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**The Curious Case of Left-Wing Authoritarianism: When Authoritarian Persons
Meet Anti-Authoritarian Norms**

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This paper has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal. Date: January 19, 2021

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Statement: All research was conducted ethically within COPE and APA ethics guidelines.

Data Archiving Statement: All data for this article will be made available upon publication on OSF.

Abstract

Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) has a controversial history in psychology. Some researchers have expressed skepticism about the existence of LWA, whereas others have argued that LWA is a valid construct. In the present article, we offer a framework to reconcile these two perspectives by proposing that ideologically-based authoritarian *norms* are sometimes in conflict with the processes that create authoritarian *individuals*. In Western political contexts, authoritarian norms *are* more likely to occur on the conservative side of the political spectrum; but authoritarian persons can occur in both conservatives *and* liberals. In our model, left-wing authoritarians thus often occupy the space where forces influencing authoritarianism are in *conflict*. We review existing evidence related to the model, derive four hypotheses from the model, and discuss criteria for falsifying the model. We conclude by considering the model's place in current research on the complexities of ideology.

Keywords: Left-Wing Authoritarianism, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Norm Fit, Threat

The Curious Case of Left-Wing Authoritarianism: When Authoritarian Persons Meet Anti-Authoritarian Norms

Are political liberals sometimes subject to reliance on simple authority, psychological rigidity, and aggressive defense of the status quo in the same way as political conservatives? The idea that liberal individuals might show strong leanings toward authority has been discussed under the rubric of *Left-Wing Authoritarianism* (LWA). As evidenced by the well-attended symposium on LWA at the most recent Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference (Conway, 2020) and by an increase in recent publications and citations on the topic (e.g., Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., 2020a; Conway et al., in press; Costello et al., 2020; Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Federico et al., 2017; Frimer et al., 2014; Proch et al., 2018; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, & Foucault, 2018; Wronski et al., 2018), interest in the LWA construct is on the rise. Although many scholars in political psychology have expressed skepticism about left-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996; Jost et al., 2003; Nilsson & Jost, 2020; Stone, 1980), others have argued that left-wing authoritarianism is a valid construct (e.g., Chan et al., 2018; Conway et al., 2018; Conway et al., in press; Conway, Zubrod, & Chan, 2020; Costello, Bowes, Stevens, Waldman, & Lilienfeld, 2020; Federico et al., 2017; Malka et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 1996; Mullen et al., 2003; Ray, 1983; Van Hiel et al., 2006).

In the current review, we present a new model suggesting there is a sense that *both* sides of the debate may be right. Specifically, we argue that existing ideologically-based authoritarian *norms* are sometimes in conflict with the processes that create authoritarian *individuals*. Existing authoritarian norms in Western, capitalist contexts

(e.g., Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Canada) are – as researchers have long argued – more prevalent on the conservative side of the political spectrum; but, even in contexts where conservative authoritarian norms exist, authoritarian dispositions can occur in both conservatives *and* liberals. In our model, left-wing authoritarians in Western contexts thus frequently occupy the space where *cultural normative* and *individual psychological* processes influencing authoritarianism are in *conflict*. In these Western contexts, persons high in authoritarianism are more likely to be in a group where authoritarian behaviors are opposed to their group’s normative ideological position. Nevertheless, they are in some real sense authoritarian.

Below, we more clearly define authoritarianism, discuss evidence related to LWA, lay out the basic building blocks of our model, and then derive four expected outcomes resulting from the model. Our aim is to present a model that both (1) helps place prior work in a new and integrative context and (2) generates new ideas for future researchers.

What is Authoritarianism?

The psychological construct of authoritarianism originated in Freudian theory, largely as an attempt to understand prejudice (Adorno et al., 1950; see Duckitt, 2013; Feldman, 2003, for summaries). Although the original theoretical framework has almost entirely been abandoned, Adorno’s definition of the construct and subsequent measurements dominated the field for many years (see Feldman, 2003). Adorno’s conceptualization included a number of dimensions that are no longer considered vital to the authoritarianism construct. Altemeyer (1996) re-envisioned the construct through social learning theory, narrowing the construct to focus on three inter-related

manifestations of authoritarianism: Authoritarian submission (desire to subject oneself to ingroup authorities), authoritarian aggression (desire to behave punitively towards those who violate authoritarian norms), and conventionalism (desire to uphold the status quo). Using this narrower conceptualization, Altemeyer produced the most widely used measurement of authoritarianism, the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale (Altemeyer, 1996). Later, building on and in some cases revising Altemeyer's position, Feldman (2003) argued that authoritarianism is best construed as comprising authoritarian submission values occurring at the intersection between social conformity and perceived threat, and developed a measure that focused on more generic content issues (such as child-rearing). More recently, Duckitt et al. (2010) argued for a more explicitly multi-dimensional approach to authoritarianism, providing evidence that authoritarianism is best construed in terms of three separate-but-related dimensions that parallel those of Altemeyer (see Duckitt et al., 2010).

Although they vary in multiple important ways, all of these modern conceptualizations share key commonalities. All posit that (a) motivations for submission to authority are central to authoritarianism and (b) authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism are all related to authoritarianism – either as part of a unidimensional construct (Altemeyer, 1996), as separate dimensions related to that construct (Duckitt et al., 2010), or as naturally correlated consequences (Feldman, 2003). Duckitt et al. (2010, p. 690) summed up this appraisal nicely:

We broadly follow these newer approaches by suggesting that this core idea (i.e., support for the subordination of the individual to collective authority) represents a social attitudinal expression of the broad motivational goal or

value of collective security, which arises from social threat and insecurity in general. This broad motivational goal or motivationally based value of collective security can be seen as subsuming a subset of three more specific motivational goals, each of which represents a particular aspect or way of attaining collective security, and each of which are expressed in social attitudinal terms in the three components of RWA identified by Altemeyer.

We follow this conceptualization in the current manuscript. In line with newer research, we apply this conceptualization to left-wing authoritarianism in a parallel fashion.

Authoritarianism as Socio-Cultural Attitudes: Implications for LWA

Although early theory was based on the assumption that authoritarianism was exclusively a personality dimension, more recent work has re-conceptualized it as a set of inter-related, relatively stable attitudes or values (see Duckitt, 2013; Duckitt et al., 2010, for reviews; cf. Ludeke, 2016). This change is important because attitudes are generally *about something* specific; that is, they have specific content (see, e.g., Duckitt, 2013). Indeed, authoritarianism has largely (but not exclusively) focused on socio-political attitudes and values (Duckitt, 2013; Duckitt et al., 2010). Because, as we will see later, more authoritarian norms exist on the right side of the political spectrum in Western, capitalist contexts where much of the research was conducted, it was natural that virtually all of these conceptualizations focused on right-wing authoritarianism (Duckitt, 2013).

Indeed, the lion's share of the work on authoritarianism has adopted this politicized theoretical definition (see Duckitt, 2013; Jost et al., 2003). This reliance on politicized theoretical approaches can be illustrated by the measures used to

operationalize authoritarianism. One study (Conway, 2018) found that over 69% of recent published papers on “authoritarianism” used an RWA scale or close equivalent (with almost all of the rest using a parenting-based measure of some kind), and 79% of the politicized scales used a version based on Altemeyer’s scale – either Altemeyer’s original RWA scale (62%) or the short version constructed by Zakrisson (2005; 17%). Even more recently, surveys of major social psychology journals (e.g., *JPSP* and *PSPB*) have suggested a continued heavy reliance on – and acceptance of – Altemeyer’s politicized conceptualization and measurement (Conway et al., 2020a).

The pros and cons of this politicized approach have been detailed elsewhere (e.g., Conway et al., 2018; Crouse & Stalker, 2007, 2014; Jost et al., 2003; Malka, 2018; Ray, 1985; Thomas, 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010). For our purposes, we make two points: (1) Whether researchers agree with this conceptualization, it is the primary conceptualization scientists have used for authoritarianism. As a result, there is value in keeping the same conceptualization here, as it allows us to interface better with the literature at large. When attempting to understand the potential for left-wing authoritarianism, it helps maintain continuity to parallel the most common conceptualizations of right-wing authoritarianism. (2) This currently-accepted conceptualization opens the door to a vital line of questioning. Namely, to the degree that authoritarianism involves inter-related, specific socio-political attitudes, we can ask: *What authorities are authoritarians submitting to?* Authoritarianism may be inherently right-wing; but it may instead be that people can be authoritarian in potentially parallel ways to both right-wing and left-wing norms, attitudes, and values.

For example, it is conceptually possible for someone to feel a strong sense of

authoritarian submission to one's religion, while not feeling an equally strong sense of authoritarian submission to scientific authorities, and vice-versa (for an analogous model for categorizing terrorists, see Post, 2005). As a result, it is important to better understand the “*authoritarian with respect to what?*” questions: Do people feel authoritarian submission to more left-wing beliefs and values, authoritarian aggression towards violators of left-wing norms, and conventionalism towards those norms? If so, are there quantifiable similarities and differences between LWA and RWA?

Left-Wing Authoritarianism

Historically, many researchers have argued for the possibility of left-wing authoritarianism (e.g., Eysenck, 1954; Mullen et al., 2003; Ray, 1983; Rokeach, 1960; Shils, 1954), and burgeoning evidence spanning multiple nations and three continents validates many of these conceptual arguments (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press; Costello et al., 2020a; Conway et al., 2020b; De Regt, Mortelmans, & Smits, 2011; Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Federico et al., 2017; Malka et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 1992, 1993, 1996; Pentony et al., 2000; Todosijević, 2005; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2006; Wronski et al., 2018). This evidence for LWA can be roughly grouped into two source types.

Left-Wing Persons Score High on Typically Right-Wing Authoritarian Measures. First, evidence exists that in some contexts persons who self-identify as left-wing or support left-wing ideologies score higher than do other individuals on questionnaires that contain markers typically associated with right-wing authoritarianism. Consider, for example, the case of communism. Left-wing economic ideology is often both the traditional status-quo and a “sacred belief” in post-communist countries and is

ipso facto the more predictable and dependable position, just as social conservatism is for many in the West. Although a survey of 19 Western democracies found that authoritarianism is associated with right-wing persons (Napier & Jost, 2008), other work in Eastern Europe and Russia has often revealed a different pattern. For example, work in Russia in the 1980s and 1990s (McFarland et al., 1992, 1993, 1996) suggested that RWA was associated with left-leaning communism policies. (A corollary is that in Soviet Russia, leftist communist leaders were less integratively complex than capitalistic reformers, who had a more conservative ideology; Tetlock & Boettger, 1989). Work in other left-wing contexts provides similar conclusions: RWA Authoritarian Submission is positively associated with more traditionally liberal platforms such as pro-environmental attitudes in Germany (Reese, 2012), and the RWA scale is associated with the prohibition of hate speech towards minorities in Poland (Bilewicz et al., 2017).¹ Similarly, in a survey of 13 Eastern European nations that used a measure of right-wing authoritarianism (a scale that included many of the issues on Altemeyer's scale and questions containing parenting submission motivations), researchers found that in many nations, RWA was correlated with left-wing ideological positions such as communism (De Regt, Mortelmans, & Smits, 2011). Even in a Hungarian sample in which RWA was associated more with right-wing than left-wing positions, left-wing persons scoring high in RWA were still evident (Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008). Hence, observed asymmetries

¹ Authoritarianism, as traditionally measured, has been largely associated with normatively negative behaviors such as prejudice and violence. However, as these additional results show, authoritarians are not necessarily associated with normatively negative behaviors. Indeed, we do not discuss at length the many normatively positive functions of adherence to authority – from the small (respectful discussion in a classroom context due to adherence to a professor's stated authority) to the large (refusal to murder someone due to respect of the authority in power to punish). In doing so, we are following the most typical definitions of authoritarianism, but not making normative judgments ourselves. Our primary purpose is to provide a model of left-wing authoritarianism parallel to typical conceptualizations of right-wing authoritarianism, so that the two ideas can be fruitfully integrated.

in political extremism in Western democracies, which are often attributed to the functional match between conservative ideology and relevant individual difference variables (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), may instead be caused by the historical rarity of radical left-wing beliefs in the United States and Western Europe.

Similarly, measures of authoritarian child-rearing attitudes contain content largely endorsed by those on the right (Conway, 2020a), yet evidence suggests that left-wing persons can meaningfully score high on such scales (Federico et al., 2017; Wronski et al., 2018). For example, during the 2016 Presidential Primaries, Republicans scored higher on a child-rearing authoritarian measure than Democrats; yet this difference across parties was smaller than the difference between *two different types of Democrats*, with supporters of the more traditional Democratic candidate Clinton higher in authoritarianism than supporters of Sanders (Wronski et al., 2018). This suggests that there is meaningful variation for liberals on a measure of authoritarianism that generally captures more right-wing content.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that persons who hold left-wing ideological positions *can* also score highly on scales that contain all the hallmarks of authoritarianism defined by past researchers. Nevertheless, this conclusion must be tempered by the fact that the authoritarianism items in these studies generally appeared to lean towards right-wing content. As such, these findings in part suggest that left-wing persons in (say) communistic contexts can display authoritarian values more traditionally considered to reflect *right-wing* ideological positions, even while maintaining a larger left-wing ideological belief rubric. Still, it is less clear that those persons are engaging in *left-wing* authoritarianism (see Jost et al., 2003, for an argument along these lines). There

is a sense in which they may be; after all, in the case of communism, the specific authority figures to whom they submit hold (in part) left-wing ideologies. But there is another sense in which the communist regimes held beliefs typically construed as conservative.

Authoritarianism on Left-Wing Content. A second line of evidence suggests that persons can be authoritarian on clearly left-wing political issues (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., 2020a; Conway et al., in press; Costello et al., 2020; Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Van Hiel et al., 2006) or that left-wing persons can endorse authoritarian policies and status quo positions as much as right-wing persons, *if* the content area is neutral or liberal (e.g., Frimer et al., 2014; Proch et al., 2018; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, & Foucault, 2018). For example, one set of studies showed that conservatives and liberals value and submit to different authority figures – but that both were roughly equally likely overall to do so (Frimer et al., 2014). In a similar manner, Proch and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that conservatives and liberals are both motivated to sometimes support the status quo – depending on whether or not the status quo itself is liberal or conservative.

Related approaches have attempted to more directly measure authoritarianism in an explicitly left-wing manner. For example, Van Hiel et al. (2006) constructed a short LWA scale for Flemish samples in Belgium. They found evidence of LWA in a sample of extreme left-wing activists, although they found little evidence of LWA in college samples.

More recent research has extended this work to non-activist samples in the U.S. (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press; Fasce &

Avendaño, 2020; Costello et al., 2020). Indeed, two independent research programs with different foci and aims both separately confirmed that non-activist U.S. samples can be characterized as having a reasonable amount of LWA.

The first research program's primary aim (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press; Conway et al., 2020a; Conway et al., 2020b) was to provide LWA scales that directly paralleled a common RWA scale. The logic behind this approach was to hold the authoritarian language in each item roughly constant, but alter the content domain. Because the authoritarian language is essentially identical across the scales, high scores on the LWA scale would suggest the presence of left-wing authoritarianism to an equal degree as high scores on RWA have been judged to reflect right-wing authoritarianism (Conway et al., 2020a). Because high scores on an RWA scale with nearly-identical authoritarian language have been historically considered markers of authoritarianism, high scores on a parallel LWA scale should similarly be considered authoritarian.

In their original studies, Conway and colleagues (2018) tweaked Altemeyer's RWA scale to focus on liberal authority figures, while retaining much of the authoritarian language from the original RWA scale. Because it directly parallels the language of the most-validated and widely used (Conway et al., 2018) RWA scale, it possesses high content validity as a measure of authoritarianism. Consider that participants who score high on this LWA scale agree that (*italicized words are direct quotes from the LWA scale*): *Our country needs a mighty leader*, that the leader should *destroy* opponents, that people should *trust the judgment of the proper authorities*, should avoid listening to *noisy rabble rousers in our society who are trying to create doubts in people's minds*, should

put some tough leaders in power who oppose those values and silence the troublemakers, should smash the beliefs of opponents, that what our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush the evil, that society should strongly punish those they disagree with, deny that their opponents have a right to be wherever he or she wants to be, and support the statement that the country would be better off if certain groups would just shut up and accept their group's proper place in society. These items hit all of the hallmarks of the consensus conceptualization of the *authoritarian* person. Indeed, in the words of Fasce & Avendaño (2020), the items on Conway et al.'s LWA scale “are not merely statements of liberal ideology; they univocally reflect an extremely authoritarian attitude, opposed to liberal commitments such as equality among citizens, freedom of expression, and tolerance toward political and cultural diversity.”

Across several studies (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press), liberals (vs. conservatives) scored appreciably higher on this scale, and the effect size for LWA-liberalism was similar to that for RWA-conservatism. This finding was not a correlational slight-of-hand: Absolute mean scores suggest that liberals (for LWA) and conservatives (for RWA) were roughly equally likely to endorse their ideologically-compatible authoritarianism. Further, LWA showed comparable validity on key domains as RWA: Two studies revealed that LWA was positively related to increased prejudice, dogmatism, and attitude strength, and LWA showed similar effect sizes as those reflecting RWA's relations to those constructs (Conway et al., 2018). Further research extended the validity of LWA by demonstrating that LWA predicts election outcomes in a way parallel to RWA (Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press). In one study, LWA was a predictor – above and beyond political ideology

– of voting for the democratic candidate in a U.S. presidential election year where threat was higher (Conway & McFarland, 2019). In a second set of studies (Conway et al., in press), LWA (again controlling for ideology) significantly predicted voting for the democratic candidate, informational contamination, reactance, and support for divisive behaviors (such as Nancy Pelosi ripping up Trump’s speech).

Additional research (Conway et al., 2020b) has revealed that both liberal and conservative American participants identify a large number of left-wing authoritarians in their everyday lives, and further revealed that both liberal and conservative participants rate the Left-Wing Authoritarianism scale as measuring authoritarianism. Further, this same LWA scale consistently predicts key phenomena that major authoritarianism theories suggest it should predict, including threat sensitivity, restrictive communication norms, negative ratings of minority groups, and dogmatism (Study 10). Importantly, these effects hold both when controlling directly for ideology *and* when performing analyses only on liberals. Thus, these effects are about something beyond *mere* liberal ideology, and a vast array of evidence suggests that *something beyond* is *authoritarianism*. Additionally, newer research from an unaffiliated lab using Conway et al.’s scale has confirmed and extended its validity. Specifically, Fasce and Avendaño (2020) found that LWA was negatively related to both social and economic conservatism, and further provided found expected relationships between LWA and a reactive stance against reward for application. To date, Conway and colleague’s LWA scale has been validated on over 6,000 participants across dozens of studies.

A second, independently-developed research program on LWA had a different aim (Costello et al., 2020). Rather than attempting to provide parallel items, Costello and

colleagues purposefully developed an LWA scale in a largely exploratory fashion “from the ground up,” without much direct reference to prior scales. Indeed, the researchers intentionally moved away from Altemeyer’s conceptualization while also developing a multi-dimensional scale. Despite these different aims and approaches, it is noteworthy that this independent approach with different aims yielded much the same outcome as Conway et al.’s (2018) approach: Not only were there consistent relationships between liberalism and authoritarianism across almost 7,000 participants, but the LWA measure predicted dogmatism, aggression towards outgroup persons, and numerous other variables consistent with authoritarian theory, above and beyond political ideology measures (Costello et al., 2020).

In sum, the evidence for LWA demonstrates that (1) left-wing persons sometimes show strongly authoritarian traits (albeit on values that are somewhat ambiguous with respect to the liberal/conservative dimension in that context), and (2) left-wing persons in Western societies sometimes illustrate hallmark signs of authoritarianism, such as agreeing to strongly-worded authoritarian statements that parallel those used in right-wing authoritarian measures. It is premature to advance strong claims regarding the exact *prevalence* of left-wing persons high in authoritarianism versus right-wing persons high in authoritarianism. But even if a specific population proves to be comparatively small, scientists can learn something important from studying them (as, for example, the large literature on low self-esteem persons in the U.S. would attest; see Baumeister, 1993). Our primary point here is not about the *size* of the LWA population; it is rather that there are ample conceptual and empirical reasons to believe that *left-wing authoritarian persons exist*, even in Western contexts. As such, it is important to understand what

those persons are like, and how they differ from and are similar to right-wing authoritarian persons.

The Authoritarian Norm Fit Model: Norms Versus Individuals

Researchers in psychology have long distinguished perceptions of the collective *norm* from the specific beliefs, behaviors, and personalities of the *individuals* involved in the norm (Nosek, 2005; Prentice & Miller, 1993). For example, individuals can recognize the existence of an ingroup norm and yet not feel as if they fully fit with that norm (Nosek, 2005; Prentice & Miller, 1993). In the present paper, we apply this distinction to norms related to authoritarianism. In particular, we consider liberal and conservative perceptions of their own political groups' authoritarian-related beliefs versus their own specific individual tendency towards authoritarianism. Functionally, this distinction entails conceptually separating shared explicit authoritarianism-related *normative ideology* that is acknowledged by political group members with the *individual authoritarian tendencies* of its group members.

This distinction is not perfect. Normative beliefs and individual beliefs are sometimes closely aligned (Crandall et al., 2002), and yet the road between collective norms and individual beliefs is often murky (e.g., Conway & Schaller, 2005). As a result, it is sometimes hard to distinguish where collective norms end and individual beliefs begin. We acknowledge these limitations and discuss them in more detail. Nevertheless, we believe the distinction between normative ideology and individual beliefs is conceptually useful for helping parse out the case of Left-Wing Authoritarianism in Western contexts.

The Nature of “Normative Fit”

One focus of this article is to outline psychological outcomes that might result from the lack of fit between norms and individuals predicted by our model – outcomes that expect differences between persons high in LWA versus RWA in Western contexts. But what do we mean by “fit?” At a base level, we mean the degree that the general perceptions of normative content are logically congruent with (or, conversely, logically at odds with) an individual motive or tendency. As a parable, if everyone in a family agrees that the family norm is to be extraverted, a person who is introverted does not “fit” in with this prevailing norm (see Conway et al., 2020a).

This lack of fit might bear consequences for the introvert’s experience and behavior. One consequence might take the form of explicit awareness, as when an introvert is keenly aware of both her introversion and the family norm for extraversion, and she seeks to resolve the tension. It also might take more subtle and less explicit forms, as when the introvert recategorizes or ignores either her introversion (thereby psychologically reconciling the conflict² in favor of the familial norm) or the family norm (thereby psychologically reconciling the conflict in favor of her own personality). In any case, an introvert in a *family of recognized extraverts* should differ psychologically in many predictable ways from an introvert in a *family of recognized introverts*. By way of analogy, we expect LWA persons in Western contexts to not “fit” as well with their representative norm, and thus show demonstrable psychological markers of this normative mismatch.

The Situational Nature of the Authoritarian Norm Fit Model

² Unless otherwise specified, we use the terms “conflict” and “mismatch” to refer to a lack of norm-individual fit in broad terms and not (necessarily) to subjectively-recognized psychological tension. Later in this article, we detail more specifically the exact psychological outcomes expected by this logical conflict.

Our model is designed to differentiate (1) persons in situations in which authoritarian norms and authoritarian motives do not *fit*, from (2) persons in whom the fit between norms and motives is more evident. As such, it is situationally specific to the exact nature of normative fit in different contexts.

For example, our model probably interfaces with Western democratic contexts differently than with Eastern European and Russian contexts. In societies with a history of more dictatorial left-wing regimes, norms on the left side of the political spectrum might be more authoritarian. As such, we would expect less (if any) normative conflict for LWA individuals with left-wing authoritarian norms in those contexts. Indeed, as we outline in Derived Hypothesis 4 below, we might see the opposite in those contexts, such that right-wing persons show more of the *low fit* outcomes discussed here, and high LWA persons functionally appear like Western RWA persons (no data to our knowledge exists on this hypothesis). Further, even in Western contexts, there may exist micro-cultures in which liberal norms are more pro-authoritarian (e.g., in radical environmental terrorist groups). Our model would not predict the outlined *low fit* outcomes for those persons.

However, as we will see later, in mainstream Western contexts, liberal (versus conservative) norms are especially prone to being explicitly anti-authoritarian. As such, it is largely to those contexts that we will initially apply our model. Nevertheless, the model might be applied in any context in which authoritarian norms and authoritarian individuals exhibit poor fit, regardless of the exact nature and direction of the individual-normative conflict. As we detail more below, the model does not expect the same effects in situations in which norm-individual fit is high and thus conflict is unlikely.

We next discuss one important variable, namely, perceived threat, that in Western

contexts contributes to authoritarianism at both the normative ideological and individual levels. We then discuss how Western left-wing ideology is prone to being less authoritarian than Western right-wing ideology. We subsequently proceed to lay out initial evidence that perceived threats can lead to authoritarian persons in both right- *and* left-wing groups. Finally, we discuss what this potential mismatch between an individual's perception of the normative beliefs of their group and their individual beliefs/behaviors might look like by considering three possible outcomes our model predicts would be exhibited by high LWA persons in Western contexts (Hypotheses 1-3) and then considering what might happen in contexts with more left-wing authoritarian norms (Hypothesis 4).

Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism

What factors influence the development of authoritarianism at both normative and individual levels? Although our norm fit approach could be applied to any set of causal factors, we focus on the causal factor that has been most widely studied: perceived threat. A long history of theory and research in psychology reveals a strong connection between authoritarianism and threat. This work suggests that authoritarianism often emerges in response to threatening circumstances – either threats to security or threats induced by uncertainty (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Crawford, 2017; Duckitt et al., 2010; Feldman, 2003; Jost et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 2005; see Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Conway & McFarland, 2018, for discussions). When threats are present, people tend to gravitate towards rigid hierarchical structures (Conway et al., 2020a; Conway et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2005).

The majority of work on the threat-authoritarianism relationship has focused on authoritarianism for *conservatives in Western contexts* (see Conway et al., 2020a). At the macro-normative level, researchers have argued that threat is largely responsible for authoritarian ideology that is generally associated with conservatives in the West (e.g., Jost et al., 2003). At the individual level, research linking threat to authoritarianism has invoked right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) almost exclusively (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Duckitt, 2013; Jost et al., 2003; Ludeke et al., 2018; for discussions and evidence of the prevalence of RWA, see Chan et al., 2018; Conway et al., 2018; Malka et al., 2017). For example, one study revealed that high RWA participants were more likely than low RWA participants to view threat-related messages as containing stronger and higher-quality arguments than reward-related messages (Lavine et al., 1999). Similarly, work linking authoritarianism to threat via open-ended measurements (Peterson et al., 2005) scored authoritarianism along primarily right-wing ideological content. Overall, the relationship between threat and RWA is so robust that Duckitt (2013, p. 1) commented: “Empirically the relationship between threat and RWA has been shown consistently and powerfully for diverse samples and methodologies and a wide range of contexts... As a result of these findings it is now widely accepted that authoritarian attitudes and behaviors seem to be powerfully influenced by threat.”

The picture that emerges from this literature is that, in Western contexts, threat contributes to both right-wing authoritarian normative ideology *and* right-wing authoritarian normative individuals. We suggest that this picture is accurate but incomplete. Our model suggests that (1) threat *does* tend to contribute to conservative authoritarian norms in Western contexts, because in those contexts there is often a

connection between authoritarianism and conservative ideology. Our model further suggests that (2) threat contributes to right-wing authoritarian individuals. However, at the individual level, (3) threat *also* contributes *left-wing* authoritarian individuals.

Normative Level: In Western Contexts, Right-Wing Ideological Norms Are More Likely to be Authoritarian than Left-Wing Norms

Ideologies often shift over time. What is considered a “conservative” ideological focus today may not be a “conservative” focus tomorrow (Conway et al., 2019). Thus, it is unsurprising that the exact nature of conservative and liberal ideologies has been a topic of much historical debate (see Jost et al., 2003, for a summary). Although the specific content of shared ideologies has been argued from many angles and varies from context to context, in Western contexts, multiple scholars agree on two common components: Compared with liberal ideologies, conservative ideologies (1) allow for hierarchical inequalities and (2) oppose non-traditional innovations (see, e.g., Giddens, 1998; Jost et al., 2003; Muller, 2001; Rossiter, 1968). Consequently, conservatism may be salient to individuals high in needs for safety and certainty, as it connotes a sense of predictability and dependability, at least in Western democracies (Tetlock, 1989).

Indeed, Jost et al. (2003) argue that this conservative/liberal ideology split comes in part from perceived threats. When people feel threatened and uncertain, they are more likely to embrace the structural inequalities and traditional views associated with Western conservative ideology. These threat-induced aspects of conservative ideology in Western contexts map directly onto two traditional conceptualizations of authoritarianism: A focus on accepting traditional authorities (and resulting authoritarian inequality) and opposition to change (see, e.g., Altemeyer, 1998). Thus, although the relation between threat and

conservative norms is less clear in Russia and Eastern Europe (Jost et al., 2003), historical analyses generally support the notion that in Western contexts conservative normative *ideology* tends to be more explicitly pro-authoritarian than liberal normative *ideology* (see Jost et al., 2003).

Do conservatives and liberals recognize these ideological norms of their own groups? Most of the evidence pertinent to this question is based on self-reports of individual beliefs in Western contexts, not direct reports of norm recognition. For example, a preponderance of evidence reveals that Western political conservatives show characteristics associated with authoritarianism, including but not limited to dogmatism, preferences for simplicity, and high need for closure (for reviews, see Jost, 2017; Van Hiel et al., 2010; Conway et al., 2016a). Similarly, liberal participants in two studies were more likely than conservatives to overestimate the complexity of their parties' political candidate (compared with the opposing party; Conway et al., 2016b), suggesting that liberals, but not conservatives, expect their public figures to be complex thinkers who embody the opposite of authoritarian stereotypes.

Although this is what we would expect if conservative norms were more prevalently authoritarian, it does not bridge the potential difference between norms and individuals discussed earlier. Indeed, such data would be just as consistent with the view that authoritarianism is solely a right-wing phenomenon at the individual level. Surprisingly, no research to our knowledge has previously *directly* measured group normative perceptions relevant to authoritarianism by liberal and conservative participants. To fill this gap, in 4,866 U.S. participants, we measured (in a study described in more detail later) the likelihood that liberals and conservatives perceive that

their political group would approve of authoritarianism. To measure self-reported political ideology, the study used a standard (e.g., Jost, Noske, & Gosling, 2008) two-item continuous measure anchored by Democrat/Republican and Liberal/Conservative. To measure belief in their groups' authoritarian norms, participants completed the following question: "I think people in my political group would approve of dogmatic or authoritarian viewpoints" (anchored on a 1-7 scale).³ Results revealed that liberalism in the U.S. was positively correlated with the belief one's group has anti-authoritarian norms (effect size $r[4866] = .39$ $p < .001$).⁴

Other evidence more indirectly suggests the importance of public normative perceptions versus private individual beliefs on a domain relevant to authoritarianism: the complexity of language. A recent meta-analysis (Houck & Conway, 2019) of 35 studies tried to help explain past discrepancies in the literature (e.g., Conway et al., 2016a) on whether or not liberals are more complex than conservatives. Houck and Conway (2019) found that for studies that asked participants *privately* for their opinions, conservatives and liberals showed the same level of linguistic complexity. However, for studies that measured politicians giving *public* statements, liberals were more complex than conservatives. This result, which was recently conceptually replicated on different set of

³ Although the pertinent question provided a subtext clue with the word "dogmatic," we purposefully did not define "authoritarianism" to participants. As we will see later, part of the purpose of the study was to test people's normative associations of that word with their own political group and their own self-identification. It would thus partially defeat the purpose to over-define the term in participants' minds. Further, participants might be wrong about the norm (e.g., Prentice & Miller, 1993), but their perceptions of the norm are at issue here. These results demonstrate that U.S. participants associate "authoritarian norms" with a higher level of approval in conservative (versus liberal) contexts. In convergence with the other evidence discussed here that conservative norms *are* more authoritarian, the picture that emerges all points in the same direction.

⁴ We also tested for a curvilinear effect and found little evidence of a curvilinear relationship between self-reported ideology and belief in a group's authoritarian norms (quadratic $\beta = -.01$, $p = .246$). The results are thus best described by the expected linear relationship.

eleven studies using an automated measurement of integrative complexity (Conway, Conway, & Houck, 2020), suggests that the public norms for the two groups – one which expects complexity (liberal) and one that does not (conservative) – may be driving the differences found on complexity in past research (e.g., Jost et al., 2003; Van Hiel et al., 2010).

Taken in total, the available evidence suggests that liberal norms in the West (and the United States in particular) are more anti-authoritarian, more opposed to simplicity, and more anti-dogmatic than conservative norms; and members of each group recognize that fact.⁵ As we shall see, however, this does not mean that individual liberals themselves are uniformly anti-authoritarian in those contexts.

Individual Level: Left-Wing Authoritarian Persons and Right-Wing Authoritarian Persons Both Result From Perceived Threat

Although it is true that threat may tend to produce conservative authoritarian ideological norms at a macro level in Western contexts (e.g., Jost et al., 2003), it is also true that already-existing ideological norms can sometimes be in conflict with the needs created by *new* threats. Consider a parable. Imagine a child who is raised in a family explicitly emphasizing free thought, creativity, and egalitarianism. The child thus is directly raised with anti-authoritarian ideological beliefs. Now imagine that, later in life, the same child finds out that their family’s freedom to live how they choose is being threatened by a military invasion – indeed, the child’s own family has been captured and

⁵ This is not to say that all conservative norms in Western contexts are entirely pro-authoritarian. Indeed, authoritarianism in general goes against the Western individualized ethos at a larger level, and thus it is possible that right-wing authoritarian persons may experience similar conflict described in this article for LWA persons. Yet quite a bit of evidence suggests that, compared to liberal norms, conservative norms in the West tend to be more pro-authoritarian. Thus, our probabilistic model suggests that, *on average*, more logical conflict should emerge for liberal authoritarians in the West than for conservative authoritarians.

the child is left completely alone, uncertain, and afraid. Now imagine that a leader comes along offering a guarantee that they can rescue the child's parents and restore their former way of life, but it will require obedience, sacrifice, and ultimate trust in the leader's strong hand to get them out of their current negative situation.

The point of the parable is not to suggest that the child will immediately become authoritarian; it is rather to suggest that it is reasonable to expect there would be a *psychological motive* towards authoritarianism. Pre-existing ideology might operate against this motive, or it might operate with it. Still, the existence of the motive probably occurs in the presence of threat, *regardless of* pre-existing normatively-implanted beliefs.

When we turn to the literature, what do we find? As discussed earlier, the majority of work on the threat-authoritarianism relationship has focused on authoritarianism for *conservatives* (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Crawford, 2017; Duckitt et al., 2010; Feldman, 2003; Jost et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 2005; see Choma & Hanoch, 2017, for discussion). However, although most work has focused on RWA, some work suggests the threat-authoritarianism relationship is broader in its ideological scope. For example, the prevalence of ecological stressors – such as pathogen prevalence, harsh climates, and frontier topography – has been tied to a number of variables relevant to authoritarianism at a broad level (e.g., Beall, Hofer, & Schaller, 2016; Conway et al., 2014; Conway et al., 2017; Fincher & Thornhill, 2012; Kitayama et al., 2006, 2010; Murray & Schaller, 2010; Oishi et al., 2017; Van de Vliert, 2013; see Conway, Chan, & Woodard, 2019, for a review).

Although it is often assumed that the threat-authoritarianism relationship is representative of *right-wing* authoritarianism (see Conway et al., 2019), most work in the

area does not explicitly distinguish right- versus left-wing authoritarianism. If, however, in line with our model, the same factors that produce authoritarian individuals on the right are capable of producing authoritarian individuals on the left, we would expect threats to predispose to LWA as well as RWA. Our model posits that when threats are made salient that are relevant to *any* group, there is a tendency for members of that group to seek strong ingroup authorities. That may be true even if the group has a history of anti-authoritarian norms.

Recent evidence suggests this may be true in the case of left-wing authoritarianism. As noted earlier, researchers designed a new LWA scale for Western participants (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2018) that was parallel to the most widely-used RWA scale (Altemeyer, 1998). Participants high in LWA on this scale endorse authoritarianism in manner parallel to participants high in RWA, but endorse them in a liberal-focused way. For example, both persons high in RWA and LWA agree that their country needs a “*strong, determined leader,*” that people should “*trust the judgment of the proper authorities,*” and that people should avoid listening to “*noisy rabble rousers in our society who are trying to create doubts in people’s minds.*” As a result of the parallel language in these scales, they are especially conducive to running comparative tests (see Conway et al., 2018, for validity evidence and discussion).

Using this approach, researchers have provided evidence that LWA, like RWA, is tied to threat. Two initial studies (Conway et al., 2018) focused on threat- or uncertainty-response variables: prejudice (see, e.g., Schaller, Conway, & Peavy, 2010), dogmatism (see, e.g., Jost et al., 2003), and attitude strength (see, e.g., Conway et al., 2008). Both studies revealed that LWA was positively related to increased prejudice, dogmatism, and

attitude strength. Furthermore, LWA showed similar effect sizes as RWA's relation to those constructs (Conway et al., 2018).

Although these studies were still a degree removed from direct measurements of threat, other work has shown similar results with more direct threat measurements. For example, Belief in a Dangerous World (BDW) is a measure of the degree that people express chronic threat-related concerns. BDW has long been associated with right-wing authoritarianism and invoked as evidence for the ostensible causal tie between threat and authoritarianism (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Crawford, 2017; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt et al., 2002; Duckitt et al., 2010; Jost et al., 2003). Nevertheless, a recent study revealed that BDW was also positively correlated with LWA when an ideologically-balanced BDW scale was used. This statistical effect became stronger when controlling for political ideology (Conway, 2020). Further evidence has tied LWA to even clearer measurements of perceived threat. Research revealed that, in a U.S.-wide sample, several ideologically-neutral measurements of perceived geographic-based ecological stress (e.g., "Does the place you live have disease?") significantly predicted both RWA *and* LWA. Indeed, when controlling for political ideology and income, ecological stress more strongly predicted LWA than RWA (Conway, 2020).

Our model assumes that threats are a universal part of the human experience, but does *not* assume that every person feels threatened by the same set of stressors equally. Indeed, liberals and conservatives may be threatened differentially by different classes of stimuli, such as physical versus ideological/emotional dangers (see, e.g., Crawford, 2017; Eadeh & Chang, 2019; Fiagbenu, Proch, & Kessler, 2019).⁶ It is further possible that

⁶ One possibility is that, although liberals and conservatives are both equally responsive to ideology threat,

stressors in one domain can be historically hydraulic, such that societal circumstances that cause greater stress for conservatives cause less stress for liberals, and vice versa. One such stress-related factor is the prolonged power of the other party (Conway & McFarland, 2019). People may generally feel more of a sense of threat after the opposing party has been in power for years, and this threat may differentially draw out either LWA or RWA depending on which party is in power. Consistent with this hypothesis, evidence reveals that (in all cases, controlling for self-reported political identification) RWA (versus LWA) was more predictive of voter support in an election that occurred after eight years of liberal control (2016 Trump/Clinton election), whereas LWA (versus RWA) was more predictive of voter support in an election after eight years of conservative control (2008 Obama/McCain election; Conway & McFarland, 2019). More recent work on the upcoming election validated this basic finding in a prospective manner (Conway et al., in press). These results suggest that living in an environment in which one's ideology is threatened – such as when the other party has more power – increases the likelihood of authoritarianism rising to the forefront in the threatened group, *regardless of whether it is liberal or conservative* (see Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press).

When Authoritarian Persons and Anti-Authoritarian Norms Collide

Taken in total, the evidence is consistent with our model's contention that LWA in Western contexts is best described as individuals high in authoritarianism existing

conservatives are more responsive to physical threat than are liberals (see Crawford, 2017). Evidence for this assertion as applied to RWA and LWA is mixed (Conway & McFarland, under review), but for the purposes of the present paper, the distinction is orthogonal to our model. Our model focuses not on the specific nature of threat sensitivity, but rather on the possibility that threat (whether physical or ideological) can predispose to authoritarianism in both liberals and conservatives.

within a group that maintains anti-authoritarian norms. This model can be stated in fairly conceptually simple if-then terms: *If* cultural processes produce liberal anti-authoritarian norms *and* individuals operating within those norms are faced with new threats, *then* authoritarian traits are likely to manifest behaviorally in left-wing individuals who are disposed to authoritarianism.

What might we expect said high LWA persons to look like? In our view, they should be defined by evidences of the tension caused when strong normative group beliefs collide with strong authoritarian motives. The desire for authoritarianism produced by threat would go against a cherished group norm, which might lead to important outcomes in line with this expected lack of norm-individual fit. We discuss three derived outcomes for Western contexts. Hypothesis 1 suggests that high LWA persons (compared with high RWA persons) might be less publicly active. Hypothesis 2 suggests that high LWA persons (compared with high RWA persons) might be less likely to identify as “authoritarian.” Hypothesis 3 suggests that high LWA persons (compared with high RWA persons) might process intergroup-based information more deeply. We further discuss, in Hypothesis 4, that each of these relationships in H1-H3 would be reversed in contexts that contain more normative endorsement of authoritarianism on the left than the right. Although for Hypotheses 1-3 we present some initial evidence relevant to that outcome, we view these as generative implications that are largely in need of additional research – and not as proven facts.

These hypotheses discuss different potential mechanisms that high LWA persons might use to cope with the poor fit between their normative ideology and their private motives. Our model does not specify whether these mechanisms act independently (as

uncorrelated but conceptually related outcomes), together (as positively correlated outcomes), or in hydraulic opposition (as one outcome satisfies the need for resolution and thus precludes the others). Indeed, it is likely that *when* each outcome is more or less likely to occur is itself subject to many additional factors that are beyond the scope of our model. However, our model suggests that each of these outcomes would be possible some of the time.

It is further worth noting that our model does not expect knowledge of group ideological norms to be salient to all people all of the time, nor does it expect that the potential tension between norms and individuals to necessarily play out in a direct and conscious way. As we will see in Hypotheses 1 and 2, it is possible that the tension we describe sometimes involves the psychological consequences of the logical conflict between authoritarian norms and individual persons, and not necessarily a direct subjective realization of the logical tension on part of the actor. As in other lines of research on such tensions (e.g., Rosenblatt et al., 1989), the resolution of potential difficulties might involve mechanisms such as avoidance, buffering, or re-categorization, not (necessarily) a clear conscious, internal resolution to a fully-realized tension.

It is also likely that some persons high in LWA are completely unaware of the norm conflict, and thus would seem more like persons high in RWA. Further, some far-left groups may openly encourage authoritarianism, thus leading to more leftist authoritarian norms (a possibility directly addressed by Hypothesis 4). Although these caveats are important, our model is probabilistic. The existence of anti-authoritarian norms and pressures for authoritarian individuals within the same population should lead to more of the proposed outcomes among affected left-wing populations *on average*,

because it allows for a clearer possibility of persons either directly feeling tension between their shared normative ideology and their own individual authoritarianism, or of the logical contrast between the two leading to outcomes such as avoidance or re-categorization.

Derived Hypothesis 1: Left-Wing Authoritarians Will Be Less Likely to Be Publically Active than Right-Wing Authoritarians

When people feel that they do not quite “fit” in a purported ingroup, they often are demotivated. Indeed, research suggests that in work contexts, feeling that one does not belong to an ingroup can cause people to feel disengaged and unmotivated (Smith et al., 2013). This process may apply directly to mainstream Western persons high in LWA, who are probabilistically more likely to recognize that they do not quite “fit” with their group’s prevailing ideology. Thus, whereas authoritarianism for conservatives may be motivating, authoritarianism for liberals may in many cases be *demotivating*.

Some evidence is consistent with this possibility. Federico et al. (2017) measured LWA by using one- and two-item parenting/school-based measures of authoritarianism, and then describing the characteristics of left-wing (versus right-wing) persons who endorsed those items. Federico et al. found that authoritarianism scores for liberals were associated with political *disengagement*, whereas this was not true for conservatives. Consistent with our narrative that our model is best applied to LWA in Western contexts, Federico et al.’s LWA disengagement effect was especially strong in Westernized political contexts (Federico et al., 2017). Federico et al. (2017) suggested that this finding might explain the apparent lack of authoritarian left “presence” in Western contexts, as left-wing authoritarians largely remove themselves from public parlance.

This idea is consistent with the present approach to normative fit: One possible outcome of the conflict between Western left-wing authoritarian persons and Western left-wing anti-authoritarian norms is for left-wing authoritarians to be less publicly involved, thereby decreasing the odds of feeling the direct tension of the conflict.⁷

Derived Hypothesis 2: Left-Wing Authoritarians Will Feel More Ambivalence about Self-Identifying as “Authoritarian”

Our model suggests that left-wing authoritarians in Western contexts are in an almost paradoxical position. Authoritarians are more likely to cling dogmatically to the normative beliefs of their group; and yet one of the normative beliefs of a left-wing authoritarian’s group is to be *non*-authoritarian.

One resolution to this potential tension is to re-categorize one’s authoritarian beliefs so that, semantically speaking, they are viewed as less authoritarian. Thus, our model might expect this tension would create ambivalence for left-wing authoritarians about the degree that they would be comfortable actually using the word “authoritarian” to categorize themselves and their behaviors.

In Western contexts, our model expects that left-wing authoritarians have more of a motive for such re-categorization than do right-wing authoritarians. In a sense, left-wing authoritarians (more so than right-wing authoritarians) might have a *motivational blind spot* for categorizing their own authoritarianism. Conservative right-wing

⁷ As discussed earlier, Conway and McFarland (2018) found that LWA was more predictive than RWA of electoral support for one election (2008), but RWA was predictive for another election (2016). Although this result might seem opposed to Federico’s findings, the two findings are conceptually orthogonal: LWA persons may in general be less likely to show disengagement and yet stress may make them more likely to support liberal candidates. Further, Conway and McFarland (2018) noted that their study contained no direct measure of political engagement and instead measured private reports of voting preference. Thus, it is unclear how the two studies fit together, and more research is needed to parse out the nature of the relationship. All human psychology is the result of competing factors that are isolated in specific studies.

authoritarians should feel more congruence with their ideology and thus identify their authoritarianism *as* authoritarianism, whereas liberal left-wing authoritarians should be especially reticent to do so. Further, in line with our model based on norm fit, we expect that this difference between liberal and conservative groups should be largely accounted for by differences in normative perceptions that their political groups' ideologies are congruent with authoritarianism.

No prior research to our knowledge has investigated this hypothesis. To help fill this gap, we first conducted 2 preliminary studies (total $n = 327$) measuring RWA/LWA, self-identification as authoritarian, and perceptions of ingroup authoritarian norms. Consistent with our expectations, whereas for conservatives, RWA consistently strongly positively predicted measurements related to *self-identification as authoritarian* (including questions about authoritarianism in general, as well as whether participants believed a paragraph they just wrote was authoritarian), LWA did not positively predict *self-identification as authoritarian* measurements. Further consistent with our model, the discrepancy between LWA and RWA in predicting authoritarian self-identification was reduced appreciably when controlling for perceptions of normative authoritarian ideology.

Indeed, the results were *stronger* than we had initially anticipated. Not only did higher LWA participants exhibit less self-identification with authoritarianism than higher RWA participants, they consistently showed a *negative* (though weak and not always statistically significant) relationship with authoritarian self-identification measures. This suggests that, for LWA, as authoritarianism increases, the willingness to identify as authoritarian actually *decreases*.

Although we did not anticipate a *reversal* of the effect for LWA, this finding is consistent with the norm conflict perspective discussed here. Persons high in LWA are more prone to dogmatically accept the liberal positions they fight for. As one of those positions is anti-authoritarianism, they might be more prone to see themselves as *less* authoritarian.

Because the total sample in the preliminary studies was comparatively small (total $n = 327$), we replicated the key effects in a larger sample (final $n = 4857$). All expectations for this replication study were *a priori* and were pre-registered at *OSF* at https://osf.io/pvr9z/?view_only=6802ce61af3a4d95be4f552d362f119e. Specifically, a sample of 4,988 U.S. adults were recruited using Amazon's *Mechanical Turk* (*MTurk*). *MTurk* has been validated for use (given proper controls) as a representative sample for research related to politics and political ideology (see, e.g., Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2018), and generally yields similar results as those from other samples (for examples, see Conway et al., 2018; Houck, Conway, & Repke, 2014), including work on left-wing authoritarianism (Conway et al., 2018). Further, *MTurk* has been validated for use in broader work on authoritarianism (Choma et al., 2017; Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2018; Ludeke et al., 2018). The sample was 57% female and was slightly left-leaning politically (4.2 on a political conservatism scale with 4.5 as the midpoint). One-hundred thirty one participants failed an attention check question, leaving 4,857 for analysis.

Participants were randomly assigned to complete either an RWA (Altemeyer, 1996) or parallel LWA (Conway et al., 2018) scale. Further, all participants completed measurements of: (1) Categorical political identification (“liberal,” “conservative,”

“moderate,” “independent,” or “neither”). (2) A two-item continuous political identification measurement used in past research, with items anchored by Democrat/Republican and Liberal/Conservative (e.g., Conway et al., 2016a, 2016b; Conway et al., 2018; this measure is nearly-identical to similar short scales used to measure ideology from multiple large research programs, e.g., Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). (3) The degree to which participants believed their self-identified political group would approve of authoritarianism (“I think people in my political group would approve of dogmatic or authoritarian viewpoints,” anchored on a 1-7 scale). (4) self-identification as an authoritarian person (“Generally speaking, I believe I am strongly authoritarian,” anchored on a 1-7 scale).

Results were consistent with our pre-registered predictions and our preliminary studies. Whereas RWA was significantly and positively associated with authoritarian self-identification ($r[2392] = .50, p < .001$), LWA was significantly negatively associated with authoritarian self-identification, albeit with a much smaller effect size ($r[2465] = -.14, p < .001$).⁸ Also consistent with expectations, the gap between LWA and RWA in predicting authoritarian self-identification was substantially closed when controlling for

⁸ These results show a similar pattern when looking at participants who identified categorically as “liberal” and “conservative” separately: For liberals, LWA was significantly negatively correlated with authoritarian self-identification ($r[880] = -.17, p < .001$). For conservatives, RWA was significantly positively associated with authoritarian self-identification ($r[489] = .20, p < .001$). Interestingly, liberals showed a positive correlation between RWA and authoritarian self-identification ($r[936] = .20, p < .001$), and conservatives showed a positive correlation between LWA and authoritarian self-identification ($r[497] = .28, p < .001$). These results suggest that it is only when liberals consider left-wing authoritarianism that the negative statistical effect on authoritarian self-identification occurs; liberals recognize RWA as personal authoritarianism and conservatives recognize LWA as personal authoritarianism. These ancillary results are neither inconsistent nor consistent with the primary perspective discussed here. On the one hand, we might expect that, because the effect is dependent on liberal ideology, liberals would not be averse to recognizing conservative authoritarianism as authoritarianism. On the other hand, we might expect that any kind of authoritarianism would be viewed as aversive to liberals and thus be denied as a personal trait. However, these ancillary results do not detract from or add to the primary conclusions drawn in the main text, and as such will not be discussed further.

perceptions of ingroup normative endorsement of authoritarianism, with the LWA-Authoritarian Self-Identification relationship becoming essentially zero (partial $r[2465] = -.01$) and the RWA-Authoritarian Self-Identification relationship appreciably reduced (partial $r[2392] = .23, p < .001$). Consistent with our proposed authoritarianism \rightarrow ingroup norm perception \rightarrow self-identification with authoritarianism path, statistical tests of mediation (Darlington & Hayes, 2017; Hayes, 2013) revealed significant indirect effects of RWA (bootstrapped $LCI = .33$, bootstrapped $UCI = .40$; Sobel test $Z = 23.20, p < .0001$) and LWA (bootstrapped $LCI = -.25$, bootstrapped $UCI = -.17$; Sobel test $Z = -8.93, p < .0001$) on authoritarian self-identification *through* ingroup norm endorsement.

Taken in total, these results demonstrate that, although persons high in LWA endorse authoritarian language that is almost identical to those high in RWA, high LWA persons (unlike high RWA persons) are reluctant to say they are *authoritarian*. Indeed, the negative correlation between LWA and self-identified authoritarianism is quite remarkable when one considers that, on the LWA scale, high LWA persons endorse the necessity of an extremely strong authority to guide them, rule society with an iron hand, viciously punish societal offenders, oppose those who doubt, and disavow the equality of all people. It is further worth considering that high LWA persons show classic signs associated with authoritarianism: They are more likely to vote for a liberal candidate under stress, show more prejudice and dogmatism, display stronger attitudes, show more reactance, show more informational contamination, and support more divisive behaviors (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2019; Conway et al., in press; Fasce & Avendaño, 2020). In spite of these clear markers of authoritarianism, these results

suggest that high LWA persons are reluctant to use the word “authoritarian” to describe themselves.

Although perhaps counterintuitive, this finding, which was consistent across multiple studies, can be reconciled within the norm fit perspective. Indeed, the negative relationship between LWA and self-identified authoritarianism almost entirely disappears when accounting for the perception that one’s ingroup opposes authoritarian beliefs. In spite of showing multiple signs of classic authoritarianism, people high in LWA are more likely to say they are not authoritarian. But this perception can be statistically accounted for almost entirely by their beliefs about their group’s anti-authoritarian ideology.

We cannot say for certain, however, *why* this correlation exists. We suspect that persons high in LWA do not experience direct subjective conflict as they report their authoritarianism self-identification. In much the same way that other tensions might be resolved by buffering/avoidance strategies or other mechanisms not directly recognized by the actor (e.g., Rosenblatt et al, 1989), we expect that high LWA participants maintain their own sense of “fitting in” with their group by their lack of authoritarian identification, without necessarily consciously experiencing the tension. This hypothesis is consistent with our model, which proposes that the logical conflict between authoritarian norms and individual beliefs, whether through conscious or less conscious mechanisms, drives high LWA persons to different outcomes than high RWA persons. However, we cannot say for certain that high LWA persons are unaware of the conflict as they make their ratings, or pinpoint the exact source of the effect.

Indeed, we suspect that the use of a re-categorization method to resolve the logical conflict for high LWA persons is in part dependent on the method we used in the

present study. Re-categorization is easier when the terms are kept vague, as we did purposefully in this study. We suspect that if we more clearly defined for participants the three sub-types of authoritarianism in ways that mapped onto the LWA questionnaire, participants would experience more direct psychological tension between their own LWA scores and their groups' norms, and in turn feel compelled to use alternative methods of resolving that tension in ways that would diminish the reported effects for Hypothesis 2.

Derived Hypothesis 3: Left-Wing Authoritarians Will Experience More Normative-Based Integrative Processing than Right-Wing Authoritarians

There are multiple ways of dealing with logical tension that emerges due to the clash between ingroup norms and private motives. As discussed in Hypothesis 1, a person in this situation might be less inclined to be public – to maintain private attitudes while removing oneself from the public sphere to minimize the subjective experience of conflict. As discussed in Hypothesis 2, a person might psychologically re-categorize individual beliefs to make them appear more in line with ingroup norms.

But there is a third outcome that prior research (e.g., Tetlock, 1986) suggests may also come into play, especially when participants are asked to weigh in on the issue in an open-ended fashion: Persons high in LWA (compared to persons high in RWA) may be especially prone to deeper processing of the mismatch between norms and private beliefs to better integrate the two sides of the potential internal conflict. The Value Pluralism Model (VPM; Tetlock, 1986) states that complex processing results when persons hold conflicting values and attempt to resolve those discrepancies, and a wide array of evidence supports this conclusion (e.g., Maddux et al., 2014; Tadmor and Tetlock, 2006;

Tadmor et al., 2009; Tetlock, 1986; Tetlock et al., 1994; see Conway, Suedfeld, & Tetlock, 2018, for a review).

How might this tendency overlap with LWA? Generally speaking, authoritarians are dogmatic about domains relevant to groups and authorities, and as such are often less complex in their processing of relevant domains (see, e.g., Jost et al., 2003; Van Hiel et al., 2010; Conway et al., 2018). Consider the issue of cooperation among opposing political groups. Authoritarians ought to be especially motivated to process such domains in dogmatic and simple ways, because they are more sensitive to the potential threat of the opposing political party. They would, in fact, be more likely to react with a cognitively *defensive* posture to such domains that would close down open-minded processing.

However, for left-wing authoritarians, this defensive motive would be in conflict with their normative anti-authoritarian ideology, which lends itself to more openness-based processing approach on relevant domains. This propensity might cause persons high in LWA to show deeper processing on intergroup cooperation domains than persons high in RWA, because persons high in LWA would be more likely in those instances to experience conflicting thoughts.

No data on which we are aware directly tests this potential discrepancy between LWA and RWA. However, some work on ideology and integrative complexity suggests a pattern partially consistent with this hypothesis. Work on the relation between ideology and integrative complexity has consistently shown that politicians on the left are more complex than those on the right (Tetlock, 1983, 1984, 1985; Tetlock et al., 1985; Tetlock et al., 1994; Thoemmes & Conway, 2007; Wasike, 2017; see Houck & Conway, 2019,

for a summary meta-analysis). Although this work did not measure RWA or LWA, it is possible that this difference arises in part because persons high in LWA – who presumably comprise part of each liberal sample – experience more value conflict on average than persons low in LWA, thus driving liberal scores up overall.

Prior evidence is not entirely favorable to Hypothesis 3, however. Because the political extremes on both sides tend to be lower in complexity than the political middle, this evidence has generally been interpreted to mean that the effect is driven by left-wing moderates as higher in complexity than right-wing moderates (Tetlock et al., 1994). That may be the case, but it is also possible that the effect partially represents the increased probability for ambivalence, uncertainty, and deeper processing associated with left-wing persons who are authoritarian when threats are imminent. As the degree to which ideological extremity and authoritarianism are separate factors is unclear,⁹ we cannot draw any firm conclusions from the exact breakdown of moderates to extremists.

We used available data to provide a more direct test of Hypothesis 3. In the context of the larger study discussed for Hypothesis 2, participants were asked to write their open-ended opinion on the following group cooperation-based topic: “It is a good thing for Democrats and Republicans to work together to solve our nation’s problems.” These open-ended responses ($n = 4767$) were scored for integrative complexity (Suedfeld, 2000; Suedfeld et al., 1994; Suedfeld & Wallbaum, 1992) and its two subcomponents (dialectical and elaborative complexity, Conway et al., 2008; Conway &

⁹ Although the two constructs are undoubtedly related, *ideological extremity* on the left may be distinguishable from *authoritarianism*. It is conceptually possible for someone to be very authoritarian about a moderate belief, or hold extreme beliefs in a non-authoritarian way. For example, the extremity of one’s belief about the environment might be disentangled from whether or not one approves of authoritarian measures concerning the environment. Consistent with this possibility, LWA in one study was significantly, but only moderately ($r = .31$), correlated with attitude extremity/strength on an environment-based item (Conway et al., 2018a).

Conway, 2011; Conway et al., 2011) using the standardized and validated *Automated Integrative Complexity* system (for validation and evidence pertinent to the system, see Conway et al., 2014; Conway, Conway, & Houck, 2020; Houck et al., 2014; Houck et al., 2017; Houck et al., 2018; McCullough & Conway, 2018a, 2018b; Zubrod et al., 2020).

Initial results raised the possibility that high RWA and high LWA persons differed in their processing of the group cooperation question: Whereas RWA was significantly negatively correlated with integrative complexity ($r[2337] = -.16, p < .001$), LWA was essentially uncorrelated with integrative complexity ($r[2430] = .01, p = .590$). These results remained essentially the same for RWA when controlling for self-identified political ideology (partial $r = -.15, p < .001$). For LWA, the results were similar when controlling for ideology, although the correlation did become significantly (but weakly) negative (partial $r[2337] = -.04, p = .037$).

Importantly, prior research suggests that a defensive posture is especially associated with decreased *dialectical* complexity (and sometimes may even be associated with *increased* elaborative complexity; Conway et al., 2008; Conway et al., 2011a; Conway et al., 2011b). If the difference above between RWA and LWA was due to the processes suggested by our model and the VPM, we would expect it to be driven more by dialectical than elaborative forms of complexity. Stated differently, we would expect LWA persons to exhibit *less* of a defensive-oriented complexity pattern. This is exactly what our preliminary data suggest: Using the ratio of elaborative-to-dialectical complexity as a marker of a defensive cognitive posture (see Conway et al., 2011a; Houck et al., 2017; Zubrod et al., 2020), RWA was positively associated with defensive thinking ($r = .13, p < .001$), whereas LWA was negatively associated with defensive

thinking (although the effect size was very close to zero, $r = -.04$, $p = .038$).

These results are preliminary and should be treated with caution, especially given the small effect sizes. Two caveats in particular should be noted. (1) Complexity is domain-specific, and thus the relation between ideology and complex processing varies from domain to domain (Conway et al., 2016a; Conway et al., 2016b). As a result, we should be especially skeptical of a result based on only one attitude item (see Conway et al., 2016a, for discussion).^{10,11} (2) Unlike the new data for Derived Hypothesis 2, more detailed analyses of the Hypothesis 3 complexity results suggested potentially conflicting messages for persons who self-identified as liberal or conservative. Specifically, there was little difference in RWA and LWA effects on complexity when comparing LWA for self-identified liberals with RWA for self-identified conservatives (both effects around zero).¹²

¹⁰ In the present study, participants also completed an open-ended question related to smoking motives that was scored by AutoIC. These results showed a weak (but statistically significant) negative correlation between RWA and complexity ($r = -.08$, about half the effect size of that for the reported cooperation of democrats and republican item). LWA's relationship with the smoking item was essentially zero. Controlling for complexity on the smoking item did not change results for either RWA or LWA effect on the complexity of the political cooperation item. This additional result suggests that RWA persons were also lower in complexity on a different item unrelated to politics, but that they were more weakly so – and the complexity on this item did not affect the main results reported here.

¹¹ A prior study with a much smaller number of participants ($N = 202$) used two political domain stems that did not directly reference group cooperation, but instead asked participants to independently evaluate liberal and conservative leadership in two separate items. This study revealed that RWA and LWA showed a similar pattern: Both RWA and LWA were weakly (and generally non-significantly) negatively related to complexity on these items. It is possible this represents a domain-specific effect that supports the present model (because the items in that prior study did not directly reference intergroup cooperation), or that this is evidence partially counter to the present model. More data are necessary to better understand these phenomena.

¹² Indeed, results revealed that LWA was positively related to complexity for self-identified conservatives, and RWA was negatively related to complexity for self-identified liberals. This suggests an interaction between ideology and authoritarian measures unpredicted by this or any model that we know of. Although this is only one of many ways of parsing these data to account for ideology (such as controlling for continuous ideology as reported in the main text), it is not consistent with Derived Hypothesis 3 of the model. As such, additional caution is warranted – it is clearly too early to draw conclusions from these data. We present them here as the available data we are aware of, not to draw any strong conclusions. It is possible that this part of the model is simply wrong.

Derived Hypothesis 4: The Moderating Role of Left-Wing Authoritarian Norms

Although a strong case can be made that there is a *general* tendency for left-wing norms to be ideologically anti-authoritarian, the reality is more complex than any absolute statement, as researchers have long acknowledged (see Jost et al., 2003, for a discussion). Indeed, it is also conceptually possible for left-wing ideologies to become associated with authoritarian norms.¹³ Although we have discussed top-down factors that produce authoritarian norms (such as ecological stressors), cultural norms often emerge for reasons that have little to do with such pressures. This large array of “bottom-up” communication factors also contributes to when and why positions become normative (Conway et al., 2005; Conway et al., 2006; Conway et al., 2009; Conway et al., 2014; Conway et al., 2017; Conway & Schaller, 2007; Kitayama et al., 2010; Schaller et al., 2002; Schaller et al., 2004). Such communication processes often lead to the emergence of clusters of various beliefs that bear no logical relation to each other (see Cullum & Harton, 2007).

Further, the processes we have described as *individual* in the present article can become more and more normatively collective over time. It is thus possible for anti-authoritarian norms to emerge in liberals as a group initially, and/or for consistent new threats over a long period of time to gradually change the anti-authoritarian part of

¹³ There is a danger of producing a semantic tautology here. “Conservatism” can mean two things that are quite different (see Conway et al., 2020): (1) the desire to maintain the status quo, and (2) conservative ideological positions. Although, conservative ideologies do tend to prefer status quo maintenance – and thus empirical evidence supports the correlation of these two things – they are conceptually orthogonal. Every group would in theory prefer to maintain the status quo, *if* that status quo were favorable to its desired ideology. If, as is often the case, the “status quo” is predominantly liberal, one presumes that liberals would prefer to maintain the status quo than to overturn it. What we often mean by conservative ideology preferring “tradition” is a *particular set* of traditions that are especially likely to be authoritarian in their nature. Although there is empirical evidence for this possibility, we are not conflating “status quo” with “ideological conservatism.”

ideology, while leaving the other parts of liberal ideology (e.g., support for governmental programs for the poor, support for unions) unaltered.

As a result, it is not surprising that there appear to be contexts in which otherwise-liberal ideological positions seem to be strongly correlated with *pro*-authoritarian norms. The most common examples, as previously discussed, involve communism in Eastern Europe and Russia (see Schwartz & Bardi, 1997; Conway et al., 2006, for discussions). The ideology of communism – an inherently left-wing ideological system – has long had an authoritarian bent (see, e.g., Bilewicz et al., 2017; De Regt, Mortelmans, & Smits, 2011; Jost et al., 2003; McFarland et al., 1992, 1993, 1996; Reese, 2012; Todosijević & Enyedi, 2008).

With respect to the larger issue of the potentially *inherent* conservative normative ideology-authoritarianism link (e.g., Jost et al., 2003), our model remains neutral. However, from the perspective of the Authoritarian Norm Fit Model, the possibility of authoritarian *left-wing* cultural norms suggests an important hypothesis: Namely, that the normative status of the link between liberalism and authoritarianism will alter the proposed relationships in Derived Hypotheses 1-3. Indeed, our model clearly states that it is ultimately the *fit* between the normative status of ingroup authoritarianism and individual psychology that matters. As such, Hypotheses 1-3 are based on the assumption that authoritarianism is more normatively accepted among right-wing than left-wing groups. While that is likely true much of the time (Jost et al., 2003), it need not always be the case. Thus, to the degree that left-wing groups normatively accept authoritarianism more than right-wing groups, our model predicts that persons high in *right-wing* authoritarianism (compared to persons high in left-wing authoritarianism)

would be (1) less likely to be publically active, (2) feel more ambivalence about self-identifying as “authoritarian,” and (3) experience more normative-based integrative processing.

No data that we know of tests this key moderating variable, which provides future researchers with a large open door for generative new research related to our model. Thus, our model not only helps us better understand authoritarianism in contexts dominated by right-wing authoritarianism, but also predicts cultural differences around the world in how authoritarianism operates.

Authoritarian Norm Fit Model: Conditions Necessary for Falsification

To this point, we have summarized evidence that, in Western contexts, (1) conservative ideological norms in Western, industrialized contexts are more likely to be authoritarian than liberal norms, (2) both conservative and liberal persons in these contexts can nonetheless be genuinely authoritarian, (3) perceived threat is likely to produce authoritarian individuals on all sides of the political spectrum, and (4) left-wing authoritarian persons in Western contexts, unlike right-wing authoritarian persons, exhibit a mismatch between normative ingroup ideology and private authoritarian beliefs. We have further derived four hypotheses related to this normative mismatch and evaluated some initial evidence related to the first three hypotheses – with small-but-consistent evidence for the first two hypotheses, and mixed evidence for the third hypothesis.

Taken together, this evidence reveals great potential for the Authoritarian Norm Fit Model to provide an excellent tool for researchers to integrate prior research into a coherent whole. However, good theories should not only be broadly integrative (e.g.,

Ellemers, 2013; Van Zomeren, 2016), they should also provide testable ideas that are subject to being proven wrong (O'Donohue et al., 2017; Van Lange, 2013). Thus, to maximize the value of our theoretical perspective, it is important to give explicit attention to the conditions necessary to falsify our model.

There is no perfect test for the truth or a falsifiability of any theory (Van Lange, 2013). However, some tests are more relevant to each theory than others. In particular, it is important to distinguish the kinds of tests that would be *strong* tests of falsification from those that would be *weak* tests by clearly illuminating the specific conditions under which the theory would expect particular results (see, e.g., Baumeister & Vohs, 2016; McGuire, 2004; O'Donohue et al., 2017). Loosely speaking, strong tests are those that lay out very specific conditional criteria that ought to produce a particular outcome the majority of the time (given those met criteria), while a weak test is subject to alternative explanations that still allow for the theory to be true even if the test “fails” – such as subordinate hypotheses that explain the competing finding while keeping the theory intact (O'Donohue et al., 2017). For example, if a theory suggests that X causes Y through M, it is a weak test of the theory if we do not know if X actually manipulated M in a given study, or how strong the relationship between X and M is in that study (see Baumeister & Vohs, 2016; Dang et al., 2020). In that case, if X does not cause Y, it is hard to know if this provides evidence that the original theory is wrong, or alternatively simply shows that the condition necessary to test the theory (X influences M) is not present because the manipulation was not effective for reasons having nothing to do with the theory (see Baumeister & Vohs, 2016, for discussion).

For the present model, strong tests would clearly identify contexts in which the (a) level of authoritarian norm fit was known for the individuals in the study. Further, for tests involving the threat-authoritarianism components of the model, such tests would (b) clearly involve threats that were *perceived as threatening by the group in question*. In other words, truly strong tests of the model would have a clear picture that individuals in each study could be identified as having particular levels of authoritarian norm fit, and that assumed influencing variables such as stress/threat were actually relevant to the population in question. It is worth noting that, although there is much broad evidence consistent with our model thus far, to date very little research has provided such strong tests – which suggests a generative and open door for future researchers.

What does this mean for the model's falsifiability? To the degree that we can clearly identify the individual levels of authoritarian fit, we expect that there will be identifiable similarities and differences between persons who have strong fit and those who do not, as discussed in the preceding sections. Specifically, if it could be proven across numerous studies that (a) we could not consistently identify authoritarians in low-fit groups, (b) persons in low-fit groups do not show a consistent connection between authoritarianism and threat (on measurements shown to be threatening to the low-fit group members), *and* (c) persons with differing levels of authoritarian fit did not consistently differ on at least some of the markers identified in this article, then we could definitively rule out the value of our model.

Importantly, for a large theoretical model such as the one discussed here, some hypotheses are more central than others (see, e.g., McGuire, 2004; O'Donohue et al., 2017). This is in part because the farther we go in the chain of derivation, the more

possible it is that there is an error in the derivation process – and not the original substantive idea on which the theory was based (see Conway & Schaller, 2002, for an illustration). Consider, for example, Hypothesis 3 in the present work. While it is possible to falsify Hypothesis 3 outright as a stand-alone hypothesis, would doing so completely eradicate the value of our model? We do not think so. In the case of Hypothesis 3, it is possible that it might be false, not because there is no truth or value in our model, but because an assumption of the *hypothesis derivation* is false, or because some countermanding hypothesis overrides it. For example, it may be that persons who have low authoritarian norm fit are, as our model suggests, tacitly motivated to do something about it. However, it could be the case that avoidance or re-categorization strategies (implied by Hypotheses 1 and 2) are simply consistently more palatable than integration strategies (implied by Hypothesis 3). This would not invalidate the usefulness of the model; it would only invalidate our derivation of Hypothesis 3.

That is not to say that such a test would be irrelevant to the model. Theories are partially valuable because they are truthful, but they are also valuable because they are generative of novel facts (Conway & Schaller, 2002; McGuire, 2004). For the reasons described earlier, this generativity must be taken as a whole and not on a case-by-case basis. Thus, if one of our derived hypotheses can be demonstrably proven to be wrong, it at a minimum reduces the value of the model a small amount. However, imagine that *all four* of our derived hypotheses could be definitively proven false. In that case, even if we could show some of the effects mentioned earlier, it would be reasonable to begin to seriously doubt the utility of the model as a whole.

The Authoritarian Norm Fit Model and Existing Ideology Research: The Over-Simplification of “Left” Versus “Right”

Following prior models (e.g., Jost et al., 2003), we have thus far focused on fairly broad and sweeping distinctions between left- and right-wing groups. While this broad distinction has proven to be empirically important across hundreds of studies (e.g., Conway et al., 2016a, 2016b; Jost et al., 2003; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; Van Hiel et al., 2010), it oversimplifies the complexities of ideological viewpoints (Chan et al., 2018). Much work has attempted to untangle the differences among different dimensions of left- and right-wing political positions.

One of the most prominent examples is recent work distinguishing between cultural and economic ideological positions (Federico & Malka, 2018; Malka et al., 2014; Malka et al., 2017a; Malka et al., 2017b; Malka & Lelkes, 2010; Malka & Soto, 2015). For example, cultural and economic conservatism are often uncorrelated or negatively correlated (see Malka et al., 2017b). Further, threat-based variables predict *cultural* conservatism but not *economic* conservatism – and sometimes threat-based variables actually predict economic *liberalism* (Malka et al., 2017a, 2017b).

This ideological complexity interfaces with the Authoritarian Norm Fit Model in two different ways. (1) First, much of what we discuss in this article is likely best classified along “culturally” ideological – and not “economically” ideological – lines. As pointed out by prior researchers (e.g., Malka, 2017a), RWA and similar scales focus almost exclusively on what researchers consider “social” or “cultural” issues. The parallel LWA scale similarly focuses on socio-cultural issues (see Conway et al., 2018; though also see Fasce & Avendaño, 2020).

What does this mean for our model? If we grant the implied assumption and thus constrain our model only to cultural ideology, the present model importantly offers up some important guideposts for understanding past work. Specifically, prior work separating cultural from economic ideology suggests a fairly simple “cultural conservative authoritarianism is the result of threat” approach. As discussed herein, we believe that approach to be correct, but incomplete, even when isolated to cultural conservatism. In Western contexts at least, threats may tend to produce culturally conservative authoritarian norms; but they also can produce culturally liberal authoritarian people.

(2) Our model suggests that *any* political group with non-authoritarian norms can tend to produce authoritarian persons, if the appropriate threats are made salient. Although we have focused only on left-wing authoritarians (and very likely only *cultural* left-wing authoritarians), the complex existence of multiple ideological subgroups raises the possibility of *multiple kinds of authoritarians* – authoritarians who have different foci and targets, but who share the underlying properties of preferring strong authorities due to perceived threats. Consider libertarians. Libertarians are often economically conservative but culturally liberal (Malka et al., 2017a). As such, they are unlikely to share a normative authoritarian ideology with cultural conservatives (see Malka et al., 2017a). The Authoritarian Normative Fit Model would expect, however, that in spite of this anti-authoritarian norm, threats sensitive to libertarians could still produce libertarian authoritarian *persons*. Thus, it should be possible to capture such persons in a fashion parallel to prior work on LWA (Conway et al., 2018; Conway & McFarland, 2018; Federico et al., 2017).

Taken together, these points suggest an important conclusion. The implication of much prior work tends to isolate authoritarianism to cultural conservatism, seemingly avoiding the possibility of strong authoritarianism in economic conservatives and cultural liberals. The available work on LWA presents a different story. That work – and our Authoritarian Norm Fit Model – suggests rather that in all political groups with anti-authoritarian norms, authoritarian persons are still likely to occur in the presence of new threats. When they do, they should exhibit the hallmark properties of poor individual-norm fit outlined here.

Concluding Thoughts

For science to function optimally, it needs to be self-correcting. Many traits or attitudes once ascribed almost exclusively to conservatives have, upon greater scientific scrutiny, been recently shown to apply to liberals as well (Clark & Winegard, 2020; Crawford, 2017; Ditto et al., 2019; Duarte et al., 2015; Eadeh & Chang, 2019; Fiagbenu, Proch, & Kessler, 2019; Frimer, Skitka, & Motyl, 2017; Honeycutt & Jussim, 2020; Jussim et al., 2015; Jussim et al., 2016). However, it is important that the field not stop with *merely* correcting prior assumptions. We must move beyond the recognition that liberals and conservatives can both *exhibit quality X* to produce integrative theories of the similarities and differences among liberals and conservatives on that dimension (see Chan et al., 2018, for a discussion).

Although authoritarianism has long been associated only with conservatives, work over the past three decades has demonstrated that it can also be associated with liberals. The present paper attempts to help reconcile this work to existing theories by providing a framework from which to explore how persons high in LWA and RWA are both similar

to and different from each other. We do not believe that this framework will be the final word on the subject, but we hope it facilitates a larger integrative discussion of how authoritarian liberals and authoritarian conservatives can be understood in relation to each other.

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