



Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism

Description

"...people who value social conformity... support the government when it wants to increase its control over social behavior and punish nonconformity...valuing social conformity increases the motivation for placing restrictions on behavior...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...
~ Stanley Feldman, Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism

Abstract

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.

"We are fast approaching the stage of the ultimate inversion: the stage where the government is free to do anything it pleases, while the citizens may act only by permission; which is the stage of the darkest periods of human history, the stage of rule by brute force."
~ Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*



Feldman, S.. (2003). Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 24(1), 41–74.

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1111/0162-895X.00316

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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."

Passini, S.. (2022). Songs and flags: Concern for Covid-19 and submission to authority. *Personality and Individual Differences*

, 185, 111251.

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1016/j.paid.2021.111251

[DOI URL](#)

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"The literature on authoritarianism has shown that the perception of threat and social insecurity is connected to attitudes of submission to authority and a greater acceptance of freedom restraints. in the present research, the relationship between concerns for covid-19 – measured in terms of the fear of personal and close to others exposure to covid-19 – on authoritarianism was analysed in Italy while considering participants' basic values as a potential mediator. results on 406 participants show high mean values on concerns for covid-19 experienced during the lockdown phase. as hypothesized, such concerns are positively related to authoritarianism, and a mediation analysis showed that the link between these two variables can be explained by the relevance attributed to conservation values."

Category

1. General

Date Created

February 2022

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web45