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Authoritarianism and Intolerance Under Autocratic and Democratic Regimes

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Abstract

Based on findings indicating that authoritarians express greater intolerance in situations where diversity is more apparent, Stenner (2005) proposes that democracies may sabotage their stability by allowing the unbridled expression of societal pluralism. She therefore suggests that pluralism in democracies be suppressed in order to pacify authoritarians and the threat their unbridled intolerance may pose to the stability of these countries. Based on data from the World and European Values Surveys, I examined 75,478 individuals across 75 countries to determine if authoritarians are indeed more intolerant in more democratic societies; a key assumption upon which Stenner's suggestion rests. While authoritarianism was more strongly and negatively related to tolerance in more democratic countries, authoritarians in more democratic countries were more tolerant than were authoritarians in more autocratic countries. I argue that Stenner's concern may be valid if we strictly consider rapid pluralization within a single generation within consolidating democracies, but for established democracies, her concern appears unwarranted.

Keywords: autocracy, authoritarianism, democracy, normative threat, social tolerance

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In an innovative conceptualization and examination of authoritarian individuals that built on and integrated decades of previous research, Stenner (2005) suggested that in order to ensure the stability of modern liberal democracy we must reign in overt pluralism; in order to save modern democracy, we must severely cripple, if not destroy, it.

Stenner (2005) provided convincing evidence that authoritarians become more intolerant of and punitive toward outgroups the more diversity they perceive, be it real or imagined. Sounding a warning similar to that of Altemeyer (1996), in her conclusion she proposed that democracy has the potential to be its own undoing. She stated, via reference to an as yet unpublished companion to her 2005 book, “[q]uite simply, authoritarians are never more tolerant than when reassured and pacified by an autocratic culture, and never more intolerant than when forced to endure a vibrant democracy” (Stenner, 2005, p. 334). She continued, “[t]he overall lesson is clear: when it comes to democracy, less is often more, or at least more secure” (Stenner, 2005, p. 335).

Stenner's (2005) concern, exemplified in her discussion of the ethnic conflict that erupted in the former Yugoslavia after Tito's death in 1980 (pp. 110-114), is that increased intolerance and punitiveness among authoritarians, which accompanies increased perceptions of pluralism, results in political instability that can threaten democracy itself. However, if this were the case, one would expect to see more democracies collapse as they become more pluralistic. While history provides myriad examples of democratic reversals, these universally occur in fledgling democracies that by no stretch of the imagination can be considered "vibrant" (cf., Huntington, 1991; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Kapstein & Converse, 2008; Svobik, 2008). Those countries considered the most vibrant democracies, the Scandinavian countries, hardly seem perched on the edge of a precipice.

Current research demonstrates a number of patterns that may allay concerns that democracy will foment its own demise due to authoritarian intolerance. Decades of evidence from intergroup contact theory research suggests that exposure to diversity increases generalized tolerance (Allport, 1954; McLaren, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). This research is buoyed by recent literature that makes the explicit argument that diversity in any form promotes a generalized tolerance of difference (Dunn, Orellana, & Singh, 2009; Dunn & Singh, 2011). The democratic learning literature finds a consistent relationship between duration of democracy and increased tolerance (Marquart-Pyatt & Paxton, 2007; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003). The current incarnation of modernization theory provides evidence that as countries become increasingly existentially secure, they also become more democratic and more tolerant of pluralism (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2013). While this literature does not look specifically at authoritarians, it certainly provides a reason to wonder how democracy is going to destabilize due to increased intolerance and punitive-mindedness in a limited portion of the populous (i.e., authoritarians) when the populous-at-large is becoming more and more tolerant as democracies continue to age and progress toward more inclusive and pluralistic societies.

A seemingly fundamental component of Stenner's (2005) argument is that authoritarians are more intolerant under democratic regimes than they are under autocratic regimes. This paper specifically examined this assumption. Using a linear mixed model approach to analyze over 75,000 individuals across 75 countries, I modeled tolerance as an interaction between Stenner's (2005) authoritarian predisposition scale and Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) effective democracy score, controlling for various other theoretically relevant variables. This was to examine both Stenner's assumption that authoritarians are more intolerant in more democratic countries, and, additionally, whether authoritarians are more intolerant relative to the rest of their country's residents in more democratic countries. The following sections explicate why one may reason that authoritarians are more intolerant in democracies than they are in autocracies and why this reasoning may not be entirely accurate.

This article refers to authoritarians and libertarians (libertarians being the opposite pole to authoritarians on the authoritarian predisposition measure) as distinct groups. Authoritarians are those who fall on the more authoritarian side of the scale, those who favor values which promote social conformity at the expense of individual autonomy; libertarians are those who fall on the less authoritarian side of the scale, those who favor values that promote individual autonomy over social conformity (Feldman, 2003). It is important, however, to keep in mind that authoritarianism is a continuum with no solid cutpoints (outside of those that numerical scales generate due to item measurement). It is more accurate to state that some are more or less authoritarian than others. Those traits associated with authoritarians are likely found in all of us, just not to the same degree and/or under the same circumstances. This terminology is used more for descriptive clarity than conceptual accuracy.

The Authoritarian Predisposition

The concept of an authoritarian predisposition (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005) is relatively straightforward, if slightly less straightforward in its predictions. Standard models of authoritarianism in individuals propose that increased authoritarianism corresponds with increased intolerance toward outgroups. In the most simplistic sense, in these conceptions, authoritarianism is a personality type/syndrome (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1996). The problem with these conceptions is that measurement turned out to be unstable and the hypotheses using such measurement were tautological (Stenner, 2005); measurements of both the personality type and the attitudinal clusters were shown to vary within individuals dependent on environmental conditions (Doty, Peterson, & Winter, 1991; Sales, 1973), and the measures themselves included indicators that were also indicators of relevant predicted concepts such as tolerance (Christie & Cook, 1958; Martin, 2001). The concept and measurement of an authoritarian predisposition is an attempt to overcome these issues.

Authoritarianism, as defined by Stenner (2005), is “an individual predisposition concerned with the appropriate balance between group authority and uniformity, on the one hand, and individual autonomy and diversity, on the other” (p. 14; see also Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997). Focusing on the “extreme authoritarianism” end of the dimension, authoritarianism “tends to produce a characteristic array of stances... which have the effect of glorifying, encouraging, and rewarding uniformity and of disparaging, suppressing, and punishing difference” (Stenner, 2005, p. 16).

Importantly, and as emphasized in the use of the term “predisposition” rather than “disposition”, authoritarians are not perpetually intolerant and punitive. Rather, they express such sentiment only when “the normative order” is threatened; when the “demarcation of people, authorities, institutions, values, and norms that... defines who ‘we’ are, and what ‘we’ believe in” (Stenner, 2005, p. 17) is perceived to be at risk. Under normal circumstances, circumstances where the normative order is not under threat, authoritarians and non-authoritarians appear remarkably similar in attitude and behavior (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005).

To summarize: An authoritarian predisposition is a relatively stable tendency to exhibit intolerance of and hostility toward those perceived to be different when group unity and uniformity are threatened.

Democratic Facilitation of Normative Threat

Modern democracy is based in dissent and diversity; the existence of competitive and fair elections (Schumpeter, 1950)—which emphasize diversity of opinion and serve to place one party (or group of parties) in power, while relegating the other(s) to dissent (Sartori, 1997)—is democracy’s essential, if not sole, defining characteristic. As democracies age they tend to become more and more inclusive and tolerant of dissenting views. As Markoff (2011) notes, “democracy is virtually an invitation for social movements to challenge power-holders” (p. 242). Democracy emphasizes not only populism but also continually evolving and expanding pluralism. For authoritarians, who are “relentlessly ‘sociotropic’ boundary-maintainers, norm-enforcers, and cheerleaders for authority, whose classic defensive stances are activated by the experience or perception of threat to those boundaries, norms, and authorities” (Stenner, 2009, p. 143), the nearly continual challenge to group norms and authorities inherent to democracy proves an ever greater normative threat as democratic societies liberalize and become increasingly tolerant, and even supportive, of norm-challenging behavior. Democracy itself, then, may serve as a normative threat to authoritarians.

Correspondent with [Markoff's \(2011\)](#) description of democracy as an ever evolving system, research in the democratic transitions literature demonstrates that democracy is more nuanced than a basic yes/no classification. Especially since the third wave of democratization in the 1990s ([Huntington, 1991](#)), scholars have expressed concern over how effective newly emerging democracies truly are in promoting (or permitting) pluralism ([Linz & Stepan, 1996](#); [O'Donnell, 1993](#); [Rose, 2001](#)) suggesting degrees of democracy rather than the simple presence or absence of such. Formal democracy has little meaning if institutionalized political rights and civil liberties are withheld or obstructed by a tyrannical majority or a corrupt elite ([Heller, 2000](#)).

Varying degrees of divergence/convergence between democratic institutions and modern democratic principles manifests in a distinction between purely formal democracy and effective democracy ([Welzel, 2002](#)). Considering the distinction between formal and effective democracy expands the conceptual framework of democracy from a categorical, yes or no, distinction, into a continuum from a pure autocracy to a fully effective democracy which fully incarnates abstract liberal-democratic principles into concrete practices. As liberal-democratic principles, in their essence, embody the pluralistic ideals of diversity and dissent, this continuum from autocracy to a “fully” effective democracy corresponds with a continuum ranging from the complete suppression to the full expression of diversity.

For authoritarians, democracy itself is a normative threat. Democracy is a system under which diversity thrives and normative values are continually under threat of challenge and change. Absent further considerations, the relationship between authoritarian expression and increased democracy appears fairly straightforward; for authoritarians, greater expression and tolerance of diversity and dissent correspondent with a more effective democracy should coincide with greater expression of intolerant attitudes; authoritarians should be more intolerant in more democratic countries. However, this supposition ignores the importance of societal norms and thereby oversimplifies the relationship between democracy and authoritarian attitudes.

Social Learning and Societal Norms

[Stenner \(2005\)](#) reconstructed the concept of authoritarianism while attempting to remain true to the foundational ideas underlying the concept. However, while acknowledging the importance of group norms in theory, Stenner did not fully consider the importance of such in her conclusion. Arguing that authoritarians are increasingly more intolerant *than the average individual* where regimes increasingly allow for the manifest expression of pluralism is considerably different from arguing that authoritarians are increasingly intolerant where regimes increasingly allow for the manifest expression of pluralism. [Stenner \(2005\)](#) argued the latter; considering the relevance of societal norms to authoritarian expression suggests the former.

Most conceptualizations of authoritarianism involve a focus on what [Altemeyer \(1996\)](#) referred to as conventionalism, or “behavioral and attitudinal conformity with ingroup norms and rules of conduct” ([Duckitt, 1989](#), p. 70). Authoritarians are highly norm-adherent, often adjusting their attitudes to conform to group norms. For example, [Pettigrew \(1958\)](#) concluded that higher levels of prejudice among South African authoritarians than among southern American authoritarians resulted from differences in norms. [Altemeyer \(1996\)](#) found that authoritarians adjusted their responses to questionnaire items in order to conform to the average score. [Oyamot, Fisher, Deason, and Borgida \(2012\)](#) found that authoritarians’ expression of intolerance toward immigrants depended on their perception of where the average person stands on the issue. [Stenner \(2005\)](#) similarly stressed the importance of group norms in her discussion of normative threat. Authoritarians desire unity and uniformity around those norms and values they perceive to be embodied by their acknowledged authority and ingroup.

The democratic learning paradigm argues that the “rough and tumble” of democratic politics promotes (political) tolerance through social learning processes; individuals in democratic countries are socialized to accept, at least in principle, democratic norms of tolerance (Marquart-Pyatt & Paxton, 2007; Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003). Given the near consensus with which democratic norms are accepted, at least in the abstract (Chong, 1993; Inglehart, 2003; McClosky, 1964; Norris, 1999; Prothro & Grigg, 1960), those possessing an authoritarian predisposition must be among those who accept such. As norms constrain individual attitudes and behavior (Etzioni, 2000), and as authoritarians are even more norm adherent than average (Altemeyer, 1996; Oyamoto et al., 2012; Stenner, 2005), authoritarians in more democratic countries should be more tolerant than authoritarians in less democratic countries due to adherence to norms of inclusion and tolerance.

Synthesis and Predictions

Current theory on authoritarianism, then, suggests that democracy has a dual impact on authoritarian attitudes: first, in more democratic countries, norms of inclusion and tolerance result in an increasingly tolerant public, including more tolerant authoritarians. Second, the increasingly frequent challenges to group norms and authority that accompany increasingly effective democracy pose an increasing normative threat to authoritarians. Authoritarians are therefore increasingly intolerant of outgroups in countries that are increasingly democratic, relative to the population as a whole. This suggests three predictions: the first following from established research on democracy and tolerance, the second divergent from Stenner’s (2005) expectations, and the third consistent with her expectations:

Prediction 1: Social tolerance will be higher in countries that are more democratic.

Prediction 2: Authoritarians will be more tolerant in more democratic countries relative to less democratic countries.

Prediction 3: Authoritarianism will demonstrate a greater negative relationship with tolerance in more democratic countries.

The third prediction is not to suggest the presence of a continuously perceived normative threat on the part of authoritarians in democracies. Rather, it is more accurate to state that increasingly effective democracy provides increasing *potential* for perceived normative threat among authoritarians. Democracy allows for and facilitates the expression of pluralism. However, this does not mean that all individuals at all times are exposed to such. Apparent normative conflict will wax and wane and individual exposure to such will vary. Authoritarians should not, therefore, be constantly “manning the barricades” (Stenner, 2005). Living in an effective democracy will expose authoritarians to a greater frequency and degree of normative threat than if they were residents in an autocratic country; they will therefore be, on average, more intolerant than the average person.

The latter two predictions seem rather contrary when considered simultaneously. If authoritarians are norm adherent, one would assume that they score relatively closely to the mean tolerance level in any given country. Authoritarians, therefore, will not be relatively more intolerant in more democratic countries. In fact, they should always score at the mean and therefore rarely be more intolerant than the population. This suggests that libertarians, who embrace pluralism and are less norm adherent, will drive the predicted increasingly negative relationship between democracy and authoritarianism (cf., Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). However, this reasoning is flawed as it assumes perfect knowledge of societal attitudes on the part of authoritarians and homogeneity of values and peer groups within countries, neither of which likely hold. While democratic norms constrain the range of acceptable levels of intoler-

ance, variety in peer groups and false consensus effects (cf., [Wojcieszak, 2008](#); [Wojcieszak & Price, 2009](#)) allow authoritarians to depart from the average level of intolerance without violating their predilection to norm adherence.

Method

Data and Concept Measurement

The individual-level data in the following analyses is from the 1995, 2000, and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) and the 2000 wave of the European Values Survey (EVS). The WVS and the EVS aim to gauge individuals' attitudes across the world's countries. The country-samples used for the analyses in this article included individuals over the age of 18, and the minimum sample size in a country is 1000 individuals. Nationally representative samples were obtained via stratified sampling.

To prevent potentially overweighting countries that appear in multiple waves, I included only the most recent survey year where the necessary data is available. "Don't know" answers were coded as missing and all observations with missing data were excluded listwise. After listwise deletion of observations containing missing data, data were available for each variable across 75 countries¹ and 75,478 individuals. There were an average of 1,006 individuals per country in the sample, with a low of 326 and a high of 2,418.

Social Tolerance

As this article examines whether democracy increases individual tolerance regardless of one's authoritarian predisposition and whether effective democracy conditions the effect of an authoritarian predisposition on individual tolerance, a relatively context-neutral measure of tolerance is necessary. Previous studies of tolerance, especially those related to political tolerance, were (intentionally) heavily context-dependent and fail to meet this criterion.

Context-dependent measures often used in political tolerance studies are problematic because they reference specific groups and specific acts ([Hurwitz & Mondak, 2002](#)). By identifying the least-liked group of the respondent and using that group to contextualize the tolerance items, [Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus \(1979\)](#) noted that United States residents were not becoming more tolerant in general, as claimed by [Nunn, Crockett, and Williams \(1978\)](#), but were becoming more tolerant of certain groups. However, as [Chong \(1986\)](#) noted, this content-control strategy "falters because it summarizes the level of tolerance in a society on the basis of an extreme data point" (p. 1387). Further, [Sullivan et al. \(1979\)](#) and [Nunn et al. \(1978\)](#) assumed an individual who does not support the right for a certain group to hold a public rally, among other acts, is intolerant of that group. In actuality, that individual may object to the specific act ([Hurwitz & Mondak, 2002](#)); for example, a person may be opposed to public rallies regardless of who participates in them. One must be especially attentive to this latter point when examining authoritarians, individuals who are inherently averse to the appearance of diversity and dissent.

While specific content-controlled and situational measures of tolerance are clearly necessary for research that examines the relationship between abstract democratic principles and more concrete expressions of those principles, for this research, such measures introduce myriad confounds. I therefore used a minimalist measure of social tolerance which avoids all such confusion by relying on questions that seek solely to determine if the respondent is willing to live in the vicinity of a member of a certain group.

The dependent variable in this paper, social tolerance, is defined as a positive general orientation toward groups outside of one's own. Following previous research (Dunn et al., 2009), I created an index of social tolerance which captures respondents' willingness to tolerate the presence of diversity; to live in close proximity to those who are unlike themselves. The social tolerance measure is a summated rating scale created by averaging the responses to six questions drawn from the WVS/EVS. Each question is a binary measure of rejection or acceptance of a distinct group as neighbors: people of a different race, immigrants/foreign workers, people with AIDS, homosexuals, drug users, and heavy drinkers. These groups were chosen to include as wide a variety of potential outgroups as possible.

The scale's Cronbach's alpha value was 0.63 across countries. The moderate alpha is not unexpected as these groups form distinctive categories. An exploratory factor analysis (using a polychoric correlation matrix) indicated that the social tolerance scale is composed of two separate, yet correlated, groups: the first composed of people of a different race and immigrants/foreign workers and the second composed of people with AIDS, homosexuals, drug users, and heavy drinkers. Replication of the below analyses using either of the two separate social tolerance scales—one focusing on race and immigration and the other composed of the items related to AIDS, homosexuals, drug users, and heavy drinkers—or the six component items as dependent variables (using a logit link) do not substantively change the conclusions reached from those reported using the full scale.ⁱⁱ The social tolerance measure was rescaled to range from 0 to 1 with a higher value indicating a higher level of social tolerance. The mean social tolerance value for each country in the dataset is depicted in Figure 1.

Authoritarian Predisposition

Feldman and Stenner (1997) argued that a valid measure of an authoritarian predisposition must isolate a predisposition to intolerance from intolerant attitudes. They proposed that a valid measure of an individual's authoritarian predisposition can be derived from a set of questions inquiring into the individual's childrearing values. The authors argued that such questions unobtrusively measure an individual's predisposition to express intolerant and punitive attitudes under conditions of normative threat.

I followed Stenner (2005), among others (Brandt & Henry, 2012; Dunn & Singh, 2011, 2014; Napier & Jost, 2008; Roccato, Vieno, & Russo, 2014; Singh & Dunn, 2013), who utilized specific child-rearing values questions from the WVS/EVS to measure an individual's authoritarian predisposition. The authoritarian predisposition scale is an additive index composed of four questions gauging the respondent's view of desirable qualities to instill in children: independence, imagination, respect/tolerance for others, and obedience. Each of the first three items was coded 1 if rejected and 0 if accepted. The fourth item, obedience, was coded 1 if accepted and 0 if rejected. The items were then summed to form a scale ranging from 0 to 4 with a higher value indicating a higher degree of authoritarianism.

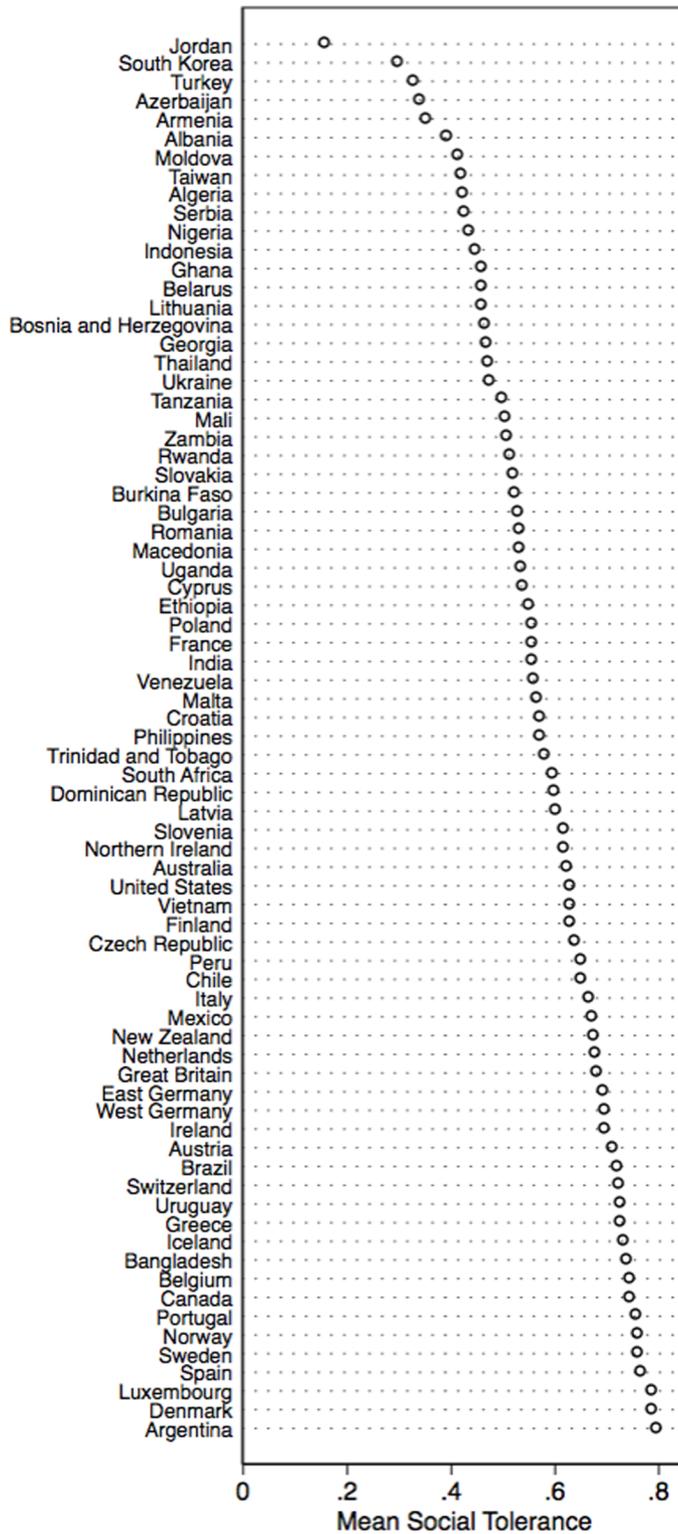


Figure 1. Social tolerance across countries.

Singh and Dunn (2013) argued that authoritarianism, as conceptualized by Stenner (2005), is defined by reference to convergent and competing values that cannot be gauged by reference to a single value or a single polar value dimension. The scale utilized by Stenner (2005) in her analysis of WVS data is therefore based on formative measurement rather than reflective. Reflective measurement signifies that the component variables in the scale are interchangeable with one another and that the error variance associated with each indicator of the latent concept is independent. A reflective scale would require, for example, that a low score on the obedience question should indicate a high score on the independence or imagination or respect/tolerance questions. However, any given respondent can justifiably score all of those values equally highly (cf., Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1986; Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996), especially when not required to rank order them and when the survey instrument blunts the response option to yes/no as it does in the WVS/EVS.

Scale reliability is meant to address a reflective theory of measurement, with a higher reliability indicating a high level of shared variance among the component items. Unsurprisingly then, and similar to that reported by Stenner (2005), the pooled alpha for this scale was a low 0.263.ⁱⁱⁱ This indicates that the items used to form this scale did not consistently “hang together” across individuals. Similar item batteries, such as the child-rearing questions used in the American National Election Studies (e.g., Federico, Fisher, & Deason, 2011; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011), often have higher alphas as they force polarization between competing value pairs; though even among these studies the reported alpha does not always reach the standard 0.70 level of acceptability.

An authoritarian predisposition, as measured here, is determined via the combination of constituent indicators rather than each of the individual indicators being an expression of an authoritarian predisposition. The items used to construct this scale are formative to the concept of authoritarianism rather than reflective of it. None of these items alone indicate that an individual possesses an authoritarian predisposition. Rather, an authoritarian predisposition is indicated by an accumulation of these items. An individual who reports more items that support social conformity and oppose individual autonomy is more likely to possess an authoritarian predisposition; an individual who believes it is important to teach a child obedience but does not believe it necessary to teach independence, imagination or tolerance and respect for others is more likely to be authoritarian than an individual who believes the opposite. If any given component item is removed, the remaining items will not necessarily compensate for its loss and the scale may be weakened or lose the ability to measure the concept. The lack of internal consistency in this measure does not, therefore, indicate a unreliable or non-valid measure (Diamantopoulos, Riefler, & Roth, 2008).^{iv}

Effective Democracy

As argued above, formal democracy means little if institutionalized political rights and civil liberties are withheld or obstructed by a tyrannical majority or a corrupt elite. Any measure of democracy must account for not only the institutionalization of modern democratic principles, but also for how effective institutions are in their application of such principles. Welzel (2002) argued that “in order to obtain a meaningful measure of effective democracy, one must operationalize the interaction between the scope of freedom rights and the quality of elites as the factor that makes these rights more or less effective” (p. 334). In line with Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Welzel (2002), the measure of effective democracy used in the following analyses is a multiplicative combination of the summed Freedom House scores for “civil liberties” and “political rights”, which account for the institutionalization of modern democratic principles, and the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators’ “control of corruption” scores (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2009), which account for the effective delivery of institutionalized democracy.

The civil liberties and political rights measures were inverted, so that higher scores indicate greater institutionalization of democratic principles, summed, and rescaled to range from 0 to 10 to create a measure of institutionalized “democratic freedom.” The control of corruption measure was rescaled to range from 0 to 1. For each country the values of the component measures of effective democracy correspond to the year each included WVS/EVS survey began and are displayed in Figure 2. These two measures were then multiplied to create the effective democracy measure. In essence, this index measures the effective delivery of institutionalized liberal-democratic freedoms in a country (Alexander, Inglehart, & Welzel, 2012) and therefore is a measure of normative threat to authoritarians.^v

Individual-Level Control Variables

I included age, education, gender, ideology, and religiosity as individual-level control variables and modernization and social heterogeneity as country-level control variables, all of which are generally associated with tolerance. I briefly discuss the rationale, expectations, and measurement for these variables below.

Age — As discussed by Inglehart (1990) and others, older cohorts tend to be less tolerant. I thus included a variable for age, coded in years.

Education — Social tolerance and education are generally held to be positively related (e.g., Davis, 1975; McCutcheon, 1985; Stouffer, 1955). As the education variable from the WVS is coded slightly differently between the 1999 and 2005 surveys and as the arbitrary rank ordering of technical education below university-preparatory education seems unwarranted, I recoded the education variable into six categories: no or incomplete primary (elementary) education, complete primary education, incomplete secondary school (technical or university-preparatory), complete secondary school (technical or university-preparatory), university education without degree, and university education with degree. Higher values indicate a higher level of education.

Gender — Previous research demonstrates that females tend toward more egalitarian social policies than men (Howell & Day, 2000; Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 1997; Scott, Matland, Michelbach, & Bornstein, 2001) and are thereby likely to hold more tolerant social attitudes. I controlled for gender using a categorical variable, with females coded 0 and males coded 1. 50.2% of the combined sample were male.

Ideology — Previous research indicates that left-right identification is related to tolerance, with those identifying with the Left more tolerant than those who identify with the Right (Guth & Green, 1991; McCutcheon, 1985; McIntosh, Iver, Abele, & Nolle, 1995; Weldon, 2006). Ideology is a self-reported measure of Left-Right identification, with higher values indicating a more right-wing identification.

Religiosity — Religiosity showed a negative relationship with social tolerance in numerous studies, often irrespective of particular religions or denominations (Herek, 1987; McFarland, 1989). To gauge religiosity, I created a summated rating scale based on four questions. As the questions used differing response scales, the responses were standardized before constructing the scale. The questions inquire as to the importance of religion in one’s life, the frequency of attendance of religious service, one’s self-described religiosity, and the importance of god in one’s life. The scale yielded an alpha of 0.83. Higher values indicate a higher degree of religiosity.

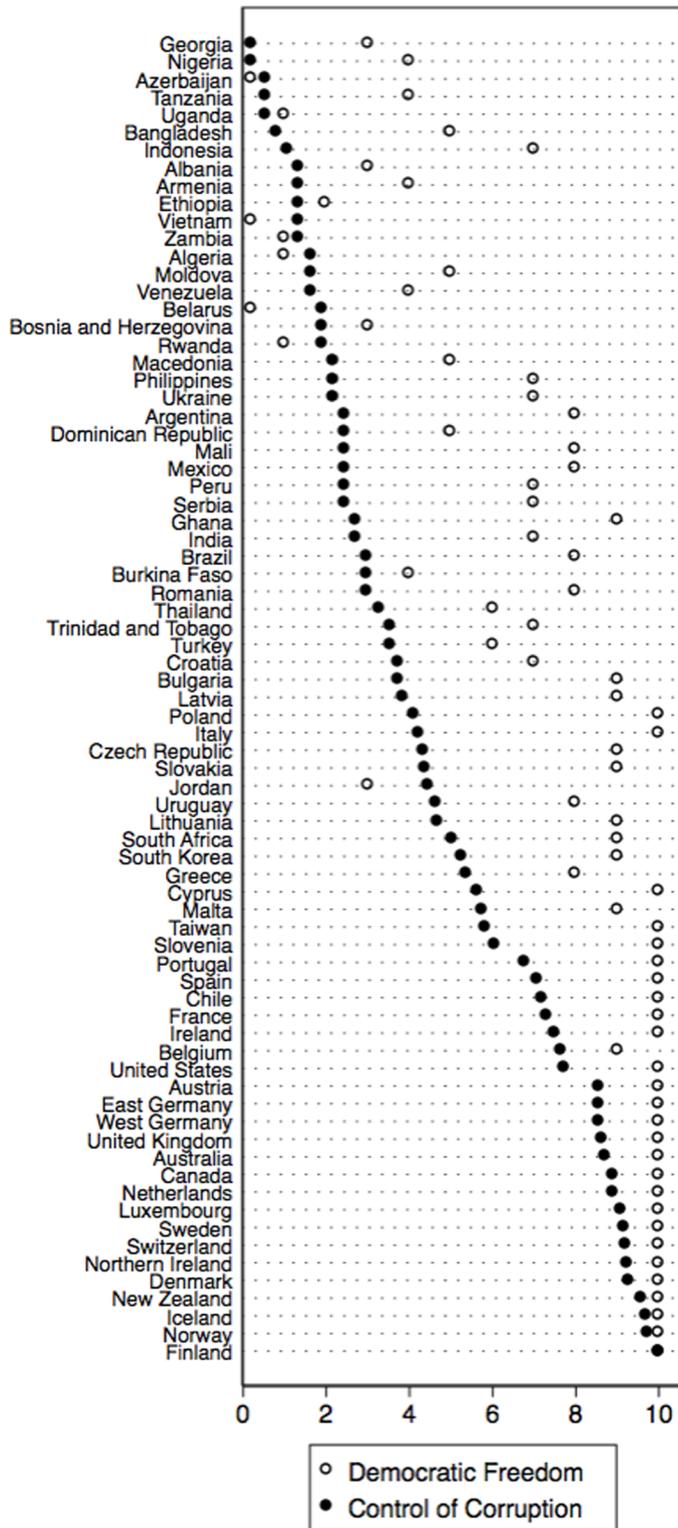


Figure 2. Control of corruption and democratic freedom across countries.

Country-Level Control Variables

Per Capita GDP — Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argued that the sustained economic growth associated with modern societies is the driving force behind the formation of self-expression values, of which tolerance is a part. To measure economic development, I used the common indicator of per capita GDP, adjusted for purchasing power, standardized to constant U.S. dollars in thousands, and logged to account for diminishing returns. The values for this variable were extracted from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2013) for each country and correspond to the year in which the WVS/EVS wave began.

Social Heterogeneity — Social fractionalization, while fostering tolerant attitudes (Hodson, Sekulic, & Massey, 1994; Stouffer, 1955; Tuch, 1987; Wilson, 1991), is also a necessary condition for societal conflict between groups. As Hodson et al. (1994) noted, “[h]eterogeneity provides the conditions fostering increased tolerance among individuals of diverse nationality through increased contact, but it also creates the conditions under which different national groups engage in competition over scarce resources” (p. 1554). Thus, I controlled for social heterogeneity with no a priori assumption regarding how it will affect social tolerance. To measure social heterogeneity I used the popular ethnic fractionalization index developed by Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, and Wacziarg (2003) across countries. Higher values indicate more diversity.^{vi}

Each variable is summarized across the sample in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Individual-Level				
Social Tolerance	0.580	0.258	0.000	1.000
Authoritarian Predisposition	1.888	1.024	0	4
Age	41.566	16.529	15	98
Education	3.622	1.472	1	6
Ideology	5.734	2.366	1	10
Religiosity	-0.063	0.833	-2.999	1.100
Country-Level				
Effective Democracy	4.681	3.187	0.000	10.000
Democratic Freedom	7.164	3.109	0.000	10.000
Control of Corruption	4.484	3.042	0.000	10.000
GDP Per Capita (logged thousands of U.S. dollars)	2.116	1.268	-0.457	4.030
Social Heterogeneity	0.389	0.252	0.002	0.930

Analyses

Testing the above predictions requires the simultaneous analysis of individual- and country-level data as they posit a relationship between a country-level independent variable and an individual-level dependent variable and further require an interaction between an individual-level and a country-level independent variable. A mixed model is well suited to testing such predictions. Due to the clustered character of the data, the use of a mixed

model also avoids false inflation of the significance levels of the macro-level coefficient estimates that would plague the results in a simple pooled regression analysis (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). More specifically, random intercepts for each country were estimated using generalized least squares. About 26% of the variance in individually-held tolerance resides at the country level, which further necessitates the use of a mixed model. Models were estimated with the *xt* suite of commands in Stata 13. Each independent variable, aside from the binary gender measure, was standardized to unit variance (and a mean of zero) to facilitate comparison of coefficients.

Results and Discussion

Estimation results are provided in Table 2. Model 1 estimates the bivariate relationship between effective democracy and social tolerance, and Model 2 introduces the control variables and the authoritarian predisposition measure. The results of Models 1 and 2 support the first prediction: a country's level of effective democracy is positively and significantly associated with individual social tolerance. Model 2 indicates that a standard deviation increase in effective democracy corresponds with a 0.09 unit increase in social tolerance. In less abstract terms, consider an individual living in a country that falls at about the 10th percentile of the effective democracy index. In this sample, this would be someone in Georgia. All else being equal, this person's expected social tolerance value is about 0.47, based on the results of Model 2. Now consider an individual living in a country that falls at about the 90th percentile of the effective democracy index. In this sample, this would be someone in Sweden. All else being equal, this person's expected social tolerance value is about 0.71, an increase of 0.24 units over the hypothetical Georgian—nearly a quarter of the range of the tolerance scale.

Interestingly, the other two macro-level variables, GDP per capita and social heterogeneity, were unrelated to social tolerance, all else being equal. Model 2 also demonstrates that authoritarianism was negatively related to social tolerance.

To test the second and third predictions, that authoritarians are more tolerant in more democratic countries and that the negative relationship between authoritarianism and tolerance is stronger in more democratic countries, respectively, in Model 3 I included an interaction between the authoritarianism measure and the effective democracy measure. In this model, the effective democracy measure becomes a conditioning variable; the negative effect of an authoritarian predisposition on tolerance was predicted to be greater in countries with higher levels of effective democracy.

Because each component of the interaction term in the analysis was standardized (and thus mean-centered), the coefficients on the component variables represent their effects on the dependent variable when the variable with which they are interacted is at its mean. The coefficient on the interaction term indicates how the relationship between each component variable and the dependent variable changes as the other component variable increases. Thus, given the third prediction, the coefficient on the interaction term in Model 3 should be negative and statistically significant and this is precisely what is found: the negative relationship between authoritarianism and social tolerance is stronger where effective democracy is higher. Where effective democracy is one standard deviation below its mean, a value near that of Venezuela in this sample, a standard deviation increase in authoritarianism corresponds with a 0.005 unit decrease in social tolerance. A standard deviation increase in authoritarianism corresponds to a 0.013 unit decrease in social tolerance where effective democracy is at its mean. Where effective

democracy is one standard deviation above its mean, a value near that of France in this sample, a standard deviation increase in authoritarianism corresponds with a 0.021 unit decrease in social tolerance.

Table 2

Social Tolerance, Authoritarianism, and Effective Democracy

Variable	Coefficient Estimates and Significance Levels					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	p-value	Coef.	p-value	Coef.	p-value
Individual-Level						
Authoritarian Predisposition			-0.013	<.001	-0.013	<.001
Age			-0.022	<.001	-0.021	<.001
Education			0.017	<.001	0.017	<.001
Gender (male)			-0.001	.554	-0.000	.816
Ideology			-0.011	<.001	-0.011	<.001
Religiosity			-0.009	<.001	-0.008	<.001
Country-Level						
Effective Democracy	0.083	<.001	0.090	<.001	0.088	<.001
GDP Per Capita			-0.008	.705	-0.007	.750
Social Heterogeneity			0.005	.721	0.004	.753
Interaction						
Authoritarian Predisposition x Effective Democracy					-0.008	<.001
Constant	0.578	<.001	0.578	<.001	0.576	<.001
Model Statistics						
Individual-level error variance	.050		.048		.048	
Country-level error variance	.011		.010		.010	
P	.180		.166		.169	
R ²	.101		.116		.116	
X ²	47.170		2170.830		2266.130	
Prob. > X ²	<.001		<.001		<.001	

Note. *p*-values are two sided. $N_{\text{individuals}} = 75,478$. $N_{\text{countries}} = 75$. P (Rho) is the proportion of unmodeled individually-held tolerance due to unobserved country-level effects. The χ^2 statistic tests the null hypothesis that each variable's effect is jointly zero.

The interactive relationship reported in Model 3 is further explored in Figure 3. Here I illustrate the predicted value of social tolerance for different values of authoritarianism (one standard deviation below the mean and one standard deviation above) across the range of effective democracy. The figure shows that the size of the gap between those on the libertarian side of the scale and those on the authoritarian side of the scale increases considerably over the range of the effective democracy measure. Still, even for those with a relatively high value on the authoritarianism measure, there is a positive and statistically significant increase in social tolerance. Thus, in line with the second and third predictions, authoritarians are more tolerant in more democratic countries and authoritarianism is a stronger predictor of tolerance in more democratic countries.

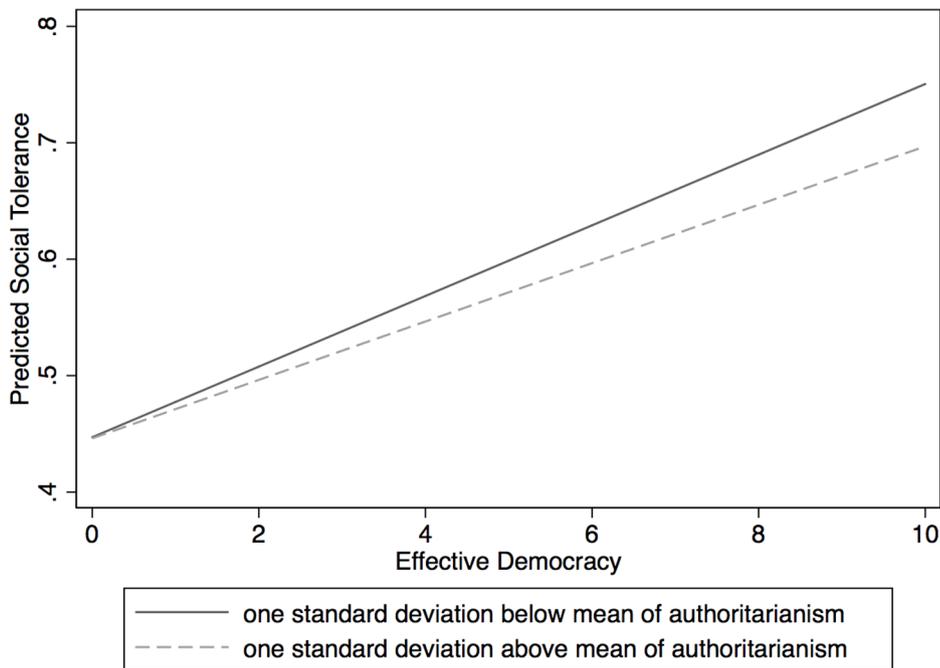


Figure 3. The effect of authoritarianism on social tolerance, conditional on effective democracy.

With the exception of gender, each of the individual-level control variables reached statistical significance across the models. Older cohorts, those who identify as on the right of the left-right continuum, and those high in religiosity tended toward lower levels of tolerance, while those with more education were more tolerant.

Finally, the proportion of unmodeled individually-held tolerance due to unobserved country-level effects is given by the ρ term. This varies from around .17 to .18 across the models, which indicates that around a fifth or sixth of the variance in social tolerance is due to country-level factors, even once the theoretically identified country-level covariates are accounted for.

Conclusion

This research is primarily concerned with examining [Stenner's \(2005\)](#) proposition that democracy may undermine its own stability if it strives to be truly pluralistic. As democracy embodies diversity and dissent ([Sartori, 1997](#)), democracy does appear to serve as a normative threat to authoritarians. In the more effective democracies, normative values appear to be challenged as a matter of routine ([Markoff, 2011](#)). [Stenner's \(2005\)](#) research indicates that threat to the normative order facilitates intolerance in authoritarians. The assumption is therefore that more democracy corresponds to greater normative threat and thereby more intolerant authoritarians; that authoritarians are more intolerant in more democratic societies than they are in more autocratic societies. This assumption overlooks the degree to which individuals are socialized to accept norms of tolerance and acceptance in democracies ([Marquart-Pyatt & Paxton, 2007](#); [Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003](#)) and the norm-conforming tendencies of

authoritarians (Altemeyer, 1996; Oyamoto et al., 2012; Stenner, 2005). There is therefore reason to challenge the assumption that authoritarians in democracies will be more intolerant than those in autocracies.

Using data on 75,478 individuals from 75 countries, I analyzed whether those with an authoritarian predisposition are more intolerant in more democratic countries. Linear mixed models revealed three points relevant to Stenner's (2005) proposition: first, individuals are more tolerant in more effective democracies; second, authoritarians in more effective democracies are more tolerant than authoritarians in more autocratic countries; third, authoritarianism is a stronger predictor of tolerance in more democratic countries than in autocratic countries. So, while authoritarianism may be a stronger predictor of tolerance in more democratic societies, authoritarians are nevertheless more tolerant under democratic regimes than under autocratic regimes. Further, the degree to which authoritarianism impacts tolerance in even the most democratic countries is quite modest.^{vii} Stenner's (2005) underlying supposition for suggesting that we rein in democracy to secure it from authoritarian discontent, that authoritarians are more intolerant in more democratic countries, is therefore moot. Authoritarians are not more intolerant in more democratic countries than they are in more autocratic ones.

Though Stenner's (Stenner, 2005) concern that democracy may instigate its own downfall is perhaps overstated, she may not be entirely off the mark. Her warning, however, does need a fairly nontrivial adjustment. There is evidence that a variety of environmental stimuli exacerbate intolerant and punitive attitudes in authoritarians (Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005) and this research indicates that democratic institutions may be one of these stimuli (see also, Singh & Dunn, 2013). The research herein supports previous research indicating both that democracy may facilitate normative threat among authoritarians and that the intolerance expressed by authoritarians is likely relative to societal norms. The countries with the most to fear from an authoritarian uprising, therefore, are likely those that are in the process of democratization, those countries with societal norms that may not yet be supportive of democratic values and institutions. Of particular concern are those countries undergoing rapid pluralization. As Inglehart and Welzel (2005) note, support for pluralism (self-expression values) corresponds with the generational replacement of those raised in more existentially uncertain times with those raised in more existentially secure and liberalized societies. Without this gradual process of generational replacement and liberalizing societal norms, exposure to dissent and diversity may push authoritarians to embrace attitudes or behaviors that prove detrimental to democratic consolidation. Perhaps then, the warning that should be sounded is against rapid pluralization in unstable and emerging democracies. This, however, is a warning whose veracity should be tested in future research before it is acted upon.

Though most theory regarding authoritarianism focuses on authoritarians as the driving force behind libertarian-authoritarian differences, recent research instead considers the opposite end of the scale, libertarians, as the drivers of difference. Hetherington and Suhay (2011) found that Americans' support for hawkish and restrictive civil liberties policies after the 9/11 terrorist attacks were driven by the policy preferences of libertarians becoming more similar to the fairly stable policy preferences of authoritarians; authoritarians remained consistently supportive of hawkish and civil liberty-restricting policies throughout the period examined, whereas, when existentially threatened, libertarians became considerably more supportive of these policies. Although Hetherington and Suhay (2011) considered existential threat rather than normative threat, and thereby opened up the possibility that dynamics may diverge between the two types of threat (a distinction already posited in the radical right-wing party support literature; Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012), it is nevertheless interesting to inquire whether the stronger relationship between authoritarianism and tolerance in democracies is driven by libertarians rather than authoritarians.

Unfortunately, the data I have used here and the above analyses do not readily facilitate the examination of such an inquiry. In a perfect scenario we could analyze panel data gathered over a long period of time while a country undergoes transition from an autocracy to an effective democracy. Such data would ideally include measures of perceptions of diversity in all its forms and normative and existential threat to further allow us to examine whether perceptions of diversity do indeed increase with increased democracy and whether this increases threat among the various levels of authoritarianism. In the meantime, evidence for or against such a proposition could be gathered from analyzing the change in tolerance levels among the gradations of authoritarianism as a country increases or decreases its level of effective democracy. The WVS and/or EVS may already have data that could facilitate such an investigation, though the time period currently available is relatively limited in terms of the evolution of societal norms.

Notes

i) I use the term “countries” for simplicity, but note that not all polities surveyed are sovereign entities. These include Northern Ireland, East and West Germany, and arguably Taiwan. Further, it should be noted that the country-level data sources used for the following analyses do not distinguish between Great Britain and Northern Ireland nor East and West Germany (i.e., Great Britain and Northern Ireland use the same value for each country-level variable as do East and West Germany).

ii) The output for these analyses are not presented here, but can be obtained from the author on request. Significance levels on the coefficient for authoritarianism only failed to meet the conventional $p \leq .05$ threshold when drinkers and drug users were individually taken as the dependent variable.

iii) [Stenner \(2005\)](#) argues that this indicates that the measure is “noisy” and therefore that any confirmation of her hypotheses should thereby be taken as evidence of the strength of the relationship, as finding any relationship between noisy indicators is more difficult.

iv) In order to allay concern with this measurement strategy, I replicated the below analyses with each component item forming the scale and found similar results. In each model (not shown but available from the author on request), the interaction term for each child rearing item and effective democracy was in the expected direction and significant at $p < .01$, two-sided, indicating that each item does function on its own to support our hypotheses, though to a more modest degree.

v) As there is some debate in the literature regarding the use of the effective democracy measure (cf., [Alexander et al., 2012](#); [Knutsen, 2010](#)), I re-estimated Model 3 of [Table 2](#) (not shown but available from the author on request), employing each component of the effective democracy measure separately. The analyses using the component measures replicated the findings in Model 3 of [Table 2](#). Replications of [Figure 3](#) using the separate components in place of the effective democracy measure illustrate that the size of the gap between the predicted tolerance scores of those low and high in authoritarianism increased dramatically and significantly over the range of both the democratic freedom and control of corruption measures.

It is particularly interesting that the control of corruption component of effective democracy also conditions the hypothesized relationship on its own. That is, while authoritarians are more tolerant in countries with more control of corruption, authoritarianism demonstrates an increasingly negative relationship with tolerance in such countries. I do not believe that this is because non-corrupt government threatens authoritarians; rather, countries that adequately control corruption better translate modern democratic principles of pluralism into practice.

vi) Interestingly, interactive models (not shown) indicate that the negative relationship between authoritarianism and social tolerance is weaker in more diverse countries. However, the primary results of this paper hold in subsamples of low- and high-heterogeneity countries. I do not speculate on the potential cause of this relationship here, as the primary concern of this article is whether authoritarians in democracies are more intolerant than authoritarians in autocracies. The results of analyses using ethnic fractionalization as a moderator, while certainly interesting, are not directly relevant to this argument.

Of further note, when both interactions, authoritarianism × democracy and authoritarianism × ethnic fractionalization, were included in the same model, the authoritarianism × democracy interaction remained significant and the conclusions of this article remain the same.

vii) If this measure is quite noisy, as Stenner (2005) argues, the effect of authoritarianism on tolerance in these analyses may be attenuated. The relationship may therefore be more substantial with a less noisy measure.

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