

**Kohn M L.** *Class and conformity: a study in values.*

Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969. 315 p.

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Men of higher class position, who have the opportunity to be self-directed in their work, want to be self-directed off the job, too, and come to think self-direction possible. Men of lower class position, who do not have the opportunity for self-direction in their work, come to regard it as a matter of necessity to conform to authority, both on and off the job. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*<sup>®</sup> (SSCI)<sup>®</sup> indicates that this book has been cited in over 400 publications since 1969.]

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The main impetus for the book was to present as a coherent whole the results of nearly a decade and a half of research. The research was designed to investigate why social class (I would now say, social stratification) is correlated with people's values, self-conceptions, and social orientations. The research demonstrated the pivotal importance of job conditions that determine how much opportunity people have to be self-directed in their work—the substantive complexity of that work, closeness of supervision, and routinization. The heart of the thesis is that the relationships of social class to values and orientations result mainly from the greater opportunity to be self-directed in one's work that is afforded by higher educational level and occupational position.

*Class and Conformity* did not argue that the relationships of job conditions with values and orientations result entirely from job-affecting values and orientations; on the contrary, it explicitly assumed that the ef-

fects are reciprocal, with job conditions both affecting and being affected by values and orientations. The book, however, never tested the assumption of reciprocity, nor did it empirically assess the magnitudes of these posited reciprocal effects. To do so required longitudinal data and reciprocal-effects causal analyses. These analyses are reported in a later book, which summarizes nearly two decades of further research, *Work and Personality*.<sup>1</sup> This book greatly extends the scope of the analysis to consider the relationships of job conditions not only with values and orientations, but also with cognitive functioning, as evidenced both in the interview situation and in the intellectuality of leisure-time activities. It assesses the psychological effects of job conditions not only for employed men, but also for employed women. And it assesses the psychological concomitants, not only of the conditions of work experienced in paid employment, but also of those experienced in housework.

*Class and Conformity* has been cited often for many reasons. The research has been replicated many times, both in the US and abroad, and most of these studies cite the book. Other studies use the interpretative scheme of the book for their own theoretical purpose—extensions of the argument, extrapolations, generalizations. Some cite the book for the definitions of concepts it introduced—the substantive complexity of work, occupational self-direction, parental values. Others cite the book for theoretical distinctions elaborated therein, e.g., valuation of self-direction versus conformity to external authority. Still others rely on indices developed in the research or statistical methods employed in the book. Some use the extensive findings to confirm, buttress, or fill in gaps in their own research. And then, alas, some cite the book to show erudition, to buttress arguments to which the book is utterly irrelevant, and some even use the book in support of arguments that its findings in fact deny. I would like to believe, though, that *Class and Conformity* is cited mainly because it used the best methods then available to confront a central theoretical issue—the relationship between larger social structure and individual personality.

1. Kohn M L & Schooler C. (With the collaboration of Miller J, Miller K, Schoenbach C & Schoenberg R.)

*Work and personality: an inquiry into the impact of social stratification.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1983. 389 p.