Theoretical bases of the beats' repudiation of conformity from the point of view of social psychology

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Abstract
Conformity is an important phenomenon in social psychology. As social animals, we always consciously or unconsciously live in a state of tension; a tension between the values of conformity and those of individuality. However, the establishment tends to uphold conformity rather than nonconformity. The Beats, as nonconformists, acted contrary to American society's expectations and believed that conformity could be calamitous for several reasons. It could make the individual doubt his reservations and, as a result, refrain from expressing his dissenting ideas. It destroyed individuality and brought about homogeneity to which the Beats were dead set against. This paper looks into the theoretical bases of the Beats' opinions about conformity.

Keywords: Authoritarian Personality, Beats, Conformity, Deviance, Social Influence.

Introduction

As a central issue in the Beats' studies, conformity comes within the scope of 'social influence' that can be defined "as a change in behavior caused by real or imagined pressure from others" (Kenrick, 2009, p. 195) and should be distinguished from 'persuasion' "a change in private attitudes and beliefs" (Kenrick, p. 195). Close attention should be paid to social influence in humanities and social sciences because as social animals, people in a society always interact with and naturally influence each other. The Beats prioritized individuality and tried to oppose and avoid conformity which "involves changing one's behavior to match the responses or actions of others, to fit in with those around us" (Kenrick, 195). 'Conscience collective', a related term in Durkheim's sociology, prioritizes society and puts it above and over the individual, that is, "Individual consciousness and moral conscience is derived from a normative order which coerces social members into thinking, judging and acting according to certain, socially desirable, norms" (Edgar 2007, pp. 59-60). And 'norm' is "a rule that governs a pattern of social behaviour" (Edgar, 231). Psychologists believe that people in societies of the East, like Japan, are more collectivistic and conversely, people in societies of the West, like America, are more individualistic (Kenrick, 2009, p. 218). The reason behind the Beats' resistance to conformity was that after World War II and especially when the cold war started, the American government under the pretext of containing the increasing influence of the former Soviet Union and also because of the unfriendly political and technological competition between these two countries, encouraged conformity and called those who had lost "norms to guide social interaction," 'anomic' (Edgar, 2007, p. 12) and most of the time also 'deviant'. To choose correctly, gain social approval, and manage self-image, as Kenrick (2009) enumerates, are the major goals of social influence (p. 195). Additionally, he enumerates conformity, compliance and obedience as the major categories of social influence (p. 195). 'Compliance' "refers to the act of changing one's behavior in response to a direct request" and 'obedience' "is a special type of compliance that involves changing one's behavior in response to a directive from an authority figure" (Kenrick, pp. 195-96). So, the difference between conformity and the two others is that "Conformity can occur without overt social pressure" (Kenrick, p. 195). Social psychologically speaking, some individuals accord great importance to social approval and therefore,

are very akin and motivated to gain the respect of those around them and act in accordance with social norms. The Beats, without question, were not amongst this type of individuals.

Nonconformity and Deviance

'Labelling theory' is an important issue related to nonconformity. It argues that if an individual breaks a social or behavioural norm, he does not simply become a deviant; 'deviant' is actually a label imposed upon the individual by society (Edgar, 2007, pp. 179-80). Durkheim enunciates that norms restrict the aspirations and goals of a society's individual members and make them coherent with the means available for their realization. This coherence, according to Durkheim, is a precondition of human happiness. If the norms, for example through increasing individualism, collapse or the means, for example, through rapid economic growth expand, there will be a discrepancy between goals and means and this condition leads to deviancy (Edgar, p. 12). As an example, the Beats did not believe in mere academic education and most of them left universities or had sporadic academic education. Instead, they preferred to have streetwise education or learn things 'on the road' or be taught by criminals, delinquents, addicts, and hoboes. Education, that is the goal, is positively valued by society but the means, that is relation with those groups, is not accepted. Ginsberg has a suggestion for education: "I am in effect setting up moral codes and standards which include drugs, orgy, music and primitive magic as worship rituals—educational tools which are supposedly contrary to our cultural mores; and I am proposing these standards to you respectable ministers …" (Schumacher, 2015, p. 144).

Some sociologists, Becker (1976) reports, look at deviance from the point of view of health and disease. They label 'deviant' any processes that tend to reduce the society's stability and identify them as symptoms of social disorganization. Accordingly, those features of society which promote stability are 'functional' and those which disrupt it are 'dysfunctional'. Some other sociologists, Becker continues, consider deviance as a political issue. Each group tends to have their own definition of the group's function accepted and this is decided in political conflict. So, what rules should be enforced, what behaviour should be regarded as deviant, and which people should be labelled as outsiders are to be considered as political. Still another sociological view, as Becker says, defines deviance as the failure to obey group rules. He believes, too, that it is society that creates deviance meaning that "*social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders" (pp. 7-9). Therefore, deviance, Becker stresses, is not a quality of the act the person commits but a result of the application of rules and sanctions to an 'offender' by others. In other words, deviance is a consequence of others' responses to a person's act (p. 9). In case of the Beats, deviance is, of course, regarded as political, medical and personal failure and all the three issues must be paid attention to. Ginsberg enumerates a list of deviants in American society like this: "Deviants from the mass sexual stereotype, quietists, those who will not work for money, or fib and make arms for hire, or join armies in murder and threat, those who wish to loaf, think, rest in visions, act beautifully on their own, speak truthfully in public, inspired by Democracy" (Schumacher, 2015, pp. 113). Becker (1976) raises a very crucially important issue: "Instead of asking why deviants want to do things that are disapproved of, we might better ask why conventional people do not follow through on the deviant impulses they have" (pp. 26-7). The Beats, as a matter of fact, raised the same question and felt sorry for those people who did not express their emotions and choked their individuality only to gain approval of other fellows. In studying the genesis of deviant behaviour, then, Becker (1976) suggests that we should pay close attention to "the processes by which people are emancipated from the controls of society and become responsive to those of a smaller group" (p. 60).

Why Conformity?

Argyle (1976) seems to have answered the question raised by both Becker and the Beats from the point of view of social psychology. He argues that even though a group does not accept a person's self-image or does not treat him respectfully, the person may be still keen to belong to the group. If the group withholds esteem and the person is going to share it, he may alter behaviour in such a way that produces the desired response from others (p. 168). Expounding on conformity, compliance and obedience, Bordens (2008) tells a real story: a jury is impaneled to hear the case State v. Leroy Reed, a paroled felon who is arrested for possessing a gun. Karl is sitting in the jury box and carefully listens and watches. The defence attorney argues that even though Reed has bought a gun, he should not be found guilty; he buys the gun because he believes that it is required for a mail-order detective course in

which he has enrolled. Reed wants to better his life and thinks that becoming a private detective is just the ticket. Evidence also shows that Reed is able to read at only a fifth-grade level and probably does not understand that he is violating his parole. The prosecuting attorney argues that the defendant should be found guilty and the judge tells the jury that, according to the law, they must find Reed guilty if he has possessed a gun and knows that he possesses a gun. At last, nine jurors favour acquittal and only three, including Karl, favour conviction. After further discussion, two of the jurors favouring conviction change their votes. Karl alone holds firm to his belief in the defendant's guilt. The other jurors try to convince Karl that a not-guilty verdict is fairer. Pressure continues (nobody directly asks or orders him to change his vote) and after a while, however, Karl, still unconvinced, decides to change his verdict. He tells the jury members that he changes his verdict to not guilty but that he just never feels right about it (pp. 231-32). This story perhaps shows that most of the time we are willing to compromise our beliefs in the face of a unanimous majority who think differently; hence, the difference between social psychology from other areas of psychology: the influence of others on our behaviour. In social situations the range of appropriate behaviour is defined by the behaviour of others. If the fire alarm rings in class, for example, we will look around to see what others do; what we do depends on whether our classmates get up and leave or they are sitting calmly.

According to Argyle (1976), it is known that insecure people are more affected by pressures and social influences of all kinds and one of the main causes of conformity is that the person wants to avoid being rejected and considered as a deviant (p. 168). In Karl's story, for example, conformity comes about as a result of 'normative social influence' according to which, as Bordens (2008) explains, in response to a norm we modify our behaviour because we experience discomfort when we disagree with others. So, in order to gain social acceptance, to avoid appearing different or being rejected we are prone to conform to norms or the implicit expectations of others (p. 234). Argyle (1976) adds: "Those who conform most are those who feel inferior, lack self-confidence, and are dependent on others" (p. 168). In general, he continues, people try to self-improve really or apparently in response to negative reactions from others (p. 168). So, we can say that the Beats were regarded as outsiders or deviants simply because they did not lack self-confidence, did not feel inferior, and above all they did not want to lose individuality via following others. Additionally, they were quite cognizant that deviance was always constructed by society and they did not take it as truth. It should not be forgotten that psychologically, as Milgram (1974) emphasizes, human beings have been perfectly tailored neither for complete autonomy nor for total submission (p. 153) and perhaps this is an answer to those who claim that the Beats at least in some cases fell prey to capitalism and could not completely escape or neutralize it. Interestingly, in a study of adult men, Schooler found that the lower the person's social-stratification position, the more he values conformity to external authority and the more he believes that conformity is all that his abilities and the nature of his circumstances allow (Saari, 2002, p. 89). Accordingly, we hardly expect the Betas, as authors and cultural figures, to conform to authority. Erikson (1987), too, submits that conformity sometimes turns man into a "thoughtless slave" and subjects him to those who "are in a position to exploit it" (p. 234).

Modernity VS. Conformity

It seems that in essence, modernity is incompatible with individuality. Gold (1997) believes that when faced with the fact of individual differences, social organizations in theory and practice incorporate mechanisms of social control that contribute to the elimination of the differences by obtaining conformity (p.71); these social organizations instruct, provide, model, and manipulate reinforcements in order to induce conformity (p.146). He even goes beyond this and says: "The persuasiveness of an idea inheres in its compatibility with other ideas in the extant culture" (p. 129) as we saw in Karl's story. In Freudian theory, to perpetuate civilization, the id or pleasure principle must be tamed. It is the ego or reality principle and social organizations' responsibility to do this. In response, people throw themselves into their work, restrain their delight, and transform sensual and sexual energy into work production; they, in fact, imagine that this will lead to their security as unquestioning, conformist citizens. According to Goffman (1963), the nature of 'good adjustment' is contradictory in such a way that the stigmatized person should cheerfully and self-unconsciously accept that he is essentially the same as normal while simultaneously he should voluntarily accept, too, that there are situations in which normal people would find it difficult to accept him as someone who is like them (p. 121). This simultaneous acceptance and distance refers to the fact that when a person is different from

normal, his personality as a whole, is labeled as stigmatized, outsider, or deviant and therefore, even if there are similarities, society ignores them. This contradiction, of course, "is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 8). Basically, in American society, Adorno (1950) claims, conformity is a sign of personal maturity (p. 154) and the rebellious tendencies have been so inhibited that the emphasis on conformity is considered as a defense against underlying hostility towards accepted authority (p. 162). Adorno also indicates that dissent, nonconformity, and lack of identification with the status quo actually work against ethnocentrism (p. 211) and although the Beats wanted to bring about heterogeneity, ethnocentrism is exactly what they were accused of. Adorno continues that even sometimes conformity is equated with psychic health and nonconformity with psychic disturbance (p. 968).

Philip Zimbardo and his students, Aronson (1999) reports, in a dramatic piece of research created a simulated or mock prison in the basement of the Psychology Department at Stanford University. He brought a group of intelligent, mature, stable, and normal young men into this prison and flipping a coin, he designated half of them prisoners and the other half guards. As such, they lived for several days and

> At the end of only six days we had to close down our mock prison because what we saw was frightening. It was no longer apparent to us or most of the subjects where they ended and their roles began. The majority had indeed become "prisoners" or "guards," no longer able to clearly differentiate between role-playing and self. There were dramatic changes in virtually every aspect of their behavior, thinking and feeling. In less than a week, the experience of imprisonment undid (temporarily) a lifetime of learning; human values were suspended, self-concepts were challenged, and the ugliest, most base, pathological side of human nature surfaced. We were horrified because we saw some boys ("guards") treat other boys as if they were despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty, while other boys ("prisoners") became servile, dehumanized robots who thought only of escape, of their own individual survival, and of their mounting hatred of the guards. (qtd. in Aronson, p. 14)

This research is basically on obedience but as mentioned above, obedience has close affinity with conformity. The boys, as Zimbardo says, conform to an external authority so seriously that they forget their humanity and change into 'dehumanized robots'. Then, Snow is quite right when he reiterates: "When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion (qtd. in Bordens, 2008, p. 231). This research should remind us of the Nuremberg Trials. When many Nazi leaders were asked why they committed those despicable crimes, most of them answered that they had only obeyed their masters. This kind of obedience is, according to Bordens, called "*destructive obedience*" (p. 255).

The Authoritarian Personality

When we are given authority or think we belong to the majority of normals, we start to cultivate authoritarian personalities as the above mentioned research shows. Adorno (1950) and colleagues who have studied prejudice in *The Authoritarian Personality* define "Conventionalism" as "rigid adherence to conventional, middle-class values" (p. 228) and this is of course a type of prejudiced conformity that the Beats did not commit. The Beats, without question, did not adhere to such a belief that "One should avoid doing things in public which appear wrong to others even though one knows that these things are really all right" (Adorno, p. 229). The study has assumed that unconventional people tend to be free of prejudice while some conventional people are prejudiced and some are not and that conventionalism is linked with antidemocratic receptivity when it is determined by external social pressure not with an established individual conscience (p. 229). Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*, as an example, is not conventional and therefore, not prejudiced: "he wanted me to work Marylou. I didn't ask him why because I knew he wanted to see what Marylou was like with another man" (Kerouac, 1959, p. 77). The writers explain why conventional people depend on external social pressure. The conscience or superego in these people is not completely integrated with the self or ego; the ego, on the one hand, should govern the relations between self and the external world and on the other, between self and deeper layers of the personality or superego. When this condition is not achieved, the superego plays the role of a foreign body and this is due to weakness in the ego that fails to internalize the superego.

So, the ego's weakness seems to be a concomitant of both conventionalism and authoritarianism. The writers continue that the weakness leads to an inability to build up a consistent and enduring set of moral values and this, in turn, require the individual to seek some coordinating and organizing agency outside of himself. In other words, as the writers say, the conscience or superego has become externalized (p. 234). The Beats had managed to build up their own morality and that was why they did not postulate that American society was rational and that composing atomic bombs was moral. Arendt (1998) points out to the necessity of distinction amongst human beings: "If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough" (pp. 175-76).

Destructive Conformity

C. Wright Mills (1969) enunciates that intellectuals of society should be nonconformists; they should detach themselves from popular values and stereotypes and they also should not depend on anyone for their beliefs. In addition, they should be self-sufficient and in recoil from the values and practices of society and they should freshly start from the bohemian underground and be in a kind of permanent mutiny against the regime of conformity (p. 143). This is, of course, an accurate description of the Beats. Fromm, as Riesman (1989) quotes him, criticizes society for imposing conformity on the individual and ignoring his individuality:

> In order that any society may function well, its members must acquire the kind of character which makes them *want* to act in the way they *have* to act as members of the society or of a special class within it. They have to *desire* what objectively is *necessary* for them to do. *Outer force* is replaced by *inner compulsion,* and by the particular kind of human energy which is channeled into character traits. (p. 5)

Fromm (2002) really believes that the world in the twentieth century is mentally sicker than it was in the nineteenth century. Conformity is, he reiterates, one of the main reasons for this neurosis. In fact, conformity has turned individuals into robots. He quotes Adlai that "we are not in danger of becoming slaves any more, but of becoming robots" and although there is no overt authority that intimidates us, we are governed by the fear of the 'anonymous' authority of conformity. It is true that we do not submit to anyone personally; it is true that we no longer go through conflicts with authority; but instead, we have no convictions of our own, almost no individuality, and no sense of self (pp. 99-100). Fromm continues that although overt authority has changed into invisible, alienated, anonymous authority, we conform as much or even more than people in an authoritarian society would. Moreover, because this authority is invisible and anonymous it is very difficult for us to attack or rebel against something which is invisible. When there was overt authority, according to Fromm, there was conflict and rebellion against it and throughout the process the personality and the sense of self developed, but when we are not cognizant of submitting or rebelling, when we are ruled by an anonymous authority, we lose the sense of self. The anonymous authority, of course, operates through conformity. We should do what everybody does; we should not be different or 'stick out'; we should be ready to change in accordance with the changes in the pattern; we should not ask if we are right or wrong, but should ask if we are adjusted and if we are not peculiar and different (pp. 148-49). Conformity, according to Fromm, even shapes our identity. We feel inferior if we are different and we do not ask if the difference is for the better or the worse (pp. 150-51). In other words, conformity has developed a new morality: to be adjusted is virtue and to be different is vice (p. 155).

Fromm contends that conformity turns human beings into automatons and as a result, destroys ethics. So, like Adorno, he submits that conformity renders conscience insignificant because by nature, conscience is nonconforming; it should be able to say no when everybody says yes. The more we conform, the more we lose the voice of our conscience and the less we act upon it. Fromm emphasizes that conscience can exist only when we experience ourselves as men not as things or commodities (p. 168). Fromm reiterates that psychologically, man "*is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity, without panic and undue fear*" (p. 190). By necessity, he explains, life is insecure and uncertain and above all "*Free man is by necessity insecure; thinking man by necessity uncertain*" (p. 190). To tolerate this insecurity, Fromm believes, one way is conforming to a group: family, nation, class, etc. As long as the individual has no individuality because of his membership in the group, he is still "we" and as long as the group functions he is sure of his own identity. This is, of course, the way

an alienated person would adopt. The other way is to develop a unique and particular entity which is "he" in such a way that he can truly sense "I am I". This condition can be accomplished if he can achieve a productive orientation and only if he can develop his active powers in such a way that he can be related to the world without having to submerge in it. Fromm continues to say that the alienated person who adopts conformity feels secure in being as similar as possible to others and in being approved of by others and his central fear is that he may not be approved. The deeper his conformity, the more his sense of insecurity will be because any deviation from the pattern and any criticism arouses fear and insecurity (pp. 190-91). In Fromm's opinion, the alienated person or the person who conforms cannot be healthy because he experiences himself as a thing or an investment and is manipulated by himself and by others as well and moreover, he loses the sense of self which creates deep anxiety; he cannot say "I" any longer; "inasmuch as "I am as you desire me" —*I am not*" (pp. 197-98). The person's voice of his conscience cannot give him strength and security but only the feeling of not having lost the close touch with the herd (p. 198). According to Fromm, the way to achieve mental health is the ability to love and to create, to break ties with the group, to have a sense of identity based on one's experience of self, to grasp reality inside and outside of ourselves, and to develop objectivity and reason, and above all, "to be able to be alone, and at the same time one with a loved person, with every brother on this earth, with all that is alive" (p. 197).

If we investigate the Beats' life and literature within the framework of Fromm's ideas, we should pay attention to some controversial issues. Critics almost unanimously believe that the Beats were alienated and if we postulate that they were nonconformists, too, it becomes a contradiction in Fromm's framework of ideas because according to him, conformists are alienated. Critics usually regard the Beats as alienated because they were detached from society and could not realize its reality. Conversely, Fromm would say that they were not alienated because they had developed a sense of self and detached themselves from the group. As opposed to Fromm's ideas, the Beats did not prioritize objectivity and the rationality based on it; instead, they prioritized subjectivity and emotion. In other words, the ego was kept in abeyance and full sway was given to the id. Accordingly, love, another controversial issue, in the Beats was more sexual rather than spiritual. Like Fromm, Marcuse (2007) also believes that conformity leads to more alienation and expresses dismay at the degree to which American people accept the status quo (p. 13). He enunciates that American society is capable of satisfying the needs of its members; this society has rendered autonomy, independence of thought, and the right to political opposition devoid of their basic critical function. Such a society, of course, justly demands its principles and institutions to be accepted and reduces the opposition to the discussion of alternative policies within the status quo. Marcuse eventually decides that in a society that is capable of rising standard of living and of freeing people from want, nonconformity with the system appears to be socially useless (p. 4). Whyte (2002) expresses the same idea and is disappointed that conformity is almost unavoidable in American society:

> nonconformity is an empty goal, and rebellion against prevailing opinion merely because it is prevailing should no more be praised than acquiescence to it. Indeed, it is often a mask for cowardice, and few are more pathetic than those who flaunt outer differences to expiate their inner surrender … the spectacle of people following current custom for lack of will or imagination to do anything else is hardly a new failing, and I am not convinced that there has been any significant change in this respect except in the nature of the things we conform to. (pp. 10-11)

Foster (1992) believes that *On the Road* is a guide about how to get out of a conformist civilization but in the end "it admits that all these roads lead back to where they began" (p. 43). Ginsberg, too, has the same idea and asserts that there is no escape and America will simply continue to torment the people who refuse to conform (Foster, 1992, p. 102). Of course, this is not the full story because if Sal withdraws, Dean continues without faltering and moreover, Sal himself following Dean in some cases manages to experience nonconformity. Theado (2000) disagrees with Foster saying that outside mainstream American society Sal finds greater meaning in the singularity of those who do not conform (p. 66). The Beats at least hoped to change this situation by bringing about heterogeneity because they truly knew that in a homogeneous society it would be much more difficult for the individual to escape conformity. It is not accidental that Sal in *On the Road* does not identify himself with the modern American culture; instead, he identifies himself with the social dregs of that culture:

> There were Beat Negroes who'd come up from Alabama to work in car factories on a rumor; old white bums; young longhaired hipsters who'd reached the end of the road and were drinking wine; whores, ordinary couples, and housewives with nothing to do, nowhere to go, nobody to believe in. If you sifted all Detroit in a wire basket the beater solid core of dregs couldn't be better gathered. (Kerouac, 1959, p. 141)

So, they hoped that heterogeneity might give them the opportunity and plenty of space to manoeuvre especially in a country that sank further and further into homogeneity. According to the quotation above, Kerouac knew that such manoeuvres in mainstream America were undoubtedly impossible.

Blacks were regarded as nonconformists merely because they were black. The Beats identified and associated themselves with them to acquire this kind of separation existed between the blacks and society; so, we should not deny that nonconformity in blacks was a matter of force whereas nonconformity in the Beats a matter of choice and therefore, rather artificial in comparison but this artificiality does not detract from their achievement in bringing about heterogeneity and difference. People like the Beats who choose to be nonconformists are christened 'autonomous' by Riesman (1989, p. 242). As a matter of fact, as Kerouac (1959) says in *On the Road*, both the African American musicians and the Betas were in the backyard and far from the mainstream: "as I sat there listening to that sound of the night which bop has come to represent for all of us, I thought of all my friends from one end of the country to the other and how they were really all in the same vast backyard doing something so frantic and rushing-about" (p. 11). Holton, Skerl (2004) reports, interestingly indicates that conformity to society for the Beats was "claustrophobic" (p. 26) and they did not tolerate it. As Charters (2010) mentions for example, Cassady "was free of what the people around Holmes considered were the social constraints that had been imposed upon them since their childhood. For the people trailing after him, Cassady was the ultimate Existentialist, acting out their own ideals of limitless free choice" (p. 105). Agreeing with Charters, Swartz (2001) adds that Dean is like a child raised by wolves in the woods who returns to civilization without the limitations that society imposes upon its citizens (p. 89). A Chinese philosopher believes that the natures of different things are not the same and each individual, too, has his own special likings and that is why social and political institutions only impose suffering on man and concludes that they should not be forcibly made identical (Chandarlapaty, 2009, p. 132). According to King (1972), the American system is basically based on a false view of human nature; it resorts to manipulation and bribery to force acquiescence. The system frustrates the natural desires of its youths and prevents them from following through or completing a situation on their own terms and continues interrupting the individual and does not let him be and therefore he is always unhappy. King continues that all this leads to the identification with and partial introjection of external values or conformity and in this way the individual either goes along with the system and squanders his powers or simply withdraws. The American system, King explains, renders the individual a passive being who is to be matched with the jobs and tasks demanded by it; in such a society which imposes and manipulates rather than letting the individual develop his unique talents, those who do not fit in are considered deviants (p. 103). Swartz (2001) truly argues that for the Beats it was experience rather than conformity that was the natural condition of the healthy human being (p. 18); so, it is not accidental that in *On the Road* Old Bull Lee "did all these things merely for the experience" (Kerouac, 1959, p. 85). Perhaps this is the gist of what the Beats really wanted: "If we are truly a free nation, then let's act like we are a free nation and let it all hang out" (qtd. in Swartz, 2001, pp. 18-19).

Commager, the eminent American historian, purports that insistence on acquiescence and conformity was the reason behind the recent defeat of Germany and Japan and warns America against the rise of similar attitudes and, as he reiterates, the remedy is, of course, nonconformity (Holladay, 2009, p. 66). And Tillich, a famous theologian pleads with students to "preserve the power to say 'no' when the patterns prescribed by society will try to conquer them. We hope for nonconformists among you for your sake, for the sake of the nation, for the sake of humanity" (qtd. in Holladay, p. 66). Kerouac did the same and as Clark, a biographer, writes the machinery had rejected him because he was a cog that would not fit in anybody's wheel (McKee, 2004, p. 41). Dean is the same, too. His first preference is to free himself from roles and expectations that society has imposed upon him. He grew up accompanied by derelicts and a drunken father and by the same token, was not subjected to the expectations of family, career, or country and so, he never fabricated a persona to suit a role. When Sal and Dean meet for the first time, Dean greets him stark naked at his door. In general, Dean is freaky, eccentric, and unique. According to the Beats, dreams and visions are very crucially important in human

life and in actuality, it is conformity that deprives human beings of their dreams and turns them into automatons. In a letter, as Harris (1993) reports, Burroughs mentions that scientists have perfected an anti-dream drug which is able "to eliminate nostalgia, to occlude the whole dreaming, symbolizing faculty . . . the source of resistance", and as a result, "contact with the myth that gives each man the ability to live alone and unites him with all other life, is cut off. He becomes an automaton, an interchangeable quantity in the political and economic equation" (p. 58). In *The Place of Dead Roads* dreams are "a vital link to our biologic and spiritual destiny in space. Deprived of this air line we die" (qtd. in Baker, 2010, p. 92). Burroughs (1959) also speaks of "dream police" (p. 31) and "dream power" (p. 32) in *Naked Lunch*. In the same novel conformity turns people into ordinary men and women and imitators: "You see men and women. Ordinary men and women going about their ordinary everyday tasks. Leading their ordinary lives" (p. 62). Or a lieutenant says to his general: "But chief, can't we get them started and they imitate each other like a chained reaction?" (p. 70).

Gutting (2006) reports that according to Immanuel Kant, the point of Enlightenment was nonconformity; it was to overcome the immaturity of accepting the authority of others and start thinking for ourselves (p. 55). According to Cusatis (2010), Sal tries to do this in *On the Road* when he rejects consumerism and conformity and sets out 'on the road' to find his place in a world indifferent to his interests (p. 39). In *Naked Lunch* symbolically, the Liquefactionists and the Divisionists bring about conformity and the Factualists struggle against them and strive to prevent them. The Liquefactionists involve themselves in "merging of everyone into One Man by a process of protoplasmic absorption" (Burroughs, 1959, p. 73) and the Divisionists "cut off tiny bits of their flesh and grow exact replicas of themselves in embryo jelly. It seems probable, unless the process of division is halted, that eventually there will be only one replica of one sex on the planet: that is one person in the world with millions of separate bodies" (p. 81). The Factualists, on the other hand, are "Anti-Liquefactionist, Anti-Divisionist" (p. 82) who "reject the facile solution of flooding the planet with 'desirable replicas'" and oppose those who "exploit or annihilate the individuality of another living creature" (p. 82). As Rabinow (1997) quotes Foucault, "To be the same is really boring" (p. 166). In brief, the Beats actually followed their great mentor, Emerson, who had said: "Every real man must be a nonconformist" (Gray, 2012, p. 115).

Conclusion

Unlike the majority of human beings who most of the time comply with some set of social rules to avoid being rejected by society, the Beats imagined themselves as unique individuals and different from others. Psychologically speaking, when we lack self-confidence and are uncertain of how to behave, we usually take comfort in conforming to other people. In actuality, when people feel that they belong to a minority, they become unwilling to freely express their opinions because if they do, they have to face its negative consequences including being driven away from society and becoming outcasts or being labelled as deviants. In this case, the Beats were no exceptions. Those who conform aspire to be socially accepted because they fear rejection and conflict. Instead, the Beats knew that they were unique and different and had characteristics that separated them from others. Achieving this different individuality, according to them, was worth even being rejected by society. To preserve social order, deviant behaviour is often punished and is not allowed to influence the established social and cultural norms. People may conform to establish and maintain a social identity and self-concept. Of course, the Beats knew that identity was constructed by society and should not be taken as truth. Instead of social identity, they believed in cultivating individual identities completely different from those produced by the established culture. Conformity is usually followed by prejudice. Those who conform to similar individuals are reluctant to even assign human emotion to nonconformists; they see them so different from themselves that it becomes difficult to think of them as humans. This type of biased and domineering individual was called 'the authoritarian personality' by Adorno and his colleagues. In brief, against all the odds, the Beats managed to say no to society's expectations.

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