

The “Antidemocratic Personality” Revisited: A Cross-National Investigation of Working-Class Authoritarianism

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More than 60 years ago, psychologists identified a potential threat to democracy from within, namely the “antidemocratic personality” arising from the “authoritarian syndrome.” It was soon discovered that the problem of authoritarianism was especially acute among those who were low in education and income, and that it was associated with intolerance toward others. However, several important questions were left unresolved. We revisit fundamental theoretical and empirical questions concerning the existence and nature of “working-class authoritarianism,” focusing especially on four psychological aspects of authoritarianism, namely, conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism. In a cross-national investigation involving respondents from 19 democratic countries, we find that all four aspects of authoritarianism are indeed related to moral and ethnic intolerance. However, only obedience to authority and cynicism are especially prevalent among those who are low in socioeconomic status. Conventionalism and moral absolutism were significant predictors of economic conservatism, whereas obedience to authority and cynicism were not. We find no support for Lipset’s (1960) claim that working-class authoritarianism would be associated with economic liberalism. Instead, we find that authoritarianism is linked to right-wing orientation in general and that intolerance mediates this relationship. Implications for electoral politics and political psychology are discussed.

“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”

—Abraham Lincoln

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More than any other type of political system, a democracy has the inherent ability to actualize its own demise. Through the democratic process, participants can implement policies that limit individual freedoms or endorse leaders who are not democratically inclined. We would do well to remember, for example, that both Mussolini and Hitler initially came to power through democratic means. In a very basic sense, then, democracy itself depends upon ordinary citizens' abilities and motivations to internalize democratic values and to tolerate those with differing social, cultural, ethnic, and ideological backgrounds. Thus, understanding the social and psychological antecedents of intolerance toward others as well as identifying the political consequences of intolerance is of paramount importance for the preservation of democratic systems.

Many of the contributions to this special issue address the ways in which democratic ideals are thwarted either because of voluntary or involuntary disenfranchisement. That is, some articles focus on undemocratic outcomes arising from political apathy and citizens' own decisions not to participate in the electoral process (Harder & Krosnick, this issue; Pacheco & Plutzer, this issue), whereas others address those coming from deliberate attempts to exclude certain segments of the population from voting (Lanning, this issue). We suggest that in addition to both of these problems, there is also the problem that even when people—including many members of economically disadvantaged groups—actually do participate in mass politics, their participation does not necessarily produce outcomes that are democratic, egalitarian, or even congruent with their own self-interest (e.g., Frank, 2004; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Stacey & Green, 1971).

In raising this possibility, we revisit “classic” works in social psychology and political science, most especially Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford's (1950) research on the authoritarian personality and Lipset's (1960) influential analysis of “working-class authoritarianism,” which suggested that intolerance of others was especially highly concentrated among members of economically disadvantaged groups. In this article, we contribute a contemporary psychological perspective to better understand the social and political attitudes of those in the lower socioeconomic strata and the consequences of those attitudes for the attainment of democratic ideals (see also Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a,b). Our thesis is that while political conservatism (or right-wing orientation) is associated with resistance to change and support for the status quo in general, some conservatives—especially those who are low in socioeconomic status—are motivated in part by authoritarian impulses to limit or repeal the freedoms of those individuals or groups in society who are quite different from them.

Building on previous work suggesting that ethnic and moral intolerance is linked to an “authoritarian syndrome” that is more common among those who are relatively uneducated and, to a lesser extent, low in income, we explore the question of how and why members of the working class often align themselves with

right-wing parties and policies that do not necessarily represent their social and economic interests. In particular, we examine which facets of the authoritarianism syndrome as theorized by Adorno et al. (1950) are most prevalent among those who are low in income and education, and how these characteristics relate to various forms of intolerance and right-wing orientation. Based on previous work, we focus on four authoritarian characteristics, namely, *conventionalism*, *moral absolutism*, *obedience to authority*, and *cynicism*. We also address the question of whether these characteristics are or are not related to economic forms of conservatism (e.g., Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Stenner, 2005). Our view is that an understanding of authoritarianism as a collection of related but distinct psychological tendencies can explain, in part, why those who are low in socioeconomic status often lend support to right-wing leaders and policies, even though doing so tends to increase the likelihood that their low-status position in society will be maintained or even worsened.

The Antidemocratic Personality

One of the most groundbreaking works in political psychology is Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality*, which was published in book form in 1950. This line of research, which originally referred to "The Antidemocratic Personality" (Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1947), sought to discover the psychological roots of social intolerance. Specifically, these authors identified a personality syndrome based on nine dimensions, including support for conventional values, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, stereotypy and rigidity, toughness and power, and cynicism, as well as the psychodynamic components of anti-intracception, projectivity, and sexual inhibition (see also Brown, 1965/2004; Sanford, 1966). These characteristics purportedly betrayed a latent capacity for authoritarianism, that is, a "degree of *readiness* to behave antidemocratically should social conditions change in such a way as to remove or reduce the restraint upon this kind of behavior" (Frenkel-Brunswick et al., 1947, p. 40).

Frenkel-Brunswick et al.'s (1947) work was predicated on the "primary hypothesis" that "an individual is most receptive to those ideologies which afford the fullest expression to his over-all personality structure" (p. 536; see also Adorno et al., 1950). This theoretical assumption has proven to be enduring, perhaps even indispensable. The notion that ideological commitments spring at least in part from underlying psychological needs and motives has guided several influential research programs in social, personality, and political psychology (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001; Lane, 1962; McClosky, 1958; Rokeach, 1960; Sidanius, 1988). In particular, the hypothesis that ideology addresses epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty and existential motives to minimize threat has garnered empirical support in contemporary psychological research (e.g., Jost et al.,

2003a,b, 2007). Although the psychoanalytic origins of the theory of authoritarianism, as originally posited by Frenkel-Brunswik et al. (1947) and Adorno et al. (1950), have been largely ignored if not rejected outright, the concept of an authoritarian syndrome remains compelling and worrisome for many social scientists (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005).

By conceiving of authoritarianism as a complex mixture of personality conflicts, socialization pressures, and rigid, intolerant, and prejudiced orientations toward others, as well as general beliefs concerning society, religion, and authority figures, among other things, Adorno et al. (1950) did not leave behind a clear conceptual legacy for subsequent generations of researchers to investigate systematically. In fact, the boundaries between underlying psychological propensities and behavioral manifestations are often blurred in both theory and research on authoritarianism. As a result, investigators sometimes fail to make clear distinctions between social psychological variables and processes, such as conventionalism, conformity, cynicism, and moral absolutism, on one hand, and the antidemocratic behaviors, such as intolerance and prejudice, that presumably result from these psychological processes, on the other hand. This confusion has contributed to at least two unresolved issues in the literature.

First, research demonstrating that low socioeconomic status is associated with relatively high levels of intolerance has led to the assumption that “working-class authoritarianism” is a pervasive phenomenon, but there is little work that sheds light on which, if any, psychological aspects of authoritarianism are related to socioeconomic status. Second, because some authors have used the term *authoritarianism* interchangeably as both an ideological outcome as well as an underlying psychological predisposition, the nature of the relationship between authoritarianism and other belief systems, such as right-wing conservatism, has frequently been obscured. We hope to contribute some theoretical and methodological clarity to this area of research by isolating four psychological aspects of authoritarianism and investigating how they relate to important antecedents such as socioeconomic status as well as downstream consequences, such as moral and ethnic intolerance, economic conservatism, and left-right political orientation.

Authoritarianism and Socioeconomic Status

One of the first major criticisms of *The Authoritarian Personality* was that Adorno et al. (1950) had underestimated the strength of the negative association between socioeconomic status and intolerance (Brown, 1965/2004; Christie, 1954). Subsequent research established that authoritarian forms of prejudice were in fact reliably linked to socioeconomic indicators, most especially low levels of education (Brown, 1965/2004; Christie, 1954; Cohn & Carsch, 1954; Kronhauser, Sheppard, & Mayer, 1956). These findings raised questions about whether intolerance (and therefore authoritarianism) stemmed from a unified personality

dynamic, as Adorno et al. (1950) supposed, or was simply the result of having little or no education. In many ways, this issue was never satisfactorily resolved.

To some critics, the discovery that intolerance was greatest among those who were low in education somehow nullified the importance of authoritarianism. For others, however, it spawned a new set of questions that were well-worth addressing. As Roger Brown (1965) wrote, “To this we must respond by asking: Why does this subculture put its norms together as it does?”

In what turned out to be a controversial chapter of his influential book, *Political Man*, Seymour Lipset (1960) attempted to address this very question. He was particularly concerned with “reactionary sentiments” among rural and working-class conservatives (p. 300; see also Lipset & Raab, 1978). Specifically, he hypothesized that low education, geographic isolation, solitary employment, financial insecurities, and disciplinarian family structures rendered members of the lower (or working) classes more likely to possess authoritarian tendencies in comparison with their middle class counterparts (p. 109). Because of these factors, Lipset argued that, “the lower classes are much less committed to democracy as a political system than are the urban middle and upper classes” (p. 102).

Lipset’s (1960) work—like that of Adorno et al. (1950) before him—inspired both praise and criticism (e.g., Grabb, 1976; Hamilton, 1972; Miller & Reissman, 1961). One of the most contested aspects of Lipset’s work was his rather vague definition of *working-class* (Dekker & Ester, 1987; Grabb, 1976). When Grabb (1976) investigated Lipset’s (1960) hypotheses concerning working-class authoritarianism using nationally representative data from the United States, he found that the best predictor of intolerance was education, followed by cynicism and then income. After adjusting for these three factors, there was no reliable association between occupational status and intolerance. These findings suggested that authoritarianism probably does not result from the structure of specific workplaces but is rather more generally related to socioeconomic status.

The Role of Education

The effort to identify which socioeconomic indicator (or set of indicators) drives authoritarian tendencies such as intolerance led eventually to one of the most robust findings in social science research, namely, that there is a strong negative association between measures of intellectual development, such as education and academic achievement, and ethnocentrism and other forms of social intolerance (Bay, 1967; Brown, 1965/2004; Christie & Cook, 1958; Dekker & Ester, 1987; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Gabennesch, 1972; Grabb, 1976; Keniston, 1968; Lipsitz, 1965; McClosky, 1958; Stewart & Houlst, 1959; Titus & Hollander, 1957). It is at least conceivable that more educated people are better equipped than others to express socially desirable opinions and that their self-reported levels of tolerance

are therefore somewhat inflated. Nevertheless, the relationship between education and tolerance is strong and observed across a number of different methodological paradigms (e.g., Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982).

In any case, the vast empirical literature documenting the fact that less-educated people are more intolerant of others led Gabennesch (1972) to conclude, "It is clear that any theoretical scheme which claims to explain authoritarianism and associated phenomena must place a high priority upon accounting for the effects of such variables as education" (p. 858). Yet, despite the scientific consensus concerning these results, there are surprisingly few theoretical explanations for the association between education and intolerance. Lipset (1960) himself argued that those who are less educated simply could not grasp the value of tolerance, writing that "the less sophisticated and stable the individual, the more likely he is to fail to understand the rationale underlying tolerance of those with whom he disagrees" (p. 108). This account is psychologically underdeveloped, to say the least.

Others have offered somewhat deeper explanations for why a lack of education would be associated with intolerance. The most prevalent theory is that education provides a "breadth of perspective," and that intolerance is most prominent among those who have little opportunity to broaden their worldviews (Kelman & Barclay, 1963). Consistent with this general notion, Chinoy (1967) argued that education leads people to appreciate "that each society, with its norms and values, is one of many, capable of change—in various directions—and is the product of man's efforts to come to terms with the world around him and with the needs of an ongoing social order. The awareness of cultural diversity is thus an antidote to ethnocentrism and the basis for a fuller understanding of mankind's common humanity" (p. 55). This account implies that ethnocentrism and other forms of intolerance may be motivated in part by ignorance and perhaps apprehension concerning foreign cultures and alternative norms. Education presumably serves to reduce these by broadening one's worldview.

Psychological Aspects of the Authoritarian Syndrome

A second limitation of Lipset's (1960) work is that he (like many others) failed to make a clear distinction between authoritarianism as a set of psychological traits and intolerance as a behavioral manifestation of these traits. Although Lipset implied that authoritarianism results from insecurity and threat stemming from low socioeconomic status, as argued by Fromm (1941), as well as from authoritarian family structures, as argued by Adorno et al. (1950), his work did little to pinpoint the psychological underpinnings of intolerance. Given the state of psychological research at the time he was writing, Lipset can hardly be singled out for blame concerning the lack of conceptual clarity.

While Adorno et al. (1950) enumerated nine dimensions of the “authoritarian personality,” subsequent work failed to empirically verify these as distinct dimensions based on the *F*-scale, the instrument that was first used to measure authoritarianism (see Brown, 1965/2004). Contemporary work has sought to develop more conceptually and empirically sound ways of measuring authoritarianism. The leading researcher in this area, Altemeyer (1996), argued that authoritarianism should be thought of in terms of aggression, submission, and conventionalism. While his measure of “right-wing authoritarianism” is psychometrically superior to its predecessors, the fact that scale items possess sociopolitical content means that it is more appropriate as a measure of ideological outcomes than of underlying psychological propensities.

Feldman (2003) argued that authoritarianism can be captured on a dimension of social conformity versus personal autonomy. With this dimension, Feldman helps to place in a broader psychological context the finding that the child rearing value of obedience, which constitutes one of the most commonly used indicators of authoritarian tendencies (e.g., Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Sears et al., 1997; Stenner, 2005), predicts moral and ethnic forms of intolerance. However, conceiving of authoritarianism exclusively in terms of this dimension brings with it at least two potential limitations. First, Feldman’s social conformity scale combines items that gauge *conventionalism* (or respect for common norms and values) along with items that tap into authoritarian forms of submission, such as *obedience*. While Feldman found that these items loaded onto a single factor, the scale was administered to college students. It is at least possible that socioeconomic factors (most especially education) would be differentially associated with distinctive aspects of authoritarianism.

A second limitation of the social conformity versus personal autonomy dimension is that it neglects other psychological aspects of authoritarianism theorized by Adorno et al. (1950) and others to play key roles in fostering intolerance and the antidemocratic personality. Specifically, indicators of cognitive rigidity, such as dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, and moral absolutism, are significantly higher in prejudiced people (e.g., Barron, 1953; Block & Block, 1951; Eriksen & Eisenstein, 1953; Frenkel-Brunswik, 1948; Koenig & King, 1962; Kutner, 1951; Kutner & Gordan, 1964; Rokeach, 1948; Sidanius, 1978, 1985; Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1976). They are also reliable predictors of right-wing conservatism (Jost et al., 2003a,b). Finally, *cynicism*—one of the nine dimensions in the original conceptualization of the “authoritarian syndrome”—has also been found in prior research to predict intolerant attitudes (Grabb, 1976).

Is Authoritarianism Related to Political Orientation?

A final point that we will address is the question of whether (and why) authoritarianism and intolerance are related to political orientation. Although it has been

well established that intolerance is more strongly associated with right-wing (vs. left-wing) orientation (Altemeyer, 1998; Lipset & Raab, 1978; Sidanius, 1985; 1988; Stone, 1980; Stone & Smith, 1993), the question of how distinct authoritarianism is from political conservatism remains a topic of debate (e.g., Crowson, Thoma, & Hestevold, 2005; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Jost et al., 2003a,b, 2007; Stenner, 2005). Altemeyer (1996) argued that while most authoritarians are conservative (i.e., right-wing), it is not necessarily the case that most conservatives are authoritarian.

Others have argued that conservatism and authoritarianism are independent, even orthogonal dimensions, despite the fact that research has shown repeatedly that the two variables are positively correlated. Stenner (2005), for instance, strenuously warned against “the folly of confusing ‘right-wing’ with authoritarian tendencies” (p. 132) but also conceded that, according to data from the World Values Survey and the General Social Survey, “authoritarianism and political conservatism reinforce one another to a reasonable degree” (p. 170). More specifically, she found that authoritarianism (measured solely in terms of child rearing values) was significantly correlated with political conservatism in the United States (pp. 167–171) and with “status quo conservatism” in both Eastern and Western Europe (p. 92), although it was not associated with economic or “laissez-faire” conservatism.

Stenner’s (2005) analyses also suggested that conservatism and authoritarianism share several of the same psychological correlates, including an “aversion to novelty, unfamiliarity, and uncertainty” (p. 173), a lack of openness and cognitive complexity, and a commitment to conscientiousness and obedience (see also Jost, 2006). Thus, although Stenner (2005) and others argued that conservatism and authoritarianism are generally unrelated, many of her own findings are consistent with the notion that there exists an authoritarian syndrome that is predominantly conservative and intolerant rather than liberal and open minded.

Is Working-Class Authoritarianism Associated with Economic Liberalism?

One of the more provocative claims made by Lipset (1960) in his chapter on “working-class authoritarianism” is that left-wing economic views are part and parcel of the authoritarian syndrome. Specifically, he argued that “the intransigent and intolerant aspects of Communist ideology attract members from that large stratum with low incomes, low-status occupations, and low education, which in modern industrial societies has meant largely, though not exclusively, the working class” (p. 100). In responding to critics a few years after the publication of his book, Lipset (1965) went even further, claiming that his original analysis was meant to show that “working-class authoritarianism is Communism” (p. 280, emphasis deleted).

In historical retrospect, these strenuous claims seem hard to justify, especially in the United States, where for decades it has been difficult to imagine members of the working class harboring a soft spot for socialist economics, let alone Communism. It is conceivable, however, that some aspects of ideology may be more historically and culturally conditioned than others and that their connection to latent personality structures such as authoritarianism could differ across time and place (e.g., Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007). A more compelling version of Lipset's (1960, pp. 101–102) general argument is that people who are low in income and/or education should gravitate toward (a) social or cultural forms of conservatism (and intolerance), and (b) economic forms of liberalism. To our knowledge, no comprehensive cross-national investigation of this hypothesis has been attempted, nor have any prior studies examined relations between distinctive psychological aspects of authoritarianism and ideological outcome variables such as moral and ethnic intolerance, economic liberalism–conservatism, and overall left–right political orientation.

Overview and Aims of This Research

To the extent that intolerance is related to maintaining and perhaps even exacerbating societal inequalities, we think that it is more likely to be associated with right-wing (vs. left-wing) orientation (Jost et al., 2003a,b; see also Altemeyer, 1998; Lipset & Raab, 1978; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, we hypothesize that psychological aspects of authoritarianism, such as conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism will be associated with intolerance and right-wing orientation. We also expect that, given prior research, at least some of these authoritarian characteristics will be more prevalent among those who are low in socioeconomic status. Stenner (2005) found that low income and education was associated with an increased tendency to prioritize the child rearing value of obedience, but she did not explore other aspects of the authoritarian syndrome.

Research suggests that threat increases both political conservatism and authoritarianism (e.g., Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Feldman & Stenner, 2003; Jost et al., 2003a,b; Landau et al., 2004). However, most of the research exploring the effects of threat on political attitudes has addressed existential threats such as terrorism and the fear of death, and it has focused on members of relatively high-status groups, such as college students (e.g., Jost et al., 2007). There are other types of interpersonal threats—such as the threat of being cheated or otherwise taken advantage of—that members of economically disadvantaged groups are more likely than others to experience in their daily lives. Because members of the working class are especially vulnerable to threats of economic exploitation and loss, we think that the resulting cynicism could lead them to embrace right-wing attitudes, contrary to Lipset's (1960) supposition that working-class authoritarianism would be associated with economic liberalism.

Thus, there is some reason to believe that obedience and cynicism may be especially important determinants of working-class authoritarianism, intolerance, and conservatism. Using data from the World Values Survey, we empirically addressed the two major questions that arose from our review of the published literature on the antidemocratic personality. First, how does socioeconomic status relate to psychological aspects of authoritarianism? Second, how do these aspects of authoritarianism relate to ideological outcomes, including ethnic and moral intolerance, economic liberalism–conservatism, and left- versus right-wing orientation?

Method

Our sample was drawn from the fourth wave of the World Values Survey (n.d.), which was administered from 1999 to 2004. Because of our focal interest in potential threats to democracy from within, we analyzed data from countries that were judged to be “functioning democracies” by the Economist Intelligence Unit’s democracy index, which rates nations on the basis of five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture (Kekic, 2007). Data were available for 19 democratic countries, including Austria ($n = 824$), Belgium ($n = 1,015$), Canada ($n = 1,230$), Czech Republic ($n = 1,360$), Denmark ($n = 593$), Finland ($n = 665$), France ($n = 858$), Germany ($n = 899$), Greece ($n = 640$), Iceland ($n = 699$), Ireland ($n = 595$), Luxembourg ($n = 360$), Malta ($n = 663$), Netherlands ($n = 794$), Slovenia ($n = 404$), Spain ($n = 1,007$), Sweden ($n = 732$), Great Britain ($n = 414$), and the United States ($n = 911$).

Measures. Income was measured on a 10-point scale, and education was measured on a 3-point scale. Religiosity was assessed with one item concerning the perceived importance of religion (4 points). We also adjusted for sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and age (6 intervals). Political orientation was assessed using a single ideological self-placement item ranging from 1 (*Left*) to 10 (*Right*) that read: “In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right.’ How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?” Economic conservatism was measured with a single item measured on a 10-point scale such that 1 = “*The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for,*” and 10 = “*People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves.*”¹

Five dichotomous items were used to assess intolerance of ethnic groups. The first item read, “When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to

¹The World Values Survey also included a measure of opposition to income equality, which would be another potential indicator of economic conservatism. However, this item was not administered in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Malta, or Sweden, and thus including it would have limited our analyses to 14 countries.

[the nation's] people over immigrants." The other four items asked participants whether they would want to exclude members of certain groups as neighbors, including "people of a different race," "Muslims," "immigrants/foreign workers," and "Jews." The sum of these five items was used as our measure of ethnic intolerance. The mean Cronbach's α for all countries was .66. Moral intolerance was measured with the mean of two items that asked participants how often they believed that divorce and homosexuality could be justifiable, ranging from *always* (1) to *never* (10).² The mean Cronbach's α for these two items for the 19 countries was .67.

To measure authoritarianism, we used several dichotomous items that correspond to various psychological aspects of authoritarianism, including obedience to authority, cynicism, moral absolutism, and conventionalism. Obedience was coded as "1" if the respondent chose it from a list of important things that children should learn, and "0" otherwise.³ Cynicism was measured such that 0 = "*Most people can be trusted,*" and 1 = "*You need to be very careful in dealing with people.*" Moral absolutism was coded so that 1 = "*There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances,*" and 0 = "*There can never be absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. What is good and evil depends entirely upon the circumstances at the time.*" Conventionalism was measured with a single item that read, "If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?" where 1 = *Disapprove* and 0 = *Approve*. Zero-order correlations among study variables are listed in Table 1.

Results

Does "Working-Class Authoritarianism" Exist?

We first explored whether socioeconomic indicators, including income and education, were indeed positively related to indicators of authoritarianism, and if so, whether the phenomenon of working-class authoritarianism extends to countries

²Our measure of moral intolerance was similar to that used by Stenner (2005) but not identical. Whereas she included an item concerning the perceived justifiability of abortion (in addition to homosexuality and divorce), we chose to omit the abortion item. If some respondents truly believe that abortion is equivalent to murder, then it may be problematic to equate the belief that abortion is rarely or ever justifiable with intolerance per se.

³In her analysis, Stenner used a composite of several child rearing values, including good manners and imagination, independence, and tolerance (reverse-scored). However, in the wave of the survey that we used, there was no item referring to "good manners." Additionally, we opted not to include "tolerance" as it seemed tautological to use the value of tolerance to predict intolerance of others. This left us with imagination, independence, and obedience, which did not form a reliable measure, mean Cronbach's α = .38. We therefore decided to measure obedience to authority with a single item.

Table 1. Correlations among Study Variables for 19 Countries Collapsed, Weighted, and Equilibrated

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Education	—											
2. Income	.36*	—										
3. Age	-.24*	-.20*	—									
4. Sex	-.03*	-.09*	.02*	—								
5. Religiosity	-.01	-.06*	.20*	.14*	—							
6. Obedience	-.15*	-.11*	.05*	-.01	.09*	—						
7. Conventionalism	-.05*	-.05*	.18*	-.04*	.26*	.07*	—					
8. Moral absolutism	-.06*	-.06*	.12*	-.00	.19*	.11*	.15*	—				
9. Cynicism	-.17*	-.15*	.01	.02*	.02*	.11*	.07*	.03*	—			
10. Economic conservatism	.05*	.09*	.03*	-.04*	-.00	-.06*	.06*	.02	-.05*	—		
11. Ethnic intolerance	-.19*	-.13*	.14*	-.00	.05*	.13*	.12*	.07*	.20*	-.08*	—	
12. Moral intolerance	-.23*	-.16*	.25*	-.07*	.32*	.21*	.36*	.23*	.16*	-.00	.27*	—
13. Political orientation	-.03*	.05*	.07*	.00	.18*	.03*	.15*	.08*	.04*	.16*	.13*	.17*

* $p < .001$.

Table 2. Fixed Effects Expected Log Odds of Authoritarianism Indicators from a Nonlinear Two-Level Model with a Level 1 Bernoulli Distribution Adjusting for Random Effects in 19 Countries

	Conventionalism	Absolutism	Obedience	Cynicism
Intercept	-.13 (.17), <i>ns</i>	-.72 (.13)***	-.82 (.14)***	.54 (.17)**
Socioeconomic Status				
Education (3 pt.)	-.05 (.04), <i>ns</i>	-.07 (.05), <i>ns</i>	-.37 (.06)***	-.44 (.05)***
Income (10 pt.)	-.00 (.01), <i>ns</i>	-.02 (.01), <i>ns</i>	-.04 (.01)**	-.06 (.02)***
Other Demographics				
Age (6 pt.)	.12 (.03)**	.08 (.03)**	-.02 (.02), <i>ns</i>	-.06 (.02)**
Sex	-.24 (.06)**	-.11 (.06)+	-.12 (.05)*	.02 (.05), <i>ns</i>
Religiosity (4 pt.)	.35 (.04)***	.29 (.04)***	.11 (.05)*	-.01 (.04), <i>ns</i>

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; + $p < .10$; *ns* = not significant.

other than the United States. We constructed multilevel models with fixed and random effects of socioeconomic status and other demographic variables on conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism. Because our dependent measures were dichotomous variables, which are not normally distributed, we specified a nonlinear model based on a Bernoulli distribution to estimate the expected log odds. As shown in Table 2, we found that only two of the four aspects of authoritarianism were predicted by socioeconomic status. Specifically, socioeconomic status was unrelated to conventionalism and moral absolutism, but it was a reliable predictor of both obedience to authority and cynicism. There were strong negative associations between education and obedience to authority, $b = -.37$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, and between education and cynicism, $b = -.44$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$. Above and beyond the effects of education, income was also negatively associated with obedience to authority, $b = -.04$, $SE = .01$, $p < .01$, and cynicism, $b = -.06$, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$. The strength of these effects across the 19 countries is all the more impressive given that aspects of authoritarianism were measured with single-item indicators.

Socioeconomic Status, Authoritarianism, Intolerance, and Conservatism

Next, we examined the effects of socioeconomic status and authoritarianism on ethnic and moral intolerance as well as economic conservatism. As shown in the first, third, and fifth columns in Table 3, we found that income was not significantly related to ethnic intolerance but showed a small negative association with moral intolerance, and a somewhat stronger positive relationship with economic conservatism. Education was a stronger predictor of intolerance; there were strong, negative associations between education and moral intolerance, $b = -.64$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, and between education and ethnic intolerance, $b = -.23$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$. After adjusting for other demographic variables,

Table 3. Predicting Ethnic and Moral Intolerance and Economic Conservatism with Socioeconomic and Authoritarian Indicators

	Ethnic Intolerance	Moral Intolerance	Economic Conservatism
Intercept	1.14 (.08)***	5.75 (.19)***	6.24 (.19)***
Socioeconomic Status			
Education (3 pt.)	-.23 (.03)***	-.64 (.05)***	.17 (.06)*
Income (10 pt.)	-.01 (.01), <i>ns</i>	-.05 (.01)***	.10 (.02)***
Other Demographics			
Age (6 pt.)	.08 (.01)***	.27 (.03)***	.06 (.03)*
Sex	-.04 (.03), <i>ns</i>	-.81 (.09)***	-.09 (.07), <i>ns</i>
Religiosity	-.02 (.02), <i>ns</i>	.69 (.05)***	.00 (.05), <i>ns</i>
Authoritarianism			
Conventionalism	.20 (.03)***	1.14 (.09)***	.22 (.09)**
Moral absolutism	.08 (.04)*	.30 (.07)***	.25 (.09)**
Obedience to authority	.15 (.05)**	.61 (.09)***	-.09 (.09), <i>ns</i>
Cynicism	.28 (.04)***	.46 (.10)***	-.08 (.07), <i>ns</i>

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; + $p < .10$; *ns* = not significant.

education was positively associated with economic conservatism, $b = .17$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$.

In a subsequent model, we entered the four aspects of authoritarianism, including conventionalism, moral absolutism, obedience to authority, and cynicism, as predictors of ethnic and moral intolerance and economic conservatism. As shown in the second, fourth, and sixth columns of Table 3, all four aspects of authoritarianism were significantly and positively related to ethnic and moral intolerance, although the association between moral absolutism and ethnic intolerance was rather weak. After adjusting for authoritarianism, the relationship between socioeconomic status and intolerance was reduced.

In order to test for mediation, we first reran the above models estimating only fixed effects and found that this did not change the pattern of results. Next, we conducted separate Sobel tests to determine whether each of the authoritarianism aspects mediated the significant effects of socioeconomic status on intolerance. We found that obedience to authority accounted for a significant amount of statistical variance in the association between education and ethnic intolerance, Sobel = -2.69 , $p < .01$. Obedience to authority significantly mediated the effect of education on moral intolerance, Sobel = -5.46 , $p < .001$, and the effect of income on moral intolerance, Sobel = -3.93 , $p < .001$. We also found that cynicism significantly mediated the relationships between education and ethnic intolerance, Sobel = -6.51 , $p < .001$. Furthermore, cynicism mediated the effects of both education, Sobel = -5.25 , $p < .001$, and income, Sobel = -4.48 , $p < .001$, on moral intolerance.

The pattern was quite different for economic conservatism. Whereas obedience to authority and cynicism were found to mediate the effects of socioeconomic status on intolerance, the other two aspects of authoritarianism, namely, conventionalism and moral absolutism were significantly and positively associated with economic conservatism. However, these variables did not mediate the effects of socioeconomic status on economic conservatism. That is, the relationship between income and economic conservatism was unchanged after adjusting for authoritarianism.

Relations Among Socioeconomic Status, Authoritarianism, Intolerance, Economic Conservatism, and Right-Wing Orientation

Our final set of analyses focused on how socioeconomic status, authoritarianism, intolerance, and economic conservatism relate to right-wing orientation. The results are summarized in Table 4. In Model 1, we found that education was unrelated to right-wing orientation, whereas income was positively and significantly related to right-wing orientation after adjusting for age, sex, and religiosity. In Model 2, we observed that all four aspects of authoritarianism were positively and significantly associated with right-wing (rather than left-wing) political

Table 4. Fixed-Effect Predictors of Right-Wing Orientation in 19 Countries

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	5.52 (.09)***	5.05 (.12)***	5.48 (.09)***	5.18 (.10)***
Socioeconomic Status				
Education (3 pt.)	-.04 (.05), <i>ns</i>	.02 (.05), <i>ns</i>	.04 (.05), <i>ns</i>	.06 (.05), <i>ns</i>
Income (10 pt.)	.07 (.01)***	.08 (.01)***	.06 (.01)***	.07 (.01)***
Other Demographics				
Age (6 pt.)	.06 (.02)**	.05 (.02)*	.02 (.02), <i>ns</i>	.02 (.02), <i>ns</i>
Sex	-.10 (.05)+	-.07 (.05), <i>ns</i>	-.02 (.05), <i>ns</i>	-.02 (.05), <i>ns</i>
Religiosity	.32 (.04)***	.27 (.04)***	.27 (.03)***	.24 (.04)***
Authoritarianism				
Conventionalism		.40 (.07)***		.28 (.05)***
Moral absolutism		.23 (.05)***		.16 (.05)**
Obedience to authority		.15 (.06)*		.11 (.06)+
Cynicism		.24 (.05)***		.15 (.07), <i>ns</i>
Ethnic intolerance			.18 (.03)***	.17 (.03)***
Moral intolerance			.08 (.02)***	.05 (.02)**
Economic conservatism			.10 (.02)***	.10 (.02)***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; + $p < .10$; *ns* = not significant.

orientation. In Model 3, we see that ethnic intolerance, moral intolerance, and economic conservatism each contribute independently to right-wing orientation, with ethnic intolerance being the strongest predictor.

In Model 4, we find that after adjusting for intolerance and economic conservatism, the association between authoritarianism and right-wing orientation was substantially reduced. Follow-up tests revealed that the relationships among all four aspects of authoritarianism and right-wing orientation were significantly mediated by both ethnic and moral intolerance, but not by economic conservatism. The relationship between conventionalism and right-wing orientation was significantly reduced after adjusting for moral intolerance, Sobel = 3.46, $p < .001$, and ethnic intolerance, Sobel = 3.09, $p < .01$, but not economic conservatism, Sobel = 1.52, *ns*. The effect of moral absolutism on right-wing orientation was significantly mediated by moral intolerance, Sobel = 4.87, $p < .001$, and it was marginally mediated by ethnic intolerance, Sobel = 1.86, $p < .07$. The relationship between obedience to authority and right-wing orientation was significantly mediated by moral intolerance, Sobel = 3.58, $p < .001$, and by ethnic intolerance, Sobel = 2.85, $p < .01$. Finally, the relationship between cynicism and right-wing orientation was also mediated by moral intolerance, Sobel = 3.16, $p < .01$, and ethnic intolerance, Sobel = 4.34, $p < .001$.

General Discussion

Using nationally representative data from 19 democratic countries around the world, we obtained mixed evidence of “working-class authoritarianism” (Lipset,

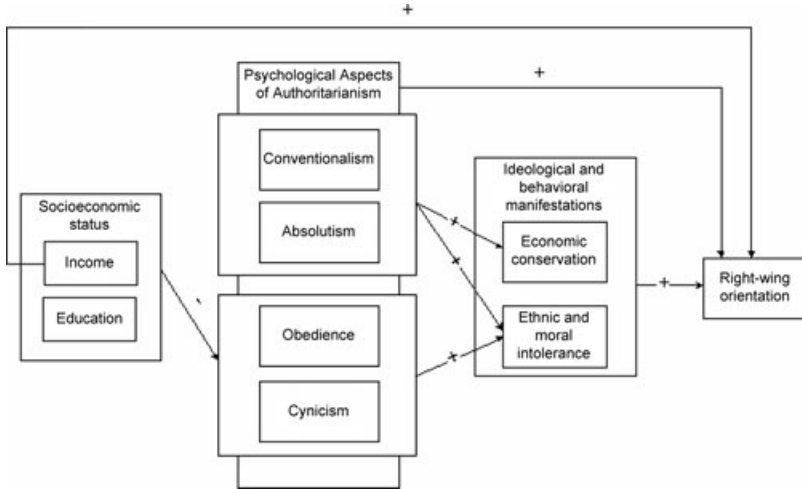


Fig. 1. Illustration of the overall pattern of results involving socioeconomic status, authoritarianism, intolerance, economic conservatism, and right-wing orientation.

1960; Stacey & Green, 1971). Our results, which are summarized graphically in Figure 1, reveal that all four psychological aspects of authoritarianism were positively associated with moral and ethnic intolerance, as well as with right-wing orientation, but they were differentially related to socioeconomic status and economic conservatism. Specifically, we found that only two of the psychological aspects of authoritarianism, namely obedience to authority and cynicism, were more prevalent among people who were low in socioeconomic status. These two variables accounted for a significant amount of variance of the association between socioeconomic status and ethnic and moral intolerance. Conventionalism and moral absolutism were unrelated to income and education, but they both contributed positively to ethnic and moral intolerance.

A somewhat different pattern characterized the relationship between psychological aspects of authoritarianism and economic conservatism. The only two aspects of authoritarianism that were significantly associated with economic conservatism were conventionalism and moral absolutism. And while economic conservatism, ethnic intolerance, and moral intolerance were all significantly and positively associated with right-wing orientation, only ethnic and moral intolerance significantly mediated the association between authoritarianism and right-wing orientation. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that authoritarianism is associated with right-wing political orientation at least in part because intolerance is generally more compatible with right-wing than left-wing ideologies (see also Lipset & Raab, 1978). We obtained no evidence in support of Lipset's (1960) claim that working-class authoritarianism would be associated with economic liberalism (see also Smith & Gunn, 1999).

Our findings underscore the importance of distinguishing among the various psychological aspects of the authoritarian syndrome, as identified by Adorno et al. (1950). More specifically, they are consistent with Sanford's (1966) argument that, with respect to attitudes and behaviors, "surface trends can be understood in large part as derivations or transformations of . . . deep-lying [personality] needs" (p. 153). Although we did find that a lack of education and low income predicted authoritarianism in general and that Authoritarianism predicted moral and ethnic forms of intolerance, a more detailed look reveals that while obedience to authority and cynicism were indeed more prevalent in the working class, conventionalism and moral absolutism were not. These latter two aspects of authoritarianism were, however, linked to economic conservatism.

These results may help to explain certain inconsistencies in the research literature concerning the nature of the relationship between authoritarianism and conservatism. For instance, Stenner (2005) found that economic conservatism was unrelated to authoritarianism, but this may be because she operationalized authoritarianism solely in terms of child rearing values. Our findings reveal that all four aspects of authoritarianism, including the child rearing value of obedience to authority, were related to right-wing orientation, but only conventionalism and moral absolutism were related to economic conservatism.

In general, our study suggests that people who are high and low in socioeconomic status may be drawn to right-wing ideology for different reasons. It appears that those who are high in income may be motivated, at least in part, to preserve their advantageous position in society, whereas individuals who are low in education and income are drawn to right-wing leaders, parties, and policies in part because of moral and ethnic intolerance, that is, because of certain behavioral manifestations of authoritarianism (see also Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1990).

We also obtained some support for a motivated social cognitive explanation for the relatively intolerant and right-wing attitudes of the working class (see also Jost et al., 2003a). Specifically, we found that low socioeconomic status was associated with obedience to authority and with perceived threat, measured in terms of a lack of trust in others. Furthermore, obedience to authority and cynicism accounted for significant portions of statistical variance in the relationships between moral and ethnic intolerance and right-wing orientation, suggesting that the relatively high level of intolerance found among members of the working class may be motivated in part by psychological efforts to cope with economic insecurity (see also Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Lane, 1962).

These findings help to shed much needed light on why those who are low in socioeconomic status often vote in ways that are seemingly incongruent with their own economic self-interest. In his provocative book, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, Thomas Frank (2004) noted that Republican President George W. Bush received the strongest electoral support in many of the poorest counties in the nation. Frank argued that members of the American working class have been

bamboozled into voting for right-wing candidates because of “wedge” issues such as abortion and gay marriage, even though such candidates offer no policies that would directly benefit the working class in economic terms (see Bartels, 2006, for a critique of this thesis). Our results suggest that the general phenomenon observed by Frank is much broader, and also more psychological, than he realized.

First, the observed relationships between socioeconomic status and intolerance, on one hand, and intolerance and right-wing orientation, on the other hand, suggest that the “wedge issues” that appeal to those who are low in income and education have a common thread in that they serve to limit or repeal the rights of others. Opposition to gay marriage, for instance, may represent moral intolerance rather than religious commitment *per se*. Similarly, a tough stance on immigration may reflect ethnic intolerance more than a concern for national security. Second, Frank (2004) implied that working-class conservatism is relatively unique to the United States, resulting from a “cultural backlash” against the 1960s and 1970s. However, the results of our cross-national investigation indicate that the attraction of right-wing leaders among those who are low in income and education is social-psychological in nature and is therefore observed throughout the world, even in highly democratic societies. It appears that the disadvantaged embrace right-wing ideologies at least in part to reduce the uncertainty and threat arising from their precarious position in society (e.g., Jost et al., 2003a), whereas the advantaged may gravitate toward the same ideologies for reasons of self-interest or perhaps even social dominance (Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1979; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

The connection between psychological aspects of authoritarianism and intolerance helps to explain the social and political attitudes of members of disadvantaged groups not only in the United States, which is the focus of Frank’s (2004) work, but around the world as well. As immigration continues to increase throughout Europe, especially immigration from Muslim countries, the political strength of far right-wing parties has increased even in relatively liberal social democracies such as the Netherlands and France (Cowell, 2002). In Switzerland, the extreme right-wing Switzerland People’s Party recently won 27% of the vote, making it the biggest single party in Parliament, after campaigning on an anti-immigration platform that included a logo showing three white sheep kicking a black sheep (Sciolino, 2007).

Frank’s (2004) book was criticized most notably by Bartels (2006) for making claims that, according to Bartels, are unsupported by public opinion data. There are many aspects of Bartels’ detailed critique, but for our purposes there are three crucial points: (a) according to data from the American National Election Studies, there has been relatively little change since the 1950s in poor Whites’ support for the Democratic party (pp. 206–211); (b) cultural values do not, as Frank suggested, outweigh economic concerns for working-class voters, nor has there been any recent change in the relative weighting of cultural versus economic issues, apart from the abortion issue (pp. 211–217); and (c) although Frank suggested that

members of the working class are economically liberal but culturally conservative, Bartels finds that they actually profess being more conservative on economic issues than Democrats and more liberal on cultural issues than Republicans (pp. 219–224).

The Frank–Bartels debate concerning, among other things, the role of social class and self-interest in political ideology rekindles interest in a number of fundamental questions that are social–psychological in nature. First, does working-class conservatism exist, and, if so, does it pose a threat to democratic procedures or outcomes? Second, how important is the economic/cultural distinction to understanding political orientation defined in terms of liberalism versus conservatism or left versus right? Third, is working-class conservatism in the United States (or, more specifically, the midwestern United States) unique, as Frank (2004) had suggested, or does it fit a more general pattern, as a social–psychological analysis of responses to threat and uncertainty brought on by economic insecurity would lead one to expect (Jost et al., 2003a, b)? These are precisely the sorts of questions that we have sought to address in this article and in parallel research programs (e.g., Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2004, 2007; Thorisdottir et al., 2007).

While there are probably many reasons why some citizens are drawn to right-wing leaders, parties, and policies, the social and psychological factors that lead members of the working class to vote against their own social and economic interests is a serious potential concern for the long-term stability of democratic society. In particular, democracy itself is threatened when citizens are motivated by intolerance of others, as opposed to, say, bettering their own situation and the situations of their fellow citizens. The findings of our research also underscore the tremendous importance of education for citizens in a democracy. It may well be that—especially for those who confront economic insecurity—higher education provides one of the few known social brakes against intolerance and other antidemocratic sentiments. To quote an early liberal, John Stuart Mill (1859/1970, pp. 238–239), “Hardly any one indeed will deny that it is one of the most sacred duties of the parents . . . after summoning a human being into the world, to give to that being an education fitting him to perform his part well in life towards others and towards himself.”

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