The Rise of Trump

MacWilliams, Matthew C

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those who fear terrorism a lot, the effect of fear on support for Trump is statistically significant at a confidence interval of 95 percent.

How Do We Know That Trump Supporters Are Authoritarians?

A common objection raised by skeptics of the four-question authoritarian scale is that the childrearing qualities it measures are not accurate estimators of an individual’s disposition to authoritarianism. One simple way to test this objection and answer skeptics is to assess whether Trump voters express authoritarian attitudes. In other words, if Trump voters really are authoritarians, more often than not they should behave like authoritarians. Not only should they walk like a duck (by testing dispositionally authoritarian); they also should talk like a duck (by expressing authoritarian attitudes on a wide range of issues). In short, they are authoritarian walkers and talkers.

Several questions in the national survey were designed to test for authoritarian behavior. These questions spring from a robust litera-
ture that dates back to Fromm’s aptly named 1941 study Escape From Freedom, spans seven decades, and abundantly details authoritarians’ fear of “the other,” antipathy for the ideals of Madisonian democracy, and disdain for the protection of minority rights from majority tyranny. As such, the questions probe survey respondents’ attitudes toward bedrock Democratic values that are the foundation of constitutional government and civil society.

On most of these questions, Trump voters exhibit statistically significant and substantive authoritarian attitudes (Figure 4). For example, Trump voters are statistically more likely to agree that “other groups” should sometimes be kept in their place. And they support preventing minority opposition once “we decide” what is right.97

Trump supporters kick the fundamental tenets of Madisonian democracy to the curb, asserting that the rights of minorities need not be protected from the power of the majority. And they are statistically more likely than Trump opponents to agree the president should curtail the voice and vote of the opposition when it is necessary to protect

Figure 4: Attitudes of Trump voters on questions of democratic principles

![Chart showing attitudes of Trump voters on democratic principles questions](chart)

97. The wording of these questions is: “Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place” and “Once the people decide what is right, we must prevent opposition from a minority.” Question answers ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” on a 7-point Likert scale.
the country—although a plurality still opposes this constitutionally questionable exercise of presidential power. 98

Trump voters are also ready to suspend the constitutionally protected Writ of Habeas Corpus by empowering police and law enforcement to arrest and detain indefinitely anyone in the United States suspected of belonging to a terrorist organization. And Trump supporters agree that mosques across the United States should be closed down—a clear abridgment of the religious freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. 99

A majority of Republican authoritarians in my poll also strongly supported Trump’s proposals to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, prohibit Muslims from entering the United States, and establish a nationwide database to track Muslims in America, whether they are citizens or not. By comparison, on all of these questions, the attitudes of Cruz, Carson, Rubio, and Bush supporters are statistically insignificant. Hence, supporters of Trump express authoritarian attitudes on a wide range of important questions, while supporters of his erstwhile Republican opponents did not.

Trump 2016: Anomalous Outlier or Political Turning Point?

Like Trump’s us-versus-them rhetoric, authoritarian voters are not new to America. Authoritarianism is a disposition that knows no geographic, racial, political, or societal boundaries; Americans are not immune from it. As the ascriptive tradition runs deep through American development, the disposition to authoritarianism, at least as measured since 1992 by means of childrearing questions, is a stable fixture within the American electorate. And the paranoid style of politics has been

98. The wording of this question is: “If it is necessary to protect our country, the president should limit the voice and vote of opposition parties.” Question answers ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” on a 7-point Likert scale. This question is not displayed in Figure 4.

99. The wording of these questions is: “How strongly do you favor or oppose the proposal to allow police and other law enforcement agencies to arrest and detain indefinitely anyone in the United States who is suspected of belonging to a terrorist organization?” and, “How strongly do you favor or oppose the proposal to ‘Close down Muslim houses of worship—known as mosques—across the United States?’” Question answers ranged from “Strongly Favor” to “Strongly Oppose” on a 7-point Likert scale.