# 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

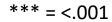
#### **Controls:**

 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***





#### EFFECT OF AUTHORITARIANISM ON VOTE CHOICE

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



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# AUTHORITARIAN SCORES BY MODE OF INTERVIEW

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