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978-0-521-14831-3 - Theory of Societal Constitutionalism: Foundations of a Non-Marxist
Critical Theory

David Sciulli

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Several theories and conceptual frameworks in political science, legal scholarship, and sociology address issues of governmental authoritarianism, abuses of power, and corporate crime and professional deviance. The theory of societal constitutionalism offers social scientists an opportunity to isolate instances of social authoritarianism, which is defined as arbitrary exercises of collective power by private organizations and institutions within a modern civil society. The author argues that by distinguishing analytically between whether social order within any organization, institution, or sector of a society is based on actors' demonstrable social control or on their possible social integration a nation-state's susceptibility to social authoritarianism can be isolated empirically.

Bringing this distinction to the literature and to research, the theory developed in this book leads to a critical reappraisal of the findings of comparative politics and also the findings of the sociologies of law, professions, and organizations and occupations. Research findings in these fields that have hitherto appeared unrelated are now revealed both to explain historical shifts in a nation-state's direction of social change and to predict contemporary shifts. For instance, certain practices by physicians within hospitals, by chemists within corporations, and by lawyers before the bar may now be seen to reflect and contribute to shifts toward greater social control and susceptibility to social authoritarianism. The theory also provides the means to examine whether these practices can be found either historically or currently in particular nation-states, whether they are present, for example, in the United States or Japan as well as in traditionally authoritarian states such as the Soviet Union, Brazil, and Argentina. The author argues that the presence of social authoritarianism is independent of whether an economy is market-based or centrally controlled or of whether Western cultural traditions are institutionalized rather than Eastern or Third World traditions.

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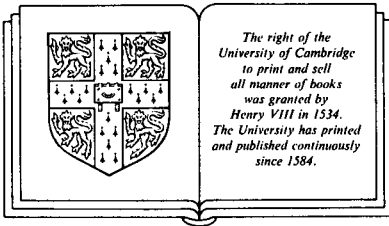
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David Sciulli

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New York Port Chester Melbourne Sydney

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521148313

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First published 1992

First paperback printing 2010

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Sciulli, David.

Theory of societal constitutionalism : foundations of a non-
Marxist critical theory / David Sciulli.

p. cm. – (Arnold and Caroline Rose monograph series of the
American Sociological Association)

ISBN 0-521-41040-1

1. Political sociology. 2. Social control. 3. Authoritarianism.

I. Title. II. Series.

JA76.S376 1992

306.2-dc20

91-15690

CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-41040-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-14831-3 Paperback

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