

# **THE IMPACT OF AUTHORITARIAN ATTITUDES ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

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# **AUTHORITARIANISM, ATTITUDES, AND THE VOTE**

- Long studied in American politics
- Renewed interest through increasing polarization and Trump's election in 2016
- We focus on two main questions:
  - I. the relationship between authoritarianism and attitudes on issues
  - II. its impact on the Presidential elections in 2016 and 2020.

# AUTHORITARIANISM AS A WORLDVIEW

- Authoritarianism has variously been described as a personality characteristic, an attitude, normative beliefs, and a worldview.
- For this research, we have adopted the approach of Hetherington and Weiler (2009).
- We treat authoritarianism as a worldview, a set of beliefs and ideals that a person uses as a guide to interpret the world.

# DATA

- Data used are from the American National Election Studies between 1992 and 2020.
  - N: 1,211(2004) – 8,280 (2020)
- From 1992 to 2020, with the exception of 1996, the ANES has included four child-rearing items that have been used to measure authoritarianism.

# AUTHORITARIANISM MEASURE

- The question reads:

*Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. I am going to read you pairs of desirable qualities. Please tell me which you think is more desirable for a child to have:*

- I. independence vs. **respect for elders**
- II. **obedience** vs. self-reliance
- III. curiosity vs. **good manners**
- IV. being considerate vs. **being well-behaved**

# AUTHORITARIANISM RESPONSE OVER TIME

	1992	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
% Least Authoritarian (0)	11.2	6.9	9.4	7.6	10.1	14.5	20.7
% Most Authoritarian (4)	15.3	14.1	12.4	16.3	17.4	14.2	12.1
Mean	2.26	2.34	2.22	2.36	2.31	2.09	1.87
Standard Deviation	1.23	1.13	1.16	1.15	1.22	1.28	1.31

# EFFECT OF AUTHORITARIANISM ON ISSUES

- Immigration
- Racial resentment
- Tolerance of outgroups
- Defense
- Social issues
- Conformity

## Controls:

- income, age, education, region, political ideology, party identification, and being born again.

# EFFECT OF AUTHORITARIANISM ON ISSUES

	2012	2016	2020
Immigration	.237***	.314***	.210***
Racial Resentment	.197***	.269***	.212***
Tolerance of Outgroups	.183***	.272***	.158***
Defense Attitudes	.105***	.098***	.177***
Social Issues	.167***	.190***	.141***
Conformity to Norms	.194***	.217***	.182***

\*\*\* = <.001



# EFFECT OF AUTHORITARIANISM ON VOTE CHOICE

	2012	2016	2020
Presidential Vote	.173*	.463***	.381***
Congressional Vote	.207**	.190**	.179***

\*\*\* = <.001 | \*\* = <0.01 | \* = <0.05

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# AUTHORITARIAN SCORES BY MODE OF INTERVIEW

	2012	2016	2020
<b>Face-to-Face   Telephone   Video</b>	2.29	2.13	1.75
<i>sd</i>	(1355)	(677)	(198)
<b>Web</b>	2.32	2.09	1.87
<i>sig</i>	.589	.423	.202
<i>sd</i>	(2526)	(1834)	(4578)

# PERCENTAGE OF AUTHORITARIAN RESPONSES (INDIVIDUAL ITEMS)

	1992	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Well-Behaved	25.6	24.4	21.6	28.7	30.6	27.2	22.0
Respect for Elders	72.2	70.0	72.7	70.7	75.9	72.9	69.4
Good Manners	51.9	54.6	56.8	59.2	66.1	60.5	55.1
Obedience	48.8	52.0	46.3	47.3	50.3	43.7	39.2

# PERCENTAGE OF AUTHORITARIAN RESPONSES (INDIVIDUAL ITEMS, MIDPOINT REMOVED)

	1992	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Well-Behaved	32.1	31.7	25.7	35.2	36.9	28.2	22.1
Respect for Elders	79.3	81.3	80.3	80.9	82.4	74.6	69.7
Good Manners	61.1	65.7	64.6	69.6	72.9	62.3	55.4
Obedience	55.3	60.2	52.8	54.9	56.1	45.0	39.4

# CONCLUSIONS

- On substance – that is, the relationship between authoritarianism and political attitudes and its impact on voting - there is not much change between 2016 and 2020.
- But...
  - There does appear to have been a change in child-rearing attitudes between 2012 and 2020.

# CONCLUSIONS

- This decrease in this measure is consistent for most all background characteristics examined.
- This raises questions about the use of these items as a cross-time measure of authoritarianism.
- Limitations of this measure have been raised in other contexts by researchers such as Luttig and by Engelhardt, Feldman, and Hetherington.



# THANK YOU!

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