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Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism

Stanley Feldman
Department of Political Science
Stony Brook University

Fifty years after the publication of The Authoritarian Personality, *the empirical literature on authoritarianism continues to grow even though there is no widely accepted theory to account for the phenomenon. The absence of a secure theoretical grounding severely limits our understanding of authoritarianism. This paper offers a new conceptualization in which authoritarian predispositions originate in the conflict between the values of social conformity and personal autonomy. Prejudice and intolerance should be observed among those who value social conformity and perceive a threat to social cohesion. These hypotheses were tested with a sample of undergraduate students; the questionnaire included new measures of the dimension of social conformity–autonomy as well as items from Altemeyer's RWA (right-wing authoritarianism) scale.*

KEY WORDS: authoritarianism, prejudice, intolerance, social conformity, threat

The construct of authoritarianism has received an enormous amount of attention since the publication of the massive research project reported in *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Starting as an investigation of the roots of anti-Semitism, it became a psychological study of ethnocentrism. Adorno et al. developed an explanation of generalized ethnocentrism in terms of a personality syndrome rooted in Freudian psychodynamics. Along with their theory, Adorno et al. developed a paper-and-pencil measure of authoritarianism, the F-scale. A large literature rapidly developed that examined the correlates of authoritarianism, as measured by the F-scale or similar measures. As of 1989 there were well over 2,000 publications on authoritarianism and related constructs (Meloen, 1993).

Despite all of the research that has been conducted over the past 50 years, the authoritarianism literature has been harshly criticized since the original study first appeared. Reviews of Adorno et al. written shortly after the book was

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published were critical of both the conceptualization and much of the empirical research (Christie & Jahoda, 1954). Contemporary reviews return to many of those same conceptual issues, even as recent work by Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996) gives researchers a sounder empirical footing (see Forbes, 1985, 1990).

Perhaps most important, the Freudian-based theory underlying *The Authoritarian Personality* has not withstood the test of time. Although quantitative research has identified relationships among the F-scale, social background characteristics, and social attitudes, evidence on the dynamics and origins of authoritarianism consistent with the Adorno et al. theory has proved elusive (see Altemeyer, 1981, 1988; Duckitt, 1992). Research has become increasingly divorced from the theory, with the bulk of work on authoritarianism consisting of empirical studies with only limited guidance from the original theory. The bigger picture discussed by Adorno et al. is often nowhere to be found. As a result, the overwhelmingly data-driven character of much of this literature provides little guidance about the theoretical status of the concept. Research findings accumulate, but rarely are they drawn from explicit hypotheses derived from a *theory* of authoritarianism.

What exactly is this construct that is used to predict so many attitudes and behaviors? And will it ever be possible to fully understand individual differences in prejudice and intolerance without explicit theoretical guidance? A close look at recent work on authoritarianism suggests that even carefully conducted empirical research based on improved measurement is not, by itself, sufficient to answer many fundamental questions that have plagued the authoritarianism literature for 50 years.

Research on authoritarianism waned in the 1970s and early 1980s but has increased significantly in recent years. One of the major reasons for the revitalization of the study of authoritarianism has been the large body of research reported by Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996). From many years of careful studies, Altemeyer has both developed a new and more reliable measure of the construct and advanced a new conceptualization based on social learning theory. Rejecting Adorno et al.'s Freudian explanation, Altemeyer (1988) prefers a simpler conceptualization that sees authoritarianism as a social attitude (or cluster of attitudes) that is learned through interactions with parents, peers, schools, and the media, and through experiences with people who hold conventional and unconventional beliefs and lifestyles. His measure of right-wing authoritarianism (the RWA scale) is more reliable and unidimensional than previous scales and has items balanced for agreement response set.

The increasing use of Altemeyer's authoritarianism measure is evidence of the general perception that he has created a superior scale that, at a minimum, has overcome many of the methodological problems that have plagued research for almost 50 years. Armed with a sounder measure that can be included easily in studies, researchers are reporting new findings on the relationship between authoritarianism and prejudice, values, punitiveness, and much else.

Although Altemeyer's RWA scale is rapidly replacing the F-scale as the measure of choice for authoritarianism, research using this measure has drawn little, if at all, on his social learning explanation. Continuing the empirical bent of much of the research conducted in the wake of *The Authoritarian Personality*, researchers adopting Altemeyer's new measure have just substituted a psychometrically better grounded scale for a weak one. The focus of the research seems to be little influenced beyond that.

Absent an accepted theory of authoritarianism, there are many issues that are not adequately addressed in Altemeyer's research, nor in the authoritarianism literature more generally. I discuss three major problems: the relationship of authoritarianism to prejudice and intolerance, the correlation between authoritarianism and conservatism, and the similarity between measures of authoritarianism and the variables we want to explain.

The Dynamics of Authoritarianism

How and when is a predisposition toward authoritarianism translated into prejudice and intolerance toward specific groups? Because we know that measures of prejudice and intolerance are never perfectly correlated across target groups (see Duckitt, 1992), it is important to understand why some groups generate more or less hostility than others.

Adorno et al. argued that authoritarians direct their repressed hostility at any group that is seen to be weak or inferior. It is now clear, however, that they substantially overestimated the extent to which the hostility of authoritarians is directed at all minority groups, and more recent studies show that the overall association between authoritarianism and prejudice, while substantial, is much lower than they claimed (Altemeyer, 1988; Duckitt, 1992). Altemeyer sees the prejudice and intolerance of authoritarians as a function of their generally hostile nature. Although he shows that the willingness of authoritarians to punish norm violators varies considerably, he provides no theoretical framework for understanding why they are more hostile toward some people than toward others (although he suggests that it has something to do with authoritarians' conventional social attitudes).

The authoritarianism perspective has been rightly criticized for ignoring the reality of actual social conflicts (Brown, 1995). How specific targets are selected and why hostility varies across target groups are critical questions that must be addressed if we are to understand the dynamics of intergroup conflict and the ability of political figures and groups to capitalize on prejudice and intolerance.

Authoritarianism and Conservatism

A second critical problem raised by research based on the authoritarian personality is our understanding of the *political* dynamics of prejudice and intolerance. Ever since the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* there have been

questions about the relationship between authoritarianism and ideology. Coming on the heels of European fascism and the Holocaust, it is not surprising that Adorno et al., like others before them (Fromm, 1941; Reich, 1946), focused on the appeal of right-wing ideologies. With attention rapidly turning to the spread of communism, early critics of the research wondered whether extreme leftists could be authoritarian (Eysenck, 1954; Shills, 1954). So far there is little empirical evidence to support these concerns. In a detailed review of the research, Stone (1980; see also Stone & Smith, 1993) has shown that authoritarianism is consistently associated with right-wing but not left-wing ideology.

This association with ideology has led some critics to argue that authoritarianism is nothing more than conservatism (Forbes, 1990; Ray, 1976, 1983). Altemeyer labels his measure *right-wing* authoritarianism to make it clear that this scale will not deal with authoritarianism on the left. But he strongly rejects the claim that authoritarianism is simply conservatism and argues that while people high in right-wing authoritarianism will very likely be conservative, the reverse is not necessarily true.[1]

Altemeyer (1996) has tried to address this problem by developing a *left-wing* authoritarianism scale. In two student samples, this left-wing authoritarianism scale was positively correlated (albeit weakly) with his RWA scale, although almost none of the students scored very high on the former. But instead of separate measures of right-wing and left-wing authoritarianism, a better approach would be to isolate a common "authoritarian" dimension, if one in fact exists.

To complicate matters further, conservatism and authoritarianism are confounded not only at the conceptual but also the empirical level. In both the Adorno et al. and Altemeyer frameworks, social conservatism, or social conventionality, is part of the very definition of authoritarianism. Moreover, in both the original F-scale and Altemeyer's RWA scale there are many items that look like measures of social conservatism, not authoritarianism. Consider the following items from a recent version of Altemeyer's measure (Altemeyer, 1996):

> Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.
>
> There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.
>
> Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy "traditional family values."
>
> A "woman's place" should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in our past.
>
> There is nothing wrong with premarital sexual intercourse.

[1] Adorno et al. were aware of this problem and argued, without any firm evidence, that the difference between authoritarianism and conservatism turned on the nature and source of conventional beliefs. They never made clear how this distinction was to be operationalized, however.

These items could quite plausibly make up a measure of social or moral conservatism that few people would label authoritarianism.

The large number of RWA items with clear conservative content makes it likely that strong conservatives would receive at least a moderate score on the scale, even if they exhibited none of the other characteristics of authoritarianism. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to empirically distinguish between authoritarianism and social conservatism with measures like these.

Similarity Between RWA Items and Variables of Interest

A third problem with Altemeyer's approach to the study of authoritarianism is that scale construction is based largely on statistical principles. Starting with the original F-scale items, Altemeyer created and selected items that would maximize the reliability and unidimensionality of his measure. Although these are certainly desirable goals, such procedures can select items that come uncomfortably close to variables we want to predict. The following items, from the 1996 version of Altemeyer's scale, are examples of this problem:

> Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.
>
> There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.
>
> Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.
>
> The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.
>
> Once our government leaders give us the "go ahead," it will be the duty of every patriotic citizen to help stomp out the rot that is poisoning our country from within.

These items could be the basis of a scale of intolerance toward deviant groups, the very attitudes authoritarianism is supposed to explain. To his credit, Altemeyer often shows that the relationships between his RWA measure and many dependent variables do not simply depend on the presence of these items (tapping "authoritarian aggression"). But wouldn't it be better if the measure of authoritarianism did not contain items similar to so many dependent variables? A reasonable critique of much research using the RWA scale is that it only shows that a measure of prejudice and intolerance predicts prejudice and intolerance.

The authoritarianism literature has provided considerable evidence that there

are important individual differences in prejudice and intolerance. This is a critical finding that must not be ignored. However, authoritarianism research has often lost sight of the big picture. The value of studying these individual differences is the contribution it can make to explaining the dynamics of prejudice and intolerance. Although this was clearly the problem that motivated the research of Adorno et al., the focus of researchers quickly shifted to more narrowly defined questions of the measurement and correlates of authoritarianism. But it is important to understand the manifestations of these individual-level characteristics in the nature of group conflict. Many of the concerns that critics have raised about this literature will only be answered through a more successful theory. And that theory must address the social and political aspects of group conflict at the same time that any study of individual differences recognizes the importance of individual psychology.

A New Conceptualization

The authoritarianism literature almost always begins by assuming that the observed consistency in prejudice and intolerance is a function of some aspect of personality. However, attitude consistency may also be a function of values or general beliefs (see Duckitt, 2001). It is also important to remember that prejudice and intolerance are social and political phenomena. I want to show that a useful way to develop a conceptualization of authoritarianism is to consider people's orientations toward society and, in particular, conflicts between individual rights and the well-being of the social unit.

Living alongside other people in a society creates a tension between the goals of personal autonomy and social cohesion. As Nunn, Crocket, and Williams (1978) stated: "every society inevitably confronts the problem of how much individual freedom is possible and how much social control is needed" (p. 7). What is the nature of this problem? From the perspective of those who wish to maximize individual freedom, the major concern is the rules and restrictions that society places on behavior. As Cohen-Almagor (1994) argued: "Liberty is a necessary condition for individuals to exercise their capabilities independently. It is required to enable people to discover, through the open confrontation of the ideas that are cherished by their society, their own stances, their beliefs, and their future life plans. The central idea of autonomy is self-rule, or self-direction" (p. 11).

The tension between autonomy and social control is manifested in people's desire for social restrictions on behavior. Why would ordinary people want society to restrict how people—including themselves—can behave? As social theorists since at least Hobbes have argued, a fundamental problem for any society is the maintenance of social order. Although it is common to think of social order in terms of the potential for crime and violence, at a more basic level the social order can be thought of as a stable pattern of interactions among members of society (see Rosenau & Bredemeier, 1993; Wrong, 1994). Why does this social order not

break down? There are three potential mechanisms to consider: force, mutual self-interest, and adherence to a common set of norms (Wrong, 1994).

I assume that virtually all people—whatever their views may be—hope that force would be used only as a last resort. If you adopt an optimistic view of human nature, there may be no need for rules that go beyond those necessary to protect life and make commerce possible. For example, the liberal view of society imagines that individuals pursuing their self-interest will produce a stable social order (Gray, 1995).

However, even if you do not believe that people are malevolent or antisocial by nature, it is not hard to be skeptical of the social consequences of millions of people all pursuing their self-interest. Social theorists since Durkheim (1897/1951) and Parsons (1937) have argued that a stable social order is sustained, at least in part, by the existence of behavioral norms that guide the interactions of the members of society. It is these common norms and values that are seen as central to the stability of society (Etzioni, 1996; Wrong, 1994). If members of society conform to these common norms, the fear of disorder (absence of social order) is reduced. It is possible that in some people, concern with the importance of social conformity is sufficiently weak that it is dominated by the desire for personal autonomy, whereas in others it may provoke a strong fear of unlimited freedom.

The tension between the values of autonomy and social conformity may well be a universal aspect of living with other people. Two major research studies support this claim. In sociology, Kohn (1977; Kohn & Schooler, 1983) has studied societal values from the perspective of the values that people consider most important for raising children. On the basis of a number of national surveys, Kohn and Schooler (1983) concluded that "there is a self-direction/conformity dimension to parental values in all industrialized countries that have to our knowledge been studied and even one society (Taiwan) that was, at the time of inquiry, less industrialized" (p. 283). Although measured in the context of child-rearing values, conformity and self-direction are seen as central social values in this research.

In psychology, Schwartz (1992) has undertaken a major study of social values. In 40 samples drawn from 20 countries, Schwartz asked respondents to rate 56 values, including ones measuring social conformity (obedient, self-discipline, politeness, and honoring parents and elders) and self-direction (creativity, freedom, choosing own goals, curious, and independent). Analyzing two-dimensional configurations of the 56 values, he found that conformity and self-direction values clustered together virtually everywhere. More important, they also appeared in regions almost directly opposite each other. One of the two obvious axes that help define the cross-national two-dimensional scaling solution is anchored by self-direction and its close neighbor, stimulation (varied life, exciting life), at one end, and conformity along with security (social order, family security) and tradition (respect tradition, devout) at the other.

Both Kohn and Schwartz found considerable variance in these values *within*

each country studied. Social and cultural conditions may contribute to the emphasis put on each value across societies. At the same time, differences in socialization, education, social experiences, and personality should produce substantial individual differences in the relative weights attached to social conformity and autonomy within societies.

Although few people would be able to articulate a personal philosophy that reconciles the conflicting values of social conformity and autonomy, the implicit tug of war between these goals should result in people adopting a perspective on the world that reflects their preferred balance between them. We can thus define a dimension anchored at one end by the desire for unlimited personal autonomy and at the other by strict conformity to societal norms of behavior. (See Duckitt, 2001, for a similarly defined dimension derived from a somewhat different theoretical perspective.)

Note that this dimension is defined by the *relative priorities* attached to the values of social conformity and personal autonomy. In the abstract, many people may place a high value on personal autonomy, particularly in an individualistic society like the United States. The key to this conceptualization is the relative weights that people give to these two values when they are forced to confront the trade-off between them. *How highly will people value personal autonomy when it comes into conflict with their desire for social conformity?*

It is useful to specify the differences in outlook across this dimension in greater detail. Consider first those people who value personal autonomy over social conformity. This perspective should be associated with a belief in the ability of freely interacting, autonomous individuals to produce a stable social order. Most important, valuing personal autonomy over social conformity should mean that these people will have a strong aversion to rules and to having to obey the dictates of society.

What are the central characteristics of those who strongly value social conformity? One factor that should lead to a desire for conformity is a more pessimistic view of human nature. It is not necessary to believe that people are inherently antisocial; one must simply believe that, left to their own devices, people pursuing their self-interest and behaving as they choose will not produce a stable social order. People may need the guidance of socially accepted norms and rules to behave appropriately in social settings.

Although a relative preference for social conformity over personal autonomy does not mean that people are opposed to the development of unique talents and personalities, they should have a strong desire to limit diversity in society. Diversity is both an indicator that people are not conforming to common social norms and a potential threat to the maintenance of those norms.

It is preferable if people believe in a common set of social norms and rules, but it is more important that people follow those rules. If necessary, that means that the threat of sanctions and the use of punishments may be necessary to keep people from misbehaving. Thus, people who value social conformity should be

strong supporters of the government and, especially, the government's power to suppress nonconformity. Such people may not grant the government the right to take any action it wishes (and may be quite opposed to government intervention in the economy), but they should be much more likely than those who value autonomy to support the government when it wants to increase its control over social behavior and punish nonconformity.

An even better solution is to ensure that people are generally obedient. Fostering a duty to obey greatly facilitates social conformity, because the motivation to conform becomes internal (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). Under ideal circumstances you wouldn't need to monitor everyone or use coercion to keep people in line. For similar reasons, if you don't believe that people are naturally inclined to conform, the way they are raised becomes important. Children should be trained to be obedient, to not challenge authority, and to accept the way society is. (Thus, child-rearing values become a good indicator of social values more generally, as Kohn and others have found.)

Finally, the desire for conformity requires commitment to a *particular* set of norms. Although it is possible for people who desire social conformity to believe that social norms are an arbitrary construction, in practice that seems highly unlikely. It is hard to imagine that people could continually believe that everyone must adhere to a set of norms without believing in those norms. It is thus extremely likely that people who value social conformity highly will also believe strongly in the validity of what they take to be common social norms: They are the correct set of prescriptions for behavior. And, if the substance of these norms is not arbitrary, it must also not be something that people can easily change—if it can be changed at all. If there is some ultimate wisdom in social norms, they may not even be a creation of ordinary people. They are likely to come from some "higher authority" (see Gabannesch, 1972).

Social Conformity, Threat, and Authoritarianism

It is easy to see that there should be a close relationship between the social conformity–autonomy dimension and prejudice and intolerance. People who value autonomy over social conformity should reject societal constraints on behavior, including restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and civil liberties in general. They should be unconcerned with defending common social norms and not be troubled by deviation from those norms. Valuing autonomy thus reduces the impulse to restrict civil liberties and the motivation to react negatively toward groups that do not fit neatly into social conventions.

The reverse should be true of people who value social conformity over autonomy. Any group—whether it be a "social" or "political" group—that deviates from a narrow view of conventionality is capable of eliciting hostility. But individuals and groups that are "unconventional" should arouse more than negative feelings. People whose goal is to maintain social conformity should want to protect society

from deviants. This can be accomplished most effectively by punishing nonconformists and by restricting their freedom to publicly display their views and win converts to their cause. Thus, the willingness to support civil liberties and freedom of speech for nonconformists should be strongly associated with the relative values placed on autonomy versus social conformity.

But if this conceptualization is really useful, it should do more than provide a new name for generalized prejudice and intolerance. Under what conditions is intolerance most likely among those who hold these different values? Consider first those who value autonomy over social conformity. Should these people be *unconditional* supporters of civil liberties?

At this point it is important to emphasize the distinction between social conformity and social order more generally. People who value autonomy may not desire social conformity, but they too should want to maintain a stable *social order*. Even a charitable view of human nature must recognize the possibility of conflict and violence, and people who value autonomy should be no more likely to want to live in a violent society than anyone else. This suggests that there *are* conditions under which people who value autonomy over social conformity may want to restrict civil liberties, especially for groups that they believe may significantly reduce social and political freedom or be a direct threat to people's lives.

The fear of violence also could lead those who value social conformity over personal autonomy to support the restriction of civil liberties. However, because valuing social conformity increases the motivation for placing restrictions on behavior, the dynamics of intolerance will follow very different principles. Most important, the desire for social freedom is now subservient to the enforcement of social norms and rules. Thus, groups will be targeted for repression to the extent that they challenge social conformity.

What could be seen as a threat to social conformity? Most obviously, beliefs, values, and behavior that are inconsistent with perceptions of social conventions (Feldman, 1989; Feldman & Stenner, 1997)—but also behavior that is a challenge to the government's ability to enforce compliance with social rules and regulations. And, among people who value social conformity, any action that may challenge conformity—either by advocating nonconformity or simply by being nonconformist—could be seen as a threat.

Intolerance and prejudice among those who value social conformity over autonomy should be a function of the degree of perceived threat to social cohesion. As a social or political group deviates from social conventionality, it will be seen as a threat and will become a target for action to suppress the threat. The desire to restrict the group's civil liberties will be a joint function of the perception of the distance of the group from conventional norms and the extent to which they are actively challenging those norms. It is possible that there will even be support for some restrictions on the rights of groups that are not obviously nonconformists, because those who value social conformity should support government restrictions on social behavior in general. However, absent some

combination of nonconformity and challenging behavior, those who value social conformity should be only somewhat more intolerant than those who seek personal autonomy.

Intolerance and prejudice may be aroused among those who value social conformity by more than just reactions to any specific target group. Perceived threats to social conformity may be more diffuse. For example, diversity in society, be it social or political, should itself be seen as a threat and therefore increase intolerance quite generally (Feldman, 1989; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 1997). Thus, the motivation to be intolerant among those who value social conformity should be a function of perceived threat to common social norms from a specific group or from more general social forces.

The Social Conformity–Autonomy Construct and Authoritarianism

What are the advantages of this conceptualization? Most important, it provides a clear conceptualization of the key construct—social conformity–autonomy—and guidelines for the development of measures. Rather than inferring the nature of the construct from the items that make up its measure, the dimension is defined theoretically. It will always be necessary to conduct item analyses to find more discriminating items that tap the underlying construct. But it should not be necessary to search—with insufficient theoretical guidance—through large pools of items to find suitable ones. Moreover, with a clear conceptualization it should be possible to develop and test alternative measures of the social conformity–autonomy dimension that can help to validate the construct. And with the dimension defined this way, it should be possible to develop measures that do not include items that closely resemble the attitudes and beliefs that we wish to predict.

The role of perceived threat in the dynamics of social conformity–autonomy highlights a critical feature of this conceptualization. In most of the literature it is assumed that authoritarianism has a direct influence on prejudice and intolerance. Arising out of the dispositional approach in psychology, research in authoritarianism has generally ignored the more recent interactionist perspective in which behavior is seen as a joint function of personality characteristics and situational factors (see Snyder & Cantor, 1998). In the conceptualization presented here, the effect of social conformity–autonomy should *always* be contingent. In statistical terms, there should be an interaction between that dimension and perceptions of threat (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 1997).[2] Absent any threat—understood here as a challenge to social conformity—there should be only weak effects of social conformity–autonomy on intolerance and prejudice. In that sense, the social conformity–autonomy dimension is truly a predisposition to respond.

[2] This interaction hypothesis is different from Altemeyer's (1988) argument that threat is a predictor of authoritarianism.

People who value social conformity are predisposed to be intolerant but may not be intolerant without the required threat, whether it is a particular group that is threatening or a perception that social cohesion is in danger more generally.

From this perspective, the central dynamics of authoritarianism are defined by the interaction between social conformity–autonomy and perceived threat. This is sufficient to explain the combination of authoritarian aggression and authoritarian submission that is at the heart of Altemeyer's RWA scale. There are clearly more elements in the original Adorno et al. conceptualization (which was a combination of eight "syndromes"), and some of these other elements may be correlates of social conformity–autonomy.

A correlate of authoritarianism that is especially significant is conservatism. A critical issue in the literature that has not been adequately addressed is whether conservatism is a *necessary* component of authoritarianism. Does the relationship between authoritarianism and prejudice and intolerance depend on the incorporation of conservatism (conventionalism) in the authoritarianism measure? If not, does it confound our understanding of the construct? An advantage of the conceptualization developed here is that conservatism is not a distinct component of the central construct.[3] On the other hand, there is almost certainly going to be a correlation between the two (at least in Western, liberal democracies). Relative to those who value personal autonomy, people who prefer social conformity should be committed to traditional values of moral behavior because those values help to regulate social behavior. We should therefore expect a correlation between social conformity–autonomy and ideology.[4] If that correlation is large enough, it could make it appear as if social conservatism is a component of authoritarianism. But apart from its correlation with social conformity–autonomy, there is no reason why conservatism should be part of the *dynamics* of prejudice and intolerance. By keeping conservatism distinct from the social conformity–autonomy dimension, it will be possible to examine these issues empirically.

Analysis

The analysis to be presented here addresses three central issues. First, I want to establish that the social conformity–autonomy dimension can be reliably measured and assess its relationship with measures of ideology and right-wing authoritarianism. Second, I show how the combination of social conformity–autonomy and perceived threat contributes to racial prejudice and intolerance. And third, I

[3] It is possible to see the social conformity–autonomy dimension as a reflection of the conflict between organic conservatism and classical liberalism, although it is not clear that this is central to contemporary ideological debate in countries like the United States.

[4] This is not to imply that social conformity–autonomy is the only basis for social conservatism. The dimensions should be correlated, not identical. Moreover, ideology is multidimensional. There is no reason to believe that social conformity–autonomy should be strongly related to economic conservatism.

examine the relationship among social conformity–autonomy, ideology, and right-wing authoritarianism in more detail.

The data for this analysis come from a sample of 266 undergraduate students at Stony Brook University who took part in the study for extra credit. This is clearly not a representative sample of adults, so the specific results presented here cannot be generalized to a broader population. However, it is an adequate sample to begin to explore the central dynamics of social conformity, prejudice, and intolerance. Many studies have found substantial variation in authoritarianism, prejudice, and intolerance in student samples like this. Most of Altemeyer's research has involved samples of undergraduates, as has a great deal of other research in this area. This sample is also reasonably diverse in characteristics such as gender, race, religion, and ideology.[5]

Questionnaires were completed outside of the classroom in groups of about 12. Participants were given a booklet that began with what appeared to be a story from a weekly news magazine, followed by a structured questionnaire. The "news magazine" story described preparations for a demonstration by a neo-Nazi group. Immediately after the story came a set of items about this group: whether they should be allowed to hold a demonstration, other aspects of support for their freedom of speech and civil liberties, and perceptions of threat. Additional items then tapped aspects of social conformity versus autonomy, values, right-wing authoritarianism, prejudice, social dominance orientation, ideology, issue positions, and background characteristics. The questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete.

Measuring Social Conformity–Autonomy

The core concept in this analysis, the relative priority given to social conformity versus personal autonomy, was measured in two different ways. This was done to provide evidence of convergent validity and to construct a reliable scale. Most directly, social conformity–autonomy was measured by a series of 17 paired alternative items. This format was chosen to emphasize the contrast between the two values. The items were also written to represent—as broadly as possible—the range of this dimension. The items are shown in Table 1, grouped into five categories that illustrate the various facets of the dimension. This grouping of the items is for purposes of presentation only; these items were constructed to tap a single common factor and were presented in random order to the participants.

The first group of items most directly represents the trade-off between social conformity and autonomy. These do not refer in any way to the social consequences of conformity and autonomy, a theme that is picked up by the second set of items. In these items, the respondents are asked whether personal freedom

[5] Half of the respondents were female; 53% were white; 38% were Catholic, 13% Protestant, and 8% Jewish; and 44% labeled themselves liberal.

Table 1. Social Conformity Versus Autonomy Items

Conformity Versus Autonomy

A. It's best for everyone if people try to fit in instead of acting in unusual ways.
B. People should be encouraged to express themselves in unique and possibly unusual ways.

A. Obeying the rules and fitting in are signs of a strong and healthy society.
B. People who continually emphasize the need for unity will only limit creativity and hurt our society.

A. We should admire people who go their own way without worrying about what others think.
B. People need to learn to fit in and get along with others.

Freedom Versus Fear of Disorder

A. It is most important to give people all the freedom they need to express themselves.
B. Our society will break down if we allow people to do or say anything they want.

A. Society is always on the verge of disorder and lawlessness and only strict laws can prevent it.
B. It is more important to give people control over their lives than to create additional laws and regulations.

A. People can only develop their true potential in a fully permissive society.
B. If we give people too much freedom there will just be more and more disorder in society.

Respect for Common Norms and Values

A. Rules are there for people to follow, not to change.
B. Society's basic rules were created by people and so can always be changed by people.

A. People should not try to understand how society works but just accept the way it is.
B. People should constantly try to question why things are the way they are.

A. People should be guided more by their feelings and less by the rules.
B. The only way to stay out of trouble is to respect the established rules of society.

Social Cohesion

A. People should be given the opportunity to hear all sides of a question, regardless of how controversial it is.
B. If we cannot achieve agreement on our values we will never be able to keep this society together.

A. In the long run our cultural and ideological differences will make us a healthier, more creative, and stronger society.
B. It is unlikely that this country will survive in the long run unless we can overcome our differences and disagreements.

A. Society should aim to protect citizens' right to live any way they choose.
B. It is important to enforce the community's standards of right and wrong.

Socialization and Child-Rearing Values

A. Students must be encouraged to question established authorities and criticize the customs and traditions of society.
B. One of the major aims of education should be to give students a few simple rules of behavior to make them better citizens.

Table 1. (cont.)

A.	Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down.
B.	If some people don't occasionally come up with rebellious ideas there would be less progress in the world.
A.	It may well be that children who talk back to their parents respect them more in the long run.
B.	Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.
A.	Children should be taught to do what is right even though they may not always feel like it.
B.	Children should be encouraged to express themselves even though parents may not always like it.
A.	The most important values children should learn are love and respect for their parents.
B.	The most important values children should learn are independence and self-reliance.

should be maximized at the cost of social and political disorder. The third group of items asks about commitment to common norms and values: Should people accept and be guided by social norms, or question them? The consequences of these norms for social cohesion make up the fourth set of items. Is it better to have a common set of social values, or is a more heterogeneous society preferable? Finally, if people are not, by nature, accepting and obedient, then those who desire social conformity should want children to be taught to be good, obedient citizens. Conversely, those who value autonomy should want to encourage it in children. Therefore, items about child-rearing values and socialization should be effective in distinguishing people along this dimension, and the last set of items in Table 1 are modeled along these lines (see Kohn, 1977; Martin, 1964).

If these 17 items are measures of an underlying dimension, there should be evidence that they form a satisfactory, unidimensional scale. The mean correlation among these items is .19 in this sample, and a simple additive scale has an estimated reliability (coefficient α) of .80.[6] The mean correlation is not especially high, but many of the items are relatively abstract and they cover a broad domain. More important than the mean correlation is evidence that the common variance in these items reflects a single dimension. Estimates from an exploratory factor analysis (iterated principal factors) yield a first factor with an eigenvalue of 3.24. By comparison, the second factor has an eigenvalue of .91. This is strong evidence of a single common factor. A scree plot of the eigenvalues also shows clear evidence of a single-factor solution. All 17 items load on the first factor with only one factor loading below .4. The intercorrelations among these items are remarkably homogeneous for such a large and diverse set of items. We call this measure the social conformity–autonomy beliefs scale (SCA Beliefs).

[6] The mean interitem correlation in this sample is very similar to that obtained in a non-random adult sample.

A second measure of social conformity–autonomy was constructed from the large inventory of values developed by Schwartz (1992). Through multidimensional scaling of responses to 56 values in a number of countries, Schwartz has identified a stable two-dimensional structure of values. One cluster of values, including his self-direction and stimulation values, closely resembles the autonomy values as defined here. Directly opposite these values in the two-dimensional space are two value clusters, labeled conformity and tradition, that look very much like the social conformity values. A dimension running from the conformity and tradition values through the self-direction and stimulation values helps to define the two-dimensional value space and looks very much like the social conformity–autonomy dimension that has been developed here.

A large number of the Schwartz value items were included in the questionnaire. From these items, two value measures were constructed. The first includes the conformity and tradition values (social order, respect for tradition, self-discipline, moderate, honoring parents and elders, accepting my portion in life, and obedient) plus one additional item added for this study (social stability). The mean interitem correlation among these values is .32, and the scale has an estimated reliability of .79. The second value measure was constructed from the self-direction and stimulation items (freedom, exciting life, creativity, varied life, independent, broad-minded, choosing own goals, daring, and curious). The mean interitem correlation among this set of value items is .37 and the estimated reliability is .84.

A few studies (Altemeyer, 1998; Rohan & Zanna, 1996) have computed correlations between right-wing authoritarianism and the Schwartz value clusters. They have generally found that authoritarianism correlates positively with the conformity and tradition values (and the neighboring security values) and that it correlates negatively with the self-direction and stimulation values (and the neighboring hedonism values). But according to the conceptualization developed here, it should be the *relative* priority attached to social conformity or personal autonomy that is most related to authoritarianism. For this reason, a single measure, corresponding to one of Schwartz's two underlying value dimensions, was constructed by taking the difference between the conformity–tradition scale and the self-direction–stimulation scale. This provides a very different measure of social conformity–autonomy than the beliefs scale, and we call it the social conformity–autonomy values scale (SCA Values).

The questionnaire also included 20 items from Altemeyer's (1988) RWA scale (see the Appendix for the specific items). The mean correlation among these items is .32 and the estimated scale reliability is .90. In addition, two ideology measures were included to examine the relationship among conservatism, social conformity–autonomy, and right-wing authoritarianism. The first was a simple measure of ideological self-identification: Respondents were asked whether they thought of themselves as very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative. A second measure tapped

Table 2. Correlations Among Social Conformity–Autonomy Measures and Authoritarianism

	SCA Beliefs	SCA Values	Values: Order	Values: Autonomy	RWA
SCA Values	.64				
Order	.44	.66			
Autonomy	−.34	−.56	.24		
RWA	.71	.68	.47	−.36	
Social conformity–autonomy	.92	.89	.60	−.49	.77

the dimension of moral or social conservatism that is usually a component of authoritarianism measures (including Altemeyer's RWA scale) often labeled "conventionalism." Respondents were asked whether they think it is "always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all" if a man and woman have sexual relations before marriage; if a married man has sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner; if there are sexual relations between two adults of the same sex; if a man and a woman live together without being married; and if an adult reads pornographic magazines or watches pornographic movies in their home. The mean interitem correlation among these five items is .24, and the scale has an estimated reliability of .66.

The correlations among the SCA scales, RWA, and the two ideology measures are shown in Table 2. The correlation between the two SCA scales is .64. RWA is substantially correlated with both of the SCA scales: SCA Values, .68, and SCA Beliefs, .71. It is interesting to note that authoritarianism is moderately correlated with the cluster of conformity values (.47) and independence values (−.36), as previous researchers have found. But the more impressive relationship is with a measure constructed from the difference between these two values. It is that contrast that best taps the *relative* priority given to social conformity or autonomy.[7]

Because a number of comparisons showed that the SCA Beliefs and SCA Values scales seem to be alternative measures of the underlying dimension, they were combined (summed) to produce a single, more reliable measure. This combined SCA scale is used for the rest of this analysis. As seen in Table 2, this measure has a correlation of .77 with right-wing authoritarianism. Although authoritarianism and social conformity–autonomy are not identical concepts, a very large share of the variance in authoritarianism (measured by RWA) is the relative preference for social conformity over autonomy.

[7] Further analysis shows that right-wing authoritarianism is a function of an almost equally weighted difference between the conformity values and the independence values. A regression of RWA on the two separate values measures yields RWA = .002 + (.66 × Conformity) − (.62 × Independence). The multiple *R* from this regression is virtually identical to the correlation between RWA and the simple difference between the values.

It is also interesting to look at the relationship between these measures and ideology. As noted earlier, one of the major criticisms of authoritarianism measures is that they are confounded with conservatism. Social conformity–autonomy should be related to ideology. Relative to people who value personal autonomy, those who prefer social conformity should be more likely to defend traditional values, especially moral values. In this sample, social conformity–autonomy has a correlation of .45 with ideological self-identification and .51 with social conservatism. The correlation of right-wing authoritarianism with ideological self-identification is .50, and with social conservatism .63. Not surprising, given its content, RWA is somewhat more strongly related to ideology, especially social ideology, than is social conformity–autonomy. The question is whether the inclusion of social conservatism in a measure of authoritarianism contributes to its predictive value or simply adds irrelevant content to the measure.

Social Conformity–Autonomy, Intolerance, and Prejudice

If the social conformity–autonomy dimension is the basis of authoritarianism, it should predict intolerance and prejudice. And, according to the conceptualization developed here, intolerance and prejudice should result from the interaction of social conformity–autonomy and perceived threat to social order. Prejudice was measured in this study with six items that tapped negative attitudes toward African Americans (see the Appendix for item wording). The mean interitem correlation for the items is .36, yielding an estimated scale reliability of .77. Intolerance was measured from respondents' reactions to a fictitious right-wing extremist group. The first task the respondents were given was to read what appeared to be a news story from a national news magazine. The story described the preparations being made in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for a rally of the "Patriotic Front," a neo-Nazi group. The group was described as "white supremacists" having ties with other right-wing and neo-Nazi groups and as having organized and held demonstrations in many states.[8]

Immediately after reading the story, the respondents were presented with a series of nine items to measure their support for the rights of the Patriotic Front to hold demonstrations and to be free of government restrictions and monitoring (the items are listed in the Appendix). The nine items form an acceptable intolerance scale with a mean interitem correlation of .23 and an estimated reliability of .73. Because perceived threat has been shown to be a major determinant of intolerance, the questionnaire included seven threat items drawn from the work of Sullivan and Marcus (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, & Wood, 1995;

[8] The news story included an experimental manipulation that varied whether the group was violent or not. Because this factor is not relevant to the hypotheses being tested here, only the participants from the "nonviolent" condition are included in the analysis. The nonviolent condition is similar to an overwhelming number of the tests of intolerance in the authoritarianism literature.

Table 3. Perceived Threat to Social Cohesion Scale

The foundations of this country are strong and we really shouldn't worry about recent changes in society.
It seems as if people in this country have less in common than they used to.
The core values of this country are every bit as solid as they have ever been.
Politics has gotten too conflictual in the last few years and it's bad for the U.S.
On the whole, the increasing diversity in the U.S. has been good for the country.
Despite what many people may say, Americans still believe in the same common values.
There have been too many things changing in this country and it's taking a toll on our basic values.
Thinking about values in society, do you think that things in this country are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel that things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982). The items ask (on a 5-point scale) whether the Patriotic Front is violent or nonviolent, honest or dishonest, threatening or non-threatening, trustworthy or untrustworthy, dangerous or safe, predictable or unpredictable, and aggressive or non-aggressive. The mean interitem correlation for these items is .32, which produces an estimated scale reliability of .77.

One of the major predictions of the conceptualization developed here is that intolerance and prejudice should be the result of an interaction between valuing social conformity and perceiving a threat to common norms. This threat can come from the specific group in question or from more general perceptions of threat to the social order (Feldman, 1989; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 1997). Because a right-wing group like the Patriotic Front should be a powerful threat to social cohesion for those who value social conformity, general perceptions of social threat were also measured. Specifically, eight items were included to tap perceptions that social cohesion in the United States is under attack. As shown in Table 3, seven of the eight items are in agree-disagree form; the last is a forced-choice question. The mean interitem correlation is .21, and the estimated reliability of the eight-item scale is .69.

To facilitate comparisons among the scales used in this analysis, I first recoded the scores to range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 1. This enabled the regression coefficients to be interpreted as the change in the dependent variable (on a 0 to 1 scale) as each independent variable ranges from its lowest possible to highest possible value (see Achen, 1982). Then, to make the interpretation of interaction effects in regression equations easier, I subtracted the means of each scale from the scale scores, so that all of the scales had a mean of zero (but they are not standardized).

The values in the left column of Table 4 are estimates of a simple regression equation predicting intolerance. In addition to social conformity–autonomy and perceived threat, the regression also included two variables to pick up attitudes toward a group like the "Patriotic Front": racial prejudice and attitudes toward the Ku Klux Klan. Prejudice was measured by the six-item scale described above, whereas attitudes toward the KKK were measured with a 10-point scale that was

Table 4. Intolerance Toward the "Patriotic Front"

Perceived threat	.335* (.132)	.331* (.132)
Social conformity–autonomy	.624* (.158)	.632* (.158)
Prejudice	–.291 (.156)	–.278 (.157)
Attitudes toward the KKK	–.105 (.104)	–.079 (.103)
Social conservatism	.000 (.105)	–.021 (.107)
Ideological self-identification	.010 (.111)	–.007 (.110)
Gender	.032 (.039)	.034 (.040)
Threat to social cohesion		.079 (.186)
SCA × threat to social cohesion		1.683* (.841)
Constant	.002 (.085)	–.006 (.085)
N	133	133
R^2	.22	.25

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$.

recoded, consistent with the other variables, to 0–1. These two variables were included to ensure that attitudes toward this group are not confounded with the other predictor variables. The dependent variable in this analysis is not the degree of liking for this group but the willingness to support its civil liberties.

Previous research has found that conservatives are somewhat less tolerant than liberals, so two ideology measures were included: liberal-conservative self-placement and social conservatism. In addition, a measure of social dominance orientation was used in the analysis. Because a number of recent studies (Altemeyer, 1998; McFarland & Adelson, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) have found substantial relationships between prejudice and social dominance measures, this variable was included in the regression model to avoid misspecification (although there is no evidence that social dominance orientation is associated with *intolerance*). The measure was constructed from eight agree-disagree items (see the Appendix). The mean interitem correlation is .42 with an estimated scale reliability of .85. Finally, gender was also included.

As expected, prejudice and attitudes toward the KKK have significant effects on expressed tolerance: As people become more prejudiced and positive toward the KKK, they are more willing to allow members of the Patriotic Front the freedom to express themselves. However, neither of the two ideology variables has significant effects, nor does social dominance or gender. The two largest coefficients are for perceived threat and social conformity–autonomy. The more people perceive the group as threatening (in particular as belligerent), the more intolerant they are. Most important for this analysis, social conformity–autonomy has a substantial effect on intolerance.

To test the key hypothesis that intolerance should be a joint function of valuing social conformity and perceptions of threat to social cohesion, I elabo-

rated the regression specification to include the measure of perceived threat to social cohesion and its interaction with social conformity–autonomy (Table 4, right column). Recall that all of the scales in this analysis were constructed to have a zero mean after being rescaled from 0 to 1. With this scaling, the "main effects" of the component variables will not change substantially when the interaction term is added to the regression. More precisely, with the interaction between social conformity–autonomy and the perceived threat to social cohesion measure in the model, the coefficient for social conformity–autonomy yields its effect when threat is 0—that is, at the sample mean (the same for the social threat coefficient). The interaction term then shows how the effect of each variable changes as the other varies from its mean (see Friedrich, 1982).

The results are completely consistent with expectations. As before, social conformity–autonomy has a large coefficient, this time yielding its effect when threat to social cohesion is at its sample mean. However, at the mean of social conformity–autonomy, social threat has no significant effect on intolerance. More important, the interaction between these two variables is large and statistically significant. The effect of social conformity–autonomy on intolerance increases substantially as perceptions of threat to social cohesion increase. Conversely, the effect of social conformity–autonomy on intolerance is substantially reduced among those who perceive little social threat. Note that the social threat items have little or nothing to do with politics and make no reference to the threat from right-wing groups. In fact, people who score high on this scale are likely to be concerned about immigration and social change, just the sorts of issues a right-wing group would champion. But instead of generating sympathy for a group like the Patriotic Front, it only leads to greater intolerance among those who strongly value social conformity. Thus, intolerance of a right-wing group like the Patriotic Front is a powerful combination of valuing social conformity and perceiving threats to social cohesion.

In addition to predicting intolerance, authoritarianism is usually associated with prejudice. Indeed, the origin of the concept in Adorno et al. (1950) stemmed from their observation that prejudice toward Jews was associated with prejudice toward many other groups and, ultimately, to the F-scale. Much the same dynamics that link intolerance with social conformity–autonomy should operate for prejudice. In particular, we should observe the same interaction between social conformity–autonomy and perceptions of threat to social cohesion. Because the prejudice measure used here focused on negative attitudes toward blacks, black respondents were excluded from this part of the analysis.

The full specification and estimates of the racial prejudice equation are shown in Table 5. Again, with the interaction between social conformity–autonomy and perceived threat to social cohesion in the equation, the coefficients for each variable give their effect on prejudice when the other is set at the sample mean. Neither variable has statistically significant effects on prejudice at that specific point. However, the interaction term is again substantively large and significant.

Table 5. Predicting Prejudice

Social conformity–autonomy	.086 (.072)
Threat to social cohesion	.040 (.068)
SCA × threat to social cohesion	.678* (.332)
Social dominance	.324* (.062)
Social conservatism	−.059 (.052)
Ideological self-identification	.201* (.050)
Gender	.050* (.019)
Constant	.422* (.026)
N	230
R^2	.31

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$.

The effect of social conformity–autonomy on racial prejudice depends highly on perceptions of social threat. When people perceive a great deal of threat to social cohesion, social conformity–autonomy is strongly related to prejudice. At high levels of threat, social conformity–autonomy is the best predictor of prejudice in the model, exceeding the large effect of social dominance.[9] On the other hand, for low levels of social threat there is no significant effect of social conformity–autonomy on prejudice.[10] The relationship is thus completely contingent; holding social dominance constant, racial prejudice—like intolerance—is found among those who value social conformity over personal autonomy and who believe that social cohesion is threatened.

Social Conformity–Autonomy, Conservatism, and Authoritarianism

The analyses of both prejudice and intolerance show that social conformity–autonomy, in combination with perceived threat to social cohesion, behaves very much like authoritarianism. But authoritarianism is not just a concept, it is also strongly associated with certain measures. The F-scale developed by Adorno et al. was, for many years, the measure of choice. Increasingly, Altemeyer's right-wing authoritarianism measure is being adopted by researchers. However, as discussed earlier, there are problems with the RWA scale. Because it was constructed empirically, the measure does not have a single conceptual focus. In fact, many of the items in the scale are quite close to measures of prejudice and intolerance, which the scale is supposed to predict. In addition, the RWA scale, like the F-scale before it, has been criticized for having an explicit ideological bias. Many

[9] The conditional coefficient for the effect of social conformity–autonomy on prejudice when threat is at its maximum is .43.
[10] The conditional coefficient for the effect of social conformity–autonomy on prejudice when threat is at its minimum is −.15, which is not statistically significant at the .1 level.

Table 6. Predicting Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Social conformity–autonomy	.512* (.041)
Threat to social cohesion	.147* (.041)
SCA × threat to social cohesion	.429* (.206)
Social conservatism	.201* (.030)
SCA × moral conservatism	–.368* (.137)
Ideology	.096* (.027)
Constant	–.012 (.013)
N	263
R^2	.71

Note. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$.

items in the scale have a clear conservative focus, and several look like they could make up a measure of social conservatism.

If the RWA scale does, in part, contain items that tap prejudice and intolerance, it should be predicted by the same interaction between social conformity–autonomy and threat to social cohesion as appeared in the previous analyses. As shown earlier, the simple correlation between RWA and the combined SCA scale is quite high, .77. If the interaction is observed in this case, the relationship between social conformity–autonomy and RWA should grow even stronger as perceptions of threat increase.

Another key question is the relationship between RWA and conservatism. If social conformity and threat capture the central dynamics of authoritarianism, what is the role of conservatism? Perhaps the conservative content of RWA is simply a consequence of the values and threat interaction.[11] The conservative items in the RWA scale would then be unnecessary but inconsequential. If so, there should be no effect of conservatism on RWA once the social conformity–autonomy and social threat interaction is controlled for. It is also possible that there is conservative content in the RWA that is extraneous. As some have argued, the social conservatism items in the scale may induce a correlation between RWA and ideology over and above any true association with authoritarianism. We would then find that ideology has an independent effect on RWA. However, it is also possible that conservatism (conventionalism) is, as Altemeyer suggests, integral to RWA. Authoritarianism may be more than social conformity–autonomy; the relationship may be strengthened among strong (social) conservatives. If this is the case, RWA should be influenced by a significant *positive* interaction between social conformity–autonomy and social conservatism.

Table 6 shows the estimates of the regression of the RWA scale on social con-

[11] Recall that the SCA scale is correlated at .51 with social conservatism. When social conservatism is regressed on social conformity–autonomy, threat, and their interaction, all three variables have statistically significant effects. Thus, the relationship between social conservatism and social conformity–autonomy does increase as perceived threat increases.

formity–autonomy, the social threat measure, their interaction, ideological self-identification, social conservatism, and the interaction between social conservatism and social conformity–autonomy. First note that the R^2 for this equation is .71, corresponding to a multiple R of .84. Not surprisingly, given the substantial correlation between them, social conformity–autonomy has a large effect on RWA even at the mean of perceived threat to social cohesion. Although much smaller, perceived threat also has a statistically significant effect on RWA at the mean of social conformity–autonomy. The more important result is the interaction term, which is statistically significant and substantively large. Just like the previous results for intolerance and prejudice, high scores on the RWA scale are observed for those who value social conformity and perceive a threat to social cohesion. The RWA scale appears to relate to social conformity–autonomy in a manner similar to measures of prejudice and intolerance: The relationship is strongest among those who perceive a threat to common norms, and it declines as perceived threat diminishes.

Even when this relationship is held constant, there is still a substantial effect of ideology on RWA. Both the ideological self-identification and social conservatism measures (especially the latter) are significant predictors. In addition, the interaction of social conservatism and social conformity–autonomy is *negative*. This is a critical finding because it shows that right-wing authoritarianism is *not* produced by the joint combination of social conservatism and a preference for social conformity. Instead, the effect of social conservatism on RWA increases as the value placed on personal autonomy increases. This means that conservatism most contributes to higher scores on RWA among people who most value personal autonomy, not social conformity. Conservatives will thus get higher scores on RWA than liberals even when (and especially when) they strongly value personal autonomy (and therefore are not predisposed toward authoritarianism).

The effects of social conformity–autonomy, threat to common norms, and social conservatism on RWA can be seen more clearly in Table 7. The entries are predicted values for RWA for three levels of social conformity–autonomy (99th, 50th, and 1st percentiles), across the range of social threat and social conservatism derived from the regression in Table 6. Ideological self-identification was held constant at its mean for this exercise. As can be seen in panel A, perceptions of threat have a substantial effect on RWA among those high in social conformity–autonomy. In contrast, social conservatism has a quite modest effect, increasing RWA scores by about .07 on a 0 to 1 scale. When social conformity–autonomy is at the sample mean (panel B), the effect of perceived threat is substantially lower, less than half of the effect seen when social conformity–autonomy is high. On the other hand, the effect of social conservatism is now much larger, approximately .21.

These trends continue in panel C, which shows the predicted values of RWA when social conformity–autonomy is low. The effect of perceived threat is now statistically indistinguishable from zero (although the effect appears to be slightly

Table 7. Predicted Values of Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Social conservatism	Threat to social cohesion						
	1%	5%	25%	50%	75%	95%	99%
	A. Social conformity–autonomy = high (99%)						
1%	.49	.51	.55	.57	.61	.66	.72
5%	.49	.51	.56	.58	.61	.67	.73
25%	.50	.52	.56	.58	.62	.67	.73
50%	.51	.53	.57	.59	.63	.68	.74
75%	.52	.54	.58	.60	.64	.69	.75
95%	.54	.56	.61	.63	.66	.72	.78
99%	.56	.58	.62	.64	.68	.73	.79
	B. Social conformity–autonomy = medium (50%)						
1%	.29	.30	.32	.33	.34	.36	.38
5%	.31	.31	.33	.34	.35	.37	.40
25%	.32	.33	.35	.36	.37	.39	.41
50%	.35	.36	.38	.39	.40	.42	.44
75%	.38	.39	.41	.42	.43	.45	.47
95%	.46	.47	.48	.49	.51	.53	.55
99%	.50	.51	.53	.54	.55	.57	.60
	C. Social conformity–autonomy = low (1%)						
1%	.11	.10	.09	.09	.08	.07	.06
5%	.13	.13	.12	.11	.11	.10	.09
25%	.16	.15	.14	.14	.13	.12	.11
50%	.21	.20	.19	.19	.18	.17	.16
75%	.26	.25	.24	.24	.23	.22	.21
95%	.38	.38	.37	.36	.36	.35	.33
99%	.45	.45	.44	.44	.43	.42	.41

Note. Entries are predicted values for RWA for combinations of social conformity–autonomy, threat to social cohesion, and social conservatism (from the regression estimates in Table 6).

negative). Social conservatism now has a very substantial effect of approximately .35. Notice that even when people value personal autonomy and do not perceive a threat to the normative order, RWA scores approach the midpoint of the scale for those who are very (socially) conservative. It is clear from these results that people can obtain RWA scores as high as the middle of the scale simply because they hold conservative attitudes.

It is still possible, however, that even if the conservative contribution to RWA is independent of social conformity–autonomy, it may help magnify the effect of these values on prejudice and intolerance. Perhaps the combination of social conformity and conservatism predicts prejudice and intolerance better than does the social conformity–autonomy dimension itself. To test this hypothesis, I added the interaction between social conformity–autonomy and social conservatism to the regression equations for intolerance of the Patriotic Front and prejudice

previously reported in Tables 4 and 5. If conservatism is important in the dynamics of prejudice and intolerance, the interaction coefficients should be positive and statistically significant.

The new interaction term is not significant in either of the equations (results not shown). In fact, the sign is wrong in both cases. The safest conclusion from these results is that there is absolutely no evidence that conservatism helps to focus the desire for social conformity into prejudice or intolerance. Ideological self-identification does have a significant effect in the prejudice equation, but this is independent of social conformity–autonomy. And further analysis shows that, like social conservatism, there is no significant positive interaction between conservative self-identification and social conformity–autonomy. These results suggest that an authoritarianism scale would likely predict as well or better if additional conservative content were not included. Any measure of authoritarianism will be substantially correlated with conservatism (in liberal democratic societies); the correlation between the SCA scale and social conservatism is .5. But conservatism is best seen as a correlate of authoritarianism, not a necessary component.

Conclusions

There is no question that research on authoritarianism has been able to accumulate even as investigators have largely abandoned the original Freudian theory. But without a compelling substitute, many questions about the construct have not been successfully dealt with. I have offered a new conceptualization of the authoritarianism phenomenon that provides an explicit basis for measurement and scale construction and that makes specific predictions about the conditions under which prejudice and intolerance will be observed. This conceptualization is rooted in a tension that appears to be a universal feature of human civilization: the conflict between a social order based on social conformity and the desire to maximize personal autonomy. The way in which people deal with this conflict leads to the relative preference they place on the values of social conformity and personal autonomy. It is this value dimension, I argue, that is the basis of the authoritarianism phenomenon.

The social conformity–autonomy dimension is, however, only a predisposition. A key component of this model is perceived threat. It is likely that those who value social conformity, because they are concerned with controlling nonconformity, will always be somewhat more likely to support government action to limit civil liberties than those who value personal autonomy. But they should not be highly intolerant or prejudiced, absent a perceived threat to social cohesion. Those who strongly value social conformity should be highly sensitive to those threats and should react by denigrating groups that are seen as a threat and by supporting action to eliminate the threat by limiting the liberties and rights of those seen to be responsible. Prejudice and intolerance in this conceptualization should

always be a result of the combination of valuing social conformity and perceiving threats to social cohesion. It is this interaction that provides the dynamics in this conceptualization and that sets it apart from most of the authoritarianism literature. Rather than simply assuming that authoritarianism will always be correlated with prejudice and intolerance, this interaction specifies the conditions under which social conformity–autonomy will predict prejudice and intolerance. As shown in the analysis, the effects of social conformity–autonomy can vary from trivial to substantial, depending on the degree of perceived threat.

This conceptualization also helps to deal with a longstanding problem in the authoritarianism literature: the status of ideology. Although conservatism (conventionalism) has been a component of both the Adorno et al. and Altemeyer conceptualizations, it is not an explicit part of the social conformity–autonomy model. The model does predict a substantial correlation between social conformity–autonomy and social or moral conservatism, and the data confirm the relationship. Because conservatism is not part of the conceptualization or of the measure of social conformity–autonomy, the relationship can be assessed empirically. And the distinction also makes it possible to determine whether conservatism is necessary for the prediction of prejudice and intolerance. As the analysis shows, there is no evidence whatsoever that conservatism contributes to the dynamics of authoritarianism. Conservatism should not be a component of authoritarianism measures, and a major advantage of the measures of social conformity–autonomy is that they do not contain extraneous conservative content.

This conceptualization is clearly different from the Adorno et al. and Altemeyer theories. However, it is easy to see how it captures the central components of "authoritarian submission" and "authoritarian aggression" from the previous theories. Authoritarian submission is a result of the desire of those who value social conformity to have everyone defer to authorities to ensure the maintenance of common norms and values and social cohesion. From this perspective, political authorities need to have the respect and obedience of the public. Authoritarian aggression is the hostility directed at those who are seen to threaten the social order. Because the goal of those high in social conformity is to defend common norms and values, they will want the authorities to take actions that punish nonconformists and restrict their ability to challenge those norms.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the nature of authoritarian aggression. Altemeyer clearly believes that those high in authoritarianism are truly aggressive and simply seek targets for their hostility. He presents little evidence, however, that they are aggressive individuals apart from their willingness to repress nonconformists. And, from my perspective, there is no reason to believe that they are aggressive or hostile beyond their desire to punish nonconformists. This understanding of authoritarian aggression is actually closer to the original Adorno et al. version than to Altemeyer's formulation.

There are a number of other components in the Adorno et al. conceptualiza-

tion that are not included in this model. In many cases they may be correlates of social conformity–autonomy or perceived threat. For example, it has long been suggested that there is a close relationship between authoritarianism and intolerance of ambiguity (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949). More recently, some researchers have argued that one of the "big five" personality dimensions, openness to experience, is associated with authoritarianism (Dollinger, Leong, & Ulicni, 1996; McCrae, 1996). It is easy to see how intolerance of ambiguity or openness to experience could be a determinant of social conformity–autonomy. Being intolerant of ambiguity means that people are uncomfortable with situations that are not well defined. This should include all sorts of diversity in society. Therefore, for those high in intolerance of ambiguity, social conformity should be highly desirable and too much individual freedom uncomfortable. If intolerance of ambiguity is a basic personality trait (or a component of one, like openness to experience), it should play a major role in shaping people's preferences for social conformity versus personal autonomy. Like conservatism, it may also be correlated enough with social conformity–autonomy to appear to be part of an authoritarianism dimension.

This conceptualization bears a likeness to two theories that should be noted. The first is Rokeach's (1960) theory of belief congruence. Rokeach argued that prejudice will be a function of the degree to which other people (groups) are seen to hold dissimilar beliefs. Rokeach argued that it is belief discrepancy, not categorical distinctions like race and ethnicity, that leads to prejudice. More recently, others have suggested that perceived differences in values are central to prejudice (Biernat, Vescio, & Theno, 1996; Struch & Schwartz, 1989). There is, however, a critical difference between the belief (or value) congruence theory and the one presented here. In Rokeach's theory, it is the perceived difference between an *individual's* beliefs and that individual's perception of another individual or group's beliefs that is critical. I have argued that prejudice and intolerance should result from perceptions that others challenge *social* norms. Moreover, these differences in beliefs and values should only motivate prejudice among those who desire social conformity. In practice, it is likely that many people, particularly those who desire social conformity, will believe that social norms are very similar to their beliefs and values. I would expect that a research design that distinguishes personal value discrepancy from threat to common social norms will find that it is the latter that predicts prejudice, and that it does so only among those who desire social conformity.

A second approach that bears a likeness to this one is a theory of authoritarianism as group identification, advanced by Duckitt (1989; see also Stenner, 1997). Duckitt argued that the covariance among the three major components of right-wing authoritarianism—authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism—could be explained by a strong ingroup identification and the corresponding demand for group cohesion. Duckitt (1989) identified the range of the underlying dimension as follows:

> At one extreme would be the belief that the purely personal needs, inclinations, and values of group members should be subordinated as completely as possible to the cohesion of the group and its requirements. At the other extreme would be the belief that the requirements of group cohesion should be subordinated as completely as possible to the autonomy and self-regulation of the individual member. (p. 71)

Although there are clearly strong similarities between Duckitt's formulation and mine, there are also critical differences. Most important, the desire for group cohesion in Duckitt's model derives from group identification. Threats to the ingroup should motivate greater authoritarianism and prejudice. In my conceptualization, it is the desire for social cohesion motivated by a concern for social order that is critical. Threats to social cohesion should be more likely to generate prejudice and intolerance than specific threats to an ingroup. This was clearly demonstrated in a study of white students in post-apartheid South Africa (Duckitt & Farre, 1994). Right-wing authoritarianism was correlated with intolerance among the white students, even though whites were the minority in the country and could be the object of government repression. As Duckitt and Farre (1994, p. 740) concluded, "Authoritarians' fear of public disorder, anarchy, and any kind of social disturbance may be so pervasive that it leads them to support strong and intolerant governments even when these are representative of social, racial, and political groups they dislike and oppose, and who might disadvantage their own ingroups."[12]

Finally, the strong correlation between the SCA and RWA scales might lead some to argue that there is nothing wrong with the RWA scale after all, or that there is nothing to be gained by measuring social conformity. It is true that if the goal is to maximize the correlation of an authoritarianism scale with measures of prejudice and intolerance, the RWA scale is a good choice. But it is possible to do even "better" by increasing the proportion of authoritarian aggression items in the scale, although that would be making it more obvious that prejudice and intolerance are being predicted by a measure of prejudice and intolerance.

The more important issue should not be which scale predicts better, but which perspective provides greater theoretical guidance for the study of authoritarianism. For example, in a study of the determinants of intergroup attitudes, Esses, Haddock, and Zanna (1993) found that perceived value conflict was a predictor of prejudice only among those high in authoritarianism. This result is completely consistent with the conceptualization presented here. However, this finding was not predicted before the analysis, nor did Esses et al. provide an explanation for it. Instead, it emerged when the investigators divided their sample into those high and low in authoritarianism and examined the predictors of prejudice for each group. Absent an effective theoretical framework, findings like this emerge by chance and their significance is difficult to appreciate.

[12] Social conformity–autonomy (and authoritarianism) is also quite distinct from social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), as Altemeyer (1998) and Duckitt (2001) have shown.

There is no question that measures like Altemeyer's right-wing authoritarianism scale predict a number of social and political attitudes well. But measurement instruments are not theories. Further progress in this area requires a conceptualization that specifies the way in which individual differences interact with social stimuli to produce prejudice and intolerance. I therefore offer this conceptualization as a new understanding of the authoritarianism phenomenon. If it is not, then it should be possible to show, empirically, how this conceptualization falls short of accounting for the empirical characteristics of authoritarianism. I hope that, whatever further studies may demonstrate, the end result will be a better understanding of the origins of prejudice and intolerance.

APPENDIX

Racial Prejudice Measure

Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.

Over the past few years blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person.

Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

Blacks shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted.

In general, blacks have gotten less than they deserve from our welfare programs.

Social Dominance Measure

Our country would be better off if inferior groups stayed in their place.

We should try to treat one another as equals as much as possible.

It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.

There should be much more equal opportunity for everyone from birth, regardless of who their parents are.

The best people should not be expected to accept others as "equals."

We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.

Some people are just much better than everyone else and deserve to have power and control over others.

No one group should dominate in society.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism Measure

Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.

Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else.

Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the "rotten apples" who are ruining everything.

Atheists and others who have rebelled against the established religions are no doubt every bit as good and virtuous as those who attend church regularly.

The real keys to the "good life" are obedience, discipline, and sticking to the straight and narrow.

A lot of our rules regarding modesty and sexual behavior are just customs which are not necessarily any better or holier than those which other people follow.

There are many radical, immoral people in our country today, who are trying to ruin it for their own godless purposes, whom the authorities should put out of action.

It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps.

There is no "ONE right way" to live; everybody has to create their own way.

Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fiber and traditional beliefs.

Homosexuals and feminists should be praised for being brave enough to defy "traditional family values."

What our country really needs, instead of more "civil rights," is a stiff dose of law and order.

It may be considered old-fashioned by some, but having a normal, proper appearance is still the mark of a gentleman and, especially, a lady.

Everyone should have their own lifestyle, religious beliefs, and sexual preferences, even if it makes them different from everyone else.

It is wonderful that young people today have greater freedom to protest against things they don't like, and to make their own "rules" to govern their behavior.

What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.

People should pay less attention to the Bible and the other old traditional forms of religious guidance, and instead develop their own personal standards of what is moral and immoral.

The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.

Our country needs free thinkers who will have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.

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