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Misreadings and misquotations; reply to Ray on authoritarianism and ethnocentrism

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In his comment on our paper (Scheepers, Felling and Peters, 1990), Ray displays a bias with regard to studies on authoritarianism. This bias has led him to ignore everything we have reported besides a statistical relation; and it has led him to object to some parts of the general theory of authoritarianism that we have not referred to because these parts are obviously irrelevant within the framework of our paper.

Let us start with Ray's objections that are irrelevant within our framework. Most of these objections, like the ones on attitudes to one's parents, type of upbringing and punitiveness, pertain to a part of the original theory as developed by Adorno *et al.* (1950/1982). This part of the theory states that authoritarianism comes into being in early childhood as a result of repressed aggressive feelings toward parents who raise their children with strict discipline. As these aggressive feelings cannot be directed against parents, they are displaced or projected to minority groups (cf. Brown, 1965; Hagendoorn, 1982). To test these hypotheses strictly would be rather difficult. It involves a longitudinal design to measure authoritarianism in early childhood as related to type of upbringing; and a second measurement of authoritarianism and ethnocentrism at a later point in time. Such a design has not been carried through yet. And none of the studies that Ray mentions can be considered as tests of these hypotheses, because they merely indirectly refer to parts of the theoretical argument.

Moreover, Ray's objections are completely beside the point because we have put forward quite a different theoretical view to explain

authoritarianism, which Ray has failed to notice. This theory was derived from one of the intellectual predecessors of Adorno *et al.*, mainly from Fromm (1929/1983, 1932, 1936), updated with more recent views (Lipset, 1959; Gabennesch, 1972; Hill, 1984; Eisinga and Scheepers, 1989; Scheepers, Eisinga and Van Snippenburg, 1989, 1991). The crucial difference is that we suggest that authoritarianism might be caused by factors related to one's *contemporary* social condition, which is in general not falsified by our data. This does not mean, however, that we deny the possible importance of the theory of Adorno *et al.*, but we just do not know of relevant data to test it strictly. In short, Ray simply misses the point of our paper on the explanation of authoritarianism.

Next, Ray wants us to defend statements derived from the original theory of Adorno *et al.*, which we have neither mentioned nor used, such as those on rigidity and on the happiness of conservatives. As these statements are simply irrelevant within the framework of our paper, we will take the liberty of passing over these objections.

Now let us proceed with some issues that we have put forward, but which were ignored by Ray. These pertain to Ray's statements that we merely have another case of the relationship between authoritarianism and ethnocentrism to report, and that we are unaware of the real debate on *why* authoritarianism predicts ethnocentrism. Ray first misquotes us by stating that we essentially accept the explanation given by Adorno *et al.*; and then fails to take into

consideration that we propose quite another theoretical interpretation for the relation between authoritarianism and ethnocentrism to which we have devoted quite a substantial paragraph (cf. Scheepers *et al.*, 1990: 18–19). This interpretation is primarily derived from recent theoretical contributions by Tajfel (1981, 1982a,b) and Turner (1982). The crux of this interpretation is that authoritarian people are particularly inclined to the mental processes of social identification and social contra-identification as counterbalances for their relatively weak ego. Social identification was defined as the selective perception of predominantly favourable characteristics among members of the ingroup. Social contra-identification was defined as the selective perception of predominantly unfavourable characteristics among members of outgroups. These mental processes result in ethnocentrism which indeed may be considered as a universal phenomenon, as Brown (1986) has stated. But this phenomenon has a great deal of variance that can be explained, at least partially, in terms of one's social conditions and in terms of authoritarianism. As our crucial hypotheses have not been falsified, we consider Ray's statement on the tenability of our theory as 'jumping to conclusions', based on misreadings and misquotations.

Having ascertained so many misreadings and misquotations in Ray's comment on just one paper, one wonders how conscientiously Ray has read all the studies on authoritarianism, of which there have been more than 1200 since 1950, according to Meloen (1983).

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