
REPLIES

Security and Harmony Value Orientations and Their Roles in Attitude Formation and Change

Valerie Braithwaite

Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet), The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

The influence of security and harmony value orientations on attitudes and attitude change depends on (a) the degree to which imbalance exists in the importance placed on security and harmony values (i.e., the degree to which individuals are predominantly security oriented or harmony oriented), (b) the degree to which individuals place equal importance on harmony and security values (i.e., the degree to which individuals are dualists as opposed to relativists), and (c) the degree to which individuals perceive the attitude object advancing or hindering the pursuit of prized values (i.e., the degree to which individuals make value-attitude linkages). Through examining research findings relating to each of these factors, this reply demonstrates that security and harmony value orientations are implicated in both attitudinal stability and change, though not always directly.

Stable value-attitude linkages are most likely to be found when psychological processes (cognitive styles) lock in a particular way of thinking about the attitude object. Cognitive styles have been associated with value imbalance, particularly the kind of imbalance that favours security over harmony values. For the population overall, the harmony value orientation tends to be stronger than the security value orientation. Even so, where harmony values dominate notably, evidence of resistance to change has been found.

Despite evidence of cognitive styles tying values to particular attitudes, the security and harmony value orientations are most useful for explaining movement in attitudes when value importance stays the same. Understanding this phenomenon involves shifting attention away from value importance and on to the question of whether the attitude object is perceived to strengthen or weaken the chances of realizing prized values. Reflection on value-attitude linkages may occur within an individual's value-attitude-belief system with the experience of cognitive dissonance. Dissonance can motivate attitude change with value importance remaining constant (Elliot & Devine,

1994; Rokeach, 1973). But political deliberation in democracies operates at another level as well, opening value-attitude linkages to public scrutiny. Social and political changes in the external environment such as the global recession, climate change, international conflict, homelessness, access to health care, and refugee migration touch people's lives and create new value-attitude linkages. The sharing and comparing of experience, information, and opinions challenge people's perceptions of how attitude objects affect value attainment. When value-attitude linkages change as a result of public deliberation, so do attitudes. Research that demonstrates these processes of sense-making through values is briefly reviewed later in this article, but first findings are summarized on cognitive styles and the valuing of security and harmony orientations.

Imbalanced Value Orientations and Cognitive Styles

Previous work has linked security and harmony value orientations to cognitive styles of conservatism, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance. Four different value instruments were used to investigate the value base of conservatism (Braithwaite, 1998b). Conservatism was conceptualised as fear of uncertainty and was measured using Wilson and Patterson's (1968) C scale. Conservatives were most likely to embrace two value clusters, one dedicated to "religiosity and personal restraint," the other "security through order, status and adherence to conventional norms" (incorporating the security value orientation). In addition, conservatives downplayed values that represented "humanistic and expressive concerns" (incorporating the harmony value orientation). Value imbalance that prioritized security over harmony was part of a set of value preferences that distinguished those who feared uncertainty from others. Fear of uncertainty

was inferred from being negatively disposed to social events signifying greater equality and freedom.

Heaven and Connors (2001) provided further insights into the relationship between value orientations and cognitive styles. They linked right-wing authoritarianism with the security value orientation, and social dominance with a low regard for both security and harmony values. More recently, Heaven, Organ, Supavadeeprasit, and Leeson (2006) extended this work by showing that cognitive styles mediate the relationship between security and harmony value orientations and attitudes, specifically, attitudes in favor of the war in Iraq and prejudice toward Middle Eastern people. In a structural equation model, security and harmony value orientations were found to influence attitudes indirectly through right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance. The stronger an individual's security value orientation, the greater the propensity for right-wing authoritarianism. With this pathway mapped out, social dominance was best predicted by lower regard for harmony values, and to a lesser extent, support for security values. As expected, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance predicted attitudes in favour of war and greater prejudice toward Middle Eastern people.

These findings show that security values and low regard for harmony values provide a values base for conservatism, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance. None of these cognitive styles facilitate socially constructive adaptation in times of disruption and change. Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance have repeatedly been associated with political extremism. It seems reasonable to postulate that having a strong security value orientation without a strong harmony orientation is a risk factor for embracing cognitive styles that are associated with bias and rigidity in formulating political attitudes.

But does this mean that those who express the opposite preference, favouring a harmony value orientation over a security value orientation, are flexible and open in forming their attitudes? It appears that the answer is no, although the inflexibility of the harmony oriented manifests itself in other ways. In a study of scenario-based choices over forest management requiring a trade-off between environmental preservation and economic development, the security and harmony oriented considered fewer issues relevant in making their decision than those with value balance (dualists; Braithwaite & Blamey, 2000). Moreover, both the security and harmony oriented were less sensitive than dualists to changing environmental and economic conditions described across the set of scenarios. The most differentiated responses across scenarios were found among dualists. In contrast, those who favored one value frame over the other recognized and used less of the available information. Value imbalance in which harmony values dominate security values, or security

values dominate harmony values, appears to limit an individual's willingness or capacity to engage with decision making in a cognitively complex way.

Balanced Value Orientations and Political Engagement

In this same study, the role of relativists compared to dualists was of particular interest. With no value frame to guide decision making, would relativists engage with the details of the scenarios and evaluate each case on its merits before making a decision? The data showed relativists displaying little interest in careful decision making. Relativists were distinctive in reporting that they put least effort into the task. Their responses suggested no greater complexity than those of the security and harmony oriented. Dualists were the only group responsive to changing circumstances in their decision making. When values are prized, balanced, and in conflict, individuals are willing and able to engage in the complexity of the decision-making task.

Value-Attitude Linkages

Early models of the relationship between values and attitudes identified two determinants of attitude (Nelson, 1968; Ostrom & Brock, 1969; Smith, 1949; Woodruff & Di Vesta, 1948). The first was the importance of the value in question. The second was the degree to which the individual perceived the attitude object advancing pursuit of this value. If the value was highly prized and if the attitude object aided value attainment, a positive attitude to the object was expected. If on the other hand, the attitude object would hinder pursuit of the value, a negative attitude to the object might be expected.

When security and harmony values approach a state of balance and are highly prized—as they are for most people, the importance of values alone is unlikely to drive attitudes. A critical consideration is likely to be perceptions of whether the attitude object will aid or undermine value attainment. Perceived value-attitude linkages can be complex. Consider for example governments providing stimulus packages to boost or prop up economic activity in a global recession. These actions may advance or undermine any number of security and harmony values. Attitudes may be positive if one thinks that such action will protect national economic development, improve international cooperation, limit hardship, save jobs, and protect the poor. Attitudes may be negative if one thinks that such action undermines principles such as reward for individual effort, responsible economic management, the rule of law, fairness, and open competition. The linkages that individuals perceive between their values and a policy

decision can be expected to influence how positively and negatively individuals feel toward that policy.

Linkages will be in part a function of individual psychology, but not entirely. Democratic societies rely on political and social institutions to provide knowledge and show leadership for citizens on how they might weigh up the likelihood that government policy will advance or hinder the pursuit of prized values. Institutions have responsibility for setting standards for political evaluations, increasing the sophistication of political debate, educating the public to think about issues in cognitively complex ways, and modeling reflective decision making. How well democratic governments do this is debatable. There is little doubt that political parties are skilled at using the media to build associations between values, candidates, and policies. But are citizens being short-changed by governments with regard to more serious and inclusive political deliberation? Before addressing this question, a more fundamental question about the capacity of individuals needs to be answered. Is there evidence that citizens can respond in a constructive and sophisticated manner if given opportunities for values-based deliberation about policy? The upcoming studies illustrate how the value balance model has been helpful in answering this question, by showing members of the public and legislature using security and harmony value orientations to arrive at and reevaluate value-attitude linkages.

Tax Policy: Self-Interest, Political Party Identification and Value-Attitude Linkage

In 2000, 2002, and 2005, three national surveys were conducted in Australia measuring attitudes to taxation, taxpaying and government policy.¹ A sample of 511 Australians completed all three surveys, the first conducted during the tax reform planning stage, the second after Australia's first goods-and-services tax (GST) was introduced, and the third after the tax reform program was bedded down and tax cuts were given to higher income earners in the budget. These data were used to test for value-attitude pathways that would be amenable to political deliberation (Braithwaite, 2009).

Two outcomes were selected: attitude to the GST measured in 2002 and attitude to tax cuts measured in 2005. Two value-attitude pathways were of interest in relation to each outcome variable. First, security values were expected to lead to a positive attitude to increasing the economic efficiency of the tax system, and this in turn was expected to lead to having a positive attitude to the GST and a positive attitude to income tax cuts.

Second, harmony values were expected to lead to a positive attitude to welfare and increased expenditure on social infrastructure. This in turn was expected to lead to a negative attitude to a regressive tax such as the GST and a negative attitude to income tax cuts.

In addition, two competing pathways were tested for why people would adopt a positive or negative attitude to these tax policies: self-interest and left-right party identification. A pathway of self-interest was considered likely showing that individuals who were struggling to get ahead because of the tax they paid were least likely to have a positive attitude to the GST and most likely to have a positive attitude to tax cuts. The self-interest hypothesis was expected to operate independently of a person's security and harmony values.

Although party identification was hypothesized as being an upshot of security and harmony values, party identification, not values, was expected to directly influence attitudes to tax policy. Party identification was considered a commonly used proxy so that individuals did not have to put effort into thinking about value-attitude linkages. Those identifying with the political right were expected to support both policies. Those identifying with the political left were expected to be opposed to both policies.

Variables from the 2000 data set representing values and attitudes, self-interest, and party identification were used in a structural equation model to predict attitude to the GST in 2002 (see Braithwaite, 2009, for details). A second structural equation model was used to predict attitude to tax cuts in 2005 (see Braithwaite, 2009, for details). If the self-interest pathway and the identification pathway were found to dominate the structural equation models, a major weakness would be identified in the argument that people are able to consider value-attitude linkages and take part in values-based dialogue around these linkages.

In both models, value-attitude linkages were present, but their importance differed in the two contexts. In predicting attitudes to the GST, the dominant pathway involved party identification and evidence of value-attitude linkages was partial at best. In predicting attitudes to tax cuts, the reverse was true. Pathways showing value-attitude linkages dominated and party identification assumed a subordinate role. In neither model was self-interest an important pathway, although it was represented.

The explanation offered for the reversal of findings between the two policy contexts was institutional. The GST divided parties of the left and right in two federal elections. It was a highly politicized event; the right in favor of the tax, the left opposed to the tax because of its regressive nature. It was therefore not so surprising that the party line should dominate attitude formation. In contrast, tax cuts attracted little open dissension between the main political parties. It was considered politically unwise to begrudge tax cuts, even if the

¹Details relating to survey methodology and measures are available in a series of working papers (Nos. 2, 4, 79, 84) at <http://ctsi.anu.edu.au/publications/WP/WPlist.html>.

primary beneficiaries were the wealthy. Political deliberation on the tax cuts was therefore left in the hands of commentators and the public. Without political parties telling individuals what they should think, individuals appeared to be quite capable of considering how the policy would advance or hinder security and harmony values.

In this study, security and harmony value orientations framed the pursuit of different goals and policy, pulling respondents in two different directions in the process. On the basis of these data, values-based dialogue over the relative merits of the two ways of thinking about tax cuts was possible with the community. But is the corollary that conservatives and progressives could be bogged down ad infinitum with values-based dialogue and never find common ground? Not necessarily, as the following analysis of the passage of Australia's affirmative action legislation demonstrates.

A Values Bridge Between Left and Right on Affirmative Action for Women

Values are shared social property for goal setting and defining appropriate behavior. Even though conservatives favour security values and progressives favor harmony values, any person potentially can take any value off the shelf as a reference material to set and justify courses of action on a principled basis. Rarely in the public domain in mature democracies do we see conservatives "dumping" on harmony values or progressives "dumping" on security values. They fight the policy battle from different value reference points—although they will defend against accusations that they are negligent in considering their opponent's value position (Braithwaite, 1998a; Braithwaite & Bush, 1998).

In 1986, the Australian government proposed legislating for affirmative action for women. Because the conservative opposition parties controlled the upper house, the government needed bipartisan support to pass the bill. This objective was achieved through building a values-based consensus around the legislation (Braithwaite & Bush, 1998).

The legislation required all large workplaces to adopt an affirmative action plan to identify obstacles facing women, to remove these barriers, and to set targets to gauge progress. It was mandatory to submit this plan of action and report on progress to a government agency annually. The legislation provided little in the way of sanctions (the worst that could happen was being named in parliament). For feminists the legislation was a "toothless tiger." For archconservatives it was a deep offense to those women who spent their time as wives and mothers, undermined the confidence of women, demeaned the achievements of successful women, assisted incapable women to apply for jobs, set

Australia on a path of mediocrity, and had a dreadful graying effect of bringing people to a common denominator (see Braithwaite, 1998a, for an account of the parliamentary debates).

Success in getting the legislation through the parliament was associated with a focus on value–attitude linkages. For progressives, the legislation was a "fair go" for women (appealing to "equal opportunity for all" and a harmony value orientation). For conservatives, the problem with the legislation was construed as a regulatory burden that would undermine business competitiveness (appealing to "national economic development" and a security value orientation). The progressive government took on board conservative concerns. Negotiations eventually produced legislation that received bipartisan support. Conservatives agreed that women deserved a fair go and progressives agreed that the legislation should improve the competitiveness of Australian business. In a series of research papers that analyzed Hansard (parliamentary) transcripts and workplace survey data (Braithwaite, 1993, 1998b; Braithwaite & Bush, 1998) it was possible to show how Australia's affirmative action legislation and implementation was grounded in both social justice and competitive business discourses. The remarkable achievement was that in spite of a tug-of-war between political extremes, a coalition of conservatives and progressives was able to find common ground in sufficient numbers to pass the most unlikely piece of legislation with bipartisan support. This research on legislative decision making demonstrates that political tussle and attitude change does not necessarily require a change in values. Reflection on value–attitude linkages and readiness to negotiate means that political parties can often work toward a consensus, values intact.

When Values Are Not Accessed: Citizen Insights About the Quality of Democracy

When political discourse takes place against a backdrop of shared social values, negotiation on an attitude position is possible, even if value priorities differ. Negotiation takes place through sympathy for the others' value priorities and credibility of their arguments, not through changing one's own value priorities. When the other has no values base that can be respected, however, constructive dialogue is likely to be more difficult (Dryzek & Braithwaite, 2001).

In a study of Australian democracy, Dryzek and Braithwaite (2001) identified two values-based discourses, one of progressives, one of conservatives. In addition, there were two discourses that did not have a values base—grievance and cynicism. Grievance took the form of resentment over the privilege being afforded to minority groups through policy like affirmative action and assertion of the democratic principle

that everyone's vote should count equally in a democracy and no one should be given special treatment. This discourse had no value correlate, suggesting it was a view shared by people with different value priorities but with a common concern about the direction in which the democracy was going.

The discourse of cynicism revealed abandoned hope in government—money controls politics, people are not equal and nothing will change that, voting doesn't change anything, the political system is controlled by minority interests and the system won't change. The most striking feature of this discourse was the tendency to be dismissive of social values such as "a good life for others," "a world of beauty," "a world of peace," "national security," and "human dignity." This discourse is akin to that of the value balance model's "relativists."

Discourses of grievance and cynicism represent strongly held attitudes that are not systematically tied to harmony and/or security values. Because they have no discernible, positive values base, such discourses may well be marginalized in political deliberation. Although ignored by mainstream politics, discourses of grievance and cynicism may signal opportunity for recruitment by political extremists. Those with grievance and cynicism about government see much that is wrong with the democracy and may find hope in ideologies that promise radical solutions to society's problems. Of importance, those with grievance and cynicism occupy territory where the values-based dialogue loses leverage for facilitating attitudinal change.

Conclusion

Security and harmony value orientations may play a role in locking in attitude positions, they may serve as a platform for changing attitudes, or they may bear no systematic relationship to attitudes. A dominant security value orientation has been related to conservatism, authoritarianism, and social dominance. These cognitive styles have consistently been linked to fear of uncertainty, rigidity, closed mindedness, and prejudicial attitudes that resist change. A dominant harmony orientation also appears to lock in certain attitudinal positions, making it less likely that information that might challenge a harmony-anchored attitude is taken on board.

These findings, however, imply neither that "lock in" is the most important function of values in attitude formation nor that values trump other attitude determinants. Of importance, the security and harmony oriented behaved no differently from those who placed little importance on values, when it came to attending to information that potentially could change preferences. The more useful function served by the value balance model is in identifying who can be drawn into values-based dialogue and how such dialogue might

be used to build coalitions of support for courses of action.

Although value imbalance is related to attitudes supporting the political right or left, any associated attitudinal close-mindedness can be ameliorated by institutional settings that encourage values-based dialogue. Two social processes are set in train through such dialogue. First, awareness of a shared understanding that both security and harmony values are considered important by the majority of people who make up the democracy comes to the fore. Second, value-attitude linkages can be subjected to critical scrutiny and rigorous analysis. When value-attitude linkages are brought into the deliberative process as well as value importance, it becomes possible for attitudes to change without a change in values.

Note

Address correspondence to Valerie Braithwaite, College of Asia and the Pacific, Building 8, Coombs Extension, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia. E-mail: Valerie.Braithwaite@anu.edu.au

References

- Braithwaite, V. (1993). The Australian government's affirmative action legislation: Achieving social change through human resource management. *Law and Policy*, *15*, 327–354.
- Braithwaite, V. (1998a). Designing the process of workplace change through the Affirmative Action Act. In M. Gatens & A. Mackinnon (Eds.), *Gender and institutions* (pp. 107–128). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Braithwaite, V. (1998b). The value orientations underlying liberalism-conservatism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *25*, 575–589.
- Braithwaite, V. (2009). *Attitudes to tax policy: Politics, self-interest and social values* (Research Note 9). Centre for Tax System Integrity, Australian National University, Canberra. Available from <http://ctsi.anu.edu.au/publications/researchnotes.html>
- Braithwaite, V., & Blamey, R. (2000). *Balanced value orientations: Do they allow for integrative complexity and commitment?* Unpublished manuscript. Available from <http://vab.anu.edu.au>
- Braithwaite, V., & Bush, J. (1998). Affirmative action in Australia: A consensus-based dialogic approach. *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, *10*, 115–134.
- Dryzek, J., & Braithwaite, V. (2000). On the prospects for democratic deliberation: Values analysis applied to Australian politics. *Political Psychology*, *21*, 241–266.
- Elliot, A. J., & Devine, P. G. (1994). On the motivational nature of cognitive dissonance: Dissonance as psychological discomfort. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 382–394.
- Heaven, P., & Connors, J. (2001). A note on the value correlates of social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *31*, 925–930.
- Heaven, P., Organ, L. A., Supavadeeprasit, S., & Leeson, P. (2006). War and prejudice: A study of social values, right-wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *40*, 599–608.

AUTHORS' REPLIES

- Nelson, C. (1968). Anchoring to accepted values as a technique for immunizing beliefs against persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 9, 329–334.
- Ostrom, T. M., & Brock, T. C. (1969). Cognitive bonding to central values and resistance to a communication advocating change in policy orientation. *Journal of Experimental Research in Personality*, 4, 42–50.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York: The Free Press.
- Smith, M. B. (1949). Personal values as determinants of political attitude. *Journal of Psychology*, 28, 477–486.
- Wilson, G. D., & Patterson, J. R. (1968). A new measure of conservatism. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 7, 264–269.
- Woodruff, A. D., & Di Vesta, F. J. (1948). The relationship between values, concepts and attitudes. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 8, 645–659.