



Value-oriented citizenship index: New extensions of Kelman and Hamilton's theory to prevent autocracy



Davide Morselli ^{a,*}, Stefano Passini ^b

^a University of Lausanne, Swiss National Centre for Competence in Research LIVES, Géopolis Building, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

^b University of Bologna, Department of Education "G. M. Bertin", via Filippo Re 6, 40126 Bologna, Italy

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ABSTRACT

In *Crimes of obedience*, Kelman and Hamilton argue that societies can be protected by the degeneration of authority only when citizenship is based on a strong values orientation. This reference to values may be the weakest point in their theory because they do not explicitly define these values. Nevertheless, their empirical findings suggest that the authors are referring to specific democratic principles and universal values (e.g., equality, fairness, harmlessness). In this article, a composite index known as the value-oriented citizenship (VOC) index is introduced and empirically analysed. The results confirm that the VOC index discriminates between people who relate to authority based on values rather than based on their role or on rules in general. The article discusses the utility of the VOC index to develop Kelman and Hamilton's framework further empirically as well as its implications for the analysis of the relationship between individuals and authority.

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1. Introduction

Twenty-five years ago, [Kelman and Hamilton \(1989\)](#) proposed several interesting ideas based on their social psychology research regarding the active role of citizens in controlling institutional authorities and avoiding atrocities that may develop from obedience to harmful and destructive demands. Their work is known primarily for its convincing theoretical framework explaining why individuals obey authorities when such authorities make destructive requests, or so called "crimes of obedience." However, a second aspect of their book is often ignored, although it is equally interesting. Kelman and Hamilton advanced several insights into the dynamics that enable people to avoid the hidden risks of such destructive obedience within political systems. The two authors argued that individuals can be citizens in different ways according to three political orientations (based on rules, roles, or values) that are described as different ways of conceptualising and relating to authority. In particular, they asserted that societies and political systems may be protected by the degeneration of authority only when citizenship is based on a strong values orientation: "Value oriented citizens are likely to play a role in the management and decision making of social institutions" ([Kelman and Hamilton, 1989, p. 271](#)) because value orientation impels "an individual in the direction of disobedience if and when an obedient act is seen as violating central values or a disobedient act is seen as embodying them" ([Kelman and Hamilton, 1989, p. 275](#)).

In the present article, we focus on this less cited part of Kelman and Hamilton's seminal work. Although a new wave of studies on crimes of obedience has emerged in recent years – largely focused on the replication and revision of [Milgram's \(1974\)](#) famous experiment (e.g., [Beauvois et al., 2012](#); [Bègue et al., 2014](#); [Burger, 2009](#); [Dambrun and Vatine, 2010](#);

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: davide.morselli@unil.ch (D. Morselli).

Dambrun et al., 2014; Gibson, 2014; Hollander, 2015) – little empirical research has been undertaken in the direction of the proactive and innovative part of Kelman and Hamilton's theory on value-oriented citizens. Specifically, in their book, Kelman and Hamilton presented some empirical findings to support their framework and proposed three scales to identify different citizenship orientations. However, the correlations between the value orientation scale and other measures such as moralism, conservatism, attachment, and political opinions were rather weak. The authors noted that “the development of a more effective value orientation scale remains a task for future research” (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989, p. 304). In this article, we present an index that aims to measure this value orientation and to overcome this limitation of Kelman and Hamilton's study. Moreover, such an index should add some explanations of disobedience to destructive requests that extend beyond those classic studies that focused solely on the concepts of authoritarianism and conservatism. Several studies (e.g., Bègue et al., 2014; Dambrun and Vatine, 2010) have shown that individuals scoring lower on authoritarianism and conservatism scales are more likely to disobey orders when obedience to such orders would result in the transgression of an ethical imperative (e.g., harm to others). However, we argue that it is important to consider whether such disobedience to authority is motivated by inclusive vs. exclusive attitudes towards other social groups and whether it addresses inclusive vs. exclusive social change. Indeed, not all disobedient groups or movements result in social change that leads to improved democratic principles for all social groups (Passini and Morselli, 2013). For instance, in the 1969 Libyan Revolution, the revolutionary movement led by Muammar al-Gaddafi installed a hereditary and authoritarian monarchy that continued to reproduce inequalities for some social groups.

According to the prosocial disobedience hypothesis (Passini and Morselli, 2009), different motivations can lead to disobedience of authority. However, only disobedience associated with inclusiveness can effectively enhance democratic principles and improve democratic institutions (Morselli and Passini, 2012). The prosocial disobedience hypothesis is consistent with Kelman and Hamilton's framework and with the definition of value-oriented citizenship (VOC). The added value of the index introduced in the present research is to consider that opposition to authority is motivated not only by anti-authoritarianism and liberal attitudes but also by inclusion of all social groups in the purpose of the protest action. Indeed, certain recent studies (e.g., Ivarsflaten, 2008; Werts et al., 2013) have shown that protest movements may promise social change by implementing populist and exclusionary measures. For instance, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, concerns regarding the economic situation have led some people to distrust authoritative officials and institutions and to support protest movements that promise economic recovery through policies rooted in xenophobia and intolerance (see Passini and Morselli, 2015). In fact, supporting such movements risks endorsing an authoritarian version of democracy and increasing the likelihood of crimes of obedience.

The link between the importance attached to values such as equality and justice and disobedient attitudes and behaviours has been investigated by studies focused on so-called postmaterialist values (e.g., self-expression, freedom of speech, equality and tolerance). Research in political science has indeed shown that in societies that hold postmaterialist values in high esteem, citizens are more mobilised to protest against the ruling authority (Dalton et al., 2010; Welzel and Inglehart, 2006). These studies have also shown that the diffusion of those values throughout a country is a strong predictor of the strengthening of democratic institutions (Welzel and Inglehart, 2008; Welzel, 2013). Indeed, all these studies are rooted in the pluralist tradition under which shared values are fundamental prerequisites for establishing durable and stable democracies (e.g., Almond and Verba, 1963; Buchanan, 2002; Dahl, 1998). However, some level of ecological fallacy has been shown in the relationship between postmaterialist values and political attitudes. Although analyses of the World Values Survey data aggregated at the country level have demonstrated that postmaterialism and preferences for democratic values are tightly correlated (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), analyses by Davis (2000) on the very same data have shown that postmaterialist values are poorly correlated at the individual level with support for certain democratic principles (i.e., political tolerance and civil liberties). Therefore, the added value of the Kelman and Hamilton approach is its focus on individual processes of legitimacy attribution rather than on the dynamics and consequences of the diffusion of certain values throughout a society. In other words, their interest is to determine which processes may help ordinary citizens oppose unethical demands from the ruling authority and to thus isolate the elements that might facilitate a critical citizenship.

1.1. Kelman and Hamilton's framework

According to Kelman and Hamilton (1989), individuals use different orientations in relating to the governing authority and the political system. Indeed, the authority relationship may be established based on (i) adherence to rules and the fear of punishments (rule orientation), (ii) identification with the behavioural proposal of the authority (role orientation), or (iii) common and internalised values (value orientation). Such individual differences reflect distinctions in how citizens define the political authority and their responsibility *vis-à-vis* the demands of that authority: “Views of authority and responsibility together clearly have a bearing on people's readiness to challenge authority and their tendency to obey or disobey” (Kelman and Hamilton, 1989, p. 262), and these two authors continue that these citizenship orientations are connoted by different processes of legitimacy attribution. In particular, rule-oriented citizens believe in the legitimacy of following rules and responding to the demands of authority. Such citizens thus support policies that contribute to enhancing a sense of security. In return, these citizens expect the government to protect their basic interests and ensure societal order. In contrast, role-oriented citizens perceive themselves as good citizens who satisfy their role obligations by actively contributing to society and by obeying the authority's demands. These citizens support policies that enhance their sense of status, and in return, they expect the government to ensure high personal status for them. Finally, value-oriented citizens are committed to

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