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# TABLE OF CONTENTS VOL 21, No. 1&2

## Authoritarianism

Mark P. Worrell Authoritarianism, Critical Theory, and Political Psychology: Past, Present, Future.....	3
David N. Smith The Ambivalent Worker: Max Weber, Critical Theory and the Antinomies of Authority.....	35
Michael Werz Personality, Authority, and Society.....	85
Jos D. Meloen Fluctuations of Authoritarianism in Society.....	107
Christel Hopf Attachment Experiences and Aggression Against Minorities.....	133
Lauren Langman I Hate, therefore I am.....	151
George Lundskow Smiles, Styles, and Profiles: Claim and Acclaim of Ronald Reagan as Charismatic Leader.....	185
Rainer Funk Erich Fromm's Concept of Social Character.....	215
Daniel Burston Modes of Authority and Social Character Research.....	231
<b>Articles and Essays</b>	
Carl L. Bankston III and Jacques Henry The Socioeconomic Position of the Louisiana Creoles: An Examination of Racial and Ethnic Stratification.....	253
June Leahy Coping Strategies of Prisoners in a Maximum Security Prison: Minimals, Optimals and Utilitarians.....	279

## **Books: Essays and Reviews**

Kevin Anderson reviews <i>L'investissement symbolique</i> by Pierre and Ariane Lantz.....	291
Frank Kunkle reviews <i>Walter Benjamin and the Bible</i> by Brian Britt.....	295
Gail Bossenga reviews <i>Becoming a Revolutionary</i> by Timothy Tackett.....	302



The formal conceptualization of the idea of authoritarianism sprang from reflection, by Erich Fromm and others, about the resistance of German workers to the notoriously authoritarian powers of state and boss in the years before Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The tragic irony of Fromm's finding, however, as the discovery that the worker's war against authority was often authoritarian itself. This is plainly visible, for example, in the stark dramatic lines of Hugo Gellert's "socialist realist" rendering of proletarian revolt (1934). In Gellert's surreal vision, the workers are pure romantic ideal-types, both leaders and led—all muscle, all men, all militancy, class warriors from shaved head to grimy toe. These workers, it seems plain, would take orders even in the revolt against authority.

This, Fromm posited, is authoritarianism; and although, in reality, most workers in Germany in 1933 were nothing like this ideal-type, there were in fact strong enough authoritarian impulses among workers to cripple effective working-class resistance to Hitler's dictatorship. So many workers were either predisposed to submit to authority, or, even more commonly, ambivalent about authority, that Fromm saw little hope for a united and determined resistance to Nazism. Gellert's idealized "class warriors" were, in reality, as eager to submit as they were to fight.

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## FROM THE EDITORS

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*Social Thought & Research* is a thirty-year old interdisciplinary journal published by the University of Kansas Sociology Department. Volume 21 represents the partial fulfillment of the journal's vision of an interdisciplinary periodical devoted to the comprehension of modern society. We thought that the problem of authoritarianism was a good place to start. Hence, we have solicited the help of political psychologists, historians, sociologists, and other knowledgeable individuals to help us tackle an enduring phenomenon of broad theoretical and intellectual interest.

When the Frankfurt theorists first undertook their inquiry into authoritarianism during the early and mid 1930s, their approach combined sociology, psychology, economics, history, and philosophy, among other things. Since the early 1950s however, the symphonic approach to authoritarianism research was pursued narrowly and was characterized by positivistic survey research that advanced little in the way of new theory or insights into the problem. The limits of that research strategy became painfully evident by the early 1980s. Potentially, authoritarianism research is now situated at a crossroads of converging interests. Once again a small but growing body of scholars outside psychology have taken a new interest in the Frankfurt School's early research program and have turned back to some of the early classic texts for inspiration. One manifestation of this new interest is the minor renaissance in Frommian-styled analyses of politics and society.

With the next issue's special section on American social thought in the works, our larger goal will be one step closer to realization, and, we are excited about its content. In addition to an original research report by Herbert Blumer, we will be publishing a previously unseen piece by George Herbert Mead – thanks to the generosity of our friend and colleague Harold L. Orbach.

Additionally, a number of pieces will be included that deal with the various stages of American ideas: Communitarianism and political thought of the founding period; several articles on pragmatism, critical theory, and aesthetics; leftist sociology during the 60s a la Alvin Gouldner. This upcoming issue will demonstrate how this journal may contribute to the usefulness of unconventional and interdisciplinary inquiry.

We welcome critical feedback from our readers and suggestions for contributions. Further, we welcome any proposals for guest editing special sections, book reviews and essays, interviews, lost classics, translations, research notes, annotated bibliographies, and dissertation excerpts. For a comprehensive discussion of this journal's format and content expectations see "From the Editors" in Volume 20. Feel free to contact the editors at the University of Kansas, Department of Sociology, STAR, Fraser Hall 716, Lawrence, KS 66045. Our e-mail address is mars@eagle.cc.ukans.edu

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## **AUTHORITARIANISM, CRITICAL THEORY, AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**

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MARK P. WORRELL  
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Psychoanalytic Marxism is responsible for developing the notion of the "authoritarian personality." Recognizing that Marx's theory of revolution contained limitations, the members of the Institute of Social Research or "Frankfurt School" (along with other kindred but unaffiliated spirits such as Wilhelm Reich) revised traditional theories of society and psyche during the early part of this century in an effort to account for the failure of revolutionary political practice amongst segments of the German working class and, relatedly, the rise of fascism.

Characteristically disenchanted with orthodoxies and dogma, Reich echoed sentiments common to Institute members when he complained that "The theoretical thinking of the Comintern leaders, in whose hands lies the fate of world revolution, has degenerated, becoming economist and mechanical; as a result, the Comintern has been regularly overtaken by events" ([1934] 1972, p.30). In the case of the Frankfurt School, the product of revisionist synthesizing and jettisoning of dogma was a unique set of theoretical optics that gathered together, *inter alia*,<sup>1</sup> Hegelian philosophy, Marx's theory of capitalism, and Freudian psychoanalytic theory into what we may now call *classical critical theory*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Not widely acknowledged by the Institute was its debt to the interpretive sociology of Max Weber. Along with Marx and Freud, Weber is undoubtedly the unadvertised but powerful influence we feel in the writings of many of the institute members (cf Kellner 1985) as well as many other varieties of "Western Marxism" (Dahms 1997). It might also be recalled that Erich Fromm was a sociology student at the University of Heidelberg and earned his doctorate under the guidance of Max Weber's brother, Alfred (Burston 1991, p.15). The title of Fromm's Ph.D. dissertation was "Das jüdische Gesetz. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Diasporajudentums" (1922).

<sup>2</sup>My use of the phrase "classical critical theory" is virtually synonymous with what Wolfgang Bonss calls "early critical theory": the period between 1929 and 1936. In the early period of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer outlined an interdisciplinary research program in which analytic social psychology