratic; HOAs are democratic businesses.

This research points the way to further, more extensive research into the levels of RWA in HOAs. Under present buying process the new owner is really entering into a contract with essentially strangers who, with sufficient votes, can have serious influence over his private property. Knowing he level of authoritarian followers will allow the buyer some discretion as to join the “community” or to join some other less authoritarian community.

It then becomes an important issue not for real estate academics or political scientists or attorneys but for psychologists and sociologists to re-orient the membership accordingly. It is this group of people experts who will be able to truly develop and form healthy and productive communities, and dismiss the oppressive authoritarian nature of HOA-Land. “Only the people can stop this authoritarian, regimented, communal form of living under HOA governments.”<sup>5</sup>

## References

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<sup>1</sup> [HOA-Land Nation Within America](#), (Part 1, “The Cultural Dynamics of HOA-Land”), George K. Staropoli (2019).

<sup>2</sup> *The Authoritarians*, Bob Altemeyer (2007). “*Authoritarianism is something authoritarian followers and authoritarian leaders cook up between themselves. It happens when the followers submit too much to the leaders, trust them too much, and give them too much leeway to do whatever they want--which often is something undemocratic, tyrannical and brutal.*”

<sup>3</sup> *Id*, “*The Score is the average percentage of respondents in a selected classification. Six classifications are used for three comparisons of any differences in the overall level of authoritarian followership. The 50% mark separates degrees of RWA with lower percentages reflecting an increasing absence of authoritarianism. Percentages above 50% indicate an increasing presence*”

“RWA” is the term for *Right-Wing Authoritarian Followers*, where the term ‘right-wing’ is used to designate people who “*traditionally submit to authority. Followers submit too much to the leaders, trust them too much, and give them too much leeway to do whatever they want--which often is something undemocratic, tyrannical and brutal.*”

<sup>4</sup> *Supra* n. 1.

<sup>5</sup> George K. Staropoli, “A choice for Americans: the US Constitution or authoritarian, private HOA government,” [HOA Constitutional Government](#) (2007).