

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

[The psychological profile of religious rightwing conservative authoritarians](http://loosetncanon.blogspot.com/2007/06/psychological-profile-of-religious.html)

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Religious right wing conservatives - the shoe fits.

You often wondered why conservative bloggers are incredibly inflexible, delete posts, and can not accept evidence that disagrees with their mindset? By observing the psychological makeup of such people, this should explain why.

I've often struggled to understand why some 'type' of people believe the way they do. There must be a psychological profile that defines religious right wing conservatives. *Many don't realize that they are in fact authoritarians.* Why they rely on faith instead of reason, dogmatism instead of critical thinking. Why it is impossible to form a debate with such people who already have the 'divine understanding' based on a sense of "the good and moral us" vs. "the bad and immoral them". This could explain why debating with such people is so difficult, why their level of denial is so great, why such bloggers strictly moderate their posts and don't hesitate to delete "inconvenient truths."

from MyDD.com:

"Rightwing authoritarianism is defined as the convergence of three attitudinal clusters:"

- ✦ Authoritarian submission: A high degree of submission to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives.
- ✦ Authoritarian aggression: A general aggressiveness, directed against various persons, that is perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities.
- ✦ Conventionalism: A high degree of adherence to the social conventions that are perceived to be endorsed by society and its established authorities.

And of course, with the religious right wing conservative, God is the ultimate authority figure and all information is filtered through a religious dogma. Though there are shades of gray, through extensive research, Robert Altemeyer identified these tendencies among right wing authoritarians. From his book, [The Authoritarian Specter](#), published by Harvard University Press -

Right Wing Authoritarian Tendencies:

Faulty reasoning

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- ✦ Make many incorrect inferences from evidence.
- ✦ Hold contradictory ideas leading them to 'speak out of both sides of their mouths.'
- ✦ Uncritically accept that many problems are 'our most serious problem.'
- ✦ Uncritically accept insufficient evidence that supports their beliefs.

- ✦ Uncritically trust people who tell them what they want to hear.
- ✦ Use many double standards in their thinking and judgements.

Profound Character Flaws

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- ✦ Be dogmatic.
- ✦ Be zealots.
- ✦ Be hypocrites.
- ✦ Be bullies when they have power over others.
- ✦ Help cause and inflame intergroup conflict.
- ✦ Seek dominance over others by being competitive and destructive in situations requiring cooperation

Blindness To Own Failings

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- ✦ Believe they have no personal failings.
- ✦ Avoid learning about their personal failings.
- ✦ Be highly self-righteous.
- ✦ Use religion to erase guilt over their acts and to maintain their self-righteousness.

Political Tendencies

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- ✦ Weaken constitutional guarantees of liberty, such as the Bill of Rights.
- ✦ Accept unfair and illegal abuses of power by government authorities.
- ✦ Trust leaders (such as Richard Nixon) who are untrustworthy.
- ✦ Sometimes join left-wing movements, where their hostility distinguishes them.
- ✦ But much more typically endorse right-wing political parties.
- ✦ Be conservative/Reform party (Canada) or Republican Party (United States) lawmakers who
 1. have a conservative economic philosophy;
 2. believe in social dominance;
 3. are ethnocentric;
 4. are highly nationalistic;
 5. oppose abortion;
 6. support capital punishment;
 7. oppose gun-control legislation;
 8. say they value freedom but actually want to undermine the Bill of Rights;
 9. do not value equality very highly and oppose measures to increase it;
 10. are not likely to rise in the Democratic party, but do so among Republicans

Hostility & Fear Toward Outgroups

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- * Weaken constitutional guarantees of liberty, such as the Bill of Rights.
- * Punish severely `common' criminals in a role-playing situation.
- * Admit they get personal pleasure from punishing such people.
- * But go easy on authorities who commit crimes and people who attack minorities.
- * Be prejudiced against many racial, ethnic, nationalistic, and linguistic minorities.

- * Be hostile toward homosexuals.
- * Support 'gay-bashing.'
- * Be hostile toward feminists.
- * Volunteer to help the government persecute almost anyone.
- * Be mean-spirited toward those who have made mistakes and suffered.
- * Be fearful of a dangerous world.

Not-So-Healthy Ingroup Cohesion

Right wing authoritarian conservatives are more likely to:

- * Strongly believe in group cohesiveness and 'loyalty.'
- * Insist on traditional sex roles.
- * Use religion to erase guilt over their acts and to maintain their self-righteousness.
- * Be 'fundamentalists' and the most prejudiced members of whatever religion they belong to.
- * Accept unfair and illegal abuses of power by government authorities.
- * Trust leaders (such as Richard Nixon) who are untrustworthy

Many [studies](#), some government funded, have reached similar conclusions of this psychological profile - like the one quoted on my main blog page that cites conservatives as having: "a set of neuroses rooted in fear and aggression, dogmatism and the intolerance of ambiguity."

One of the best recent books on this subject is John Dean's [Conservatives Without Conscience](#). He notes that this type of conservatism is a recent phenomenon - the religious rightwing conservative authoritarians of today are not the same as the Barry Goldwater or the William F Buckley conservatives, they are a new breed. For a quick summary of the main points of this book, constitutional lawyer Gleen Greenwald [reviews](#) it with excerpts:

"Dean contends, and amply documents, that the "conservative" movement has become, at its core, an authoritarian movement composed of those with a psychological and emotional need to follow a strong authority figure which provides them a sense of moral clarity and a feeling of individual power, the absence of which creates fear and insecurity in the individuals who crave it. By definition, its followers' devotion to authority and the movement's own power is supreme, thereby overriding the consciences of its individual members and removing any intellectual and moral limits on what will be justified in defense of their movement.

Dean relies on substantial social science data to illustrate the personality type that seeks out authoritarian movements. But his case is made much more persuasively by what one can visibly see unfolding before one's own eyes.

As Dean convincingly demonstrates, the characteristic which defines the Bush movement, the glue which binds it together and enables and fuels all of the abuses, is the vicious, limitless methods used to attack and demonize the "Enemy," which encompasses anyone -- foreign or domestic -- threatening to their movement. What defines and motivates this movement are not any political ideas or strategic objectives, but instead, it is the bloodthirsty, ritualistic attacks on the Enemy de jour -- the Terrorist, the Communist, the Illegal Immigrant, the Secularist, and most of all, the *Liberal*."

I would be extremely interested in knowing about the 30% of Americans who still support GW Bush. According to Rasmussen, roughly half (about 14%) *strongly* support Bush. I'd be willing to bet that, of the 14% of Americans that strongly support Bush, 90% of them are devout Christians as well. By all indications, it figures into the psychological profile.

Conservatism: clinical tendencies

A study funded by the US Government's National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health has concluded that conservatism can be explained psychologically as: **a set of neuroses rooted in "fear and aggression, dogmatism and the intolerance of ambiguity"**. (see report)

A study by NYU and UCLA published in the **Journal Nature Neuroscience** shows **liberals have a greater cognitive ability to problem solve and cope with changing conditions than conservatives** who are more "persistent and structured" and are more reliant on "habitual responses." From the study: "Liberalism was associated with stronger conflict-related anterior cingulate activity, suggesting greater neurocognitive sensitivity to cues for altering a habitual response pattern." **Essentially, conservatives tend to rely on 'persistence' in a 'habitual response pattern,' despite signals that this response pattern should change... (i.e. "stay the course")**