

SOCIAL-POLITICAL CONTEXT AND AUTHORITARIAN ATTITUDES:
EVIDENCE FROM SEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Using World Values Survey data on seven European democracies, we explore how authoritarian attitudes often associated with Radical Right party support are related to both individual-level and macro-level influences. We find that socio-demographic variables, such as age, education and social class, have similar effects across countries. Nonetheless, even after controlling for these socio-demographic variables, country differences remain, suggesting that demographic composition does not account for the majority of the country differences in attitudes. On the other hand, social-political context—as measured by income inequality, ethnic heterogeneity and radical Right-wing party presence—accounts for much of the country-level differences. This finding suggests that individual authoritarian attitudes are strongly influenced not only by personal circumstances, but also by nationwide social-political factors.

KEYWORDS: Authoritarian attitudes; contextual effects; radical right parties; political sociology.

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Introduction

The study of authoritarian attitudes has its roots in the classic research of Adorno and his colleagues, which identified the ‘authoritarian personality’ (Adorno et al., 1950). Authoritarianism has been traced back to even more simple and fundamental personality traits such as open versus closed mindedness (Rokeach 1960) or tough versus tender mindedness (Eysenck, 1954). Recent research has explored more closely the attitudinal predispositions of authoritarian individuals (Raden, 1989; Middendorp, 1993; Evans, Heath and Lalljee, 1996; Feldman and Stenner, 1997) and the social characteristics, especially as they relate to social class, which produce authoritarian traits (Lipset, 1959; Grabb, 1979; Ray, 1983; Dekker and Ester, 1987). Another line of research shows a link between authoritarian attitudes and support for Radical Right-wing parties (RRPs) (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1996; Andersen and Evans, 2003).

Less studied are the effects of social and political contextual factors on individual authoritarian attitudes. Research on the US is quite convincing that social and political attitudes generally affect government policy and thus socio-economic conditions (Stimson et al., 1995; Smith, 2000; Burstein, 1998). It is also likely that the causal direction works the other way as well—that is, societal conditions affect citizens’ attitudes on such matters. In fact, there is mounting evidence that contextual factors play an important role in social and political attitude formation (Inglehart, 1977; Quillian, 1995; Andersen and Heath, 2002). There has been no systematic cross-national research, however, that examines the relationship between specific socio-political contextual factors and authoritarian attitudes.

The present paper assesses the impact of both individual and contextual factors on a set of authoritarian attitudes often linked to support for Radical Right Parties: moral

conservatism, ethnic/racial prejudice, prejudice towards homosexuals and AIDS sufferers, and economic discrimination. Using World Values Survey (WVS) data we explore the correlates of these attitudes in seven European democracies in the 1990s: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. We have two main goals: (1) to explore how individual-level socio-demographic variables are associated with these attitudes across countries, and (2) to explore the partial effects of three social-political contextual factors—ethnic homogeneity, income inequality, and RRP presence—and assess whether these factors can account for country-level differences in authoritarian attitudes after controlling for individual-level characteristics. We accomplish these goals by linking the WVS data with country-level measures for each of the contextual factors identified above.

Theory and hypotheses

Dimensions of Authoritarianism and Radical Right Parties

We begin by discussing theoretical and empirical research related to measuring authoritarian attitudes. Although there are several ways to operationalize authoritarianism, most emphasize its multi-dimensional character. For example, Adorno et al.'s (1950) classic F-scale for the authoritarian personality includes elements of ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, politico-economic ideology, anti-democratic attitudes, moralistic condemnation, distrust and punishment. Similarly, the working-class authoritarianism literature has looked at tolerance of out-groups, cynicism and variants of the F-scale (Lipset, 1959; Miller and Riessman, 1961; Grabb, 1979). Moreover, work on Radical Right electorates has tended to separate moral authoritarianism and traditionalism from ethnocentrism (Billiet et al, 1996; Evans 2001; Swyngedouw and Ivaldi 2001).

Although the correlations between the various dimensions of authoritarianism are typically high,¹ their theoretical underpinnings differ. For example, rejection of racial groups may derive from feelings of ethnic superiority or nationalism, whereas rejection of homosexuality or unmarried cohabiting may stem instead from religious dogmatic sentiments of traditionalism. Indeed some work on Radical Right electorates' attitudes argues that differences between ethnocentrism and moral conservatism are key to understanding political differences (Grunberg and Schweisguth 2003). Similarly, nationalism has also been shown to be separate from other ideological dimensions (Heath et al., 1999). Other authors underline the necessity of distinguishing between an authoritarian personality and authoritarian ideology (Middendorp, 1993). Some see the latter as orthogonal to economic left-right attitudes (Evans, Heath and Lalljee, 1996; Ray, 1983), while others argue that the two attitudes are closely linked (Altermeyer, 1981; Stone, 1980).

While a protest element is certainly present, it is widely accepted that the principal motivation for voting for RRP is authoritarian ideology (van der Brug et al 2000; van der Brug and Fennema 2003). Neo-liberal economic motivations were seen equally as spurs to these parties' success in the 1980s, but there has been a steady shift towards emphasising social and moral issues, especially immigration, law and order and moral rectitude (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Lubbers et al., 2002). Certainly there is variation among the ideological stances of RRPs—for instance, the Scandinavian Progress Parties have been characterised as Right-libertarian (Harmel and Gibson, 1995) and even the attitudinal positions of voters for 'hard' Right parties such as *Vlaams Blok* do not correspond entirely to a homogeneous authoritarian set (Evans 2001)—but there has been a convergence of such parties across time towards more similar authoritarian stances.

Individual Influences of Authoritarian Attitudes

¹¹ Although see Dekker and Ester on low correlations between the F-scale and other authoritarian measures according to social class (1987:401).

The socialization perspective has a strong tradition in political sociology, especially with respect to the link between party loyalties and cleavage voting (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson et al., 1954; Alford, 1967; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart, 1979). Much of this research has looked at class identity and voting, usually linking the two with left-right attitudes (Vanneman, 1980; Kelley and Evans, 1995; Weakliem, 1991; Andersen and Heath, 2003), but the mediation of authoritarian attitudes between the class/party relationship has also resulted in the working-class authoritarianism hypothesis (Lipset, 1959; Middendorp and Meloen, 1990).

The working class authoritarianism hypothesis states that the social context of the working class is more favourable than the social context of the middle classes for the growth of authoritarian values. Low education, social isolation, economic and social insecurity and resulting family tension that is found disproportionately in the working class encourages the development of out-group hostility, traditionalism, self-reliance and moral conservatism (Lipset, 1959:490-492). Critics argue, however, that studies supporting this thesis have typically used poor measures of social class (Dekker and Ester, 1987) or authoritarianism (Miller and Riesman, 1961; Grabb, 1979). Nonetheless, more recent research using better operationalization of these variables has confirmed that working class individuals do indeed show higher levels of ideological authoritarianism, if not a greater authoritarian personality *stricto sensu* (Middendorp and Meloen, 1990).

Social class is not the only demographic variable related to authoritarian attitudes: age, gender and life cycle factors, education and religion have also been shown to be important predictors. Perhaps the most widely accepted finding is the negative effect education has on authoritarian attitudes (Janowitz and Marvick, 1953; Inglehart, 1977; see Weil, 1985, however, for some discussion of the variable effects of education on racist attitudes). University education exposes people to a more diverse range of people, ways of life and ideas, and consequently they are more likely to be open-minded and liberal. On the other hand, religious practice has been positively linked to authoritarianism (Weller, 1975; Schwartz and Huisman, 1995). In European democracies, the emphasis has been placed strongly on Catholicism, particularly on

matters of moral conservatism (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 2003; Mulé, 1993), but more generally all doctrinal religions tend to emphasise a body of historical wisdom and hence dogmatic adherence to the *status quo* rather than change (Durkheim, 1954; Glock, 1973).

Age, and more specifically transitions through the life cycle, may also affect authoritarian attitudes (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991). Of course, it is not always clear whether age differences in attitudes have more to do with cohort and period effects rather than life-cycle events (see, for example, Danigelis and Cutler, 1991). Nonetheless, changes in life circumstances associated with marital status and family composition can have profound effects on the way people live their lives, and thus could affect authoritarian attitudes independently of age (Kiecolt and Acock, 1988; Trent and South, 1992). More specifically, getting married and having children are events associated with traditional lifestyles and thus may lead to more traditional and authoritarian attitudes. Also related largely to family dynamics, but also to their more general subordinate position in society, women are typically less likely than men to hold conservative or authoritarian attitudes (Cherlin and Walters, 1981; Amato, 1988; Trent and South, 1992).

Following from Merton's (1957) distinction between 'localite' and 'cosmopolitan' individuals, we might also expect that the size of the municipality in which people live impact on their attitudes. Merton argued that localites are largely in contact with people similar to them and are thus generally pre-occupied with individualistic or close community issues, rather than issues that pertain to the larger world. In contrast, cosmopolitan individuals—*e.g.*, those living in larger centres—see themselves as belonging to a larger world. From this it seems sensible to suggest that localites will be more conservative and authoritarian in their views because they have less contact with people who have views different from their own.

What these influences on authoritarian attitudes have in common is the perception—whether real or imaginary—that a traditional way of life is under threat. For example, those who are economically vulnerable, such as those with low education and/or working class occupations, may be more likely to perceive that high unemployment rates coupled

with high immigration might lead to their own unemployment. Similarly, those strongly devoted to a dominant religion may feel threatened by large-scale immigration that results in the growth of other religions in their society. These perceived threats could lead in turn to intolerance and increased conservatism, authoritarianism and ethnocentrism (Huddy et al 2002:486). Socialization influences, which can be vertical—i.e., inter-generational—or horizontal—i.e., between members of peer groups—can amplify these perceptions of threat.

Possible Contextual Influences

It is perhaps obvious that individual circumstances are important to the formation of individual attitudes and values, and empirical research is highly supportive of the idea. The role of contextual variables in determining attitudes has been less studied, however. There is evidence that community characteristics affect racial prejudice (Quillian, 1995), but less is known about the link between country-level variables and authoritarian attitudes more generally. Nonetheless, some studies have found an empirical relationship between individual attitudes towards social inequality and country-level macro-economic indicators (Korpi and Palme, 1998; Weakliem et al 2002). These studies suggest the possibility that authoritarian attitudes are associated with social and economic context in the same way. As with the individual-level variables, the perception of threat associated with certain contextual factors may be the impetus for authoritarian attitudes. Country-level factors that could potentially influence such perceptions of threat for which we have data about are: income inequality, ethnic homogeneity, and radical Right-wing party presence.

Weakliem et al show income inequality at the societal level to be positively associated with greater individual support for economic inequality (2002:5). They also find that the relationship between attitudes and societal conditions is strongest among those with higher incomes. Given the association of Right-wing economic views with economic inequality, we might also expect this group to have a disproportionately large influence in an authoritarian direction. From the perspective of threat, however, a large number of

individuals within the lower group will be in a socially marginalized and economically insecure position, so we might also expect them to hold more authoritarian positions.

Concerning ethnic homogeneity, the presence of a high percentage of ‘out-groups’ within the population may be perceived as a threat to national culture and way of life (Vanhanen, 1999). While direct effects of ethnic population on prejudice and ethnocentrism have been notoriously hard to prove, there is some support for the *halo effect hypothesis*, where proximate communities with high ethnic populations stimulate extremist support (Mayer and Perrineau, 1989). This suggests the possibility, then, that that a higher level of ethnic heterogeneity may well be associated with more authoritarian attitudes. It is also possible that the effect is in the opposite direction, however. Holding all else constant, individuals in countries that are heterogeneous may be generally more open-minded because there is not a perceived single way of life to preserve, while individuals in countries that are relatively homogenous may be more interested in preserving the ‘national’ way of life, resulting in attitudes that are less tolerant of out-groups and non-traditional ways of life.

We might also expect that the presence of radical Right-wing parties influence authoritarianism. These parties typically mobilise voters by convincing them of the validity of authoritarian statements on law and order, moral rectitude and immigration—all areas in which the threats of criminality, moral decay and cultural and economic invasion are invoked. These statements could in turn intensify existing authoritarian attitudes, and possibly fundamentally alter the direction of some other voters’ previously undecided or even libertarian views. We might also expect that the higher the profile of a RRP, the greater its influence. Nevertheless, we might equally expect a “backlash” in the presence of such parties amongst other sections of the electorate. The mobilisation of anti-immigrant feeling amongst RRP supporters may engender a shift towards a more pro-immigrant position amongst other voters repelled by such policies. RRP presence, then, may in fact be linked to overall lower levels of authoritarianism.

Research Questions

By assessing macro- and individual correlates of such dimensions, we can ascertain the extent to which different types of socio-economic threat may induce generally higher levels of authoritarianism and whether they exercise influence only on specific dimensions. Given previous research, we expect that authoritarian attitudes will be more likely among men, older people, those lacking a university degree, the working class, and those who do not have gainful employment. We might also expect that those who are married and who have children might exhibit more authoritarian attitudes than others. Finally, we also might expect that those who live in smaller areas are less likely to be exposed to many different peoples and lifestyles and thus we might expect that they consequently are more authoritarian than those who live in larger centres.

We then move on to explore if there are country differences in authoritarian attitudes even when controlling for these individual-level variables. We expect that there will be, and that contextual variables will account for some of these differences. Given that this type of research has not been done before, however, we do not specify the direction of association for the contextual variables. In other words, our analysis of the relationship between macro-context and individual authoritarian attitudes is largely exploratory. Our main goals here, then, are to determine which country-level variables matter, how they matter, and whether they matter equally for all the dimensions of authoritarian attitudes that we explore.

Data and Method

The primary data for this study are the 1990 and 1995 World Values Surveys (Inglehart et al. 2000). These data are from social surveys of individuals from more than 60 nations, over two waves: 1990-93 and 1995-97. Although the participating countries of the World Values Surveys (WVS) used surveys with comparable questions, separate organizations implemented the surveys in each country. Moreover, because many countries participated in only one wave, we use data from both waves to increase the number of countries that could be analysed. We analyse data from seven European

countries, all of which were based on national probability samples (analytical sample size is in parentheses): Austria (1,029), Denmark (914), Germany (2,521), Norway (2,026), Spain (4,704), Sweden (1,597), and Switzerland (1,035). The selection of these countries was based on two criteria: (1) we required only modern industrialized European countries; (2) these were the only such countries for which the WVS have reliable measures for all relevant predictors and dependent variables. We pool the data from these seven countries, resulting in an analytical sample size of 13,826 after missing cases are excluded.

Dependent Variables

As stated earlier, we explore four dependent variables designed to tap different dimensions of authoritarian attitudes: moral conservatism, ethnic-religious prejudice, prejudice towards homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers, and economic discrimination based on nationality.² The measurement of these variables is given below:

- *Ethnic-Religious Prejudice* is tapped using a set of questions that asked respondents whether or not they would like to have people from particular groups as their neighbours. Respondents were coded 1 if they identified one or more of the following groups: people of a different race, Muslims, and immigrants/foreign workers. Those who do not show prejudice are scored 0.
- *Prejudice Towards Homosexuals and/or AIDS Sufferers* is tapped using the same question as above, with those who claim that they would not like to live next to homosexuals and/or people who have AIDS are scored a 1, while all others are scored 0.
- *Moral Conservative Attitudes* were measured using a three-item additive scale that asked opinions about homosexuality, divorce and suicide. For each individual item, respondents were asked to state where they stood on a 10-point scale (coded

² Ideally we would use a variant of the F-scale because of its proven reliability and validity. Unfortunately, however, to our knowledge there are no suitable cross-national data that allow us to do so.

0-9) representing “never justifiable” to “always justifiable”. The final scale ranged from 0 to 27, with high scores indicating authoritarian attitudes.

- *Economic Discriminatory Attitudes* is measured from a single item that asked respondents to agree or the statement: “When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to [national citizen] people over immigrants”. A binary variable was created, coding those who agreed 1, and all other responses 0.

Individual-level Predictors

The regression models include eight socio-demographic predictors: age (treated as a quadratic orthogonal polynomial in order to account for a possible curvilinear trend), gender (coded 1 for men and 0 for women), education (coded 1 for completion of a university degree, 0 for otherwise), religion, social class, employment status, marital status, and number of children.

Religion is operationalized as a set of three dummy regressors representing four categories: (1) no religion (the reference category), (2) practising Christian, (3) non-practising Christian, and (4) practising other.³ Five dummy regressors are used to test for differences between six categories of the *social class* variable: (1) working class (the reference category), (2) routine non-manual workers, (3) self-employed, (4) professional, (5) managers, and (6) those who could not be classified because of missing information. *Employment status* distinguishes between three categories: (1) retired, (2) unemployed, and (3) other (the reference category).

We also control for the marital status of the respondent (married respondents are coded 1; others are coded 0), the number of children the respondent had (a continuous variable), and the population of the residential location of the respondent, which is divided into five

³ This last category includes practising Buddhists, as well as those from the more traditionally ‘dogmatic’ religions. There are so few Buddhists in the dataset, however, that this does not influence our findings.

categories: (1) less than 2,000; (2) 2,000-9,999; (3) 10,000-99,999; (4) 100,000-500,000; (5) more than 500,000.

Country-level Predictors

The individual-level data are linked with country-level variables found from several different sources:

- *Income Inequality* within each country was measured using the Gini coefficient, which is the most widely available measure of income inequality. These data were collected in the mid-1990s by government statistics organizations in each of the countries and later compiled by the World Bank (2000). Larger values indicate greater inequality.
- To measure *Ethnic and Religious Heterogeneity* we followed Weakliem *et al.* (2002), who adapt a more complicated measure from Vanhanen (1999). This measure ranges from 0-1, with high values indicating a high degree of heterogeneity and low levels indicating relative homogeneity. The measure was calculated by subtracting from 1 the mean of three measures of dominance: (1) the proportion of the population in the largest linguistic group, (2) the proportion of the population in the largest racial group, and (3) the proportion of the population in the largest religious group (for all these countries the largest group is Christian—*i.e.*, all Christian denominations are treated as part of the dominant religion).
- The presence of *Radical Right Parties* was measured using an average vote measurement calculated from the proportion of electoral votes the party received between 1990 and 1995 (EREPS, 2003). Because the World Values Surveys were carried out in different years, and not necessarily election years, we calculate the electoral presence of the party using its scores from the two most proximate legislative elections. The scale ranges from 0 to 100, with high values indicating a strong presence. Countries for which there was no presence of a radical right party during the time under study were given a score of 0.

To facilitate comparisons of the relative strength of the relationships in a particular model, the contextual variables were standardized (*i.e.*, we subtracted the mean and divided by their standard deviation).

Statistical Methods

When the number of level-two cases is large, the use of mixed models or multilevel modelling is an effective way to assess contextual variation and how it decreases as contextual variables are added (see, for example, Andersen and Heath 2002). With only seven countries, however, such models do not provide reliable estimates. As a result, our analyses are based on a series of fixed-effects generalized linear models, the family and link function determined by the measurement of the dependent variable. To predict moral conservatism, an interval-level measure, we used ordinary least squares regression. Since the prejudice and economic discrimination variables are all binary, we fitted logit models to these dependent variables.

For each dependent variable we started by fitting models that include a set of country dummy regressors representing the country variable (referred to as Model 1 from here onwards). Preliminary models were also fitted, specifying interactions between country and various explanatory variables. None of the interaction effects were substantively large, however, so they were removed from the reported models in order to simplify interpretation. A second set of models (Model 2), which replaced the country dummy regressors with the three contextual variables, were then fitted and compared to Model 1. The main goal of Model 2 is to assess whether the country differences can be accounted for by the contextual variables.

Results

Before we begin the main analyses, it is informative to inspect differences across countries with respect to authoritarian attitudes and the contextual variables. We start by looking at Table 1, which shows responses to the authoritarian measures. We see a

number of noteworthy differences between countries. Most obvious is that Austrians appear to have the most authoritarian attitudes, placing highest on all of our measures. As might be expected given their emphasis on social democracy, respondents from the Scandinavian countries tend to be less authoritarian than others. The greatest variation is seen with respect to attitudes toward homosexuals and aids sufferers, where only 15 percent of Danes show prejudice while 50 percent of Austrians show prejudice. As we shall see later, the homosexual/aids item stands out in the multivariate analyses as well. In any event, that there are substantial country differences suggests that either individual and/or contextual factors are at work.

[Table 1 about here]

We now turn to Table 2, which shows how the contextual variables vary by country. As was the case with the attitudinal variables, we again see substantial differences across countries. For example, the Gini coefficient ranges from 21.7 in Denmark (the country with the most equal income distribution) to 32.5 in Spain. Heterogeneity ranges from a low of .017 in Denmark to a high of .127 in Switzerland. Finally, the percentage of vote won by RRP in recent elections ranges from 0 in Spain (where no such parties existed), to 18 in Switzerland. We will return to examine the effects of these contextual variables on attitudes after first attempting to explain country differences with the individual-level variables only.

[Table 2 about here]

We begin the statistical modelling by assessing individual-level effects on authoritarian attitudes, controlling for country. As we can see from Table 2, most of the individual-level predictor variables behave in the expected manner but there are exceptions. From the age coefficients, we see that older respondents show higher levels of prejudice, discrimination, and moral conservatism than do younger students. The curvilinear relationships in all four models indicate that the differences become even more

pronounced at higher levels of age. Also following previous research, university education is associated with lower levels on all authoritarian indicators.

[Table 3 about here]

The results regarding religion are mixed. There is a general pattern that the less religious are least authoritarian. Only for ethnic prejudice is there no discernible relationship with religion. The religious effects are quite strong for moral conservatism and prejudice towards homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers, where the more one practises their religion, the more authoritarian they are. For example, compared to the nonreligious, the odds of showing prejudice are 1.32, 1.88, and 1.82 times as high for nonpractising Christians, practising Christians and those who practise other religions. Given that the “other” religion category contains a large proportion of non-white respondents, it is not surprising that practising non-Christians are less likely to feel employers should discriminate on the basis of nationality. Concomitantly, Christians—whether practising or not—are least likely to support the hiring of non-nationals, despite being as tolerant of ethnic neighbours as other groups, indicative of a nuance between ideological and pragmatic discrimination. Overall, then, the findings suggest that Christians are typically *more* authoritarian than those who do not belong to a religion.

For the most part, the effects of social class are supportive of the working class authoritarian hypothesis. For example, the working class generally show the highest levels of authoritarian attitudes and in line with their liberal heritage, professionals have the lowest levels of authoritarianism. More specifically, compared to the working class, the odds of professionals showing ethnic prejudice are about 0.57 times what they are for the working class. Similarly, the odds of professionals favouring discrimination in the labour market are about 0.52 times the odds for the working class. Like research by Manza and Brooks (1999:76) on the US, however, we find that the self-employed have similar authoritarian attitudes to the working class.

Employment status had mixed effects on the four dimensions. Only with respect to attitudes of job discrimination was there a statistically significant positive effect. For example, the odds of agreeing that employers should favour nationals are about 1.28 times higher for the unemployed than those who are working. Unemployment does not significantly affect any of the other dependent variables, nor are any of the other variables affected by retirement. Even with respect to job discrimination, there is no evidence that retirement brings increased authoritarian attitudes.

Reflecting what was shown in Table 1, we see that the country differences in attitudes hold up even after controlling for important demographic predictors. Austria, the reference category, remains the country with the overall highest levels of authoritarianism on all four dimensions. Although there are some changes in ordering in terms of level of authoritarian attitudes, the patterns seen in Table 1 roughly hold for each of the four dependent variables. In other words, differences at the country-level have little to do with differences in social composition.

We now attempt to account for some of the country differences by replacing the country variable with the contextual variables discussed earlier. As we can see from Table 3, which shows the coefficients for Model 2, the contextual variables appear to account for some, but not all, of the country-level variation. The measures of fit indicate that, as would be expected, in all cases Model 2 does not fit as well as Model 1. Nonetheless, although the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) values for these models are consistently higher than those for the corresponding Model 1, the differences are not overwhelmingly large.⁴ In fact, Model 2 performs reasonably well

⁴ The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) are measures of fit based on the log-likelihood of the model. The AIC penalizes the fit according to the number of parameters in the model; BIC applies a larger penalty that considers both the number of parameters and the sample size. $AIC = -2 \log\text{-likelihood} + 2p$, where p is the number of parameters; $BIC = -2 \log\text{-likelihood} + (p \log n)$, where n is the sample size. The smaller the AIC or BIC value, the better the fit of the model.

for all dependent variables except prejudice towards homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers, for which there were no significant contextual effects despite large country differences. It is also important to note that the individual-level effects are substantively similar to those in Model 1, so we will not discuss them presently. Instead, our focus is on the contextual effects.

[Table 4 about here]

The findings regarding the electoral strength of a RRP are mixed. It has a positive effect on ethnic prejudice, but a negative effect on moral conservatism. Surprisingly, there is no apparent RRP effect on prejudice towards homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers or on job discrimination. The first of these findings is easily explained in terms of the mobilisation thesis—i.e., Radical Right parties typically appeal to voters by emphasizing immigrant out-groups. In other words, voters are influenced by the party's discussion of how out-groups are problematic. That said, it is equally likely that countries with stronger RRP do well precisely because of higher levels of prejudice. Still, given that we find little evidence of country variation determined by individual characteristics and these individual characteristics are controlled for, RRP presence is a plausible influence on authoritarian attitudes.

The second finding counters the mobilisation hypothesis but is easy to explain. In countries with strong RRPs, there may be a backlash against the ideas promoted by such parties—the fact that ethnocentric and authoritarian ideas are given greater prominence may encourage people disapprove of them all the more. Given the minority status of such parties even where they are successful, a general liberalization of the electorate would offset any 'authoritarianization' of RRP supporters. When contrasted with the prejudice findings, this emphasizes the importance of separating out dimensions of authoritarianism. Again, we cannot disentangle the direction of causation from these data,

but the findings suggest a complex relationship between authoritarian attitudes and political parties.

The findings regarding income inequality parallel those for the RRP variable—that is, there is a statistically significant effect for moral conservatism and ethnic prejudice but no discernible relationship for prejudice towards homosexuals and AIDS sufferers or job discrimination. Recall that the higher the Gini coefficient, the less equal is the income distribution. We see, then, that respondents from countries characterised by high levels of income inequality tend to be less morally conservative than those from countries with more equal income distributions. A plausible explanation for this finding relates to a possible desire to legitimise differences in wealth and income. The mechanism could work as follows: vast differences in incomes lead to noticeable differences in life-styles, which in turn leads to open-mindedness. On the other hand, that individuals from countries with more equal income distributions tend to be less discriminatory of other ethnic groups suggests that the general idea of egalitarianism spins off when equality in incomes is prevalent.

The effects of heterogeneity are consistently strong across the dependent variables, except again for prejudice towards homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers. The most directly related measure to heterogeneity is ethnic prejudice. Here we find that the more diverse a society, the less likely individuals within it are prejudiced against people of different ethnic groups. This can be explained in terms of a socialisation effect caused by cosmopolitanism, and the lack of a single ‘national’ way of life to defend. On the other hand, ethnic diversity tends to be related to individual attitudes that are generally more conservative and more likely to discriminate on the job market.

Discussion and Conclusions

The individual level predictors generally behaved in ways that were consistent with previous research, reaffirming the importance of socialisation in determining authoritarian attitudes. The finding that blue-collar workers tend to be more authoritarian

on all dimensions than people from other social classes—the traditionally Right-wing authoritarian self-employed aside—supports Lipset’s working class authoritarianism hypothesis. Also supportive of other research, we found a strong link between liberal values and higher education. This, as always, emphasizes the role that learning plays in the development of personality and political attitudes.

The findings regarding religion were not all consistent with previous research, however. In fact, contrary to popular belief, we found that prejudicial elements are strongly present in the dominant faiths of Western democracies. On three of the four dimensions, practising Christians were more authoritarian, and even on the ethnic discrimination dimension—an attitude which previous commentators have held up as anathema to Christian doctrine—there was no significant difference between Christians and others. In this sense, research suggesting Christianity is an impediment to RRP voting may be spurious—if ethnocentric or morally conservative values promote RRP support, then it is not religion *per se* that impedes RRP support.

The contextual effects behaved in a much less consistent manner than did the individual-level effects. For example, there were some differing effects across the dependent variables for particular contextual variables that are not easily explained from the present data. Given that macro-effects on authoritarian attitudes are an under-researched phenomenon, these findings suggest that more detailed research in the area is needed. Nonetheless, except for attitudes towards homosexuals and AIDS sufferers, contextual effects were quite prevalent. We also learned from this research the importance of assessing the various dimensions of authoritarian attitudes separately. It is clear that attitudes towards homosexuals and AIDS sufferers are qualitatively different from the other attitudes examined.

The findings concerning RRP challenge some widely accepted assumptions. While a strong RRP can give prominence to ethnocentric and authoritarian discourse, there is little evidence that this mobilises support among people who do not already hold authoritarian attitudes. Only for ethnic prejudice is the evidence consistent with such an

effect. For other dimensions of authoritarianism, the evidence is suggestive of RRP's influencing the mobilization of voters on the opposing side of the political spectrum. In other words, as speculated by Kitschelt (1996), RRP's may provoke a backlash among those with liberal attitudes. The findings could also indicate that in countries with greater moral liberalism, RRP's find greater support from a reactionary minority. This follows Ignazi's (1992) silent counter-revolution argument but it is difficult to ascertain why a similar dynamic was not seen with ethnic prejudice. We must be cautious in our interpretation, however, given that three of the countries we explore are Scandinavian, where others have argued that the RRP's can be regarded as a distinct category (Harmel and Gibson, 1995). As new suitable data become available, future research should attempt to include more countries with varying degrees of RRP presence.

Ethnic heterogeneity also does not appear to provoke a heightened sense of threat as a matter of course. In fact, heterogeneity seems to have no effect whatsoever on some aspects of authoritarian attitudes (*e.g.*, prejudice against homosexuals and/or AIDS sufferers) and even increases levels of libertarianism. For example, diverse societies are associated with higher levels of ethnic out-group tolerance. On the other hand, diversity is positively associated with economic discrimination. The latter may be simply a pragmatic response rather than a deeply rooted attitudinal one, however. To adequately test this hypothesis we would require data allowing levels of economic insecurity to vary over time. To our knowledge there are no appropriate longitudinal cross-national data to explore this question in more detail.

Economic inequality has a similarly complex relationship with authoritarianism. High levels of income inequality are associated with low levels of moral conservatism but high levels of ethnic prejudice. In other words, people in unequal societies are much more likely than people from equal societies to let people live their lives as they please, but they are also more likely to reject close contact with out-groups. As said earlier, the low levels of conservatism in these countries may reflect a "legitimising" effect where citizens interpret differences in lifestyles as reflecting choice rather than differences in economic opportunities. Where we might expect discrimination to be exercised more

openly—*e.g.*, against challengers within the job market—no difference is seen, however. Again, this suggests that ethnic discrimination is largely based upon both ideological and pragmatic elements. On the other hand, it is difficult to explain why the most “obvious” outlet for such discrimination is precisely where no effect is seen.

One possible explanation is that countries with high levels of income inequality tend to be more market-driven and hence individuals of whatever background are expected to fend for themselves. This parallels the findings from economic models of voting that countries with a reputation for self-support—the US, for instance—are ones where pocketbook voting is the lowest, whereas social democracies such as Denmark where the state assumes a much greater responsibility are the ones where the pocketbook model holds best. Simply put, Americans do not generally blame the government for the state of their personal finances because they see the government as having little to do with it; the Danes take the opposite view (Nannestad and Paldam, 1997). An alternative explanation is that in countries with greater inequality, the influence of the upper, richer strata is greater (see Weakliem et al. 2002), and thus worries about immigrant competition are lower, thus offsetting worries among the lower strata. Again, the evidence we present here indicates the need for further research.

Our findings have important implications, both in terms of future research and in more normative terms concerning public policy. First, regarding reaction to RRP threat, it is clear that merely to ascribe all reactionary and ethnocentric mobilisation to these parties alone is simplistic. Ironically, in the presence of such parties, the backlash on some elements of authoritarianism appears to produce a net societal liberalization that may not otherwise occur. Thus, in addressing the issues upon which RRPs apparently thrive, progressive governments need to be aware of differential effects on matters of ethnic prejudice as opposed to moral conservatism, for instance.

Secondly, governments should be careful not to commit the fallacy that the economy solves everything. Indeed, in societies with low levels of income inequality, the social ‘feel good factor’ from broader levels of prosperity may not extend to newcomers. The

welfare chauvinism seen amongst RRP supporters may be more widespread in societies where those that do well do not want new claimants to reduce existing benefit (see, for example, Jensen et al. 2003). Thus, although there may be greater tolerance in egalitarian societies in situations of prosperity, threats to such prosperity may engender greater prejudice because of what may be lost (at least in popular perception).

In conclusion, these initial findings suggest that the effects of individual characteristics on authoritarian attitudes do not vary greatly from country to country. By implication, it would seem that country differences are largely due to contextual variables. To return to the roots of research into authoritarianism, this supports the notion that specific nationalities are unlikely to manifest any “genetic” predisposition towards authoritarianism. Influences from political parties and governments, however, may directly affect people’s social and political attitudes. Of course, future research should assess even further contextual variables to better determine the exact nature of these influences.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables, by country

Dependent variables

Mean score on moral conservatism scale (standard deviations in parentheses)	19.01 (6.37)	16.60 (7.01)	14.25 (7.74)	16.87 (6.72)	17.67 (7.08)	13.39 (7.21)	16.17 (7.58)
Percent showing Ethnic/racial Prejudice	26.9	19.8	23.0	25.5	16.4	17.1	23.1
Percent showing Prejudice towards Gays and/or aids Sufferers	50.1	15.4	34.0	26.5	39.4	20.1	23.2
Percent who feel employers should give priority to nationals when jobs are scarce	77.2	52.8	54.9	50.2	75.1	29.3	59.4
Sample size	1,029	914	2,521	2,026	4,704	1,597	1,035

Table 2
Country-level variables

	Austria	Denmark	Germany	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Switz.
<u>Context variables</u>							
Gini Coefficient	23.1	21.7	30.0	24.2	32.5	25.0	36.1
Heterogeneity	0.020	0.017	0.040	0.023	0.100	0.043	0.127
Percentage of vote for Radical Right Parties	16.6	6.4	2.3	10.0	0	4.0	18.0

Table 3

Country difference models, controlling for individual level factors (Model 1)

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
	Morality (OLS)	Ethnic (logit)	Gays/Aids (logit)	Jobs (logit)
Intercept	14.02***	-0.784***	-0.28*	1.07***
Age	175.55***	37.083***	42.25***	30.28***
Age-squared	76.21***	9.995***	9.89***	11.07***
Men	1.08***	0.293***	0.39***	0.01
<i>Religion</i>				
Other	6.42***	-0.019	0.60***	0.09
Non-practicing Christian	2.39***	0.131	0.28***	0.45***
Practicing Christian	5.60***	0.140	0.63***	0.33***
None	--	--	--	--
University Degree	-2.62***	-0.647***	-0.69***	-0.75***
<i>Social Class</i>				
Managers	-1.06***	-0.171*	-0.21***	-0.31***
Professional	-2.42***	-0.563***	-0.56***	-0.66***
Self-employed	-0.31	-0.019	0.02	-0.00
Routine non-manual	-0.66***	-0.183**	0.17**	-0.12*
Unclassified	-0.30	-0.150*	-0.15**	-0.20***
Working class	--	--	--	--
<i>Employment Status</i>				
Unemployed	-0.07	0.001	-0.06	0.25**
Retired	-0.31	-0.030	-0.03	0.08
Employed/Other	--	--	--	--
Married	1.05***	-0.019	0.03	-0.01
Number of Children	0.27***	0.001	0.07***	0.01
<i>Residential area population</i>				
More than 500,000	--	--	--	--
100,000-500,000	0.11	-0.232**	-0.13	0.07
10,000-99,999	0.94***	-0.260**	-0.16*	0.12
2,000-9,999	1.51***	-0.240**	0.07	0.26**
less than 2000	1.95***	-0.105	0.10	0.28**
<i>Country</i>				
Switzerland	-5.57***	-0.391***	-1.59***	-1.14***
Sweden	-4.84***	-0.536***	-1.44***	-2.20***
Norway	-0.68**	-0.007	-1.01***	-1.15***
Spain	-1.48***	-0.790***	-0.63***	-0.21*
Denmark	-1.64***	-0.517***	-1.84***	-1.30***
Germany	-4.35***	-0.388***	-0.89***	-1.25***
Austria	--	--	--	--
<i>N</i>	13,826	13,826	13,826	13,826
	$R^2=.280$	$X^2=622***$	$X^2=1779***$	$X^2=2166***$
	RSE=6.24	<i>d.f.</i> =26	<i>d.f.</i> =26	<i>d.f.</i> =26
AIC	89,899	13,546	15,759	16,437
BIC	89,957	13,604	15,817	16,495

P*-value <.05; *P*-value <.01; ****P*-value <.001

Table 4

Contextual effect models, controlling for individual level factors (Model 2)

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
	Morality (OLS)	Ethnic (logit)	Gays/Aids (logit)	Jobs (logit)
(Intercept)	12.42***	-1.237***	-0.93***	0.49***
Age	151.85***	36.895***	36.58***	19.62***
Age-squared	82.02***	9.994***	9.45***	12.10***
Men	0.92***	0.288***	0.34***	-0.04
<i>Religion</i>				
Other	4.51***	-0.022	0.22	-0.61***
Nonpracticing Christian	1.80***	0.133	0.09	0.18**
Practicing Christian	5.56***	0.134	0.66***	0.35***
None	--	--	--	--
University degree	-2.73***	-0.587***	-0.81***	-0.89***
<i>Social Class</i>				
Managers	-1.29***	-0.195**	-0.32***	-0.35***
Professional	-1.92***	-0.550***	-0.33***	-0.39***
Self-employed	-0.46*	-0.039	0.02	-0.01
Routine non-manual	-1.92***	-0.242***	-0.38***	-0.46***
Unclassified	-0.18	-0.165*	-0.08	-0.08
Working class	--	--	--	--
<i>Employment Status</i>				
Unemployed	-0.13	-0.006	-0.06	0.23**
Retired	0.03	-0.033	0.04	0.23**
Employed/other	--	--	--	--
Married	1.32***	-0.013	0.09*	0.09*
Number of children	0.31***	0.002	0.06***	0.02
<i>Residential area population</i>				
More than 500,000	--	--	--	--
100,000-500,000	-0.45*	-0.233**	-0.30***	-0.18*
10,000-99,999	0.35	-0.273***	-0.30***	-0.10
2,000-9,999	1.08***	-0.247**	-0.04	0.06
less than 2000	1.70***	-0.101	-0.04	0.12
<i>Country-level variables</i>				
Radical Right Party	-0.20**	0.193***	-0.03	0.002
Gini coefficient	-1.99***	0.163**	0.07	-0.076
Heterogeneity	1.40***	-0.309***	-0.08	0.322***
<i>N</i>	13,826	13,826	13,826	13,826
	$R^2=.242$	$X^2=606***$	$X^2=1322***$	$X^2=1353***$
	RSE=6.40	<i>d.f.</i> =23	<i>d.f.</i> =23	<i>d.f.</i> =23
AIC	90,607	13,556	16,211	17,243
BIC	90,658	13,607	16,262	17,294

P*-value <.05; *P*-value <.01; ****P*-value <.001