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# **Cultural Value Orientations and Christian Religiosity: On Moral Traditionalism, Authoritarianism, and their Implications for Voting Behavior**

WILLEM DE KOSTER AND JEROEN VAN DER WAAL

**ABSTRACT.** Drawing upon problems of interpretation in political sociological research, this article questions the common practice of lumping together moral traditionalism and authoritarianism. First, it is demonstrated that of the two only moral traditionalism relates to religious orthodoxy. Second, the well-established strong correlation between both value orientations proves to be caused, in the case at hand solely by the circumstance that nontraditionalism and nonauthoritarianism go hand in hand; moral traditionalism and authoritarianism are almost unrelated. Third, moral traditionalists are shown to vote for Christian right-wing parties, whereas authoritarianism more commonly leads to a vote for a secular right-wing party. Fourth, whereas moral traditionalism proves decisive for the voting behavior of Christians, it is authoritarianism that underlies the non-Christian vote. These findings from The Netherlands (consistent with theories on cultural modernization) lead to the conclusion that attention should be paid to the distinction between these orientations because this aids the interpretation of research findings, and because authoritarianism will probably gain a more central role in politics at the cost of moral traditionalism.

*Keywords:* • Authoritarianism • Christian religiosity • Cultural conservatism  
• Moral traditionalism • Voting behavior

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## **Introduction**

In his classical work *Political Man*, Lipset (1959) distinguished economic values from noneconomic, cultural values, arguing that political values have a bi-dimensional structure. This distinction has been validated time and again in empirical studies (see, for instance, Fleishman, 1988; Houtman, 2003; Middendorp, 1991), leading

to a general consensus that economic and cultural values differ fundamentally (compare Evans and Heath, 1995; Evans et al., 1996; Heath et al., 1994). Although this is a valuable insight, insufficient attention has been paid to the nature of the cultural dimension: it seems customary in political sociological research to lump together value orientations and opinions on divergent cultural issues without a clear theoretical justification. Mainly on the basis of empirical arguments, cultural issues are considered interchangeable:

research based on nationally representative data sets, collected among the Dutch population in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1990, has demonstrated that the so-called F-scale for authoritarianism is strongly related to more conventional measures of cultural conservatism. Examples are intolerance regarding homosexuals, a preference for the maintenance of traditional gender roles, family traditionalism, harsh attitudes toward criminals, and a willingness to limit political freedom of expression (Middendorp 1991: 111). Those findings indicate that there is ample reason to reject too neat a distinction between authoritarianism and culturally conservative political values. Indeed, their strong correlation suggests that it makes more sense to consider them highly interchangeable concepts. (Houtman, 2001: 163)

Achterberg (2004: 337–8) shows the same lack of attention for differences between cultural issues: he describes the contrast between cultural conservatism and cultural progressiveness as a conflict about “typical cultural issues such as ‘law and order’, ‘rights of suppressed minorities, homosexuals and women’ [and] ‘traditional moral values’.” Similarly, Flanagan and Lee (2003: 239–40) designate items such as one’s view on freedom of speech, the clarity of good and evil, and sexual freedom as “libertarian items.” This practice is also found in the work of Evans et al. (1996: 99–100, 112; see also Heath et al., 1994: 130), who compose a cultural scale of, among other things, opinions regarding stiffer sentences, traditional moral values, and law obedience.

The use of cultural issues in present-day research practice (for more examples, see Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Houtman, 2003) seems, in short, to be based on the notion that a morally traditional value orientation (a conservative stance on moral issues such as gender relations, sexuality, life, and death) does not differ from an authoritarian stance (which implies aversion to cultural diversity and a rigid conception of social order).

However, this common practice proves to cause problems. For example, De Witte and Billiet (1999) experienced problems of interpretation: contrary to their expectations, a conservative cultural value orientation did *not* predict a vote for the Christian Democrats in Flanders. While discussing their research findings, they blamed their operationalization of cultural value orientations:

the indicators for cultural conservatism were rather “though” [*sic*] ones, referring to ethnocentrism and authoritarianism mostly. “Softer” indicators, such as moral attitudes and child rearing practices, were lacking ... we might have observed different results, if we had been able to use more moderate indicators of cultural conservatism in our study. Future research should try to do so. (De Witte and Billiet, 1999: 113, 115)

This recommendation suggests that moral traditionalism is somehow connected to a Christian worldview, whereas authoritarianism is not. In this article,

we will assess to what extent there really is a difference between these cultural value orientations.

### Disentangling Moral Traditionalism and Authoritarianism

In the West, Christians dominate the traditional part of society when it comes to moral issues such as gender relations, sexuality, life, and death. Their traditional stance is, of course, deeply inspired by the Christian Bible and by socialization in Christian institutions. These grant legitimacy to a masculine order and the fostering of God-given life. Therefore, for Christians it is generally beyond doubt that this order should be respected and that life should be protected against man-induced changes. Christian religiosity seems, in other words, to be “naturally” tied to moral traditionalism. In the case of authoritarianism, on the other hand, such a “natural” relationship with Christian doctrine appears to be lacking.

To find out whether this is empirically observable, we will assess the relationship between the extent to which one endorses the central axioms of Christianity (religious orthodoxy) and moral traditionalism and authoritarianism, respectively. If moral traditionalism is related to Christian religiosity and authoritarianism is not, religious orthodoxy will logically only be related with the former.

We use data from Cultural Changes in the Netherlands, a longitudinal survey project that started in the 1970s and was executed by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office. Since the Netherlands is highly secularized today, we use the 1975 file (Middendorp, no date) wherein Christians and non-Christians are about equally represented, allowing for meaningful statistical comparison.<sup>1</sup> The dataset consists of 1977 respondents, which is 77 percent of those initially selected, and is representative of the Dutch population aged 16–74. Political sociological research on cultural value orientations indicates findings derived from Dutch data on this matter are typical for the West in general (Houtman, 2003: 91).

The items used to measure *moral traditionalism* are questions or propositions concerning gender relations, homosexuality, the family, and reproduction; for example “A woman is more capable of bringing up small children than a man is,” “Homosexuals should be firmly dealt with,” and “If a woman so wishes, it should be possible for her to have an abortion.” Principal component analysis reveals a first factor with high loadings for all items, explaining 29 percent of the variance. The items form a good scale since Cronbach’s alpha is 0.76.<sup>2</sup>

*Authoritarianism* is measured using seven Likert-items that belong to the F-scale available in the file. These are questions or propositions such as “There are two sorts of people: the strong and the weak,” “Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked and feeble-minded people,” and “What we need are fewer laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless, devoted leaders whom people can trust.” Principal component analysis yields a first factor which explains 33 percent of the variance. The reliability of the scale is sufficient: Cronbach’s alpha is 0.66.<sup>3</sup>

*Religious orthodoxy* is constructed of eight items used for the same purpose by Middendorp (1991). It contains questions such as “Do you believe in heaven?” and “Do you believe in eternal life?” as well as “Do you regard the Bible as the word of God?” Principal component analysis yields a first factor explaining 50 percent of the variance. With a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83, the scale is good.

Table 1 represents the findings of the zero-order correlation analyses of *moral traditionalism* and *authoritarianism* with *religious orthodoxy*. Despite the large random sample, there is no significant correlation between *authoritarianism* and *religious orthodoxy* whatsoever. The positive correlation between *moral traditionalism* and *religious orthodoxy* is, on the contrary, significant and rather strong. This clearly indicates that a Christian worldview is connected to moral traditionalism, but not to authoritarianism.

TABLE 1. *Zero-Order Correlations of Moral Traditionalism and Authoritarianism with Religious Orthodoxy*

| Scale                | Religious orthodoxy | N   | p       |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----|---------|
| Authoritarianism     | -0.03               | 963 | 0.420   |
| Moral traditionalism | 0.31                | 952 | < 0.001 |

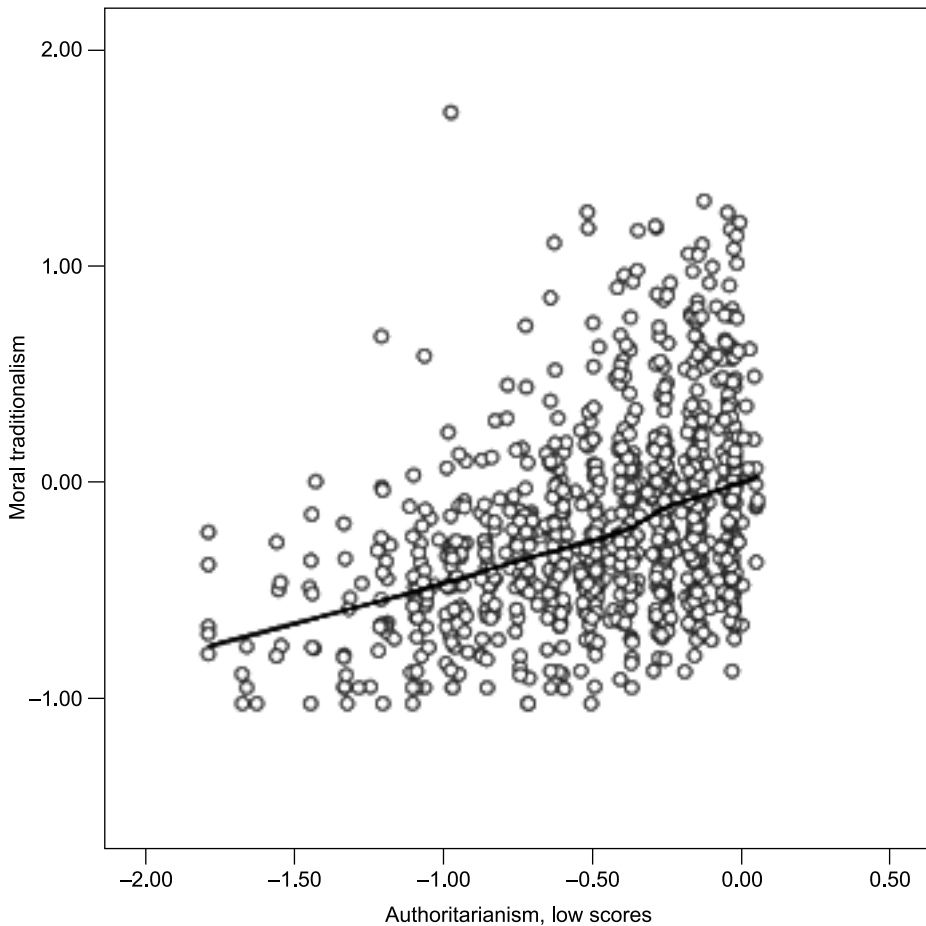


FIGURE 1. *Correlation between Moral Traditionalism and the First Half of Authoritarianism (N = 910)*

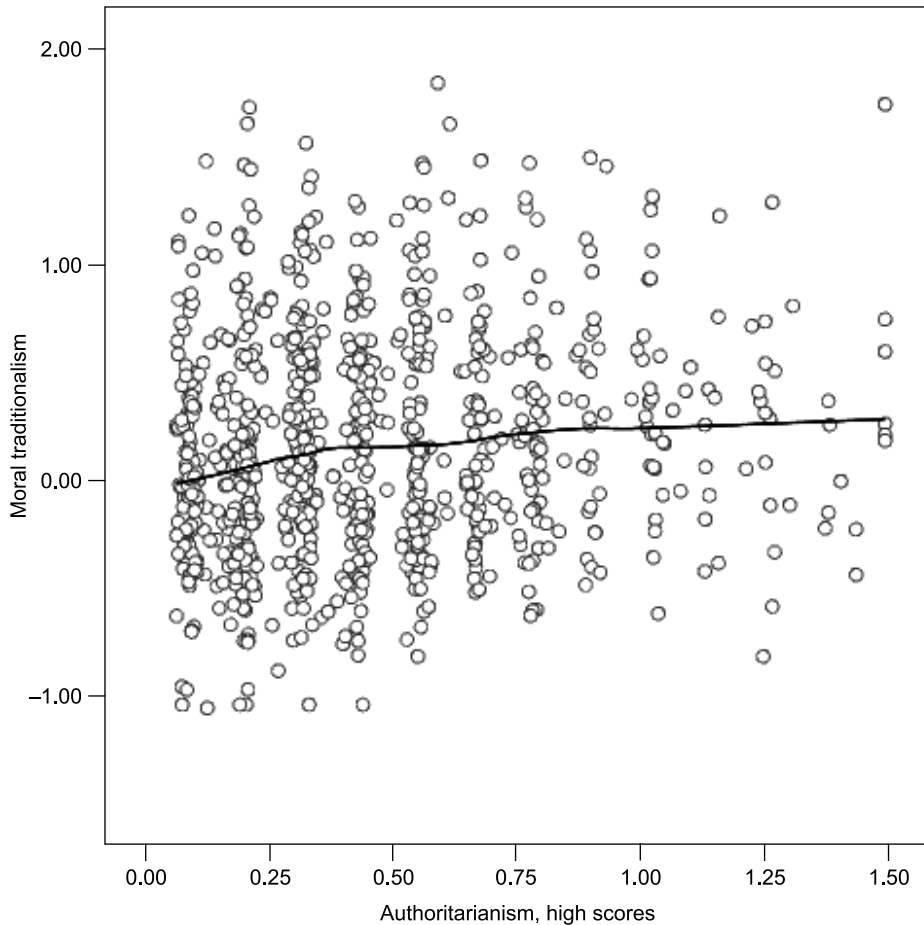


FIGURE 2. *Correlation between Moral Traditionalism and the Second Half of Authoritarianism (N = 881)*

Consequently, another question arises: how is it possible that two scales that are strongly correlated (a fact that causes many studies to lump them together in some sort of cultural conservatism scale) differ to such an extent in their correlation with a measure of religious orthodoxy? Their different relationship with religious orthodoxy suggests that the well-established strong correlation between the two value orientations may be mainly caused by a convergence at the other end of the ideological spectrum – a convergence between nontraditionalism and nonauthoritarianism. This possibility is supported by the following considerations.

An individual strongly attached to individual freedom may logically consider traditional moral values to be as oppressive as authoritarianism: both imply the oppression of individual self-realization. She or he will therefore reject them and adhere to their anti-poles: nontraditional moral values and nonauthoritarianism. Therefore, a considerably linear correlation is to be expected at these sides of the

TABLE 2. Zero-Order Correlations between Moral Traditionalism and Different Parts of Authoritarianism

| Scale                         | Moral traditionalism | N    | R <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|------|----------------|
| Authoritarianism              | 0.42***              | 1792 | 0.175          |
| Authoritarianism, low scores  | 0.40***              | 910  | 0.157          |
| Authoritarianism, high scores | 0.14***              | 881  | 0.018          |

Note: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

value orientations. However, moral traditionalism does not necessarily correlate equally strongly with authoritarianism. Although both imply the restriction of individual freedom, the findings mentioned above indicate that these orientations have different backgrounds. Whereas moral traditionalism is founded on legitimacy, because it is religiously inspired, authoritarian ideas have to do with coercion. Adhering to traditional ideas concerning gender relations, homosexuality, the family, and life and death stemming from one's Christian notion of the good life seems to differ from a strong attachment to a rigid and coercive social order.

To assess these notions, we split *authoritarianism* into an authoritarian and nonauthoritarian half and correlate both with *moral traditionalism*. The division of *authoritarianism* is based on the median, yielding equal-sized groups allowing comparison.<sup>4</sup> These subpopulations with, respectively, low and high scores consist of 936 respondents each.

The graphics of the correlations of both halves with *moral traditionalism* (Figures 1 and 2) are clear. The scatter plots and the lowess lines (estimations of the regression functions) drawn in them indicate a stronger positive linear correlation of *moral traditionalism* with *authoritarianism* in the group with low scores on *authoritarianism* than in the group with high scores.<sup>5</sup> In order to make the correlations of both subpopulations comparable, we quantified their strengths. The relevant data are shown in Table 2.

The positive correlation of *moral traditionalism* with the nonauthoritarian half of *authoritarianism* is rather strong – almost as strong as with the entire authoritarianism scale. The correlation with the second authoritarian half is substantially weaker. The explained variance of the authoritarian half is almost nine times smaller than that of the nonauthoritarian half ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>6</sup> Part of the correlation may have disappeared only because of the splitting of *authoritarianism*, but the difference between the halves is so large that this cannot be the only explanation. The correlation with *moral traditionalism* is thus to be attributed almost completely to the nonauthoritarian side of *authoritarianism*. This means these two dimensions can be distinguished empirically – in spite of their high correlation.

### Political Implications of the Distinction between Moral Traditionalism and Authoritarianism

Problems of interpretation arising in studies on voting behavior if moral traditionalism and authoritarianism are not distinguished have led us to the assessments presented above. Now we know that these two value orientations can be distinguished empirically, the question remains: do they differ in their implications for voting behavior?

De Witte and Billiet (1999) expected moral traditionalism (their “soft” indicators) would lead to a vote for the Christian Democrats. Our finding that a *Christian* worldview relates to a more traditional stand on moral issues seems to support this suggestion. Since, in general, conservatism leads to voting for a right-wing party, it is plausible that moral traditionalism leads to a vote for a *Christian* right-wing party. Authoritarians, on the other hand, are expected to vote for a *secular* right-wing party. If a highly legitimate guideline for the arrangement of society (such as Christian faith) is missing, force or coercion may be considered the only option to “maintain” social order. Since secular right-wing parties are most oppressive when it comes to cultural issues (Ignazi, 2003), these seem the “natural” allies of authoritarians.

We will assess these expectations by means of logistic regression analyses in which the dependent variable is a dichotomy of Christian right-wing parties versus secular right-wing parties (the former categorized as 2 and the latter as 1).<sup>7</sup> *Moral traditionalism*, *authoritarianism*, and *Christian identity* are included to find out how these variables relate to each other. *Christian identity* is measured as a standardized dichotomy based on self-identification in which both Protestants and Roman Catholics are categorized as Christians (51.9 percent) and all other categories as non-Christians (47.4 percent). In addition, we include *economic conservatism* to control for economic beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

*Economic conservatism* is measured with a scale of nine Likert-items. It contains propositions and questions such as “The government should oblige employers to share in the profits to the same degree that shareholders do,” “Government tax on higher incomes should be [strongly increased/strongly decreased],” and “The government should make many more grants available to children of less well-to-do families.” Principal component analysis reveals a first factor explaining 48 percent of the variance. Cronbach’s alpha being 0.86, the items form a reliable scale. Table 3 shows the results of the analyses.

In a first model, only the control variables are included. Not surprisingly, a *Christian identity* leads to a vote for Christian right-wing parties. In a second model, *moral traditionalism* is added, reducing the effect of *Christian identity*. So, in concurrence with the findings presented above, the original effect of *Christian identity* is partly mediated by *moral traditionalism*, which has the strongest effect. In agreement with our expectations, *moral traditionalism* inspires a vote for Christian right-wing parties too. Whereas the inclusion of *authoritarianism* in a third model virtually does not alter the effect of *Christian identity*, it does lead to an increase

TABLE 3. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Voting for a Christian Right-wing Party Versus Voting for a Secular Right-Wing Party*

|                               | B (S.E.)          | B (S.E.)          | B (S.E.)          |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Constant                      | 0.312** (0.111)   | 0.331** (0.113)   | 0.357** (0.114)   |
| Economic conservatism         | -0.809*** (0.148) | -0.926*** (0.155) | -0.982*** (0.159) |
| Christian identity (no = ref) | 1.339*** (0.103)  | 1.182*** (0.106)  | 1.198*** (0.108)  |
| Moral traditionalism          |                   | 1.213*** (0.211)  | 1.348*** (0.223)  |
| Authoritarianism              |                   |                   | -0.419* (0.192)   |
| R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)   | 0.413             | 0.457             | 0.463             |

Notes: N = 765; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .



in the effect of *moral traditionalism*. As expected *authoritarianism* has a negative effect, indicating that it underlies a vote for secular right-wing parties. These findings indicate that moral traditionalism and authoritarianism have different implications when it comes to voting.

The fact that moral traditionalism appears to be derived from Christian religiosity, while authoritarianism does not appear to be, suggests these value orientations might also differ in *salience* between Christians and non-Christians. For Christians, moral traditionalism is likely to be highly salient, since it is based on their shared comprehensive system of belief. Authoritarianism, on the other hand, is likely to be more salient for secular non-Christians. For them, the proper arrangement of society can no longer be grounded on a single, clear, encompassing grand narrative. Therefore, the maintenance of social order and the disapproval or approval of the cultural diversity that has arisen due to this lack of a single set of comprehensive guidelines is likely to be the cause of major controversy. Since this conflict largely coincides with the distinction between authoritarianism and nonauthoritarianism, these value orientations are expected to be of greater importance for non-Christians.

This difference in importance is likely to be reflected in differences in voting behavior, since the extent to which value orientations are salient finds expression in the extent to which people base their voting behavior on these value orientations. Because traditionalism and authoritarianism are related to the right wing of the political spectrum (Ignazi, 2003), moral traditionalism is probably of more importance for right-wing voting behavior for Christians than for non-Christians, while for authoritarianism the opposite is expected to be true.

In a final analysis, we assess this idea by splitting the file into Christians and non-Christians and incorporating the assumed relations in path models. The dependent variable in these models is *right-wing voting behavior*, measured by respondents' party political preferences. Therefore, we use the question of which party the respondent would vote for if there were to be elections for parliament at the moment of the survey. We placed the parties on a continuum by scaling the question of party political preference with the left-right self-identification of the respondents – a five-point scale with a range from “very left” to “very right.”

In order to control for other effects, we include variables in our models that have been demonstrated to be theoretically and empirically important for voting behavior (compare Houtman, 2003; Middendorp, 1991), as far as this is possible with our dataset. Besides the three scales mentioned above, *income* and *level of education* are incorporated as explanatory variables, and *gender* as a control variable.<sup>9</sup> *Income* is measured as standardized gross family income. *Level of education* is measured at a quasi-interval level by combining several questions into one standardized variable. Distinguishing seven levels, this variable measures the highest level of education completed.

To assess our expectations, we execute a conditional test with a multi-sample analysis (see Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993: 51–84). We therefore construct identical path models for the Christian and non-Christian subpopulations. In this analysis, *economic conservatism*, *moral traditionalism*, and *authoritarianism* are modeled as endogenous explanatory variables. *Gender*, *level of education*, and *income* are modeled as exogenous variables. *Right-wing voting behavior* functions as an endogenous dependent variable.

Because several variables are of an ordinal level of measurement and do not satisfy the condition of a multivariate normal distribution, both models are fitted to an asymptotic covariance matrix. By this, standard errors are estimated using the Weighted Least Squares (WLS) method (Jöreskog et al., 1999: 181). The parameters of these models are estimated using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method. In this we follow Jöreskog et al. (1999: 190), who conclude that this yields more likely results than the WLS method, which is commonly used for these kinds of models if smaller samples are fitted to an asymptotic covariance matrix. Because of the use of the ML method and multi-sample analysis, we test the fit of the models with the covariance matrix using the Satorra–Bentler Scaled  $\chi^2$ . This is necessary because the regular  $\chi^2$  does not take into account the non-multivariate normal distribution of the variables in our models. Besides, the Satorra–Bentler Scaled  $\chi^2$  is recommended for a multi-sample analysis (Jöreskog et al., 1999: 180).

In a multi-sample analysis, two models are considered as nested. A first  $\chi^2$  test verifies if both models with identical parameterization *and* equal estimated values of the parameters fit the data. The second test is executed with several *different* estimated parameters per model. This means that the values of some parameters are considered to differ between the Christian and non-Christian subpopulations. In our case, these are the parameters of the correlations between *moral traditionalism* and *right-wing voting behavior* and between *authoritarianism* and *right-wing voting behavior*. The conditional test shows that the second model fits the data significantly better than the first model.<sup>10</sup> This means the effect of *moral traditionalism* and *authoritarianism* on *right-wing voting behavior* differs between the Christian and non-Christian subpopulations. Figure 3 shows both models.

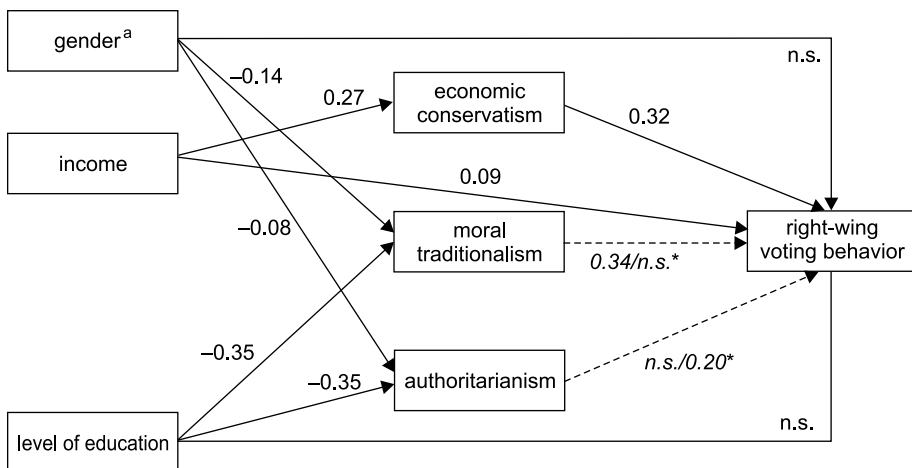


FIGURE 3. *Path Model for Both Categories (N = 619/509\*)*

Notes: \*In the Christian and the non-Christian category, respectively.

<sup>a</sup>Men are coded as 1; woman are coded as 2.

All coefficients depicted are significant at 5 percent level, unless indicated otherwise (n.s.).

TABLE 4. *The Influence of Cultural Value Orientations on Right-wing Voting Behavior*

|                                 | Coefficient | Standard error |
|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>Christians (N = 619)</i>     |             |                |
| Moral traditionalism            | 0.336*      | 0.114          |
| Authoritarianism                | -0.072      | 0.051          |
| $R^2$ voting behavior           | 0.255       |                |
| <i>Non-Christians (N = 509)</i> |             |                |
| Moral traditionalism            | 0.072       | 0.0485         |
| Authoritarianism                | 0.196*      | 0.0505         |
| $R^2$ voting behavior           | 0.198       |                |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ .

All paths incorporated in both models are depicted. The parameters that differ by subpopulation are depicted as dotted lines.<sup>11</sup> All relevant data are shown in Table 4.

The effect of *moral traditionalism* on *right-wing voting behavior* is, as expected, stronger in the Christian subpopulation (0.34;  $p < 0.05$ ) than in the non-Christian subpopulation (0.07; not significant). A one-sided test shows this difference is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The influence of *authoritarianism* on *right-wing voting behavior* is smaller in the Christian subpopulation (-0.07; not significant) than in the non-Christian subpopulation (0.20;  $p < 0.05$ ). According to a one-sided test, this difference is significant as well ( $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that for Christians moral traditionalism is indeed more salient than for secular non-Christians, while for authoritarianism it is the other way around.

### Secularization and the Maladies of Modernity

Our analyses indicate that a bi-dimensional structure exists in cultural value orientations. Moral traditionalism can be distinguished empirically from authoritarianism, and these value orientations differ in their implications for voting behavior. These findings seem in line with theories on cultural modernization.

Many different concepts are used to describe the process of cultural transformation that has taken place in the West during recent decades, ranging from "postmodernisation" (Bauman, 1995) and "reflexive modernisation" (Beck et al., 1994; Giddens, 1991) to "detraditionalisation" (Heelas et al., 1996). However, these concepts basically denote the same phenomenon: a transition from a society in which value orientations and identities that are considered highly legitimate are "pre-given" by grand narratives to a late-modern society in which value orientations and identities lose their traditional legitimacy and meaning. As Christian religiosity traditionally has been the most comprehensive grand narrative in the Netherlands, this process of cultural modernization is perceptible most clearly as the process of secularization.

Traditionally, the way one should think, feel, and act was self-evidently taken from the Christian faith. Due to the process of secularization, the proportion of people who do not derive their identity, meaning, and the accessory value orientations from a comprehensive ideology (the non-Christians) has increased.

The way they handle cultural differences is based on reflection on society and “the self.”

Those who lack Christian guidelines for thinking, feeling, and acting in such societies experience many contradictory values without hierarchy or arrangement. For them, the existing social institutions have lost their once taken-for-granted legitimacy (see Berger et al. [1974], who refer to this as the “homeless mind”). This in turn forms the breeding ground upon which anomie and alienation, the two “maladies of modernity” (Zijderveld, 2000: 198–201), develop.

A common feature shared by these two conditions is that social institutions are no longer experienced as self-evident and legitimate, though otherwise they differ considerably. Whereas, in the sociology of culture sense, anomie stands for discontent with the absence of a meaningful social order, alienation stands for the desire to free oneself from an overbearing, meaningless institutional order which is considered a hindrance (Zijderveld, 2000). Feelings of anomie therefore go hand in hand with an authoritarian stand, as has been demonstrated time and again (see, for example, Lutterman and Middleton, 1970; McDill, 1961; Middendorp, 1991; Srole, 1956), while the anti-authoritarian counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the new social movements which sprang from it, are inspired by feelings of alienation (Houtman, 2004; Roszak, 1968; Zijderveld, 1970).

Our research findings can be interpreted in the light of this theoretical framework. First, the finding that religious orthodoxy relates to moral traditionalism, whereas it does not relate to authoritarianism, seems logical. Only moral traditionalism appears to be derived from the “pre-given” grand narrative of Christianity, of which religious orthodoxy is a clear expression.

Second, precisely because it is derived from this encompassing ideology, moral traditionalism is based on legitimacy. Authoritarianism, on the other hand, stems from the lack of certainty, reassurance, and a framework for interpretation that has arisen due to the process of secularization. Because of this difference in their backgrounds, it can be understood that the traditional and authoritarian sides of these value orientations hardly correlate – our second finding.

Third, focusing on the right side of the political spectrum, where the differences come to light, we have demonstrated that moral traditionalism leads to a vote for a Christian right-wing party, whereas authoritarianism underlies the vote for a secular right-wing party. Since the Christian notion of the good on which moral traditionalism is based guides Christian politics, the former relationship can be interpreted. The latter relationship seems to be related to the connection between anomie and authoritarianism. Those lacking clear-cut guidelines and longing for social order (the anomic) are authoritarian. They turn to secular right-wing parties because such parties propose measures of coercion and law and order to deal with cultural diversity and problems of social order most strongly.

Fourth, moral traditionalism is important for Christians and not for non-Christians in this study, most likely because only for the former is this value orientation religiously “pre-given.” Authoritarianism, on the contrary, is merely salient for non-Christians. Apparently, since they are susceptible to the maladies of modernity, the conflict between a rigid conception of social order and approval of cultural diversity, stemming from anomie and alienation respectively, appears to be important for them.

## Discussion

The suggestion underlying our study, that moral traditionalism is somehow connected to a religious worldview (in this case, Christianity) while authoritarianism is not, has proven to be sound. Since our research findings show this clearly, one wonders why this insight has not been given its due in political sociology thus far. This may be attributable to the adherence to progressive values by most social scientists (compare Ladd and Lipset, 1975). As mentioned, in their vision there is no principal distinction between moral traditionalism and authoritarianism – both are considered curtailing. Therefore, the correlation between the values they adhere to themselves might be considered self-evident. Consequently, they do not recognize that something different occurs at the other end of the spectrum.

If the distinction between moral traditionalism and authoritarianism is taken into account in empirical assessments, this will probably lead to fewer “unexpected” research findings such as those of De Witte and Billiet (1999). Conclusions such as “religion has by far the strongest effect on the libertarian-authoritarian vote” (Middendorp, 1989: 289) will probably be a thing of the past: the libertarian–authoritarian vote in this study was, by now unsurprisingly, based on a scale partly consisting of moral traditionalist items.

Our analysis also has implications for research on authoritarianism and religious orthodoxy or fundamentalism. The latter concepts are often confused conceptually (Laythe et al., 2002: 624–5), and as such demonstrate positive correlations (see, for example, Hunsberger et al., 1996; Laythe et al., 2001, 2002; Rhodes, 1960). The discrepancy with our results can partially be explained by the fact that fundamentalism is, contrary to our conceptualization of orthodoxy, not so much about the content of religious beliefs as it is about the “way in which beliefs are held” (Hunsberger et al., 1996: 202; compare Laythe et al., 2002): since fundamentalism is characterized by militant attempts to defend and spread the faith (Laythe et al., 2001), it is logically tied to authoritarianism. More important from our theoretical point of view is that the measures of authoritarianism employed incorporate moral traditionalism, for instance, items about “traditional beliefs” (Laythe et al., 2001: 3, compare 2002). Therefore, the positive correlations may be a by-product of the faulty practice of operationalization that we address.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, studies aiming to show the rising salience of cultural voting behavior (Achterberg, 2006; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006; Houtman, 2001) would probably have made their point more clearly if these had taken the distinction between moral traditionalism and authoritarianism into account. Their common practice of lumping authoritarianism and moral traditionalism together probably underestimates the rise of voting on the basis of cultural value orientations: due to the growing proportion of secular non-Christians, the importance of moral traditionalism has probably declined.

The growing number of people who lack clear “pre-given” guidelines from a shared religion might be the driving force of the increasing popularity of new left-wing politics and new right-wing politics in the West since the 1960s. After all, the non-authoritarian and authoritarian stances toward cultural issues converge strongly with the new left and new right political agendas, respectively. From this perspective, it is striking that in the study of De Witte and Billiet (1999) authoritarianism did not predict a vote for the Christian Democrats, but had by far the strongest negative and positive effect on a new left-wing party and new right-wing party, respectively. All in all, the available evidence suggests authoritarianism is becoming the main cultural fault line in western societies.

## Appendix

TABLE A1: *Factor Loadings of the Moral Traditionalist Items*

| Item   | Factor 1 |
|--|----------|
| Homosexuals should be firmly dealt with  | 0.76     |
| Do you think that homosexuals should be left as free as possible to live their own lives or do you feel that this should be opposed as much as possible?<br>[Leave as free as possible...oppose as much as possible] | 0.70     |
| Homosexuals should be eradicated from society  | 0.68     |
| In a firm it is unnatural when women hold a position of authority over men   | 0.62     |
| It is not as important for a girl to get a good schooling as it is for a boy   | 0.53     |
| A married couple decides on principle not to have children although there are no medical objections. Can you approve of such a point of view or do you think it unacceptable?  | 0.53     |
| A woman is more capable of bringing up small children than a man is  | 0.49     |
| After all, boys can be educated more freely than girls   | 0.49     |
| To check the population expansion, birth-control should be strongly advocated  | 0.38     |
| Are there circumstances in which abortion should be allowed?   | 0.34     |
| If a woman so wishes, it should be possible for her to have an abortion  | 0.34     |
| Suppose a physician is able to put someone out of his/her misery at his/her own request by giving him/her an injection. What do you think he should do?<br>[Give the injection ... don't give the injection]*        | 0.34     |
| Eigenvalues  | 3.45     |
| $R^2$  | 0.29     |
| Cronbach's $\alpha$  | 0.76     |

\* Authors' translation from Dutch codebook of datafile.

TABLE A2. *Factor Loadings of the Authoritarianist (F-scale) Items*

| Item  | Factor 1 |
|---|----------|
| Most people fall short of your expectations when you get to know them better  | 0.65     |
| Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, lame and feeble-minded people                             | 0.61     |
| There are two sorts of people: the strong and the weak  | 0.59     |
| Young people often revolt against social institutions that they find unjust; however when they get older they ought to become resigned to reality | 0.57     |
| What we need are fewer laws and institutions and more courageous, tireless, devoted leaders whom people can trust                                 | 0.56     |
| Ill-mannered people cannot expect decent people to want to mix with them  | 0.55     |
| Nowadays more and more people are prying into matters that should remain personal and private   | 0.50     |
| Eigenvalue  | 2.33     |
| $R^2$   | 0.33     |
| Cronbach's $\alpha$   | 0.66     |

TABLE A3. *Factor Loadings of Religious Orthodoxy Items*

| Item  | Factor 1 |
|---|----------|
| Do you believe in heaven?                   | 0.82     |
| In the devil?                               | 0.81     |
| In hell?                                    | 0.79     |
| Do you believe in eternal life?             | 0.72     |
| Did Adam and Eve exist?                     | 0.69     |
| Do you regard the Bible as the word of God? | 0.65     |
| Do you think that praying has some meaning? | 0.61     |
| Do you believe in purgatory?                | 0.49     |
| Eigenvalue                                  | 3.96     |
| $R^2$                                       | 0.50     |
| Cronbach's $\alpha$                         | 0.83     |

TABLE A4. *Factor Loadings of the Economic Conservatism Items*

| Item  | Factor 1 |
|---|----------|
| Are you in favor or against the government taking radical measures to reduce the differences in ownership of property?  | 0.79     |
| Are you in favor or against the government taking radical measures to reduce the differences in income levels?  | 0.78     |
| The government should oblige employers to share in the profits to the same degree that shareholders do  | 0.73     |
| Government tax on higher incomes should be [strongly increased....strongly decreased]   | 0.71     |
| The government should allow for the minimum income to rise more sharply than other income-levels  | 0.70     |
| Do you want the differences between higher and lower incomes to increase, decrease or remain as it is?  | 0.68     |
| There are individuals who own a lot and others who own very little. Do you want these differences in the ownership of property to become larger, to become smaller or to remain as it is? | 0.64     |
| Surtax should be [strongly increased....strongly decreased]   | 0.61     |
| The government should make many more grants available to children of less well-to-do-families   | 0.60     |
| Eigenvalue  | 4.31     |
| $R^2$   | 0.48     |
| Cronbach's $\alpha$   | 0.86     |

### Notes

1. As this article draws on data collected in the Netherlands in 1975, when non-Christian religiosity was a marginal phenomenon and not as yet represented in surveys, our argument is based only on the distinction between Christians and *secular* non-Christians.
2. See Appendix for details. The translations from Dutch are adopted from Middendorp (1991). All items are standardized. Only respondents with less than three "missing



values” on these items are assigned a score on this scale. All this applies to all other scales as well.

3. The scales for moral conservatism and authoritarianism can be constructed separately in a meaningful way, because confirmatory factor analysis indicates that a model in which their respective items are explained by two latent factors fits the data better than a model in which only one latent factor is specified. Details are available from the authors upon request.
4. Other criteria which can be used to split authoritarianism yield approximately the same results, since authoritarianism has a normal distribution.
5. Since a lowess line is never *exactly* linear (even when the regression function itself is linear), the almost straight line in Figure 1 forms strong evidence for the existence of a linear correlation.
6. Of course, a similar analysis can be conducted by splitting *moral traditionalism* instead of *authoritarianism*. This yields comparable results: the correlation between the nontraditional half and *authoritarianism* is 0.312 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 0.196 ( $p < 0.01$ ) between the traditional half and *authoritarianism*. The explained variance of the traditional half is more than 2.5 times lower than that of the nontraditional half ( $p < 0.01$ ).
7. The Christian Democrats (the Christian Democratic Appeal or CDA) and orthodox Christian parties (the Anti-Revolutionary Party or ARP, the Christian Historical Union or CHU, the Dutch Reformed Political Alliance or GPV, the Catholic People's Party or KVP, the Political Dutch Reformed Party or SGP, and the Roman Catholic Party Netherlands or RKPN) are coded as right-wing Christian parties (that is, as 2) and the conservatives (the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy or VVD) as a secular right-wing party (that is, as 1).
8. Christian right-wing parties generally propagate more economic redistribution by the state than secular right-wing parties. By controlling for *economic conservatism* the “pure” cultural effects we aim to demonstrate remain.
9. Men are coded as 1; woman are coded as 2.
10. The  $\chi^2$  of the model with nonidentical values for some parameters needs to be extracted from the  $\chi^2$  of the model with identical values for all parameters. In this case:  $64.322 - 51.150 = 13.172$ . Taking the degrees of freedom of both models into account, it is possible to verify the significance of this difference. With a difference of two degrees of freedom, the difference in  $\chi^2$  should be at least 5.991 to be significant at the 5 percent level. This condition is satisfied.
11. In the model, the error covariances between the endogenous explanatory variables *economic conservatism*, *authoritarianism*, and *moral conservatism* are set free. For clarity's sake, this is not depicted in Figure 3.
12. These explanations do not appear to hold for Hunsberger et al. (1996), since all their separate items of authoritarianism correlate with fundamentalism as well as orthodoxy. However, these results are likely to be spurious. The data are based on a specific group (psychology students) that probably is predominantly progressive, so a high correlation between their scores on moral traditionalism and authoritarianism is to be expected (see Table 2). Therefore, the reported zero-order correlations between authoritarianism on the one hand and fundamentalism and orthodoxy on the other hand may be caused by the fact that all these variables correlate with moral traditionalism.

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