Orientations Towards Authority and Congruency Theory  
*The Cross-national, Cross-time Evidence*

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**ABSTRACT**  
This paper employs the 1981 and 1990 World Values Surveys to demonstrate that publics in advanced industrial states have become less deferential both in general, as well as in the polity, the family, and the workplace. In addition, this analysis also provides broad-gauged prime facie support for the claim (Eckstein, 1966, 1969, 1975, 1992; Pateman, 1970; Kohn, 1969; Greenberg et al., 1995) that authority orientations across different domains are generalizable: attitudes toward authority in the polity, the family, and the workplace do indeed appear to be inter-connected. Furthermore, even under the most rigorous testing conditions, when multiple authority orientations are pitted against each other, and when various other prominent explanations are introduced, orientations toward authority in one domain turn out to be useful (i.e., statistically significant) estimates of authority orientations in another.

1. Introduction  

There is now a vast body of evidence demonstrating that fundamental changes have taken place in the character of advanced industrial states over the last two decades or so. The political faces of these changes are familiar: Public confidence in traditional governmental and non-governmental institutions has eroded (Dalton, 1984; Lipset and Schneider, 1987; Nevitte, 1991; Johnston, 1986). Electoral volatility has increased as attachments to traditional political parties have weakened (Dalton and Wattenberg, 1993; Kitschelt, 1989; Clarke and Kornberg, 1993; Hershey, 1993). The salient issue spaces of publics have shifted (Rohrschneider, 1993; Dalton et al., 1984). New social movements have emerged (Dalton et al., 1990; Kitschelt, 1993; Rochon and Mazmanian, 1993) and publics

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are more likely than before to turn to alternative modes of political action (Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979; Jennings, van Deth et al., 1989; Maguire, 1993).

Equally impressive changes have taken place in other domains. Sociologists, for example, have documented profound shifts in primary relations (Goode, 1963; Zeldich, 1964; Baker, 1984). Families are now less patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal and polygynous; they have become more equalitarian, monogamous, bilateral and conjugal (Korman and Leslie, 1985). And in the economic domain, there have been striking changes in workplace orientations. When it comes to management cultures, for example, the evidence is that the prevailing ethos of the industrial era, namely, that maximum efficiency comes from formal hierarchical organizational structures and the clear separation of managers from workers, has been eclipsed by an ethos that places more emphasis on the principles of worker participation, manager-worker co-operation, mutual problem-solving and trust (Zuboff, 1988). Corresponding transformations have also taken place in the attitudes of workers who now desire greater freedom to plan and execute tasks, and the opportunity to be more “expressive” in the workplace (Yankelovich et al., 1985; Zanders, 1993; Zanders and Harding, 1993).

There is considerable consensus about the empirical scope and direction of these shifts, and most argue that they are associated in one way or another with the transition to late industrialism. Certainly, there is some debate about whether the origins of these changes are grounded mainly in value shifts or in structural factors. And there is less agreement still about what these transformations collectively imply. The following investigation explores empirically one possible unifying theme, namely, that these changes may signify a comprehensive transformation which involves shifting attitudes to “authority.” This line of speculation, first, is entirely consistent with characterizations of the contemporary dynamics of advanced industrialized states provided by a variety of other observers (Flanagan, 1982; Inglehart, 1990; Rosenau, 1992; Ester et al., 1993). Second, and more importantly, this perspective is also useful because it resonates with earlier pioneering contributions to empirical democratic theory, particularly those of Eckstein (1966, 1969, 1975, 1992) and Pateman (1970), who argue that orientations towards authority are likely to be “congruent.” According to the “congruency” perspective, there are powerful reasons for expecting social, economic and political aspects of authority orientations to be closely connected. The implication is not only that such orientations are generalizable from one domain, such as the social, to others like the polity and the workplace, but also that changes taking place in one domain will be empirically linked to changes in others.

This analysis begins by revisiting these early renditions of congruency theory and calls for a more comprehensive and explicit elaboration of the congruency perspective. Contemporary empirical evaluations of these perspectives, we argue, have been limited in important respects. What is required is a more broad-gauged