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*Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values**

Stanley Feldman, *University of Kentucky*

Research in public opinion and mass belief systems has provided numerous insights into the organization of political attitudes and beliefs and levels of political sophistication in the public. However, having found that most people do not structure their beliefs ideologically, this literature is of limited usefulness in understanding how people do form their political attitudes and beliefs. Another large body of literature suggests that specific attitudes and beliefs are in part a reflection of people's core beliefs and values. This paper examines the role of three core beliefs—support for equality of opportunity, economic individualism, and the free enterprise system—in structuring political beliefs and evaluations.

A great deal of research in the area of mass political behavior has been devoted to the explanation of preferences on issues of public policy, evaluations of government performance, and attitudes toward political figures. Although much can be learned from studying the determinants of specific attitudes and preferences, it is of particular interest to uncover the *underlying principles* that lend some degree of consistency and meaningfulness to public opinion. Not too many years ago such attitudinal consistency was routinely attributed to the widespread existence of political ideology. However, a considerable amount of research, beginning with Converse's (1964) seminal paper on mass belief systems, has fairly conclusively shown that the political thinking of much of the public cannot be adequately described as ideological in the sense of deductive reasoning from an overarching set of integrated principles about politics and the social world (see Kinder, 1983, for a summary of much of this research). Although this literature has contributed to our understanding of the limits of political ideology and sophistication, it has generally failed to explain the ways in which political attitudes and preferences *are* formed in the mass public. As a result, we know more about how people do not think about politics than about how they do (Kinder, 1983). People may not view the world in ideological terms but they do have political attitudes, beliefs, and preferences that need to be explained.

Much of the research on the structure of public opinion and mass belief systems has followed the lead of Converse (1964) and adopted a sociological model of belief system constraint. This approach views the development of structure in mass belief systems as a function of social learning. Political attitudes and beliefs

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are organized into coherent structures by political elites for consumption by the public. The more people are exposed to these structures and the better they comprehend them, the more likely their beliefs will be systematically organized. A large body of literature has utilized this perspective to study issue constraint and the effect of the political environment on the development of belief system structure. However, the social constraint perspective is better suited for studying the structural changes that accompany differences in political expertise and information than for explaining why certain people adopt particular patterns of political attitudes and preferences. Even if elites are responsible for structuring views in liberal and conservative packages, the question remains: Why do people gravitate toward one or the other perspective?

Although it has largely been ignored, Converse also briefly discussed an alternative to the social constraint perspective: what he termed psychological constraint. Observing that much of the structure of ideological belief systems cannot be explained on purely logical grounds, Converse (1964) argued that "often such constraint is quasi-logically argued on the basis of an appeal to some superordinate value or posture toward man and society, involving premises about the nature of social justice, social change, "natural law," and the like. Thus a few crowning postures—like premises about survival of the fittest in the spirit of Social Darwinism—serve as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs, and these postures are of prime centrality in the belief system as a whole" (p. 211).

Other literature on American politics and public opinion suggests that Converse's concept of psychological constraint could indeed help to account for the political attitudes and preferences of the public. In fact, a long tradition of analyses of American politics and public opinion, going back to Tocqueville, has attributed much of the distinctive character of American public opinion to certain basic values and beliefs (see, e.g., de Tocqueville, 1955; Hartz, 1955; Lipset, 1979, summarizes a great deal of this literature). From this perspective, political attitudes and opinions are not simply accepted on the basis of their packaging by elites, but in a general way are consistent with certain core beliefs and values. Despite the prominence of this tradition of political analysis, it has had surprisingly little impact on survey-based studies of political attitudes and mass belief systems. With very few exceptions, the role of people's core beliefs and values has been examined only in studies based on in-depth interviews with a relatively small number of subjects (Lane, 1962; Lamb, 1974; for exceptions, see Feagin, 1975; Feldman, 1983). On the other hand, psychological studies of belief systems have stressed the role of core beliefs and values in structuring more peripheral elements (Rokeach, 1960, 1973; Bem, 1970; Lane, 1972).

How do core beliefs and values influence political opinions? Having rejected the assumption of ideological reasoning, how can it be argued that the public reasons from certain beliefs and values? To answer this question it is im-

portant to recognize that policy preferences, performance judgments, and candidate assessments are all political *evaluations*. It is therefore important to understand the ways in which these evaluations are made. As noted by Kinder (1983) evaluations of politics may be made on the basis of a number of criteria. Self-interest, group identifications, and political events can all be utilized to judge the desirability of policies or the performance of politicians. The hypothesized relationship between core beliefs and values and public opinion rests on such a simple mechanism. Political evaluations may be based, in part, on the extent to which policies and actions are consistent or inconsistent with certain important beliefs and values. Viewed this way, people do not need to be ideologues in order to evaluate politics on the basis of beliefs and values. To some extent, policies and actions are simply judged right or wrong because of their implications for deeply held values (see Rokeach, 1973). Based on this line of reasoning, we would not expect public opinion to be completely structured or determined by core beliefs and values, since they are just one of the many possible criteria that people can employ to generate political evaluations.

A second major issue that must be dealt with here is the question of the origin of peoples' core beliefs and values. How can it be argued that people who are often not politically sophisticated possess core beliefs and values that can be used for evaluating politics? This problem has usually been addressed by advancing the concept of a political culture or ethos (see, e.g., Williams, 1970; Lipset, 1979; Bennett, 1980; McClosky and Zaller, 1984). Viewed most broadly, the political culture or ethos is the "set of widely shared beliefs, values, and norms concerning the relationship of citizens to their government and to one another in matters affecting public affairs" (McClosky and Zaller, 1984). As widely shared values and beliefs, the elements of the political culture are evident in the political rhetoric and politics of the society. In fact, they may be so pervasive that their presence in everyday politics often goes unnoticed (Hartz, 1955; Wills, 1971). The values and beliefs of the political culture are maintained over time by the persistence of institutions and policies (Devine, 1972; Wills, 1971) and by the strong commitment to these values on the part of the political elites (see Lamb, 1982; McClosky and Zaller, 1984). In such an environment, the public may easily absorb the major elements of the political culture through processes of socialization and continual reinforcement by the norms of society and the language of political debate. It should not require a high degree of political sophistication for people to absorb the political norms of society when they are so ingrained in the political and social life of the nation (Lane, 1962).

In order to begin an empirical study of the role of core beliefs and values in the study of public opinion, it is first necessary to identify the key theoretical concepts and show that they can, in fact, be adequately measured. A review of the literature on American beliefs and values (see, e.g., Williams, 1970; Lipset, 1979; Elder and Cobb, 1983; McClosky and Zaller, 1984) shows that many such concepts have been discussed. However, three core beliefs directly relevant to the

study of political attitudes are prominent in the literature: belief in equality of opportunity, support for economic individualism, and support for the free enterprise system. All three of these are major components of what Devine (1972) has identified as the Lockean liberal basis of American public opinion and have been argued to be central to the way in which people in the United States think about politics (see McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Lipset, 1979).

Economic individualism, the belief that people should get ahead on their own through hard work, is a core element in accounts of American values and beliefs. Some of the earliest European settlers in the New World brought with them a commitment to the work ethic already entrenched in industrializing Britain (Weber, 1958; Feagin, 1975). Originally an outgrowth of ascetic Protestantism, the work ethic was refashioned in industrializing America into a powerful secular religion (Wylie, 1954; Hofstadter, 1955). Although the Great Depression and the New Deal response tempered the extremism of the Horatio Alger and Social Darwinism period (Beer, 1978), evidence of widespread belief in the work ethic is still apparent in mass opinion surveys and in-depth interviews (Sennet and Cobb, 1972; Lamb, 1974; Feagin, 1975; Lewis, 1978; Sniderman and Brody, 1977; Feldman, 1983; McClosky and Zaller, 1984).

The companion belief to the work ethic is *equality of opportunity*. Despite obvious discrimination against racial minorities and women, the United States was the first nation to break with the aristocratic tradition and acknowledge that formal equality is a right of all people, regardless of social status (Lipset, 1979). In their pure form, economic individualism and equality do not easily coexist. In order to minimize the potential conflict, Americans have interpreted equality as formal or political equality rather than equality of results. As Potter (1954, p. 92) has noted, "equality came to mean, in a major sense, parity in competition. Its value was as a means to advancement rather than as an asset in itself." In fact, equality of opportunity can be seen to be based solidly in the individualistic tradition (Devine, 1972).

As a system, Americans have always given strong support to the *free enterprise system* (Lipset, 1979; Dobelstein, 1980; McClosky and Zaller, 1984). The free enterprise system can be seen as the economic side of the individualistic social system, and support for the free enterprise system has typically been accompanied by a distrust of big government (Lipset, 1979; Devine, 1972). Although it is clear that many Americans support some degree of governmental intervention in the economy (Shapiro and Gilroy, 1984), and favor some programs designed to assist marginal groups in society (Beer, 1978), the source of the problem is not seen to reside with the economic system itself (Free and Cantril, 1967). Moreover, evidence suggests that popular distrust of big business is directed at specific institutions of big business rather than toward the system of free enterprise (Lipset, 1979; Ladd and Lipset, 1980). McClosky and Zaller (1984) have recently argued that support for capitalism and free enterprise forms one of the basic elements of the American political culture.

Much of the literature identifying these core beliefs has dealt with them as characteristics of an undifferentiated American political culture. However, it seems likely that the commitment to these three beliefs is not uniformly distributed within the public (McClosky and Zaller, 1984). To the extent that such differences exist, they could help account for variations in policy preferences, political evaluations, and candidate preference. If so, core beliefs could help to fill the theoretical vacuum left by the demise of mass political ideology. Rather than structuring specific attitudes around overarching ideological principles, people may rely on specific beliefs and values to make sense of the political world. Yet individual values and beliefs do not constitute an ideology; as Williams (1979) notes, it is only when values and beliefs become interconnected in an abstract manner that the basis of an ideology appears.

The goal of this paper is to determine whether there is an important place for basic orientations in the empirical study of public opinion and mass belief systems. This task requires that reliable and valid scales to measure these concepts be developed and that such scales add to our ability to understand and predict political attitudes and opinions. Specifically, the analysis begins with an examination of the characteristics of survey questions that were recently designed to measure these three core beliefs. The analysis then turns to the key question of the degree to which the three core beliefs contribute to our understanding of people's issue positions, presidential performance evaluations, and candidate evaluations.

Data

The data for this analysis come from the pilot study for the 1984 National Election Study (NES), which was conducted during July and August of 1983. The pilot study was a reinterview of a random sample of 314 people initially interviewed as part of the 1982 National Election Study. These people were first reinterviewed in July and then again in August. Thus, two waves of pilot study data are available, as well as all the information collected just after the 1982 election. This makes the pilot study data a particularly rich source of information about policy preferences, evaluations of government performance, and candidate evaluations.

As part of the July wave of the pilot study, a series of Likert-type items (with five response categories of strongly agree to strongly disagree) was included to measure support for economic individualism (the work ethic), equality of opportunity, and the free enterprise system.¹ Six items were intended to mea-

¹ Most recent attempts to measure values like equality and individualism have relied on ranking a large number of abstract values (see, e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Inglehart, 1977, and others have used a similar ranking procedure to measure the value of postmaterialism). Two considerations led to the decision to use multiitem scales for each value. First, the goal of this effort was to measure the importance attached to specific core beliefs and values rather than assess overall value systems. Multiitem

sure economic individualism and support for free enterprise, and seven items were designed to measure support for equality. In the August reinterviews six of the equality items were repeated. The items and their variable numbers from the election study data set are as follows (the second set of variable numbers for the equality items are from the second wave of the pilot study):

Equality of Opportunity:

V2169 If people were treated more equally in this country, we would have many fewer problems. (V3120)

V2172 We should give up on the goal of equality, since people are so different to begin with. (V3122)

V2175 Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. (V3123)

V2178 Some people are just better cut out than others for important positions in society. (V3121)

V2250 Some people are better at running things and should be allowed to do so. (V3124)

V2253 All kinds of people should have an equal say in running this country, not just those who are successful. (Not in Wave 2)

V2256 One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance. (V3125)

Economic Individualism:

V2170 Any person who is willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding.

V2173 Hard work offers little guarantee of success.

V2176 Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really have only themselves to blame.

V2251 Even if people are ambitious, they often cannot succeed.

V2254 If people work hard, they almost always get what they want.

V2257 Even if people try hard, they often cannot reach their goals.

Free Enterprise:

V2171 The less government gets involved with business and the economy, the better off this country will be.

V2174 There are many goods and services that would never be available to ordinary people without governmental intervention.

scales permit more precise distinctions to be made for each value. Second, although it is possible to maintain a conceptual distinction between values and beliefs, as Williams (1979) and Bennett (1980) note, values are always associated with sets of beliefs that link them to societal practices. The use of the scales acknowledges the relationship between the values and beliefs and allows a better specification of the meaning of the values being measured (i.e., equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcomes).

V2177 There should be no government interference with business and trade.

V2252 Putting government regulations on business does *not* endanger personal freedom.

V2255 Government intervention leads to too much red tape and too many problems.

V2258 Contrary to what some people think, a free enterprise system is not necessary for our form of government to survive.

Scale Reliabilities and Correlations

If core beliefs are going to be useful in the analysis of public opinion and political preferences, then it must first be demonstrated that such beliefs can be reliably measured. In the present context, an examination of scale reliability and individual item quality is required. Since this was an initial study of these three belief dimensions, there is some expectation that not all of the questions constructed for this purpose will be useful. The results of an initial reliability and item analysis for the three sets of items produced acceptable overall reliabilities for the economic individualism and free enterprise scales but disappointingly poor results for the equalitarianism items.² To investigate the problems with the equalitarianism, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted (principle axis factoring with oblique rotation). This produced two distinct factors with V2178 and V2250 forming a dimension only slightly related to the other five items. These two items seem to define a factor that deals with equality of capabilities among people, while the other items deal more clearly with the equality of opportunity in society.

Based on these preliminary results, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using Joreskog's LISREL program (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1981). As shown in Table 1, the estimated model includes four unobserved factors labeled equality of opportunity, individual differences, economic individualism, and free enterprise. The model provides a good fit to the data and supports the four-factor model. The two constructs developed from the equality items are only slightly correlated ($r = .24$), and the correlations among all the factors are generally low to moderate, even controlling for random measurement error. The loadings of the items on the factors illustrate the variable quality of the questions as measures of the underlying constructs. One of the reasons the full set of equality items did not produce a reliable scale is that two of the items tap a very different and distinct dimension. Of the remaining five items, two are fairly good indicators of equality of opportunity (V2169 and V2256), one is a fair indicator (V2175), and the other two are very poor. Of the individualism set, V2170 is clearly the best indicator. On the other hand, V2251 is only weakly correlated with the underlying con-

²Judging from item nonresponse, people had little trouble answering these questions. The largest number of don't knows was 3.1 percent. Three other questions produced over 2 percent don't knows. Overall, only six out of 19 items generated more than 1 percent don't knows.

TABLE 1
Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Scale Items

Item	Equality of Opportunity	Individual Differences	Economic Individualism	Free Enterprise
V2169	.60*			
V2172	.12			
V2175	.35*			
V2253	.15*			
V2256	.72*			
V2178		.53*		
V2250		.35*		
V2170			.81*	
V2173			.46*	
V2176			.45*	
V2251			.17*	
V2254			.49*	
V2257			.48*	
V2171				.66*
V2174				.24*
V2177				.49*
V2252				.33*
V2255				.68*
V2258	-.34*			.09

Correlations among the factors:

	Equality	Differences	Individualism
Differences	.24*		
Individualism	-.31*	-.26*	
Free enterprise	-.14	-.38*	.31*

Chi-square = 252.2

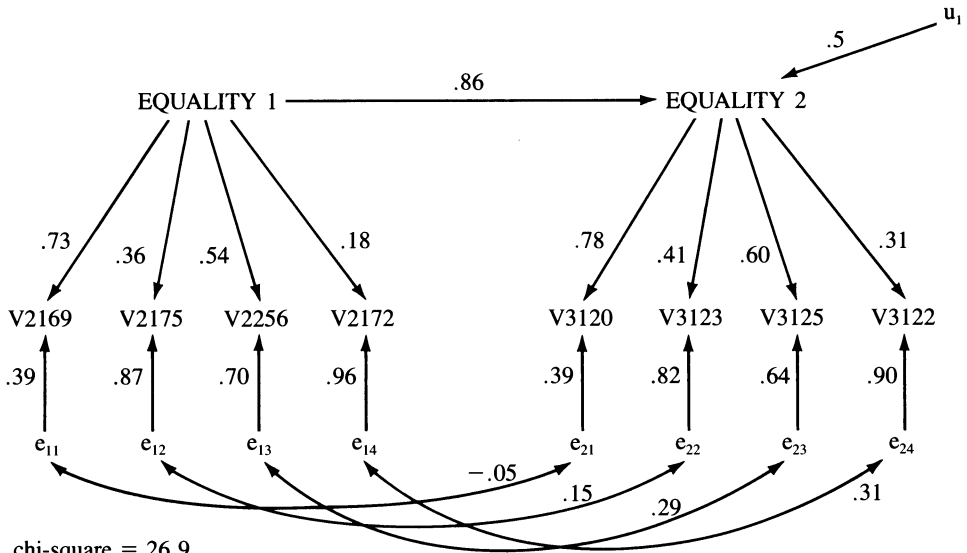
Degrees of freedom = 137

Goodness of fit index = .93

* = $p < .01$

NOTE: All entries are standardized coefficients estimated by using LISREL. In addition to the above coefficients, correlated errors were estimated between the following items: V2251 and V2178, V2254 and V2253, V2257 and V2178, V2257 and V2170, V2174 and V2253, V2257 and V2251, V2255 and V2257, V2258 and V2177.

FIGURE 1
Stability of Equality



chi-square = 26.9
degrees of freedom = 15
goodness of fit index = .94

struct. Of the six free enterprise questions, two (V2174 and V2175) are very good, and two others (V2177 and V2252) correlated moderately with the construct. The other two indicators are poor, and surprisingly, V2258 correlates negatively with equality of opportunity but not at all with free enterprise.

Since the equality items were included on both waves of the pilot study, it is possible to answer two additional questions. How stable is the commitment to equality over time, and to what degree are the error components for the equality items correlated over time? If equality of opportunity is a central belief, it should be very stable over time. On the other hand, if the error terms of particular items are highly correlated over time, this would suggest that people are responding to the wording of a particular question instead of the underlying construct. To investigate the correlations of the construct and error terms over time, the model shown in Figure 1 was estimated using the LISREL program. For this part of the analysis, the four best indicators of equality were used. The correlations between the indicators and the construct are very similar to the previous estimates. There does not seem to be a problem with autocorrelated error terms. Two are very small, and the worst produced only a modest correlation over the two waves. With random and correlated error factors taken into account, the estimated sta-

bility of equality over the two waves is .86. This is quite impressive given that the model removes any effect of people responding to the same wording of questions across the two waves.

Some conclusions can now be drawn about the quality of the items included in the pilot study to measure the three core beliefs. Most generally, the results to this point show that it is very possible to develop items that are good indicators of these constructs. Each set of questions contains several that are strongly correlated with the underlying belief. As a whole, however, the indicators included on the pilot study do not produce scales that are as reliable as would be desired. The evidence suggests, however, that further development of items could produce reliable measures of all three beliefs.

Substantively, these results provide a clearer indication of the meaning of the constructs being measured here. The subset of equality items that appear most reliable tap a belief that equality of opportunity is desirable and should be actively pursued. It is also clear that people distinguish between the guarantee of equal opportunity in society and the belief that abilities are equally distributed among the population (for similar results, see McClosky and Zaller, 1984). The economic individualism scale focuses on the efficacy of the work ethic. The one item that clearly does not scale deals with ambition rather than hard work; the difference seems to be important to people. Finally, the free enterprise scale that emerges from the item analysis taps the belief that government involvement in the economy is detrimental to the performance of the free enterprise system, a belief clearly apparent in recent conservative thought (Friedman and Friedman, 1980).

Correlates of the Three Values

The first step in assessing the meaning and validity of these measures is to consider their correlations with basic political and demographic variables. For the present analysis, additive scales were constructed from the best indicators, as established in the preceding section: V2170, V2173, V2176, V2254, and V2257 for economic individualism (coefficient alpha = .65); V2171, V2177, V2252, and V2255 for free enterprise (alpha = .63); and V2169, V2175, V2256, V3120, V3123, and V3125 for equality of opportunity. The latter scale uses the three best equality items twice in one overall scale (three from the first wave of the pilot study and three from the second). The mean interitem correlation for these six items is almost exactly the same as the interitem correlations for the three items in each of the two waves, effectively simulating a six-item scale (alpha = .72).³ All of the scales were formed in a simple additive manner, scored

³ All of the analyses in this paper were repeated using an equality of opportunity scale created from just the three items in the July interview. A comparison of the results from the short and long versions of the equality scale shows only small differences in the coefficient estimates. As expected, the longer version of the scale produces slightly larger estimates of the impact of equality on the dependent variables.

TABLE 2
Scale Distributions and Correlations

Part 1:

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness
Equality (1)	.00	1.00	.71	.26	-.66
Equality (2)	.00	1.00	.77	.23	-1.09
Equality (1 + 2)	.08	1.00	.74	.23	-.68
Individualism	.00	1.00	.55	.23	-.41
Free enterprise	.00	.75	.41	.13	-.14

Part 2:

	Liberal- Conservative	Party ID	Equality	Individualism
Individualism	-.23 ^a	-.19	-.21	
Free enterprise	.01	-.11	.03	.09
Equalitarianism	.29	.26		

Part 3:

	Age	Education	Gender (Female)	Income	Race (Black)	Attendance at Reli- gious Services
Equalitarianism	-.04 ^a	-.15	.18	-.20	.23	.15
Individualism	.04	-.08	-.11	.15	-.04	.04
Free enterprise	.02	-.05	.02	.07	-.05	.02

NOTE: ^aEntries are Pearson product-moment correlations.

so they range from +1 (most equalitarian, most individualistic, and most supportive of free enterprise) to 0. This scoring produces scales in easily interpretable units; each varies from 0 to 1, with .5 being the score that would occur if a respondent were neutral (i.e., neither agreeing or disagreeing) toward all of the items in the scale.

The top part of Table 2 gives the distributions of the scales (for comparison, the distributions for equality scales formed from just wave 1 and wave 2 items are also shown). All the scales are skewed, as should be expected given the nature of the beliefs being measured here. The skewness is least obvious for free enterprise and most pronounced for equality. The extreme skewness of the equality scale is probably due in part to the fact that the items that compose this scale are all worded in the "agree" direction (for an equalitarian response). Even with the skewed distributions, both equality and individualism show satisfactory levels of variation; the standard deviation for free enterprise is, by comparison, significantly lower.

Part 2 of Table 2 shows the intercorrelations of the three scales and the correlations of the scales with party identification and liberal-conservative self-identification (high scores are Democratic for party identification and liberal for ideology). The three belief scales are relatively independent; the correlation of equality and individualism is just slightly lower than the estimate obtained previously from the LISREL factor model. Free enterprise is virtually uncorrelated with the other two beliefs. Equality and individualism are somewhat correlated with party identification and ideological identification in the expected direction; compared to conservatives and Republicans, liberals and Democrats are somewhat more equalitarian and less individualistic. Most important, this result shows that there is a great deal of variance in these three beliefs that is independent of liberal-conservative and party identification. Thus, analyses that include only liberal-conservative and party identification may substantially underestimate the degree to which political attitudes and preferences are structured by more central political beliefs.

Finally, the three scales were correlated with a number of social background and demographic factors (see part 3 of Table 2). There are a few interesting patterns revealed here, though the magnitude of the correlations shows that variation in these beliefs is not simply a function of social position. Increasing income is associated with more individualistic and less equalitarian beliefs. Blacks are more equalitarian than whites, although they seem to be just as individualistic. Women, on the other hand, are both more equalitarian and less individualistic than men. This may indicate that the "gender gap" has at least some of its source in differences between men and women in core beliefs and values. More generally, the correlations between the beliefs and race and gender suggest that differences in support for core beliefs are to some extent associated with long-standing cleavages in society.

Basic Beliefs and Issue Preferences

The empirical study of mass belief systems has focused extensively on the structure of issue positions. Therefore, a good place to begin an examination of the impact of core beliefs is the preferences that people hold on public policy issues. The data from the 1982 National Election Study, along with the additional information collected in the pilot study, provide a wealth of preference items to consider. The items used here include both domestic and foreign/defense policy items. These questions were asked in several different formats, including standard seven-point scales, attitudes toward federal spending in a number of areas, and support for government intervention in solving problems. Detailed information about issue scale construction is provided in the Appendix.

Each of the issue items (or combinations of items) was coded so that 1 is the most extreme "liberal" response possible, and 0 is the most "conservative" response. In order to make the interpretation of the coefficients as uniform as possible, party identification and ideological self-identification were also coded on a

TABLE 3

Regressions of Issue Positions on Values, Identifications, and Demographics

Issue	Equality	Individualism	Free Enterprise	Party ID	Liberal-Conserv. ID	R ²	N
Jobs/Std. of living	.29** (.25)	-.15* (-.13)	.15 (.12)	.07 (.09)	.18* (.13)	.29	233
Welfare	.21** (.15)	-.22** (-.15)	-.03 (-.01)	.00 (.01)	.35** (.20)	.19	272
Social services	.24** (.22)	-.11 (-.10)	-.02 (-.02)	.04 (.06)	.07 (.05)	.25	228
Health/Education	.27** (.26)	-.06 (-.06)	-.08 (-.06)	.01 (.02)	.22** (.18)	.24	261
Gov't goals: class	.40** (.40)	-.01 (.02)	.04 (.02)	.02 (.04)	.20** (.16)	.40	265
Cities/Crime	.24** (.21)	.00 (.00)	-.16 (-.09)	.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.08	219
Spending/Services	.12 (.22)	-.05 (-.10)	-.06 (-.02)	.07 (.06)	.35** (.05)	.21	236
Federal/State action	.00 (.00)	-.30** (-.16)	.14 (.06)	.20** (.15)	.38** (.16)	.12	291
Government intervention	.16 (.12)	.06 (.05)	.06 (.03)	.09 (.10)	.51** (.34)	.23	203
Minority aid	.27** (.25)	-.09 (-.09)	-.02 (-.01)	.04 (.06)	.18* (.15)	.21	242
Gov't goals: blacks	.44** (.39)	-.02 (-.02)	.14 (.07)	.04 (.05)	.23** (.17)	.41	265
Women's equality	.11 (.09)	-.07 (-.07)	.16 (.11)	.08 (.10)	.10 (.07)	.08	277
Gov't goals: women	.42** (.41)	-.03 (-.03)	.04 (.02)	.00 (.00)	.29 (.23)	.35	265
Defense	.10 (.08)	-.17* (-.15)	-.01 (-.01)	.17** (.20)	.22* (.16)	.23	236

NOTE: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses. All coefficients are calculated holding education, income, race, and gender constant.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$.

0 to 1 scale, with 1 indicating a strong Democrat and an extreme liberal. In order to minimize the number of cases lost through missing data, those who could not place themselves on the liberal-conservative scale were coded along with the moderates at .5.

Table 3 presents the results of regressing each issue preference on the three

beliefs, the two identifications, income, education, gender, and race. To make the table somewhat less cumbersome, the coefficients for the latter four variables are not presented; the impact they have on the issue positions is not central to this analysis.

Several major patterns are evident in Table 3. First, the free enterprise scale is not a significant predictor in *any* of the equations. In some cases it comes close, but given the number of issues considered here, its failure is quite striking. The results are just the opposite for the equality scale, which is very clearly the most consistent predictor of a wide variety of issues of the independent variables considered here. What is impressive is the wide range of issues for which equality is a significant predictor. It is strongly related to support for domestic social welfare programs, aid to minority groups, and support for government programs for improving the status of women. From the pattern of the results across issues, it appears that equality of opportunity is more strongly related to support for specific government programs to assist the needy and victims of discrimination than to general issues of activism and intervention. The third scale, economic individualism, has a somewhat more limited impact. It has a significant effect on preferences for government guaranteed jobs and social welfare spending, and it has a pronounced relationship to questions of federal-state responsibility and federal government intervention. Thus, it appears that support for equalitarianism leads to support for a broad range of government social service spending and aid to minorities, while economic individualism is associated with preferences for a more limited federal government and limits on social welfare spending. Of the two political identifications, ideological self-placement has the more pronounced effect on issue preferences. Its largest coefficients suggest that it is strongly related to conflict over the role of the federal government. Party identification, on the other hand, has a very limited impact on the issues examined here, after controlling for the core beliefs and ideology.

The results of this analysis show that equality of opportunity and economic individualism may play important roles in the development of positions on public policy questions.⁴ For the set of policies examined here, equality of opportunity emerges as the strongest correlate of public preferences. These results provide no evidence, however, that support for an unfettered free enterprise system is related to expressed issue preferences.

⁴Part of the explanation for the lack of impact of economic individualism may be the additive form of the models estimated. Given that equality and individualism are only slightly correlated, interaction effects between these two scales are possible. It may make a very big difference if a person is nonindividualistic and equalitarian or nonindividualistic and nonequalitarian. Further analysis, not reported here, shows that variations in economic individualism are more consequential among those low in equality. Unfortunately, a sample of 314 people is not a very good vehicle for examining interaction effects—the standard errors of the interaction terms were too large to draw firm conclusions.

Retrospective Performance Evaluations

Basic beliefs may affect people's evaluations of public policy issues not only through their preferences for government action but also in terms of their retrospective evaluations of government performance. Retrospective evaluations have been seen by some as a key element in voting behavior and as critical to maintaining government accountability (Fiorina, 1978). As noted earlier, basic beliefs and values can serve as standards by which people judge the performance of the president and government. Nine retrospective evaluations of President Reagan's job performance were included on the 1982 NES: inflation, unemployment, taxes, balanced budget, interest rates, nuclear arms, national defense, relations with Russia, and the environment. Each of these variables was regressed on the same set of variables used in the analysis of the issue positions. The results are

TABLE 4

Regressions of Performance Evaluations on Values, Identifications, and Demographics

Evaluation	Equality	Individual	Free Enterprise	Party ID	Liberal-Conserv. ID	R ²	N
Inflation	-.17** (-.15)	.11* (.10)	-.03 (-.02)	-.26** (-.34)	-.09 (-.07)	.35	273
Unemployment	-.19** (-.19)	.03 (.03)	.07 (.03)	-.16** (-.23)	-.14* (-.11)	.23	258
Tax cuts	-.24** (-.22)	.15* (.14)	-.06 (-.03)	-.15** (-.19)	-.10 (-.07)	.26	239
Budget	-.17** (-.16)	.10* (.10)	-.02 (-.01)	-.26** (-.34)	-.11 (-.08)	.26	263
Interest rates	-.12* (-.12)	.03 (.03)	-.15 (-.08)	-.12 (-.17)	-.20** (-.16)	.23	269
Nuclear arms	-.32** (-.29)	.04 (.04)	.13 (.07)	-.08 (-.11)	-.19* (-.14)	.22	237
National defense	-.21** (-.19)	.07 (.07)	-.02 (.01)	-.09* (-.12)	-.31** (-.24)	.25	271
Relations with Russia	-.15* (-.14)	.07 (.06)	.07 (.04)	-.15** (-.20)	-.09 (-.07)	.17	249
Environment	-.11 (-.10)	.23** (.21)	.00 (.00)	-.11* (-.15)	-.15 (-.11)	.22	242

NOTE: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses. All coefficients are calculated holding education, income, race, and gender constant.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$.

presented in Table 4. As before, each dependent variable is coded 0–1, with 1 indicating strongest approval and 0 strongest disapproval.⁵

Not too surprisingly, party identification has a pronounced effect on evaluations of Reagan's job performance (although the coefficients are small for the areas of nuclear arms control, national defense, and environmental protection). What is more interesting is the substantial impact of equality on seven of the nine evaluations and the strong impact of individualism on two (and its statistically significant impact on a third). All the retrospective judgments except for protecting the environment are strongly influenced by respondents' levels of egalitarianism, and evaluations of Reagan's performance on taxes, inflation, and especially the environment show a substantial effect of individualism. As was the case with preferences on issue positions, these results provide no evidence that the free enterprise scale is associated with political evaluations.

The substantive pattern of these results deserves some attention. It is clear that support for equality of opportunity has a consistent impact on evaluations of Reagan's performance in economic matters, with the largest coefficients obtained for tax cuts and unemployment. Somewhat less predictable is the strong relationship between support for equality and evaluations of Reagan's performance on defense issues, especially control of nuclear arms. In fact, evaluations of Reagan on this issue are much more strongly tied to belief in equality than to party or ideological identification.⁶ The results for judgments of Reagan's performance in protecting the environment indicate that the government's environmental policies, perhaps symbolized by the EPA and James Watt, were most acceptable to those with a strongly individualistic perspective. Overall, these results strongly suggest that people use these two core beliefs as standards in their evaluation of government performance in a number of areas.

Basic Beliefs and Candidate Evaluations

A last important set of dependent variables pertain to candidate evaluations. As research has recently shown, candidate evaluations predict vote choice with a high degree of accuracy and seem to do a good job of capturing the dynamics of

⁵Some of the retrospective evaluations are dichotomous and some are trichotomous. The use of these evaluations as dependent variables in a regression equation violates several of the assumptions of the regression model. To determine if this had any effect on the substantive conclusions, all of the retrospective evaluation equations were reestimated using probit analysis. In no case was the pattern of estimates different than the regression estimates presented in Table 4. The regression estimates are presented to maintain consistency with the analysis of issue preferences and candidate evaluations.

⁶The large coefficients for equality of opportunity in the Reagan defense items are a bit surprising. One possible explanation is that belief in equality of opportunity is somehow linked to a less militaristic perspective on defense matters. Alternatively, those with a strong commitment to equality may see defense programs competing with domestic programs for funding.

TABLE 5

Regressions of Candidate Evaluations on Values, Identifications, and Demographics

Evaluations	Equality	Individual	Free Enterprise	Party ID	Liberal-Conserv. ID	R ²	N
Reagan	-19.2** (-.17)	19.8** (.18)	2.0 (.01)	-21.4** (-.27)	-29.6** (-.21)	.38	314
Glenn	-2.4 (-.04)	-5.0 (-.08)	-3.8 (-.07)	6.0* (.14)	-1.0 (-.01)	.03	314
Kennedy	12.4* (.11)	8.0 (.07)	-18.4* (-.10)	27.0** (.36)	8.4 (.06)	.29	314
Mondale	2.8 (.04)	-4.2 (-.05)	7.8 (.03)	16.2** (.29)	16.2** (.15)	.18	314
Reagan-Glenn	-14.4* (-.12)	23.6** (.21)	-.6 (-.00)	-24.6** (-.30)	-31.2** (-.21)	.36	314
Reagan-Kennedy	-30.8** (-.17)	12.6 (.07)	-7.0 (-.04)	-47.4** (-.38)	-40.8** (-.22)	.46	314
Reagan-Mondale	-20.4** (-.13)	24.6* (.17)	-9.0 (-.07)	-37.2** (-.35)	-45.4** (-.24)	.45	314

NOTE: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standardized coefficients in parentheses. All coefficients are calculated holding education, income, race, and gender constant.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$.

the vote choice process (Page and Jones, 1979; Markus, 1982). Moreover, candidate evaluations in the form of feeling thermometers are more appropriate dependent variables in regression analysis than is vote choice. The first wave of the pilot study contained feeling thermometer items for Reagan, Glenn, Kennedy, and Mondale. In addition to predicting these simple evaluations, choice preferences were simulated by taking differences between pairs of evaluations. This was done for Reagan and each of the three Democrats. Table 5 provides the results of regressing each of these variables on the same set of beliefs, identifications, and demographics used in the previous analyses. The dependent variables for the simple preferences range from 0 to 100 while the range is -100 to +100 for the paired alternative variables.

Looking first at the simple evaluations, the most distinctive results occur for evaluations of Reagan. Both equality and individualism have quite substantial effects on evaluations of Reagan, even holding party and ideological identifications constant. In fact, the unstandardized coefficients for these two beliefs are almost as large as the coefficient for party identification. The impact of beliefs on evaluations of the Democrats is clearly more limited, with only evaluations of Kennedy showing the effects of equality and free enterprise.

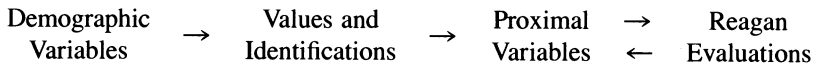
There are several possible reasons why evaluations of Reagan are more closely tied to core beliefs than are evaluations of the three Democrats. Reagan has been a particularly ideological president, and this may have increased the extent to which he is evaluated in terms of basic values and beliefs. This would also help explain why these beliefs seem to affect only evaluations of Kennedy among these Democrats: more than the other two he has been publicly associated with a clear set of liberal policies. A second possible explanation is familiarity. Until people know where a public figure stands in a number of respects, values and beliefs are unlikely to be very important in the evaluation process. Finally, an incumbent president may be more likely to be evaluated in terms of basic beliefs because his actions in office provide the basis for doing so. Consistent with this interpretation, the results presented in Table 4 showed that retrospective evaluations of Reagan's performance are heavily influenced by beliefs in equality and economic individualism. Ultimately, the only way to compare the merits of these explanations is to gather data for a number of candidates across a variety of contexts.

The effects of core beliefs on candidate *preferences* are quite apparent in the simulated Reagan-Democrat pairings in Table 5. The coefficients indicate that both equality and individualism would play important roles in Reagan-Glenn and Reagan-Mondale contests and that equality would strongly influence the outcome of a Reagan-Kennedy election. Several of the coefficients for these two beliefs in the preference equations are quite large, especially considering that party and ideological identifications are also included in the estimated equations.

These results show that equality and economic individualism *influence* evaluations of candidates, but not *how*. It is possible to examine the manner in which beliefs influence candidate evaluations in much more detail for Reagan by incorporating into the analysis more proximal determinants of evaluations. For this analysis six new variables were constructed. An overall measure of retrospective judgments of Reagan's performance was constructed by summing the nine performance items examined previously. An issue proximity measure was constructed by summing the absolute values of the differences between each respondent's positions on five issues and his or her perceptions of Reagan's position. The five issues used were defense spending, aid to minorities, guaranteed jobs and living standards, women's rights, and government services. Separate measures of positive (hopeful and proud) and negative (angry and afraid) emotions were created, as were two trait measures: competence/leadership and integrity. All six proximal variables were scored 0 to 1, with 1 indicating high performance evaluations and high issue proximity, strong expressions of positive and negative emotions, and endorsements of Reagan's competence and integrity.

A model was constructed that posited performance, issue proximity, competence, integrity, and emotions as immediate determinants of Reagan evaluations. Equality and individualism, and party and ideological identifications were speci-

fied to be one step back in the evaluation process with the demographic variables yet a further step removed from evaluations:



Thus, in addition to estimating the effects of all prior variables on evaluations of Reagan, the effects of beliefs, identifications, and demographics on the proximal determinants must also be evaluated. All of this leads to estimation problems, however. The proximal determinants of evaluations may be strongly affected themselves by evaluations of Reagan (as indicated by the pair of arrows). Moreover, the individual proximal variables are very likely reciprocally related to each other.

To overcome these estimation problems, the entire system of equations was estimated using full information maximum likelihood procedures (employing the LISREL program). Although LISREL estimates all of the relationships simultaneously, the estimation problem can be conceptualized in terms of two sets of equations. First, a number of demographic variables (income, education, race, sex, region, occupation, religion, and age) are taken as exogenous to the proximal determinants and are used as instrumental variables in a two-stage estimation procedure with evaluations as the dependent variable. Assuming that these demographic variables affect evaluations of Reagan through the more proximal variables, this estimation procedure yields consistent estimates of the effects of the proximal determinants on evaluations without the bias that would be created by the simultaneous effects of evaluations.⁷

Second, the six proximal variables are then regressed on the two beliefs, party and ideological identification, and the demographic variables. Rather than estimating each equation separately, the six equations are estimated as a set with the error terms for the six proximal variables allowed to be correlated.⁸ If each of the equations was estimated separately, it is possible that the estimates of the effects of the independent variables on a particular proximal variable would be affected by its relationship to the other proximal variables. Although it would be desirable to specify the nature of the relationships among these variables, employing the correlated error approach will nevertheless produce consistent esti-

⁷In the LISREL model this is accomplished by constraining the coefficients for the effects of the demographic variables on Reagan evaluations to zero thus making them instruments for the proximal variables.

⁸This is equivalent to estimating "seemingly unrelated regressions" (Kmenta, 1971, pp. 517–29), where none of the proximal variables affects any of the other proximal variables directly, but the equations are related, since the errors in one equation are related to the errors in all other equations for the proximal variables. In the LISREL model this is easily accomplished by making the part of the Beta matrix for the proximal variables diagonal (all off-diagonal elements are fixed at zero) and allowing the corresponding off-diagonal elements of Psi to be free parameters.

TABLE 6
Estimates for the Reagan Evaluation Equation

	Direct Effects	Total Effects
Performance	12.8** (.19)	12.8 (.19)
Positive emotions	12.6** (.21)	12.6 (.21)
Negative emotions	-1.9 (-.03)	-1.9 (-.03)
Competence	18.0** (.15)	18.0 (.15)
Integrity	29.5** (.27)	29.5 (.27)
Issue proximity	8.1 (.06)	8.1 (.06)
Equality	-3.8 (-.04)	-19.2 (-.18)
Individualism	.8 (.01)	18.6 (.18)
Party ID	-4.0 (-.05)	-20.8 (-.28)
Liberal-Conservative	-10.0* (-.07)	-25.6 (-.19)
Income		0.0 (.00)
Education		.8 (.07)
Race		-9.6 (-.11)
Gender		-4.7 (-.10)

NOTE: All coefficients are maximum likelihood estimates.
Standardized coefficients are in parentheses.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$.

mates of the impact of the beliefs, identifications, and demographics on the proximal variables.

The first column of Table 6 provides the results of the Reagan evaluation equation from the LISREL model. The R^2 for this equation is .72, which probably approaches the reliability of the feeling thermometer. The coefficients show that evaluations of Reagan are primarily determined by four of the six proximal variables—evaluations of his performance, integrity, and competence, and posi-

TABLE 7
Regression of Proximal Vote Determinants
on Values, Identifications, and Demographics

Predictors	Dependent Variables					
	Performance	Positive Emotions	Negative Emotions	Competence	Integrity	Issue Proximity
Equality	-.36** (-.22)	-.22 (-.12)	.26* (.16)	-.14* (-.14)	-.14* (-.14)	-.16** (-.19)
Individualism	.20* (.13)	.26* (.15)	-.18 (-.12)	.18** (.21)	.24** (.26)	.10** (.13)
Party ID	-.32** (-.29)	-.30** (-.25)	.20** (.18)	-.14** (-.23)	-.16** (-.24)	-.12** (-.19)
Liberal/ Conservative	-.32** (-.15)	-.24 (-.10)	.14 (.06)	-.14* (-.11)	-.14* (-.12)	-.20** (-.19)
Income	.00 (.00)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.03)	-.00 (-.08)	-.00 (-.01)	.00 (.02)
Race	-.08 (-.06)	-.09 (-.06)	.06 (.05)	-.07 (-.10)	-.06 (-.08)	-.08* (-.12)
Gender	-.11** (-.15)	-.02 (-.02)	.06 (.08)	-.06** (-.14)	-.01 (-.03)	.01 (.04)
Education	.01 (.06)	.02 (.11)	.02* (.15)	.01 (.07)	.01 (.13)	-.01 (-.09)
<i>R</i> ²	.30	.36	.27	.41	.46	.34

NOTE: All coefficients are maximum likelihood estimates. Standardized coefficients are in parentheses.

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$.

tive emotions about him. Negative emotions and issue proximity seem not to play a significant role in the evaluation process. With the proximal determinants held constant, only ideological identification has a barely significant effect on evaluations of Reagan. We need to look now at the equations for the proximal variables to see how the other variables indirectly affect evaluations of Reagan (see Table 7).

The most obvious feature of these estimates is that party identification has a pronounced effect on all the proximal variables. This is of course not terribly surprising. What is more interesting are the substantial effects of equality and individualism on many of the dependent variables. Equality has significant effects on retrospective performance evaluations, issue proximity, competence, and negative emotions. Individualism appears in the equations for performance, issue proximity, and positive emotions, and especially strongly in the equations for competence and integrity. In several of the equations one of the two beliefs has a coefficient rivaling that of party identification. This analysis illustrates the

different ways in which equality and individualism influence evaluations of Reagan. Equality is most important in evaluations of Reagan's performance and in issue proximity—as seen earlier, it is very much based on policy. Individualism, on the other hand, is more influential in people's perceptions of Reagan's competence and integrity. It is possible that individualism enters into the evaluation of Reagan primarily in terms of his rhetoric and image rather than on the basis of specific policies he has pursued.

It is also possible to compute the total effects of this set of variables on evaluations of Reagan (total effects are direct plus indirect effects). These coefficients are shown in both standardized and unstandardized terms in the second column of Table 6. In standardized units the largest effects are registered for party identification, integrity, and positive emotions. Both equality and individualism show substantial total effects on evaluations. In unstandardized units, the coefficients for the total effects of equality and individualism are only slightly lower than the total effects of party and ideological identifications.

Conclusions

The results of 20 years of research on mass belief systems have shown that the political attitudes and beliefs of much of the American public are not structured ideologically. One consequence of these findings has been the failure to explain satisfactorily variations in political preferences. Political attitudes and beliefs may not be a consequence of ideological reasoning, but they do exist and need to be accounted for. It has long been suggested that political preferences and attitudes may be structured by more central beliefs and values. However, there has been little systematic study of the relationships between core beliefs and attitudes and preferences, in part because suitable measures of core beliefs have not been included in major studies of public opinion.

The evidence presented here shows that it is possible to develop reliable and valid measures of basic beliefs and that such measures are strongly related to policy positions, performance evaluations, and candidate evaluations. Although none of the three scales investigated here can be considered a finished product (all of the estimated reliabilities fall short of conventionally acceptable levels), there is every reason to believe that further work would produce longer, more reliable scales. Perhaps more important than the final quality of these particular scales is the observation that there is significant variation in the extent to which people hold beliefs in equality of opportunity, the work ethic, and the free enterprise system. This makes it at least possible that these (and potentially other) basic beliefs and values may explain differences in the evaluations and preferences of the mass public.

Substantively, the results presented here show that beliefs in equality of opportunity and the work ethic are associated with preferences on public policy issues, presidential performance evaluations, and candidate evaluations. Equality

of opportunity in particular is strongly related to positions on a variety of domestic issues and to a wide range of evaluations of presidential performance. These relationships are strong, even holding constant party and liberal-conservative identifications and a number of social background factors. Detailed analysis of the impact of equality of opportunity and the work ethic on evaluations of Reagan shows that the former is more policy based, while the latter relates more strongly to dimensions of candidate image. The extent and strength of the estimated impact of equality is consistent with Rokeach's (1973) argument and findings that the relative priority people assign to equality is an important basis of political conflict and debate in this country.

The free enterprise scale, on the other hand, was found to have virtually no significant relationships with any of the dependent measures considered here. Although it is entirely possible that this may be a function of the items used in this scale, rather than an indication of a lack of relationship between the underlying belief and political preferences, the content of this scale—the trade-off between government involvement and free enterprise—and the uniformly negative results strongly suggest that this dimension is not a critical part of most Americans' evaluations of policies and candidates. There are at least two ways of explaining this key finding. On the one hand, it may indicate that beliefs about free enterprise really do approach a consensus, and thus there is little or no conflict associated with this dimension of the political culture. Alternatively, the results may show that, for the most part, the members of the public do not see most political issues in terms of a conflict over free enterprise and government control.

This analysis should be considered as just a beginning. Much more work is necessary to identify and measure those core beliefs and values that help to structure political attitudes and preferences. More thought must also be given to the processes linking these beliefs with evaluations and issue preferences. All of the estimates in this paper were based on simple recursive models that assume that the beliefs influence evaluations but not vice versa. At least in some cases this is clearly an oversimplification. Although basic beliefs may not be significantly affected by candidate evaluations and retrospective judgments (at least in the short run), it is possible that issue preferences may influence the priorities people place on their basic beliefs and values. And the long-term dynamics of core beliefs and values will need to be carefully investigated. The results of this paper show that further attention to the more central elements of belief systems will help us better understand the sources of policy preferences and political evaluations.

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APPENDIX

Issue Variables Used in Regression Analyses

The following are seven-point scales from the 1982 NES:

Jobs and Standard of Living: V425

Spending/Services: V443

Minority Aid: V415

Women's Equality: V435

Defense: V407

The following are constructed from questions on desired levels of spending for federal programs (1982):

Welfare: welfare spending, V319; food stamps, V321

Health/Education: environment, V310; health, V311; educational system, V315

Cities/Crime: big cities, V312; halting crime rate, V313; drug addiction, V314

Social Services: social security, V320; unemployment compensation, V323; aid to the handicapped, V324

The following are items in the 1982 NES:

Federal/State Action: V458

Government Intervention: government regulation of business, V459; government involvement in societal issues, V460, V461

The following three scales were constructed from a series of items from the 1983 pilot study that asked about preferences for government action:

Government Goals—Class: creating jobs for unemployed, V3182; reducing the gap between the income of rich people and poor people, V3184; improving the standard of living of poor Americans, V3181

Government Goals—Blacks: improving the social and economic position of blacks, V3183; making sure black children attend schools with white children, V3186; promoting affirmative action programs that help blacks get ahead, V3190

Government Goals—Women: improving the social and economic position of women, V3185; promoting affirmative action programs that help women get ahead, V3187; insuring equal pay for equal worth, V3189.

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