

The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics

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BELIEF SYSTEMS have never surrendered easily to empirical study or quantification. Indeed, they have often served as primary exhibits for the doctrine that what is important to study cannot be measured and that what can be measured is not important to study. In an earlier period, the behaviorist decree that subjective states lie beyond the realm of proper measurement gave Mannheim a justification for turning his back on measurement, for he had an unqualified interest in discussing belief systems.¹ Even as Mannheim was writing, however, behaviorism was undergoing stiff challenges, and early studies of attitudes were attaining a degree of measurement reliability that had been deemed impossible. This fragment of history, along with many others, serves to remind us that no intellectual position is likely to become obsolete quite so rapidly as one that takes current empirical capability as the limit of the possible in a more absolute sense. Nevertheless, while rapid strides in the measurement of "subjective states" have been achieved in recent decades, few would claim that the millennium has arrived or that Mannheim could now find all of the tools that were lacking to him forty years ago.

This article makes no pretense of surpassing such limitations. At the same time, our substantive concern forces upon us an unusual concern with measurement strategies, not simply because we propose to deal with belief systems or ideologies, but also because of the specific questions that we shall raise about them. Our focus in this article is upon differences in the nature of belief systems held on the one hand by elite political actors and, on the other, by the masses that appear to be "numbered" within the spheres of influence of these belief systems. It is our thesis that there are important and predictable differences in ideational worlds as we progress downward through such "belief strata" and that these differences, while obvious at one level, are easily overlooked and not infrequently miscalculated. The fact that these ideational worlds differ in character poses problems of adequate representation and measurement.

The vertical ordering of actors and beliefs that we wish to plumb bears some loose resemblance to the vertical line that might be pursued downward

through an organization or political movement from the narrow cone of top leadership, through increasing numbers of subordinate officials, and on through untitled activists to the large base formally represented in membership rolls. It is this large base that Michels noted, from observations of political gatherings, was rarely "there", and analogues to its physical absence do not arise accidentally in dealing with belief systems. On the other hand, there is no perfect or necessary "fit" between the two orderings, and this fact in itself has some interest.

That we intend to consider the total mass of people "numbered" within the spheres of influence of belief systems suggests both a democratic bias and a possible confusion between numbers and power or between numbers and the outcomes of events that power determines. We are aware that attention to numbers, more or less customary in democratic thought, is very nearly irrelevant in many political settings. Generally, the logic of numbers collides head on with the logic of power, as the traditional power pyramid, expressing an inverse relation between power and numbers, communicates so well. "Power" and "numbers" intersect at only one notable point, and that point is represented by the familiar axiom that numbers are one resource of power. The weight of this resource varies in a systematic and obvious way according to the political context. In a frankly designed and stable oligarchy, it is assumed to have no weight at all. In such a setting, the numbers of people associated with particular belief systems, if known at all, becomes important only in periods of crisis or challenge to the existing power structure. Democratic theory greatly increases the weight accorded to numbers in the daily power calculus. This increase still does not mean that numbers are of overriding importance; in the normal course of events it is the *perception* of numbers by democratic elites, so far as they differ from "actual" numbers, that is the more important factor. However this may be, claims to numbers are of some modest continuing importance in democratic systems for the legitimacy they confer upon demands; and, much more sporadically, claims to numbers become important in nondemocratic systems as threats of potential coercion.

I. Some Clarification of Terms

A term like "ideology" has been thoroughly muddled by diverse uses.² We shall depend instead upon the term "belief system," although there is an obvious overlap between the two. We define a *belief system* as a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence.³ In the static case, "constraint" may be taken to mean the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes. We depend implicitly upon such notions of constraint in judging, for example, that, if a person is opposed to the expansion of social security, he is probably a conservative and is probably opposed as well to any nationalization of private industries, federal aid to education, sharply progressive income taxation, and so forth. Most discussions of ideologies make relatively elaborate assumptions about such constraints. Constraint must be treated, of course, as a matter of degree, and this degree can be measured quite readily, at least as an average among individuals.⁴

In the dynamic case, "constraint" or "interdependence" refers to the probability that a change in the perceived status (truth, desirability, and so forth) of one idea-element would *psychologically* require, from the point of view of the actor, some compensating change(s) in the status of idea-elements elsewhere in the configuration. The most obvious form of such constraint (although in some ways the most trivial) is exemplified by a structure of propositions in logic, in which a change in the truth-value of one proposition necessitates changes in truth-value elsewhere within the set of related propositions. Psychologically, of course, there may be equally strong constraint among idea-elements that would not be apparent to logical analysis at all, as we shall see.

We might characterize either the idea-elements themselves or entire belief systems in terms of many other dimensions. Only two will interest us here. First, the idea-elements within a belief system vary in a property we shall call *centrality*, according to the role that they play in the belief system as a whole. That is, when new information changes the status of one idea-element in a belief system, by postulate some other change must occur as well. There are usually, however, several possible changes in status elsewhere in the system, any one of which would compensate for the initial change. Let us imagine, for example, that a person strongly favors a particular policy; is very favorably inclined toward a given political party; and recognizes with gratification that the party's stand and his own are congruent. (If he were unaware of the party's stand on the issue, these elements could not in any direct sense be constrained within the same belief system.) Let us further imagine that the party then changes its position to the opposing side of the issue. Once the information about the change reaching the actor has become so unequivocal that he can no longer deny that the change has occurred, he has several further choices. Two of the more important ones involve either a change in attitude toward the party or a change in position on the issue. In such an instance, the element more likely to change is defined as less central to the belief system than the element that, so to speak, has its stability ensured by the change in the first element.⁵

In informal discussions of belief systems, frequent assumptions are made about the relative centrality of various idea-elements. For example, idea-elements that are logically "ends" are supposed to be more central to the system than are "means." It is important to remain aware, however, that idea-elements can change their relative centrality in an individual's belief-system over time. Perhaps the most hackneyed illustration of this point is that of the miser, to whom money has become an end rather than a means.

Whole belief systems may also be compared in a rough way with respect to the *range* of objects that are referents for the ideas and attitudes in the system. Some belief systems, while they may be internally quite complex and may involve large numbers of cognitive elements, are rather narrow in range: Belief systems concerning "proper" baptism rituals or the effects of changes in weather on health may serve as cases in point. Such other belief systems as, for example, one that links control of the means of production with the social functions of religion and a doctrine of aesthetics all in one more or less neat package have extreme ranges.

By and large, our attention will be focussed upon belief systems that have

relatively wide ranges, and that allow some centrality to political objects, for they can be presumed to have some relevance to political behavior. This focus brings us close to what are broadly called *ideologies*, and we shall use the term for aesthetic relief where it seems most appropriate. The term originated in a narrower context, however, and is still often reserved for subsets of belief systems or parts of such systems that the user suspects are insincere; that he wishes to claim have certain functions for social groupings; or that have some special social source or some notable breadth of social diffusion.⁶ Since we are concerned here about only one of these limitations—the question of social diffusion—and, since we wish to deal with it by hypothesis rather than by definition, a narrow construction of the term is never intended.

II. Sources of Constraint on Idea-Elements

It seems clear that, however logically coherent a belief system may seem to the holder, the sources of constraint are much less logical in the classical sense than they are psychological—and less psychological than social. This point is of sufficient importance to dwell upon.

Logical Sources of Constraint

Within very narrow portions of belief systems, certain constraints may be purely logical. For example, government revenues, government expenditures, and budget balance are three idea-elements that suggest some purely logical constraints. One cannot believe that government expenditures should be increased, that government revenues should be decreased, and that a more favorable balance of the budget should be achieved all at the same time. Of course, the presence of such objectively logical constraints does not ensure that subjective constraints will be felt by the actor. They will be felt only if these idea-elements are brought together in the same belief system, and there is no guarantee that they need be. Indeed, it is true that, among adult Americans, those who favor the expansion of government welfare services tend to be those who are more insistent upon reducing taxes "even if it means putting off some important things that need to be done."⁷

Where such purely logical constraint is concerned, McGuire has reported a fascinating experiment in which propositions from a few syllogisms of the Barbara type were scattered thinly across a long questionnaire applied to a student population. The fact that logical contingencies bound certain questions together was never brought to the attention of the students by the investigator. Yet one week later the questionnaire was applied again, and changes of response to the syllogistic propositions reduced significantly the measurable level of logical inconsistency. The conclusion was that merely "activating" these objectively related ideas in some rough temporal contiguity was sufficient to sensitize the holders to inconsistency and therefore to occasion re-adjustment of their beliefs.⁸

On a broader canvas, such findings suggest that simple "thinking about" a domain of idea-elements serves both to weld a broader range of such elements into a functioning belief system and to eliminate strictly logical inconsistencies defined from an objective point of view. Since there can be no doubt that educated elites in general, and political elites in particular, "think about"

elements involved in political belief systems with a frequency far greater than that characteristic of mass publics, we could conservatively expect that strict logical inconsistencies (objectively definable) would be far more prevalent in a broad public.

Furthermore, if a legislator is noted for his insistence upon budget-balancing and tax-cutting, we can predict with a fair degree of success that he will also tend to oppose expansion of government welfare activities. If, however, a voter becomes numbered within his sphere of influence by virtue of having cast a vote for him directly out of enthusiasm for his tax-cutting policies, we cannot predict that the voter is opposed as well to expansion of government welfare services. Indeed, if an empirical prediction is possible, it may run in an opposing direction, although the level of constraint is so feeble that any comment is trivial. Yet we know that many historical observations rest directly upon the assumption that constraint among idea-elements visible at an elite level is mirrored by the same lines of constraint in the belief systems of their less visible "supporters." It is our argument that this assumption not only can be, but is very likely to be, fallacious.

Psychological Sources of Constraint

Whatever may be learned through the use of strict logic as a type of constraint, it seems obvious that few belief systems of any range at all depend for their constraint upon logic in this classical sense. Perhaps, with a great deal of labor, parts of a relatively tight belief system like that fashioned by Karl Marx could be made to resemble a structure of logical propositions. It goes without saying, however, that many sophisticated people have been swept away by the "iron logic" of Marxism without any such recasting. There is a broad gulf between strict logic and the quasi-logic of cogent argument. And where the elements in the belief system of a population represent looser cultural accumulations, the question of logical consistency is even less appropriate. If one visits a Shaker community, for example, one finds a group of people with a clear-cut and distinctive belief system that requires among other things plain dress, centrality of religious concerns, celibacy for all members, communal assumptions about work and property, antagonism to political participation in the broader state, and a general aura of retirement from the secular world. The visitor whose sense of constraint has been drawn from belief configurations of such other retiring sects as the Amish is entirely surprised to discover that the Shakers have no abhorrence of technological progress but indeed greatly prize it. In their heyday, a remarkable amount of group energy appears to have been reserved for "research and development" of labor-saving devices, and among the inventions they produced was a prototype of the washing machine. Similar surprise has been registered at idea-elements brought together by such movements as Perónism and Italian Fascism by observers schooled to expect other combinations. Indeed, were one to survey a limited set of ideas on which many belief systems have registered opposite postures, it would be interesting to see how many permutations of positions have been held at one time or another by someone somewhere.

Such diversity is testimony to an absence of any strict logical constraints among such idea-elements, if any be needed. What is important is that the

elites familiar with the total shapes of these belief systems have *experienced* them as logically constrained clusters of ideas, within which one part necessarily follows from another. 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.

Social Sources of Constraint

The social sources of constraint are twofold and are familiar from an extensive literature in the past century. In the first place, were we to survey the combinations of idea-elements that have occurred historically (in the fashion suggested above), we should undoubtedly find that certain postures tend to co-occur and that this co-occurrence has obvious roots in the configuration of interests and information that characterize particular niches in the social structure. For example, if we were informed that dissension was rising within the Roman Catholic Church over innovations designed to bring the priest more intimately into the *milieu* of the modern worker, we could predict with a high degree of success that such a movement would have the bulk of its support among the *bas-clergé* and would encounter indifference or hostility at the higher status levels of the hierarchy.

Of course, such predictions are in no sense free from error, and surprises are numerous. The middle-class temperance movement in America, for example, which now seems "logically" allied with the small-town Republican right, had important alliances some eighty years ago with the urban social left, on grounds equally well argued from temperance doctrines.⁶ Nonetheless, there are some highly reliable correlations of this sort, and these correlations can be linked with social structure in the most direct way. Developmentally, they have status similar to the classic example of the spurious correlation—two terms that are correlated because of a common link to some third and prior variable. In the case of the belief system, arguments are developed to lend some more positive rationale to the fact of constraint: The idea-elements go together not simply because both are in the interest of the person holding a particular status but for more abstract and quasi-logical reasons developed from a coherent world view as well. It is this type of constraint that is closest to the classic meaning of the term "ideology."

The second source of social constraint lies in two simple facts about the creation and diffusion of belief systems. First, the shaping of belief systems of any range into apparently logical wholes that are credible to large numbers of people is an act of creative synthesis characteristic of only a minuscule proportion of any population. Second, to the extent that multiple idea-elements of a belief system are socially diffused from such creative sources, they tend to be diffused in "packages," which consumers come to see as "natural" wholes, for they are presented in such terms ("If you believe this, then you will also believe that, for it follows in such-and-such ways"). Not

that the more avid consumer never supplies personal innovations on the fringes—he is very likely to suppress an idea-element here, to elaborate one there, or even to demur at an occasional point. But any set of relatively intelligent consumers who are initially sympathetic to the crowning posture turns out to show more consensus on specific implications of the posture as a result of social diffusion of “what goes with what” than it would if each member were required to work out the implications individually without socially provided cues.

Such constraint through diffusion is important, for it implies a dependence upon the transmission of information. If information is not successfully transmitted, there will be little constraint save that arising from the first social source. Where transmission of information is at stake, it becomes important to distinguish between two classes of information. Simply put, these two levels are what goes with what and why. Such levels of information logically stand in a scalar relationship to one another, in the sense that one can hardly arrive at an understanding of why two ideas go together without being aware that they are supposed to go together. On the other hand, it is easy to know that two ideas go together without knowing why. For example, we can expect that a very large majority of the American public would somehow have absorbed the notion that “Communists are atheists.” What is important is that this perceived correlation would for most people represent nothing more than a fact of existence, with the same status as the fact that oranges are orange and most apples are red. If we were to go and explore with these people their grasp of the “why” of the relationship, we would be surprised if more than a quarter of the population even attempted responses (setting aside such inevitable replies as “those Communists are for everything wicked”), and, among the responses received, we could be sure that the majority would be incoherent or irrelevant.

The first level of information, then, is simple and straightforward. The second involves much more complex and abstract information, very close to what Downs has called the “contextual knowledge” relevant to a body of information.¹⁰ A well informed person who has received sufficient information about a system of beliefs to understand the “whys” involved in several of the constraints between idea-elements is in a better position to make good guesses about the nature of other constraints; he can deduce with fair success, for example, how a true believer will respond to certain situations. Our first interest in distinguishing between these types of information, however, flows from our interest in the relative success of information transmission. The general premise is that the first type of information will be diffused much more readily than the second because it is less complex.

It is well established that differences in information held in a cross-section population are simply staggering, running from vast treasuries of well organized information among elites interested in the particular subject to fragments that could virtually be measured as a few “bits” in the technical sense. These differences are a static tribute to the extreme imperfections in the transmission of information “downward” through the system: Very little information “trickles down” very far. Of course, the ordering of individuals on this vertical information scale is largely due to differences in education, but it is strongly modified as well by different specialized interests and tastes that

individuals have acquired over time (one for politics, another for religious activity, another for fishing, and so forth).

Consequences of Declining Information for Belief Systems

It is our primary thesis that, as one moves from elite sources of belief systems downwards on such an information scale, several important things occur. First, the contextual grasp of “standard” political belief systems fades out very rapidly, almost before one has passed beyond the 10% of the American population that in the 1950s had completed standard college training.¹¹ Increasingly, simpler forms of information about “what goes with what” (or even information about the simple identity of objects) turn up missing. The net result, as one moves downward, is that constraint declines across the universe of idea-elements, and that the range of relevant belief systems becomes narrower and narrower. Instead of a few wide-ranging belief systems that organize large amounts of specific information, one would expect to find a proliferation of clusters of ideas among which little constraint is felt, even, quite often, in instances of sheer logical constraint.¹²

At the same time, moving from top to bottom of this information dimension, the character of the objects that are central in a belief system undergoes systematic change. These objects shift from the remote, generic, and abstract to the increasingly simple, concrete, or “close to home.” Where potential political objects are concerned, this progression tends to be from abstract, “ideological” principles to the more obviously recognizable social groupings or charismatic leaders and finally to such objects of immediate experience as family, job, and immediate associates.

Most of these changes have been hinted at in one form or another in a variety of sources. For example, “limited horizons,” “foreshortened time perspectives,” and “concrete thinking” have been singled out as notable characteristics of the ideational world of the poorly educated. Such observations have impressed even those investigators who are dealing with subject matter rather close to the individual’s immediate world: his family budgeting, what he thinks of people more wealthy than he, his attitudes toward leisure time, work regulations, and the like. But most of the stuff of politics—particularly that played on a national or international stage—is, in the nature of things, remote and abstract. Where politics is concerned, therefore, such ideational changes begin to occur rapidly below the extremely thin stratum of the electorate that ever has occasion to make public pronouncements on political affairs. In other words, the changes in belief systems of which we speak are not a pathology limited to a thin and disoriented bottom layer of the *lumpeproletariat*; they are immediately relevant in understanding the bulk of mass political behavior.

It is this latter fact which seems to be consistently misunderstood by the sophisticated analysts who comment in one vein or another on the meaning of mass politics. There are some rather obvious “optical illusions” that are bound to operate here. A member of that tiny elite that comments publicly about political currents (probably some fraction of 1% of a population) spends most of his time in informal communication about politics with others in the same select group. He rarely encounters a conversation in which his assumptions of shared contextual grasp of political ideas are challenged. Intellectual-

ally, he has learned that the level of information in the mass public is low, but he may dismiss this knowledge as true of only 10 to 20% of the voters, who affect the course of mass political events in insignificant ways if at all.¹³ It is largely from his informal communications that he learns how "public opinion" is changing and what the change signifies, and he generalizes facetly from these observations to the bulk of the broader public.¹⁴

III. Active Use of Ideological Dimensions of Judgment

Economy and constraint are companion concepts, for the more highly constrained a system of multiple elements, the more economically it may be described and understood. From the point of view of the actor, the idea of organization that leads to constraint permits him to locate and make sense of a wider range of information from a particular domain than he would find possible without such organization. One judgmental dimension or "yardstick" that has been highly serviceable for simplifying and organizing events in most Western politics for the past century has been the liberal-conservative continuum, on which parties, political leaders, legislation, court decisions, and a number of other primary objects of politics could be more—or less—adequately located.¹⁵

The efficiency of such a yardstick in the evaluation of events is quite obvious. Under certain appropriate circumstances, the single word "conservative" used to describe a piece of proposed legislation can convey a tremendous amount of more specific information about the bill—who probably proposed it and toward what ends, who is likely to resist it, its chances of passage, its long-term social consequences, and, most important, how the actor himself should expect to evaluate it if he were to expend further energy to look into its details. The circumstances under which such tremendous amounts of information are conveyed by the single word are, however, twofold. First, the actor must bring a good deal of meaning to the term, which is to say that he must understand the constraints surrounding it. The more impoverished his understanding of the term, the less information it conveys. In the limiting case—if he does not know at all what the term means—it conveys no information at all. Second, the system of beliefs and actors referred to must in fact be relatively constrained: To the degree that constraint is lacking, uncertainty is less reduced by the label, and less information is conveyed.

The psychological economies provided by such yardsticks for actors are paralleled by economies for analysts and theoreticians who wish to describe events in the system parsimoniously. Indeed, the search for adequate overarching dimensions on which large arrays of events may be simply understood is a critical part of synthetic description. Such syntheses are more or less satisfactory, once again, according to the degree of constraint operative among terms in the system being described.

The economies inherent in the liberal-conservative continuum were exploited in traditional fashion in the early 1950s to describe political changes in the United States as a swing toward conservatism or a "revolt of the moderates." At one level, this description was unquestionably apt. That is, a man whose belief system was relatively conservative (Dwight D. Eisenhower) had sup-

planted in the White House a man whose belief system was relatively liberal (Harry Truman). Furthermore, for a brief period at least, the composition of Congress was more heavily Republican as well, and this shift meant on balance a greater proportion of relatively conservative legislators. Since the administration and Congress were the elites responsible for the development and execution of policies, the flavor of governmental action did indeed take a turn in a conservative direction. These observations are proper description.

The causes underlying these changes in leadership, however, obviously lay with the mass public, which had changed its voting patterns sufficiently to bring the Republican elites into power. And this change in mass voting was frequently interpreted as a shift in public mood from liberal to conservative, a mass desire for a period of respite and consolidation after the rapid liberal innovations of the 1930s and 1940s. Such an account presumes, once again, that constraints visible at an elite level are mirrored in the mass public and that a person choosing to vote Republican after a decade or two of Democratic voting saw himself *in some sense or other* as giving up a more liberal choice in favor of a more conservative one.

On the basis of some familiarity with attitudinal materials drawn from cross-section samples of the electorate,¹⁶ this assumption seems thoroughly implausible. It suggests in the first instance a neatness of organization in perceived political worlds, which, while accurate enough for elites, is a poor fit for the perceptions of the common public. Second, the yardstick that such an account takes for granted—the liberal-conservative continuum—is a rather elegant high-order abstraction, and such abstractions are not typical conceptual tools for the "man in the street." Fortunately, our interview protocols collected from this period permitted us to examine this hypothesis more closely, for they include not only "structured" attitude materials (which merely require the respondent to choose between prefabricated alternatives) but also lengthy "open-ended" materials, which provided us with the respondent's current evaluations of the political scene in his own words. They therefore provide some indication of the evaluative dimensions that tend to be spontaneously applied to politics by such a national sample. We knew that respondents who were highly educated or strongly involved in politics would fall naturally into the verbal shorthand of "too conservative," "more radical," and the like in these evaluations. Our initial analytic question had to do with the prevalence of such usage.

It soon became apparent, however, that such respondents were in a very small minority, as their unusual education or involvement would suggest. At this point, we broadened the inquiry to an assessment of the evaluative dimensions of policy significance (relating to political issues, rather than to the way a candidate dresses, smiles, or behaves in his private life) that seemed to be employed *in lieu of* such efficient yardsticks as the liberal-conservative continuum. The interviews themselves suggested several strata of classification, which were hierarchically ordered as "levels of conceptualization" on the basis of *a priori* judgments about the breadth of contextual grasp of the political system that each seemed to represent.

In the first or top level were placed those respondents who did indeed rely in some active way on a relatively abstract and far-reaching conceptual dimension as a yardstick against which political objects and their shifting policy

significance over time were evaluated. We did not require that this dimension be the liberal-conservative continuum itself, but it was almost the only dimension of the sort that occurred empirically. In a second stratum were placed those respondents who mentioned such a dimension in a peripheral way but did not appear to place much evaluative dependence upon it or who used such concepts in a fashion that raised doubt about the breadth of their understanding of the meaning of the term. The first stratum was loosely labeled "ideologue" and the second "near-ideologue."

In the third level were placed respondents who failed to rely upon any such over-arching dimensions yet evaluated parties and candidates in terms of their expected favorable or unfavorable treatment of different social groupings in the population. The Democratic Party might be disliked because "it's trying to help the Negroes too much," or the Republican Party might be endorsed because farm prices would be better with the Republicans in office. The more sophisticated of these group-interest responses reflected an awareness of conflict in interest between "big business" or "rich people," on the one hand, and "labor" or the "working man," on the other, and parties and candidates were located accordingly.

It is often asked why these latter respondents are not considered full "ideologues," for their perceptions run to the more tangible core of what has traditionally been viewed as ideological conflict. It is quite true that such a syndrome is closer to the upper levels of conceptualization than are any of the other types to be described. As we originally foresaw, however, there turn out to be rather marked differences, not only in social origin and flavor of judgmental processes but in overt political reactions as well, between people of this type and those in the upper levels. These people have a clear image of politics as an arena of group interests and, provided that they have been properly advised on where their own group interests lie, they have been likely to follow such advice. Unless an issue directly concerns their grouping in an obviously rewarding or punishing way, however, they lack the contextual grasp of the system to recognize how they should respond to it without being told by elites who hold their confidence. Furthermore, their interest in politics is not sufficiently strong that they pay much attention to such communications. If a communication gets through and they absorb it, they are most willing to behave "ideologically" in ways that will further the interests of their group. If they fail to receive such communication, which is most unusual, knowledge of their group memberships may be of little help in predicting their responses. This syndrome we came to call "ideology by proxy."

The difference between such narrow group interest and the broader perceptions of the ideologue may be clarified by an extreme case. One respondent whom we encountered classified himself as a strong Socialist. He was a Socialist because he knew that Socialists stood four-square for the working man against the rich, and he was a working man. When asked, however, whether or not the federal government in Washington "should leave things like electric power and housing for private businessmen to handle," he felt strongly that private enterprise should have its way, and responses to other structured issue questions were simply uncorrelated with standard socialist doctrine. It seems quite clear that, if our question had pointed out

explicitly to this man that "good Socialists" would demand government intervention over private enterprise or that such a posture had traditionally been viewed as benefiting the working man, his answer would have been different. But since he had something less than a college education and was not generally interested enough in politics to struggle through such niceties, he simply lacked the contextual grasp of the political system or of his chosen "ideology" to know what the appropriate response might be. This case illustrates well what we mean by constraint between idea-elements and how such constraint depends upon a store of relevant information. For this man, "Socialists," "the working man," "non-Socialists" and "the rich" with their appropriate valences formed a tightly constrained belief system. But, for lack of information, the belief system more or less began and ended there. It strikes us as valid to distinguish such a belief system from that of the doctrinaire socialist. We, as sophisticated observers, could only class this man as a full "ideologue" by assuming that he shares with us the complex undergirding of information that his concrete group perceptions call up in our own minds. In this instance, a very little probing makes clear that this assumption of shared information is once again false.

The fourth level was, to some degree, a residual category, intended to include those respondents who invoked some policy considerations in their evaluations yet employed none of the references meriting location in any of the first three levels. Two main modes of policy evaluation were characteristic of this level. The first we came to think of as a "nature of the times" response, since parties or candidates were praised or blamed primarily because of their temporal association in the past with broad societal states of war or peace, prosperity or depression. There was no hint in these responses that any groupings in the society suffered differentially from disaster or profited excessively in more pleasant times: These fortunes or misfortunes were those that one party or the other had decided (in some cases, apparently, on whim) to visit upon the nation as a whole. The second type included those respondents whose only approach to an issue reference involved some single narrow policy for which they felt personal gratitude or indignation toward a party or candidate (like social security or a conservation program). In these responses, there was no indication that the speakers saw programs as representative of the broader policy postures of the parties.

The fifth level included those respondents whose evaluations of the political scene had no shred of policy significance whatever. Some of these responses were from people who felt loyal to one party or the other but confessed that they had no idea what the party stood for. Others devoted their attention to personal qualities of the candidates, indicating disinterest in parties more generally. Still others confessed that they paid too little attention to either the parties or the current candidates to be able to say anything about them.¹⁷

The ranking of the levels performed on *a priori* grounds was corroborated by further analyses, which demonstrated that independent measures of political information, education, and political involvement all showed sharp and monotonic declines as one passed downward through the levels in the order suggested. Furthermore, these correlations were strong enough so that each maintained some residual life when the other two items were controlled, des-

pitate the strong underlying relationship between education, information, and involvement.

The distribution of the American electorate within these levels of conceptualization is summarized in Table I. The array is instructive as a port-

TABLE I—Distribution of a Total Cross-Section Sample of the American Electorate and of 1956 Voters, by Levels of Conceptualization

	Proportion of total sample	Proportion of voters
I. Ideologues	2½%	3½%
II. Near-ideologues	9	12
III. Group interest	42	45
IV. Nature of the times	24	22
V. No issue content	22½	17½
	100%	100%

rait of a mass electorate, to be laid against the common elite assumption that all or a significant majority of the public conceptualizes the main lines of politics after the manner of the most highly educated. Where the specific hypothesis of the "revolt of the moderates" in the early 1950s is concerned, the distribution does not seem on the face of it to lend much support to the key assumption. This disconfirmation may be examined further, however.

Since the resurgence of the Republicans in the Eisenhower period depended primarily upon crossing of party lines by people who normally considered themselves Democrats, we were able to isolate these people to see from what levels of conceptualization they had been recruited. We found that such key defections had occurred among Democrats in the two bottom levels at a rate very significantly greater than the comparable rate in the group-interest or more ideological levels. In other words, the stirrings in the mass electorate that had led to a change in administration and in "ruling ideology" were primarily the handiwork of the very people for whom assumptions of any liberal-conservative dimensions of judgment were most far-fetched.

Furthermore, within those strata where the characteristics of conceptualization even permitted the hypothesis to be evaluated in its own terms, it was directly disproved. For example, the more sophisticated of the group-interest Democrats were quite aware that Eisenhower would be a more pro-business president than Stevenson. Those of this group who did defect to Eisenhower did not, however, do so because they were tired of a labor-oriented administration and wanted a business-oriented one for a change. Quite to the contrary, in the degree that they defected they did so *in spite of* rather than *because of* such quasi-ideological perceptions. That is, their attitudes toward the respective interests of these groups remained essentially constant, and they expressed misgivings about an Eisenhower vote on precisely these grounds. But any such worries were, under the circumstances, outweighed by admiration for Eisenhower's war record, his honesty, his good family life, and (in 1952) his potential for resolving the nagging problem of the Korean War. Among respondents at higher levels (ideologues and near-ideologues),

there was comparable attraction to Eisenhower at a personal level, but these people seemed more careful to hew to ideological considerations, and rates of Democratic defection in these levels were lower still. In short, then, the supposition of changing ideological moods in the mass public as a means of understanding the exchange of partisan elites in 1952 seems to have had little relevance to what was actually going on at the mass level. And once again, the sources of the optical illusion are self-evident. While it may be taken for granted among well educated and politically involved people that a shift from a Democratic preference to a Republican one probably represents a change in option from liberal to conservative, the assumption cannot be extended very far into the electorate as a whole.

IV. Recognition of Ideological Dimensions of Judgment

Dimensions like the liberal-conservative continuum, as we have observed, are extremely efficient frames for the organization of many political observations. Furthermore, they are used a great deal in the more ambitious treatments of politics in the mass media, so that a person with a limited understanding of their meaning must find such discussions more obscure than enlightening. Aside from active cognitive use, therefore, the simple status of public comprehension of these terms is a matter of some interest.

It is a commonplace in psychology that recognition, recall, and habitual use of cognized objects or concepts are rather different. We are capable of recognizing many more objects (or concepts) if they are directly presented to us than we could readily recall on the basis of more indirect cues; and we are capable of recalling on the basis of such hints many more objects (or concepts) than might be active or salient for us in a given context without special prompting. In coding the levels of conceptualization from free-answer material, our interest had been entirely focused upon concepts with the last status (activation or salience). It had been our assumption that such activation would be apparent in the responses of any person with a belief system in which these organizing dimensions had high centrality. Nevertheless, we could be sure at the same time that if we presented the terms "liberal" and "conservative" directly to our respondents, a much larger number would recognize them and be able to attribute to them some kind of meaning. We are interested both in the proportions of a normal sample who would show some recognition and also in the meaning that might be supplied for the terms.

In a 1960 reinterview of the original sample whose 1956 responses had been assigned to our levels of conceptualization, we therefore asked in the context of the differences in "what the parties stand for," "Would you say that either one of the parties is more conservative or more liberal than the other?" (It was the first time we had ever introduced these terms in our interviewing of this sample.) If the answer was affirmative, we asked which party seemed the more conservative and then, "What do you have in mind when you say that the Republicans (Democrats) are more conservative than the Democrats (Republicans)?" When the respondent said that he did not see differences of this kind between the two parties, we were anxious to distinguish between those who were actually cynical about meaningful party

differences and those who took this route to avoid admitting that they did not know what the terms signified. We therefore went on to ask this group, "Do you think that people generally consider the Democrats or the Republicans more conservative, or wouldn't you want to guess about that?" At this point, we were willing to assume that if a person had no idea of the rather standard assumptions, he probably had no idea of what the terms meant; and indeed, those who did try to guess which party other people thought more conservative made a very poor showing when we went on to ask them (paralleling our "meaning" question for the first group), "What do people have in mind when they say that the Republicans (Democrats) are more conservative than the Democrats (Republicans)?" In responding to the "meaning" questions, both groups were urged to answer as fully and clearly as possible, and their comments were transcribed.

The responses were classified in a code inspired by the original work on levels of conceptualization, although it was considerably more detailed. Within this code, top priority was given to explanations that called upon broad philosophical differences. These explanations included mentions of such things as *posture toward change* (acceptance of or resistance to new ideas, speed or caution in responding to new problems, protection of or challenge to the *status quo*, aggressive posture towards problems vs. a *laissez-faire* approach, orientation toward the future or lack of it, and so forth); *posture toward the welfare state*, *socialism*, *free enterprise*, or *capitalism* (including mention of differential sensitivity to social problems, approaches to social-welfare programs, governmental interference with private enterprise, and so forth); *posture toward the expanding power of federal government* (issues of centralization, states' rights, local autonomy, and paternalism); and *relationship of the government to the individual* (questions of individual dignity, initiative, needs, rights, and so forth). While any mention of comparably broad philosophical differences associated with the liberal-conservative distinction was categorized in this top level, these four were the most frequent types of reference, as they had been for the full "ideologues" in the earlier open-ended materials.

Then, in turn, references to differences in attitude toward various interest groupings in the population; toward spending or saving and fiscal policy more generally, as well as to economic prosperity; toward various highly specific issues like unemployment compensation, highway-building, and tariffs; and toward postures in the sphere of foreign policy were arrayed in a descending order of priority, much as they had been for the classification into levels of conceptualization. Since respondents had been given the opportunity to mention as many conservative-liberal distinctions as they wished, coding priority was given to the more "elevated" responses, and all the data that we shall subsequently cite rests on the "best answer" given by each respondent.¹⁸

The simple distributional results were as follows. Roughly three respondents in eight (37%) could supply no meaning for the liberal-conservative distinction, including 8% who attempted to say which party was the more conservative but who gave up on the part of the sequence dealing with meaning. (The weakest 29% will, in later tables, form our bottom stratum "V," while the 8% compose stratum "IV.") Between those who could supply no

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meaning for the terms and those who clearly did, there was naturally an intermediate group that answered all the questions but showed varying degrees of uncertainty or confusion. The situation required that one of two polar labels (conservative or liberal) be properly associated with one of two polar clusters of connotations and with one of two parties. Once the respondent had decided to explain what "more conservative" or "more liberal" signified, there were four possible patterns by which the other two dichotomies might be associated with the first. Of course, all four were represented in at least some interviews. For example, a respondent might indicate that the Democrats were the more conservative because they stood up for the working man against big business. In such a case, there seemed to be a simple error consisting in reversal of the ideological labels. Or a respondent might say that the Republicans were more liberal because they were pushing new and progressive social legislation. Here the match between label and meaning seems proper, but the party perception is, by normal standards, erroneous.

The distribution of these error types within the portion of the sample that attempted to give "meaning" answers (slightly more than 60%) is shown in Table II. The 83% entered for the "proper" patterns is artificially increased to

TABLE II — Association of Ideological Label with Party and Meaning

Ideological label	Meaning	Party	Proportion of those giving same answer
Conservative Liberal	Conservative Liberal	Republican Democrat	83%
Conservative Liberal	Liberal	Republican Democrat	
Conservative Liberal	Conservative Liberal	Democrat* Republican	5
Conservative Liberal	Liberal	Democrat* Republican	6
Conservative Liberal	Liberal	Democrat Republican	6
			100%

a. While this pattern may appear entirely legitimate for the southern respondent reacting to the southern wing of the Democratic Party rather than to the national party, it showed almost no tendency to occur with greater frequency in the South than elsewhere (and errors as well as lacunae occurred more frequently in general in the less well educated South). Data from a very different context indicate that southerners who discriminate between the southern wing and the national Democratic Party take the national party as the assumed object in our interviews, if the precise object is not specified.

an unknown degree by the inclusion of all respondents whose connotations for liberalism-conservatism were sufficiently impoverished so that little judgment could be made about whether or not they were making proper associations (for example, those respondents whose best explanations of the distinction involved orientations toward defense spending). The error types thus represent only those that could be unequivocally considered "errors." While Table II does not in itself constitute proof that the error types resulted from pure guesswork, the configuration does resemble the probable results if 20-25% of the respondents had been making random guesses about

how the two labels, the two polar meanings, and the two parties should be sorted out. People making these confused responses might or might not *feel* confused in making their assessments. Even if they knew that they were confused, it is unlikely that they would be less confused in encountering such terms in reading or listening to political communications, which is the important point where transmission of information is concerned. If, on the other hand, they were wrong without realizing it, then they would be capable of hearing that Senator Goldwater, for example, was an extreme conservative and believing that it meant that he was for increased federal spending (or whatever other more specific meaning they might bring to the term). In either case, it seems reasonable to distinguish between the people who belong in this confused group at the border of understanding and those who demonstrate greater clarity about the terms. And after the confused group is set aside (stratum III in Tables III-VI), we are left with a proportion of the sample that is slightly more than 50%. This figure can be taken as a maximum estimate of reasonable recognition.

We say "maximum" because, once within this "sophisticated" half of the electorate, it is reasonable to consider the quality of the meanings put forth to explain the liberal-conservative distinction. These meanings varied greatly in adequacy, from those "best answers" that did indeed qualify for coding under the "broad philosophy" heading (the most accurate responses, as defined above) to those that explained the distinction in narrow or nearly irrelevant terms (like Prohibition or foreign-policy measures). In all, 17% of the total sample gave "best answers" that we considered to qualify as "broad philosophy."¹⁰ This group was defined as stratum I, and the remainder, who gave narrower definitions, became stratum II.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the liberal-conservative definitions supplied was the extreme frequency of those hinging on a simple "spend-save" dimension *vis-à-vis* government finances. Very close to a majority of all "best" responses (and two-thirds to three-quarters of all such responses in stratum II) indicated in essence that the Democratic Party was liberal because it spent public money freely and that the Republican Party was more conservative because it stood for economy in government or pinched pennies. In our earlier coding of the levels of conceptualization, we had already noted that this simple dimension seemed often to be what was at stake when "ideological" terms were used. Frequently there was reason to believe that the term "conservative" drew its primary meaning from the cognate "conservation." In one rather clear example, a respondent indicated that he considered the Republicans to be more conservative in the sense that they were "... more saving with money and our *natural resources*. Less apt to slap on a tax for some non-essential. More conservative in promises that can't be kept." (Italics ours.)

Of course, the question of the proportion of national wealth that is to be spent privately or channeled through government for public spending has been one of the key disputes between conservatives and liberal "ideologies" for several decades. From this point of view, the great multitude of "spend-save" references can be considered essentially as accurate matching of terms. On the other hand, it goes without saying that the conservative-liberal dialogue does not exhaust itself on this narrow question alone, and our view of these

responses as an understanding of the differences depends in no small measure on whether the individual sees this point as a self-contained distinction or understands the link between it and a number of other broad questions. On rare occasions, one encounters a respondent for whom the "spend-save" dimension is intimately bound up with other problem areas. For example, one respondent feels that the Republicans are more conservative because "... they are too interested in getting the budget balanced—they should spend more to get more jobs for our people." More frequently when further links are suggested, they are connected with policy but go no further:

[Republicans more conservative because] "Well, they don't spend as much money." [What do you have in mind?] "Well, a lot of them holler when they try to establish a higher interest rate but that's to get back a little when they do loan out and make it so people are not so free with it."

Generally, however, the belief system involved when "liberal-conservative" is equated with "spend-save" seems to be an entirely narrow one. There follow a number of examples of comments, which taken with the preceding citations, form a random drawing from the large group of "spend-save" comments:

[Democrats more conservative because] "they will do more for the people at home before they go out to help foreign countries. They are truthful and not liars."

[Republicans more liberal judging] "by the money they have spent in this last administration. They spent more than ever before in a peace time. And got less for it as far as I can see."

[Republicans more conservative because] "Well, they vote against the wild spending spree the Democrats get on."

[Republicans more conservative because] "they pay as you go."

[Democrats more conservative because] "I don't believe the Democrats will spend as much money as the Republicans."

[Republicans more conservative because] "it seems as if the Republicans try to hold down the spending of government money." [Do you remember how?] "Yes," [by having] "no wars."

From this representation of the "spend-save" references, the reader may see quite clearly why we consider them to be rather "narrow" readings of the liberal-conservative distinction as applied to the current partisan scene. In short, our portrait of the population, where recognition of a key ideological dimension is concerned, suggests that about 17% of the public (stratum I) have an understanding of the distinction that captures much of its breadth. About 37% (strata IV and V) are entirely vague as to its meaning. For the 46% between, there are two strata, one of which demonstrates considerable uncertainty and guesswork in assigning meaning to the terms (stratum III) and the other of which has the terms rather well under control but appears to have a fairly limited set of connotations for them (stratum II). The great majority of the latter groups equate liberalism-conservatism rather directly with a "spend-save" dimension. In such cases, when the sensed connotations are limited, it is not surprising that there is little active use of the continuum as an organizing dimension. Why should one bother to say that a party is conservative if one can convey the same information by saying that it is against spending?

Since the 1960 materials on liberal-conservative meanings were drawn from the same sample as the coding of the active use of such frames of reference in 1956, it is possible to consider how well the two codings match. For a variety of reasons, we would not expect a perfect fit, even aside from coding error. The earlier coding had not been limited to the liberal-conservative dimension, and, although empirical instances were rare, a person could qualify as an "ideologue" if he assessed politics with the aid of some other highly abstract organizing dimension. Similarly, among those who did employ the liberal-conservative distinction, there were no requirements that the terms be defined. It was necessary therefore to depend upon appearances, and the classification was intentionally lenient. Furthermore, since a larger portion of the population would show recognition than showed active use, we could expect substantial numbers of people in the lower levels of conceptualization to show reasonable recognition of the terms. At any rate, we assumed that the two measures would show a high correlation, as they in fact did (Table III).

Of course, very strong differences in education underlie the data shown in Table III. The 2% of the sample that occupy the upper left-hand cell have a mean education close to seven years greater than that of the 11% that occupy the lower right-hand cell. Sixty-two per cent of this lower cell have had less formal education than the least educated person in the upper corner. The differences in education show a fairly regular progression across the intervening surface of the table (see Table IV). Although women have a higher mean education than men, there is some sex bias to the table, for women

TABLE III — Levels of Conceptualization (1956) by Recognition and Understanding of Terms "Conservatism" and "Liberalism" (1960)

	LEVELS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION				
	Stratum	Ideologue	Near ideologue	Group interest	Nature of the times content
Recognition and understanding ^a	I	51%	29%	13%	16%
	II	43	46	42	40
	III	2	10	14	7
	IV	2	5	6	7
	V	2	10	25	30
Number of cases		100% (45)	100% (122)	100% (580)	100% (288)
					(290)

a. The definitions of the strata are: I. recognition and proper matching of label, meaning, and party and a broad understanding of the terms "conservative" and "liberal"; II. recognition and proper matching but a narrow definition of terms (like "spend-save"); III. recognition but some error in matching; IV. recognition and an attempt at matching but inability to give any meaning for terms; V. no apparent recognition of terms (does not know if parties differ in liberal-conservative terms and does not know if anybody else sees them as differing).

are disproportionately represented in the lower right-hand quadrant of the table. Furthermore, although age is negatively correlated with education, there is also rather clear evidence that the sort of political sophistication represented by the measures can accumulate with age. Undoubtedly even

sporadic observation of politics over long enough periods of time serves to nurture some broader view of basic liberal-conservative differences, although

TABLE IV — Levels of Conceptualization (1956) and Term Recognition (1960) by Mean Years of Formal Education

	LEVELS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION				
	Stratum	Ideologue	Near ideologue	Group interest	Nature of the times content
Recognition and understanding ^a	I	14.9 ^a	14.2	12.3	11.1
	II	13.9	11.9	10.7	10.7
	III	*	11.1	10.6	9.8
	IV	*	*	10.4	9.9
	V	*	10.0	9.5	8.5

* Inadequate number of cases.

a. The cell entry is mean number of years of formal education. Partial college was arbitrarily assumed to represent an average of 14 years, and work toward an advanced degree an average of 18 years.

b. See Table III for definitions of the five strata.

of course the same sophistication is achieved much more rapidly and in a more striking way by those who progress greater distances through the educational system.

It is not surprising that political sophistication goes hand in hand with political activism at the "grass roots" (Table V). The relationship is certainly

TABLE V — Amount of 1956-1960 Political Activity by Level of Conceptualization (1956) and Term Recognition (1960)

	LEVEL OF CONCEPTUALIZATION				
	Stratum	Ideologue	Near ideologue	Group interest	Nature of the times content
Recognition and understanding ^a	I	3.8 ^a	2.6	2.5	2.6
	II	3.4	3.0	1.7	1.8
	III	*	2.5	2.2	1.5
	IV	*	*	1.9	1.5
	V	*	1.7	1.0	.8

* Inadequate number of cases.

a. The cell entry represents a mean of the number of acts of political participation exclusive of voting reported for the two presidential campaigns of 1956 and 1960. For 1956, a point was awarded to each respondent for party membership, campaign contributions, attendance at political rallies, other party work, attempts to convince others through informal communication, and displaying campaign buttons or stickers. In 1960, essentially the same scoring applied, except that on two items more differentiated information was available. A point was awarded for attending one or two political rallies, two points for three to six rallies, and three points for seven or more. Similarly, a second point was awarded for people who reported having attempted in 1960 to convince others in more than one class (friends, family, or coworkers). A total score of 15 was possible, although empirically the highest score was 14. Only about 1% of the sample had scores greater than 9.

b. See Table III for definitions of the five strata.

not perfect: About 20% of those in the most sophisticated cell engaged in none of the forms of participation beyond voting that were surveyed (see note a, Table V) in either the 1956 or 1960 election campaigns, and there is more "stray" participation than has sometimes been suspected among those who express little interest in politics or comprehension of party differences yet who may, for example, happen on a political rally. Furthermore, even the active hard core is not necessarily sophisticated in this sense: Two of the thirteen most active people fall in the lower right half of the table, and their activism is probably to be understood more in terms of mundane social gratifications than through any concern over the policy competition of politics.

Nonetheless, persistent and varied participation is most heavily concentrated among the most sophisticated people. This fact is important, for much of what is perceived as "public reaction" to political events depends upon public visibility, and visibility depends largely upon forms of political participation beyond the vote itself. Anyone familiar with practical politics has encountered the concern of the local politician that ideas communicated in political campaigns be kept simple and concrete. He knows his audience and is constantly fighting the battle against the overestimation of sophistication to which the purveyor of political ideas inevitably falls prey. Yet, even the grass-roots audience that forms a reference point for the local politician is, we suspect, a highly self-selected one and quite sophisticated relative to the electorate as a whole.

Since we have 1960 information on the number of political rallies attended by each of our respondents, we may simulate the "sophistication composition" of the typical political gathering. "Typical" is loosely used here, for real gatherings are various in character: A dinner for the party faithful at \$15 a plate obviously attracts a different audience from the one that comes to the parade and street rally. Nonetheless, the contrast between the electorate and an hypothetical average rally is instructive (Table VI). People located in the three upper left-hand corner cells of the matrix (6% of the electorate) form more than 15% of the composition of such rallies, and probably, in terms of further rally participation (vocal and otherwise), seem to form a still higher proportion. Yet on election day their vote (even with a

TABLE VI—The Sophistication Composition of a "Typical" Political Rally, Compared to the Composition of the Total Electorate^a

A RALLY					THE ELECTORATE				
High	5%	5%	11%	11%	Low	2%	3%	6%	3%
High	5%	6	8	11	11	4	1	4	18
		0	5	9	0	*	*	1	6
		*	0	1	*	*	*	*	3
Low	*	2	7	1	1	0	1	11	7
									2
									5
									2
									3
									11

* Less than half of 1%.

a. Both five-by-five matrices are those employed in Tables III, IV, and V. Aside from rounding error, the proportions entered in each matrix total 100%. The table should be read by observing differences between proportions in the same regions of the two tables. For example, the three least sophisticated cells in the lower right-hand corner constitute 21% of the electorate and 1% of a typical rally audience.

100% turnout) is numerically outweighed by those votes mustered by people in the single cell at the opposite corner of the table who do not attend at all.

One of the most intriguing findings on the surface of the matrix is that strength of party loyalty falls to one of its weakest points in the upper left-hand corner cell of the matrix. In other words, among the most highly sophisticated, those who consider themselves "independents" outnumber those who consider themselves "strong" partisans, despite the fact that the most vigorous political activity, much of it partisan, is carried on by people falling in this cell. If one moves diagonally toward the center of the matrix, this balance is immediately redressed and redressed very sharply, with strong partisans far outnumbering independents. In general, there is a slight tendency (the most sophisticated cell excepted) for strength of party loyalty to decline as one moves diagonally across the table, and the most "independent" cell is that in the lower right-hand corner.²⁰

This irregularity has two implications. First, we take it to be one small and special case of our earlier hypothesis that group-objects (here, the party as group) are likely to have less centrality in the belief system of the most sophisticated and that the centrality of groups as referents increases "lower down" in the sophistication ordering. We shall see more handsome evidence of the same phenomenon later. Second, we see in this reversal at least a partial explanation for the persistence of the old assumption that the "independent voter" is relatively informed and involved. The early cross-section studies by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues turned up evidence to reverse this equation, suggesting that the "independent voter" tends instead to be relatively uninformed and uninvolved. Other studies have added massively to this evidence. Indeed, in many situations, the evidence seems so strong that it is hard to imagine how any opposing perceptions could have developed. The perception is somewhat easier to understand, however, if one can assume that the discernment of the informed observer takes in only 5, 10, or 15% of the most sophisticated people in the public as constituting "the public." This "visible" or "operative" public is largely made up of people from the upper left-hand corner of our preceding tables. The illusion that such people are the full public is one that the democratic sample survey, for better or for worse, has destroyed.

V. Constraints among Idea-Elements

In our estimation, the use of such basic dimensions of judgment as the liberal-conservative continuum betokens a contextual grasp of politics that permits a wide range of more specific idea-elements to be organized into more tightly constrained wholes. We feel, furthermore, that there are many crucial consequences of such organization: With it, for example, new political events have more meaning, retention of political information from the past is far more adequate, and political behavior increasingly approximates that of sophisticated "rational" models, which assume relatively full information.

It is often argued, however, that abstract dimensions like the liberal-conservative continuum are superficial if not meaningless indicators: All that they show is that poorly educated people are inarticulate and have diffi-

culty expressing verbally the more abstract lines along which their specific political beliefs are organized. To expect these people to be able to express what they know and feel, the critic goes on, is comparable to the fallacy of assuming that people can say in an accurate way why they behave as they do. When it comes down to specific attitudes and behaviors, the organization is there nonetheless, and it is this organization that matters, not the capacity for discourse in sophisticated language.

If it were true that such organization does exist for most people, apart from their capacities to be articulate about it, we would agree out of hand that the question of articulation is quite trivial. As a cold empirical matter, however, this claim does not seem to be valid. Indeed, it is for this reason that we have cast the argument in terms of constraint, for constraint and organization are very nearly the same thing. Therefore when we hypothesize that constraint among political idea-elements begins to lose its range very rapidly once we move from the most sophisticated few toward the "grass roots," we

TABLE VII — Constraint between Specific Issue Beliefs for an Elite Sample and a Cross-Section Sample, 1958^a

Congressional candidates	DOMESTIC				FOREIGN			
	Employment	Education	Housing	F.E.P.C.	Economic	Military	Isolationism	Party preference
Employment	—	.62	.59	.35	.26	.06	.17	.68
Aid to education		—	.61	.53	.50	.06	.35	.55
Federal housing			—	.47	.41	-.03	.30	.68
F.E.P.C.				—	.47	.11	.23	.34
Economic aid					—	.19	.59	.25
Military aid						—	.32	.18
Isolationism							—	.05
Party preference								—
<i>Cross-Section Sample</i>								
Employment	—	.45	.08	.34	-.04	.10	-.22	.20
Aid to education		—	.12	.29	.06	.14	-.17	.16
Federal housing			—	.08	-.06	.02	.07	.18
F.E.P.C.				—	.24	.13	.02	-.04
Economic aid					—	.16	.33	-.07
Soldiers abroad ^b						—	.21	.12
Isolationism							—	-.03
Party preference								—

a. Entries are tau-gamma coefficients, a statistic proposed by Leo A. Goodman and William H. Kruskal in "Measures of Association for Cross Classifications," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 49 (Dec., 1954), No. 268, 749. The coefficient was chosen because of its sensitivity to constraint of the scalar as well as the correlational type.

b. For this category, the cross-section sample was asked a question about keeping American soldiers abroad, rather than about military aid in general.

are contending that the organization of more specific attitudes into wide-ranging belief systems is absent as well.

Table VII gives us an opportunity to see the differences in levels of constraint among beliefs on a range of specific issues in an elite population and in a mass population. The elite population happens to be candidates for the United States Congress in the off-year elections of 1958, and the cross-section sample represents the national electorate in the same year. The assortment of issues represented is simply a purposive sampling of some of the more salient political controversies at the time of the study, covering both domestic and foreign policy. The questions posed to the two samples were quite comparable, apart from adjustments necessary in view of the backgrounds of the two populations involved.²¹

For our purposes, however, the specific elite sampled and the specific beliefs tested are rather beside the point. We would expect the same general contrast to appear if the elite had been a set of newspaper editors, political writers, or any other group that takes an interest in politics. Similarly, we would expect the same results from any other broad sampling of political issues or, for that matter, any sampling of beliefs from other domains: A set of questions on matters of religious controversy should show the same pattern between an elite population like the clergy and the church members who form their mass "public." What is generically important in comparing the two types of population is the difference in levels of constraint among belief-elements.

Where constraint is concerned, the absolute value of the coefficients in Table VII (rather than their algebraic value) is the significant datum. The first thing the table conveys is the fact that, for both populations, there is some falling off of constraint *between* the domains of domestic and foreign policy, relative to the high level of constraint *within* each domain. This result is to be expected: Such lowered values signify boundaries between belief systems that are relatively independent. If we take averages of appropriate sets of coefficients entered in Table VII however, we see that the strongest constraint *within* a domain for the mass public is less than that *between* domestic and foreign domains for the elite sample. Furthermore, for the public, in sharp contrast to the elite, party preference seems by and large to be set off in a belief system of its own, relatively unconnected to issue positions (Table VIII).²²

TABLE VIII — Summary of Differences in Level of Constraint within and between Domains, Public and Elite (based on Table VII)

	Average Coefficients			
	Within domestic issues	Between domestic and foreign issues	Within foreign issues	Between issues and party
Elite	.53	.25	.37	.39
Mass	.23	.11	.23	.11

It should be remembered throughout, of course, that the mass sample of Tables VII and VIII does not exclude college-educated people, ideologues,

or the politically sophisticated. These people, with their higher levels of constraint, are represented in appropriate numbers, and certainly contribute to such vestige of organization as the mass matrix evinces. But they are grossly outnumbered, as they are in the active electorate. The general point is that the matrix of correlations for the elite sample is of the sort that would be appropriate for factor analysis, the statistical technique designed to reduce a number of correlated variables to a more limited set of organizing dimensions. The matrix representing the mass public, however, despite its realistic complement of ideologies, is exactly the type that textbooks advise against using for factor analysis on the simple grounds that through inspection it is clear that there is virtually nothing in the way of organization to be discovered. Of course, it is the type of broad organizing dimension to be suggested by factor analysis of specific items that is usually presumed when observers discuss "ideological postures" of one sort or another.

Although the beliefs registered in Table VII are related to topics of controversy or political cleavage, McClosky has described comparable differences in levels of constraint among beliefs for an elite sample (delegates to national party conventions) and a cross-section sample when the items deal with propositions about democracy and freedom—topics on which fundamental consensus among Americans is presumed.²³ Similarly, Prothro and Grigg, among others, have shown that, while there is widespread support for statements of culturally familiar principles of freedom, democracy, and tolerance in a cross-section sample, this support becomes rapidly obscured when questions turn to specific cases that elites would see as the most direct applications of these principles.²⁴ In our estimation, such findings are less a demonstration of cynical lip service than of the fact that, while both of two inconsistent opinions are honestly held, the individual lacks the contextual grasp to understand that the specific case and the general principle belong in the same belief system: In the absence of such understanding, he maintains psychologically independent beliefs about both. This is another important instance of the decline in constraint among beliefs with declining information.

While an assessment of relative constraint between the matrices rests only on comparisons of absolute values, the comparative algebraic values have some interest as well. This interest arises from the sophisticated observer's almost automatic assumption that whatever beliefs "go together" in the visible political world (as judged from the attitudes of elites and the more articulate spectators) must naturally go together in the same way among mass public. Table VII makes clear that this assumption is a very dangerous one, aside from the question of degree of constraint. For example, the politician who favors federal aid to education could be predicted to be more, rather than less, favorable to an internationalist posture in foreign affairs, for these two positions in the 1950s were generally associated with "liberalism" in American politics. As we see from Table VII, we would be accurate in this judgment considerably more often than chance alone would permit. On the other hand, were we to apply the same assumption of constraint to the American public in the same era, not only would we have been wrong, but we would actually have come closer to reality by assuming no connection at all.

All the correlations in the elite sample except those that do not depart

significantly from zero exhibit signs that anybody following politics in the newspapers during this period could have predicted without hesitation. That is, one need only have known that Democrats tended to favor expansion of government welfare activities and tended to be internationalists in foreign affairs, to have anticipated all the signs except one. This exception, the -18 that links advocacy of military aid abroad with the Republican Party, would hold no surprises either, for the one kind of international involvement that Republicans came to accept in this period limited foreign aid to the military variety, a view that stood in opposition to "soft" liberal interests in international economic welfare. If these algebraic signs in the elite matrix are taken as the culturally defined "proper" signs—the sophisticated observer's assumption of what beliefs go with what other beliefs—then the algebraic differences between comparable entries in the two matrices provide an estimate of how inaccurate we would be in generalizing our elite-based assumptions about "natural" belief combinations to the mass public as a whole. A scanning of the two matrices with these differences in mind enhances our sense of high discrepancy between the two populations.

To recapitulate, then, we have argued that the unfamiliarity of broader and more abstract ideological frames of reference among the less sophisticated is more than a problem in mere articulation. Parallel to ignorance and confusion over these ideological dimensions among the less informed is a general decline in constraint among specific belief elements that such dimensions help to organize. It cannot therefore be claimed that the mass public shares ideological patterns of belief with relevant elites at a specific level any more than it shares the abstract conceptual frames of reference.

Constraints and Overt Behavior

There is still another counter-hypothesis that deserves examination. This view would grant that the political belief systems of the less well educated may be more fragmented and chaotic. It would maintain at the same time, however, that this fact is inconsequential in the determination of behavior. The presence, absence, or incoherence of these "intervening" psychological states is thus epiphenomenal: Social structure commits behavior to certain channels quite independent of specific cognitions and perceptions of the actors themselves.²⁵ In other versions, researchable intervening mechanisms are suggested. The "opinion leader" model is one of them. If it is true that the mass of less knowledgeable people rely upon informal communication from a few more informed people for cues about desirable or appropriate behavior, then the lines of behavior choices followed in politics might indeed show strong sociostructural patterns, even though many uninformed actors have little of the opinion leaders' coherent and organized understanding of why one behavior is more appropriate than another. What these points of view have in common is the insistence that strong constraints can be expected to operate between sociostructural terms and conscious behavior choices quite apart from the presence or absence of appropriate intervening psychological "definitions of the situation."

Figure 1 is addressed to such arguments. The graphs indicate the varying degrees of association between objective class position and partisan preference in the 1956 presidential election, as a function of differences in the

nature of political belief systems captured by our "levels of conceptualization." If objective locations in the social structure served to produce behavioral consequences regardless of the presence or absence of relevant

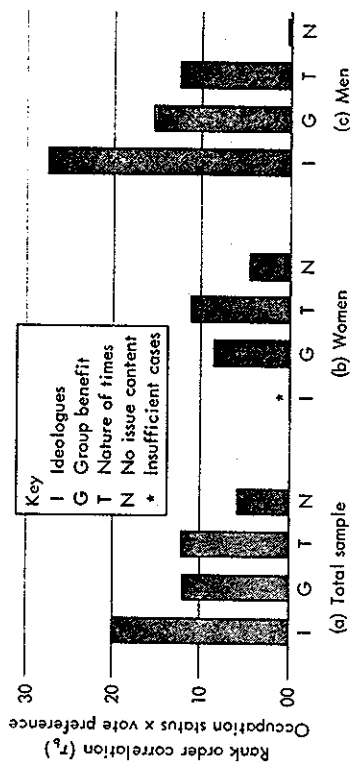


Figure 1. The Correlation of Occupation and Vote Preference within Levels of Conceptualization.

intervening organizations of conscious beliefs, then we would not expect any particular slope to the progression of bars within each graph. As Figure 1(a) shows for a sample of the adult electorate as a whole, however, the differences in intervening belief organization produce very marked and orderly differences in the degree to which partisanship reflects sociostructural position. Of course, from one point of view, this observation seems only common sense, yet the doctrinaire position that the intervening psychological terms are unimportant or epiphenomenal continues to be argued with more vehemence than empirical evidence.

Since it can be seen that a perfectly functioning opinion-leader model would also produce something approaching a rectangular distribution of bars in Figure 1, the slope depicted in Figure 1(a) can also be taken as a commentary on the practical imperfections with which opinion leader processes operate in this domain. That is, the "ideologues" and "near-ideologues" represented by the first bar of each graph are opinion leaders *par excellence*. While they tend to be disproportionately well educated, they nevertheless include representatives from all broad social *milieus*. Empirically they differ sharply from the less sophisticated in their attention to new political events and in the size of their store of information about past events. They get news firsthand and, presumably, form opinions directly from it. By their own report, they are much more likely than the less sophisticated to attempt to persuade others to their own political opinions in informal communications. Finally, much social data leads us to assume that the bulk of these informal communications is addressed to others within their own social *milieu*. Since social-class questions are important for these opinion leaders and since their own partisan preferences are rather clearly geared to their own class, we would suppose that "opinion leading" should serve to diffuse this connection between status and behavior through less knowledgeable mem-

bers of their *milieu*, whether or not the more complicated rationales were diffused. In other words, most of what goes on in the heads of the less informed of our respondents would indeed be irrelevant for study if the respondents could at least be counted upon to follow the lead of more informed people of their own *milieu* in their ultimate partisanship. And to the extent that they can be counted on to behave in this way, we should expect Figure 1 to show a rectangular distribution of bars. The departure from such a pattern is very substantial.

Now there is one type of relationship in which there is overwhelming evidence for vigorous opinion-leading where politics is concerned in our society. It is the relationship within the family: The wife is very likely to follow her husband's opinions, however imperfectly she may have absorbed their justifications at a more complex level. We can do a fair job of splitting this relationship into its leader-follower components simply by subdividing our total sample by sex. As Figure 1(b) suggests, our expectation that the presence or absence of intervening belief systems is of reduced importance among sets of people who are predominantly opinion followers is well borne out by the relatively flat and disordered progression of bars among women. Correspondingly, of course, the same slope among men becomes steeper still in Figure 1(c).²⁶

The fact that wives tend to double their husbands' votes is, from a broader "system" point of view, a relatively trivial one. If we are willing to consider the family as the basic voting unit, then Figure 1(c) suggests that diffusion of the sociostructurally "proper" behavior without diffusion of understanding of that behavior through simple opinion-leading processes is a very feeble mechanism indeed across the society as a whole, at least where political decisions of this sort are concerned.²⁷ The organization of partisanship among those who give no evidence of intervening issue content shows no trace whatever of those residual effects that should be left by any systematic opinion-following (and that are visible among comparable women). Thus, while we are in no way questioning the existence of some opinion-leading, it seems doubtful that it represents the dominant, effective phenomenon sometimes supposed, a phenomenon that succeeds in lending shape to mass politics despite the absence of more detailed individual comprehension of the political context.²⁸

Much more broadly, we have become convinced that this class of finding—the declining degree of constraint between a term representing social structure and one representing an important political choice as one moves from the more to the less politically sophisticated in the society—is a powerful and general one. It is powerful (for readers not accustomed to the statistics employed) in the simple sense that the variation in constraint as a function of sophistication or involvement is extremely large: There are no other discriminating variables that begin to separate populations so cleanly and sharply as these measures. It is a general finding in at least two senses. First, it replicates itself handsomely across time: In every instance within the span of time for which appropriate data are available, the finding is present where class and partisanship are concerned. Secondly, it has some incipient claim to generality where sociostructural terms other than "social class" are concerned: The same sharp finding emerges, for example, when

PHILIP E. CONVERSE
the relationship between religion and partisanship (Protestant vs. Catholic) is examined.

And, of course, if class or religious membership is considered to constitute one set of idea-elements and the predispositions that lead to particular partisan preferences and final choice to form another, then the whole phenomenon takes its place as another large class of special cases of the decline of constraints and the narrowing of belief systems to which this paper is devoted.

VI. *Social Groupings as Central Objects in Belief Systems*

While for any unbiased sampling of controversial belief items we would predict that the relevant elite would show a higher level of internal constraint among elements than those shown by their publics, we would predict at the same time that it would be possible to bias a choice of issues in such a way that the level of constraint in the public could surpass that among the elites. This possibility exists because of the role that visible social groupings come to play as objects of high centrality in the belief systems of the less well informed.²⁹

Such a reversal of the constraint prediction could be attained by choosing items that made it clear that a particular grouping, within the population and visible to most respondents, would be helped or hurt by the alternative in question. Consider, by way of illustration, the following set of items:

Negroes should be kept out of professional athletics.

The government should see to it that Negroes get fair treatment in jobs and housing. The government should cut down on its payments (subsidies) on peanuts and cotton, which are raised mainly by Negroes in the South.

The government should give federal aid only to schools that permit Negroes to attend. Even though it may hurt the position of the Negro in the South, state governments should be able to decide who can vote and who cannot.

If this country has to send money abroad, the government should send it to places like Africa that need it, and not to countries like Britain and France.

The strategy here is obvious. The questions are selected so that the same group is involved in each. In every case but one, this involvement is explicit. Some American adults would not know that Africa's population is largely Negro, for these people, the level of constraint between this item and the others would be relatively low. But the majority would know this fact, and the total set of items would show a substantial level of constraint, probably higher than the general level shown by the "mass" items in Table VII. Furthermore, the items are chosen to cut across some of those more abstract dimensions of dispute (states' rights, the strategy of economic development abroad, the role of the federal government in public education, and so forth) customary for elites, which means that constraint would be somewhat lowered for them.

The difference between the mass and elite responses would spring from differences in the nature of the objects taken to be central in the beliefs represented. For the bulk of the mass public, the object with highest centrality is the visible, familiar population grouping (Negroes), rather than questions of abstract relations among parts of government and the like. Since these latter questions take on meaning only with a good deal of political information

and understanding, the attitude items given would tend to boil down for many respondents to the same single question: "Are you sympathetic to Negroes as a group, are you indifferent to them, or do you dislike them?" The responses would be affected accordingly.

While we have no direct empirical evidence supporting this illustration, there are a few fragmentary findings that point in this direction. For example, following the same format as the issue items included in Table VII, we asked our cross-section sample an attitude question concerning the desirability of action on the part of the federal government in the desegregation of public schools. Since we had also asked the question concerning fair treatment for Negroes in jobs and housing, these two items form a natural pair, both of which involve Negroes. The correlation between the two (in terms comparable to Table VII) is .57, a figure very substantially greater than the highest of the twenty-eight intercorrelations in the "mass" half of Table VII. It seems more than coincidence that the only pair of items involving the fortunes of a visible population grouping should at the same time be a very deviant pair in its high level of mutual constraint.

A parallel question was asked of the elite sample of Table VII, although the comparability was not so great as for those items presented in the table. This question was, "If Congress were to vote to give federal aid to public schools, do you think this should be given to schools which are segregated?" While the question was worded in such a manner as to avoid responses based on attitudes toward federal aid to education, a number of elite respondents insisted on answering in the negative, not because they were necessarily against desegregation, but rather because they were against any kind of federal aid to education. (The additional element of federal aid to schools was not present at all in the item for the cross-section sample). Setting aside those respondents who gave indications that they were deviating from the intention of the question (7% of the elite sample), the correlation between the desegregation item and the F.E.P.C. item was nevertheless only .31, or very much to the low side of the elite intercorrelations on domestic issues, instead of being uniquely to the high side as it was for the mass sample.

We may summarize this situation in the following manner. Out of twenty-eight "trials" represented by the intercorrelations in Table VII, in only three cases did the mass sample show an intercorrelation between issues that was of the same sign and of greater absolute magnitude than its counterpart for the elite sample. Two of these "reversals" were completely trivial (.02 and .04), and the third was not large (.08). With respect to the only pair of items that explicitly involved the fortunes of a well-known social grouping, however, there not only was a reversal, but the reversal was large: The constraint for the mass sample, by a simple difference of coefficients, is .26 greater. This isolated test certainly provides some striking initial support for our expectations.

Up to this point, we have discussed two broad classes of findings. The first, as exemplified by Table VII and our more recent elaborations on it, suggests that groups as attitude objects (groups *qua* groups) have higher centrality in the belief systems of the mass than of the elite. The second is exemplified by the many findings that the alignment of an individual's social-group membership (like class or religious membership) and his political

behavior is sharpest among the most politically involved and sophisticated third of a mass sample and fades out progressively as involvement and sophistication decline.

In case these propositions do not seem to square perfectly with one another, Figure 2 provides a schematic view of the situation that may clarify the matter for the reader. Of course, the details of the figure (like the precise characters of the functions) are sheer fancy. But the gross contours seem empirically justified. The elite of Table VII would naturally be represented by a line along the top of Figure 2, which would be thin to the vanishing point. The "relative elite" of the mass sample, which defines "the public" as perceived by most impressionistic observers, might sweep in the top 2%, 5%, or 10% of the graph, as one chose. In the upper reaches of the group centrality graph, we have already seen glimmers of the inverse relationship between group centrality and sophistication in such diverse items as the falling-off of party loyalty at the very "top" of the mass sample or the lowered constraint for the Negro items in the elite sample.

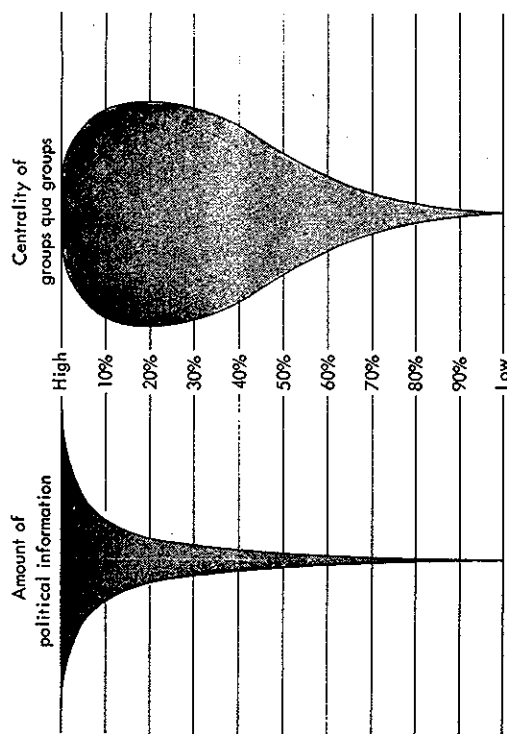


Figure 2. Political Information and the Centrality of Groups as Objects in Belief Systems.

On the other hand, why is it that when we work downward from the more sophisticated third of the population, the centrality of groups begins once again to diminish? We are already committed to the proposition that differences in information are crucial, but let us consider this point more fully. The findings that lead us to posit this decline come from a class of situations in which the actor *himself* must perceive some meaningful link between membership in a particular group and preference for a particular party or policy alternative. These situations are most typically those in which the link is not made explicit by the very nature of the situation (as we made it explicit in our battery of Negro questions above). In these cases, the indi-

vidual must be endowed with some cognitions of the group as an entity and with some interstitial "linking" information indicating why a given party or policy is relevant to the group. Neither of these forms of information can be taken for granted, and our key proposition is that, as the general bulk of political information declines, the probability increases that some key pieces of information relevant to this group-politics equation will not show up.

The first item—the individual's cognition that a group exists—is a very simple one and may not even seem plausible to question. For certain groups at certain times and places, however, the possibility that such a cognition is absent must be recognized. All groups, including those that become important politically, vary in their visibility. Groups delimited by physical characteristics "in the skin" (racial groups) are highly visible, if specimens are present for inspection or if the individual has been informed in some rather vivid way of their existence. Similarly, groups that have buildings, meetings, and officers (church, congregation, and clergy for example) are more visible than groups, like social classes, that do not, although the salience of any "official" group *qua* group may vary widely according to the individual's contact with its formal manifestations.

Some groups—even among those to which an individual can be said to "belong"—are much less visible. Two important examples are the social class and the nation. Where social class is concerned, virtually all members of a population are likely to have absorbed the fact that some people have more means or status than others, and most presumably experience some satisfaction or envy on this score from time to time. Such perceptions may, however, remain at the same level as reactions to the simple fact of life that some people are born handsome and others homely; or, as Marx knew, they may proceed to cognitions of some more "real" and bounded groups. The difference is important.

Much the same kind of observation may be made of the nation as group object. On the basis of our analysis, it might be deduced that nationalist ideologies stand a much better chance of penetrating a mass population than would, for example, the single-tax ideology of the physiocrats and Henry George, for nationalist ideologies hinge upon a simple group object in a way that single-tax notions do not. This kind of deduction is perfectly warranted, particularly if one has in mind those Western nations with systems of primary education devoted to carving the shape of a nation in young minds as a "real" entity. But Znaniecki has observed, for example, that the vast majority of peasants in nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia was "utterly unconscious that they were supposed to belong to a Russian society united by a common culture." Again he reports that a 1934-1935 study in the Pripet marshes showed that nearly half of those inhabitants who were ethnically White Ruthenian had no idea that such a nationality existed and regarded themselves as belonging at most to local communities.³⁰ The nation as a bounded, integral group object is difficult to experience in any direct way, and its psychological existence for the individual depends upon the social transmission of certain kinds of information. What is deceptive here, as elsewhere, is that decades or even centuries after the *litterati* have come to take a nation concept for granted, there may be substantial proportions of the member population who have never heard of such a thing.³¹

fore can never be seen as commenting incisively upon the belief structures of individuals.

It might then be argued that we are mistaken in saying that constraint among comparable "distant" belief elements declines generally as we move from the more to the less politically sophisticated. Instead, the configuration of political beliefs held by individuals simply becomes increasingly idiosyncratic as we move to less sophisticated people. While an equally broad range of belief elements might function as an interdependent whole for an unsophisticated person, we would find little aggregative patterning of belief combinations in populations of unsophisticated people, for they would be out of the stream of cultural information about "what goes with what" and would therefore put belief elements together in a great variety of ways.

For the types of belief that interest us here, this conclusion in itself would be significant. We believe however, that we have evidence that permits us to reject it rather categorically, in favor of our original formulation. A fair test of this counterhypothesis would seem to lie in the measurement of the same belief elements for the same individuals over time. For if we are indeed involved here in idiosyncratic patterns of belief, each meaningful to the individual in his own way, then we could expect that individual responses to the same set of items at different points in time should show some fundamental stability. They do not.

A longitudinal study of the American electorate over a four-year period has permitted us to ask the same questions of the same people a number of times, usually separated by close to two-year intervals. Analysis of the stability of responses to the "basic" policy questions of the type presented in Table VII yields remarkable results. Faced with the typical item of this kind, only about thirteen people out of twenty manage to locate themselves even on the same side of the controversy in successive interrogations, when ten out of twenty could have done so by chance alone.

While we have no comparable longitudinal data for an elite sample, the degree of fit between answers to our issue items and congressional roll-calls is strong enough to suggest that time correlations for individual congressmen in roll-call choice on comparable bills would provide a fair estimate of the stability of an elite population in beliefs of this sort. It is probably no exaggeration to deduce that, in sharp contrast to a mass sample, eighteen out of twenty congressmen would be likely to take the same positions on the same attitude items after a two-year interval. In short, then, we feel very confident that elite-mass differences in levels of constraint among beliefs are mirrored in elite-mass differences in the temporal stability of belief elements for individuals.

We observed much earlier that the centrality of a specific belief in a larger belief system and the relative stability of that belief over time should be highly related. From our other propositions about the role of groups as central objects in the belief systems of the mass public, we can therefore arrive at two further predictions. The first is simply that pure affect toward visible population groupings should be highly stable over time, even in a mass public, much more so in fact than beliefs on policy matters that more or less explicitly bear on the fortunes of these groupings. Second, policy items that do bear more rather than less explicitly upon their fortunes

While cognitions of certain groups are not always present, the much more typical case is one in which the interstitial or contextual information giving the group a clear political relevance is lacking. For example, a substantial proportion of voters in the United States is unable to predict that any particular party preference will emerge in the votes of different class groupings, and this inability is particularly noticeable among the least involved citizens, whose partisan behavior is itself essentially random with respect to social class.³²

One important caveat must be offered on the generalization represented in Figure 2. From a number of points we have made, it should be clear that the figure is intended to represent an actuarial proposition and nothing more. That is, it has merit for most situations, given the typical state of distribution of political information in societies as we find them "in nature." In certain situations, however, the cues presented to citizens concerning links between group and party or policy are so gross that they penetrate rapidly even to the less informed. In such cases, the form representing group centrality in Figure 2 would taper off much less rapidly with declining over-all information in the lower strata of the population.

For example, the linking information that made religion particularly relevant in the 1960 election was extremely simple, of the "what goes with what" variety. It was expressible in five words: "The Democratic candidate is Catholic." Studies have shown that, once Kennedy was nominated, this additional item of information was diffused through almost the entire population with a speed that is rare and that, we suspect, would be impossible for more complex contextual information. The linking information that made social class unusually relevant after World War II was, however, precisely this vague, contextual type.³³ It can be readily demonstrated with our data that the impact of the religious link in 1960 registered to some degree in the behavior of even the least sophisticated Protestants and Catholics, while the incremental impact of social-class cues in the earlier period had not registered at these lower levels.

The precise form of the centrality function in Figure 2 depends heavily therefore upon the character of the linking information at issue in the special case. Furthermore, if we wished to "tamper," it would not be difficult to supply a poorly informed person with a very tiny increment of linking information, too small to change his over-all amount of political information visibly yet large enough to increase considerably the centrality of a specific group in a specific situation. However this may be, Figure 2 is valid in an actuarial sense, for in "natural" populations the probability that any given individual possesses such linking information declines as over-all information becomes less.

VII. The Stability of Belief Elements over Time

All of our data up to this point have used correlations calculated on aggregates as evidence of greater or lesser constraint among elements in belief systems. While we believe these correlations to be informative indicators, they do depend for their form upon cumulations among individuals and there-

should show less stability than affect towards the group *qua* group but more than those items for which contextual information is required.

Figure 3 gives strong confirmation of these hypotheses.³⁴ First, the only question applied longitudinally that touches on pure affect toward a visible population grouping is the one about party loyalties or identifications. As the figure indicates, the stability of these group feelings for individuals over time (measured by the correlation between individual positions in two successive readings) registers in a completely different range from that

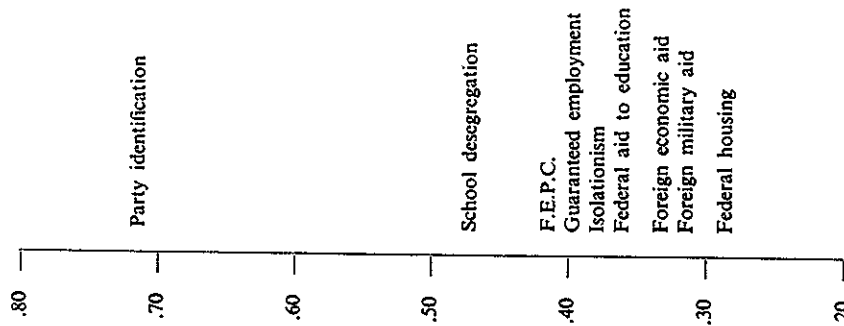


Figure 3. Temporal stability of Different Belief Elements for Individuals, 1958-60^a.

a. The measure of stability is a rank-order correlation (tau-beta) between individuals' positions in 1958 and in 1960 on the same items.

characterizing even the most stable of the issue items employed.³⁵ This contrast is particularly ironic, for in theory of course the party usually has little rationale for its existence save as an instrument to further particular policy

preferences of the sort that show less stability in Figure 3. The policy is the end, and the party is the means, and ends are conceived to be more stable and central in belief systems than means. The reversal for the mass public is of course a rather dramatic special case of one of our primary generalizations: The party and the affect toward it are more central within the political belief systems of the mass public than are the policy ends that the parties are designed to pursue.

Figure 3 also shows that, within the set of issues, the items that stand out as most stable are those that have obvious bearing on the welfare of a population grouping—the Negroes—although the item concerning federal job guarantees is very nearly as stable. In general, we may say that stability declines as the referents of the attitude items become increasingly remote, from jobs, which are significant objects to all, and Negroes, who are attitude objects for most, to items involving ways and means of handling foreign policy.

Although most of the less stable items involve foreign policy, the greatest instability is shown for a domestic issue concerning the relative role of government and private enterprise in areas like those of housing and utilities. Interestingly enough, this issue would probably be chosen by sophisticated judges as the most classically “ideological” item in the set, and indeed Table VII shows that the counterpart for this question in the elite sample is central to the primary organizing dimension visible in the matrix. Since the item refers to visible population groupings—“government” and “private business”—we might ask why it is not geared into more stable affect toward these groups. We do believe that measures of affect toward something like “private business” (or better, perhaps, “big business”) as an object would show reasonable stability for a mass public, although probably less than those for more clearly bounded and visible groups like Negroes and Catholics. The question, however, is not worded in a way that makes clear which party—government or private business—will profit from which arrangement. Lacking such cues, the citizen innocent of “ideology” is likely to make rather capricious constructions, since the issue is probably one that he has never thought about before and will never think about again except when being interviewed.

In short, all these longitudinal data offer eloquent proof that signs of low constraint among belief elements in the mass public are not products of well knit but highly idiosyncratic belief systems, for these beliefs are extremely labile for individuals over time. Great instability in itself is *prima facie* evidence that the belief has extremely low centrality for the believer. Furthermore, it is apparent that any instability characterizing one belief sets an upper limit on the degree of orderly constraint that could be expected to emerge in static measurement between this unstable belief and another, even a perfectly stable one. While an aggregate might thus show high stability despite low constraint, the fact of low stability virtually ensures that constraint must also be low. This kind of relationship between stability and constraint means that an understanding of what underlies high instability is at the same time an understanding of what underlies low constraint.

The fact that we have asked these questions at more than two points in time provides a good deal of leverage in analyzing the processes of change

that generate aggregate instability and helps us to illuminate the character of this instability.³⁶ For example, in Figure 4 we discover, in comparing our indicators of the degree of instability associated with any particular belief as they register between t_2 and t_3 with the same figures for t_1 and t_2 , that estimates are essentially the same. This result is an important one, for it assures us that within a medium time range (four years), differences among issues in degree of response stability are highly reliable.

Far more fascinating, however, is another property that emerges. Quite generally, we can predict t_3 issue positions of individuals fully as well from a knowledge of their t_1 positions alone as we can from a knowledge of their t_2 positions alone. In other words, the turnover correlations between different time points for these issues tend to fit the scheme shown in Figure 4.

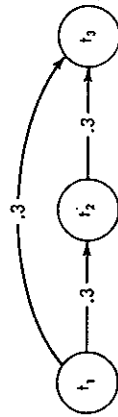


Figure 4. Pattern of Turnover Correlations between Different Time Points.

It can be shown that there is no single meaningful process of change shared by all respondents that would generate this configuration of data.³⁷ In fact, even if we assume that there is a relatively limited number of change processes present in the population, we find that only two such models could generate these observations. The first of these models posits that some of the respondents managed in a deliberate way to locate themselves from one measurement to another on the opposite side of an issue from the one they had selected at the preceding measurement. It would have to be assumed that a person who chose a leftist alternative on a certain issue in the first measure would be motivated to remember to seek out the rightish alternative two years later, the leftist again two years after that, and so on. Naturally, an assumption that this behavior characterizes one member of the population is sufficiently nonsensical for us to reject it out of hand.

Once this possibility is set aside, however, there is only one other model involving a mixture of two types of process of change that fits the observed data. This model is somewhat surprising but not totally implausible. It posits a very sharp dichotomy within the population according to processes of change that are polar opposites. There is first a "hard core" of opinion on a given issue, which is well crystallized and perfectly stable over time. For the remainder of the population, response sequences over time are statistically random. The model does not specify what proportions of the population fall into these two categories: This matter is empirically independent, and it is clear that the size of the turnover correlations between any two points in time is a simple function of these relative proportions.³⁸

In view of our earlier remarks, this "black and white" model is credible in its assumption that a mass public contains significant proportions of people who, for lack of information about a particular dimension of controversy, offer meaningless opinions that vary randomly in direction during repeated trials over time. We may be uncomfortable, however, at using a model that suggests such a rigid and polar division of the population, leaving no room for the "gray" area of meaningful change of opinion or "conversion." In this respect, while the randomness posited by the model is a discouraging property substantively, it is an empowering property mathematically, for aggregate randomness has certain predictable consequences. For example, if the model were to fit the data, we would know that some people who are responding to the items as though flipping a coin could, by chance alone, supply the same responses at three trials in a row and would therefore have response paths indistinguishable from those of perfectly stable respondents but for entirely different reasons. While we could not enter the stable group and "tag" such random people, we would at least have an excellent estimate of the number of them that lingers after three trials to pollute the set of genuinely stable respondents. Most important, however, is the fact that the very character of the model makes it possible to test quite rigorously the goodness of fit of the data to the model.

For our initial test, we singled out the issue that seemed on *a priori* grounds most likely to fit the model. It was the most "ideological" item in the battery yet the one that had shown the highest degree of temporal instability: the question about the respective roles of private enterprise and government in areas like housing and electrical power. It is important to understand in detail the grounds on which this item was chosen. The model requires that some people have unswerving beliefs on the subject and that other people have no beliefs at all. It also requires that there be no middle ground, no set of people whose beliefs on the subject are in the process of evolution. For these requirements, the "government vs. private enterprise issue," more than any of the others, seemed "sheltered" from meaningful change. This isolation was true in two senses. First, it involved a very basic area of political controversy, and people understanding the stakes involved in a more ideological way would not be readily dissuaded from their respective positions. Secondly, while events like the crisis at Little Rock and exposés of waste in foreign aid were occurring in this period to touch off meaningful evolutions of opinion, little was occurring that might intuitively be expected to shake true beliefs on one side or the other. At the same time, of course, the relationships to be judged in the item were sufficiently remote and abstract from the experience of most people to make many meaningless responses likely.

The fit between the data collected at three time points on this issue and our black and white model was virtually perfect.³⁹ This result lends remarkable assurance that our understanding of the "change" processes affecting the issue responses was accurate: The only change that occurred was random change. We naturally went on to apply this test of fit to the other issues, for which the black and white model had seemed less credible. And indeed, these other items showed a somewhat poorer fit with the model. None strays a great distance, but it is unlikely that any would survive signifi-

cant tests of goodness of fit.⁴⁰ What, then, can we say about the character of beliefs touched by these other items?

Strictly speaking, as soon as we encounter data that depart in any significant measure from the black and white model, we lose all mathematical anchors, in the sense that, unless we insert a variety of restrictive assumptions, in the number of models (even simple ones) that could *logically* account for the data becomes very large indeed. Despite this loss of power, the existence of one issue that does fit the black and white model perfectly provides at least an intuitive argument that those that depart from it in modest degrees do not require a totally different class of model. In other words, we come to suppose that these other items depart from the model only because of the presence of a "third force" of people, who are undergoing meaningful conversion from one genuine opinion at t_1 to an opposing but equally genuine opinion at t_2 . This "third force" is small, and the dominant phenomenon remains the two segments of the population, within one of which opinions are random and within the other of which opinions have perfect stability. Nevertheless, the presence of any third force suffices to disrupt the fit between the data and the black and white model, and the degree of departure is a function of the size of the third force.

It should be reiterated that this view cannot be subjected to any unequivocal mathematical test but rather depends for its reasonableness upon the excellence of the fit shown by one issue and the approaches to fit shown by the others. It seems likely that responses to other issues of a similar type are generated in similar fashion. And while it is true that competing attitude models could be applied to describe most of these data, their assumptions simply lose all plausible ring when confronted with the results from the private-enterprise issue.⁴¹

Or, in another vein, the discouragingly large turnover of opinion on these issues in the total mass public might be taken as evidence that the questions were poorly written and thus extremely unreliable—that the main lesson is that they should be rewritten. Yet the issues posed are those posed by political controversy, and citizens' difficulties in responding to them in meaningful fashion seem to proffer important insights into their understanding of the same political debates in real life. More crucial still, what does it mean to say that an instrument is perfectly reliable *vis-à-vis* one class of people and totally unreliable *vis-à-vis* another, which is the proper description of the black and white model? The property of reliability is certainly not inherent *solely* in the instrument of measurement, contrary to what is commonly supposed.

As another check on the question of reliability, we decided to examine the temporal stability of belief elements of this sort among very limited sets of people whose broader interviews gave us independent reasons to believe they had particular interest in narrower belief areas (like the Negro question). We took advantage once again of interviews with a good deal of open-ended material, sifting through this voluntary commentary to find people who had shown "self-starting" concern about particular controversies. Then we went back to the relevant structured issue questions to examine the stability of these belief elements for these people over time. The turnover correlations for these limited subpopulations did increase substantially, be-

ginning to approach the levels of stability shown for party identification (see Figure 3). Once again, the evidence seemed clear that extreme instability is associated with absence of information, or at least of interest, and that item reliability is adequate for people with pre-existing concern about any given matter.⁴²

The substantive conclusion imposed by these technical maneuvers is simply that large portions of an electorate do not have meaningful beliefs, even on issues that have formed the basis for intense political controversy among elites for substantial periods of time. If this conclusion seems self-evident, it is worth reflecting on the constancy with which it is ignored and on the fact that virtually none of the common modes of dealing empirically with public beliefs attempts to take it into account. Instead, it is assumed that a location must be found for all members of a population on all dimensions of controversy that are measured. Our data argue that, where any single dimension is concerned, very substantial portions of the public simply do not belong on the dimension at all. They should be set aside as not forming any part of that particular *issue public*. And since it is only among "members" of any given issue public that the political effects of a controversy are felt (where such "effects" include activated public opinion expressed in the writing of letters to the editor, the changing of votes, and the like), we come a step closer to reality when we recognize the fragmentation of the mass public into a plethora of narrower issue publics.

VIII. Issue Publics

Our longitudinal data on eight specific political issues permit us to sketch crudely the boundaries of a sampling of eight issue publics.⁴³ While details of specific publics are not appropriate here, the general picture that emerges provides some final confirming glimpses into the character of political belief systems in a mass public.

First, of course, these publics vary in size, although none embraces any clear majority of the electorate. As would be expected, relative size is almost perfectly correlated with the ranking of issue stability (Figure 3), and the smallest issue public (that associated with the "ideological" private-enterprise issue) includes less than 20% of the electorate.

Since all members of the same population fall either within or outside eight different issue publics, a second analytic question involves the structure that would be revealed were we to map several issue publics at once. What proportions of the electorate would fall at the intersection of two, three, or even more issue publics? One logically possible outcome of such mapping would be a set of concentric rings, suggesting that these issue concerns are cumulative in Guttman's sense. That is, the picture might show that, if a person fell within the bounds of one fairly narrow issue public embracing only 20% of the population, then he would be nearly certain to fall within some other related issue public encompassing 40% of the population.

The reality does not approach such neatness, however. Memberships and overlapping memberships in issue publics are quite dispersed phenomena, although distribution is not entirely random. It can be shown, for example, that the number of respondents who warrant inclusion in all eight of the

issue publics exceeds chance expectation by a factor greater than five. Exactly the same is true for the number of people who fall in none of the eight issue publics. Furthermore, the proportions of people who lie at the intersections of two or more issue publics tend to show increments above the chance level that, while much smaller, are nevertheless relatively large where the joint content of the issues would lead one to expect greater overlap. At any rate, the departure from a Guttman cumulative structure is extreme, and the simple conclusion seems to be that different controversies excite different people to the point of real opinion formation. One man takes an interest in policies bearing on the Negro and is relatively indifferent to or ignorant about controversies in other areas. His neighbor may have few crystallized opinions on the race issue, but he may find the subject of foreign aid very important. Such sharp divisions of interest are part of what the term "issue public" is intended to convey.

Since one of our early comparisons in this paper had to do with the general levels of constraint among an elite and a mass public on a sampling of belief elements, it is interesting to ask what degree of constraint can be found among the belief elements of those who fall at the intersection of any pair of issue publics. In such a case, we have some assurance that both sets of beliefs are important to the actor, and it is not therefore surprising that these correlations tend to be much stronger. A matrix of intercorrelations parallel to those of Table VII for people at these respective intersections looks more like the elite matrix than like the mass matrix. Of course, this "intersection" matrix is a spurious one, representing no particular population: Very few people contribute to all of the intercorrelations, a substantial number contribute to none, and the set contributing to each cell is quite variable in composition. Nevertheless, the fact remains that removal from analysis of individuals who, through indifference or ignorance, lie outside the issue publics in question serves to close much of the gap in constraint levels between mass and elite publics.

IX. Summary

Our discussion of issue publics has brought us full circle, for there is an obvious relationship among the divisions of the common citizenry into relatively narrow and fragmented issue publics, the feeble levels of constraint registered among specific belief elements of any range, and the absence of recognition or understanding of overarching ideological frames of reference that served as our point of departure. For the truly involved citizen, the development of political sophistication means the absorption of contextual information that makes clear to him the connections of the policy area of his initial interest with policy differences in other areas; and that these broader configurations of policy positions are describable quite economically in the basic abstractions of ideology. Most members of the mass public, however, fail to proceed so far. Certain rather concrete issues may capture their respective individual attentions and lead to some politically relevant opinion formation. This engagement of attention remains narrow however: Other issue concerns that any sophisticated observer would see as "ideologically" related to the initial concern tend not to be thus associated in

any breadth or number. The common citizen fails to develop more global points of view about politics. A realistic picture of political belief systems in the mass public, then, is not one that omits issues and policy demands completely nor one that presumes widespread ideological coherence; it is rather one that captures with some fidelity the fragmentation, narrowness, and diversity of these demands.

Such a description is not particularly economical, and the investigator is confronted by the fact that, in coping with a poorly constrained system, he must choose between parsimony and explanatory power. This dilemma confronts him only in the degree that he insists upon dealing with the issue or ideological base of mass politics. That is, the very diffusion of this issue base at the mass level means that many of the threads cancel themselves out and can be ignored at one level of description. With good information on basic party loyalties in a population, with knowledge of sudden disruptions of economic expectations, and with freedom to treat other short-term perturbations in mass political behavior in terms of such inelegant factors as candidate popularity, there is no reason to feel that mass political phenomena are difficult to understand or predict in relatively economical terms. But such accounts do not probe to the level that supplies for many the fundamental "why" of politics—its issue or ideological base.

If we insist on treating this base and choose economy over explanatory power, then we are likely to select one or two ideological threads to follow, with recognition that the consequences of substantial numbers of other threads must be ignored. If the limited threads are well chosen, this strategy has a number of strengths, and a "good" choice of threads is likely to involve visible and competing population groupings, for reasons sketched above.

This latter strategy is essentially that employed by Lipset in tracing the imprint of social class upon mass political behavior across time and nationality in *Political Man*. His choice of threads is good, in part because of the ubiquity of social-class differences historically and cross-nationally and in part because, among issue threads, social class is one of the more reliably prominent. Despite the great diversity of issue concerns in the American public in the 1950s, if one were required to pick the single thread of ideological relevance most visible and persistent, it undoubtedly would be related to social class.

On the other hand, there is a major sacrifice of explanatory power here. For example, when we argue that social-class concerns represent the most prominent, unitary "issue" thread in mass American politics in the past decade, the scope of our statement should not be overestimated. Given the diversity and number of such threads, it need only mean (as is probably the case) that such concerns have made some greater or lesser contribution to the significant political behaviors—for the mass, largely in voting—of 20 to 40% of the American population in this period. This contribution is enough, of course, to leave a clear imprint on mass political phenomena, although it does not constitute even substantial explanation.¹¹

Furthermore, it may well be that, in pluralist societies with other highly visible group cleavages, these cleavages may often have greater penetration into mass publics than do class differences, as far as consequences for political behavior are concerned. Religious pluralism is a case in point. While

class differences mark every society, not all current democracies contain fundamental religious differences. Where such differences exist and can in some measure be separated from social class differences—the Netherlands, Austria, and the United States are good examples—there is fair reason to believe that they are fully as important, if not more important, in shaping mass political behavior than are class differences. Even in current France, one can predict with greater accuracy whether a citizen will be a partisan of the “left” or of the “right” by knowing his position on the “clerical question” than by knowing his position on the more central class issues typically associated with the left-right distinction. And this accuracy is possible despite several decades during which French elites have focused primary attention on other more gripping controversies and have frequently attempted to deflate the clerical question as a “phony” issue.⁴⁵

Whatever problems are posed for description by the diffuseness of the issue base of mass politics, the most important insights are to be gained from the fact that ideological constraints in belief systems decline with decreasing political information, which is to say that they are present among elites at the “top” of political systems, or subsystems and disappear rather rapidly as one moves “downward” into their mass clientele. We see the importance of this fact in a number of standard phenomena of both routine and crisis politics.

Perhaps the simplest and most obvious consequences are those that depend on the fact that reduced constraint with reduced information means in turn that ideologically constrained belief systems are necessarily more common in upper than in lower social strata. This fact in turn means that upper social strata across history have much more predictably supported conservative or rightist parties and movements than lower strata have supported leftist parties and movements.

These facts have further bearing on a number of asymmetries in political strategy, which typically arise between elites of rightist and leftist parties. These elites operate under rather standard ideological assumptions, and therefore recognize their “natural” clienteles in the upper and lower strata of the society respectively. The cultural definitions that separate upper and lower in most if not all modern societies are such that the lower clientele numerically outweighs the upper. The net result of these circumstances is that the elites of leftist parties enjoy a “natural” numerical superiority, yet they are cursed with a clientele that is less dependable or solidary in its support. The rightist elite has a natural clientele that is more limited but more dependable.

Asymmetrical elite strategies therefore emerge. They are best summed up perhaps in terms of an increasingly overt stress on group loyalty and cohesion *per se* as one moves from right to left across party spectra in most political systems. This difference has a great number of concrete manifestations. For example, where political institutions encourage multiparty development, there is likely to be less party fragmentation on the left than on the right. Where political institutions permit interparty differences in the stringency of party discipline at the legislative level, it is common to find a rather steady progression in strength of discipline exacted as one moves from right to left. At an electoral level, rightist candidates are more likely to run as individual

notables, dissociating themselves from party *per se* or claiming positions “above the parties” and priding themselves on the independence of their consciences from party dictation.

Entirely parallel asymmetries arise in the relations between party elites and elites of organized interest groups based “outside” the political order as it is narrowly conceived. These relations tend to be more overtly close as one moves from the right to the left. Trade unions have with some frequency created or coalesced with leftist parties, and, where such coalition has not occurred, trade unions (and particularly those with the less politically sophisticated memberships) publicize political endorsements that link them rather unequivocally with specific leftist parties. Associations of professional and business people, to the degree that they perform public political activity at all, tend toward non-partisan exhortations to “work for the party of your choice” and in other ways maintain or are kept at a “proper” distance from rightist parties so far as self-publicized connections are concerned. All these differences flow from the simple fact that, for leftist parties, the transmission of gross, simple, group-oriented cues is a functional imperative. For rightist parties, there is much to lose and nothing to gain in such publicity, for the basic clientele can be counted on for fair support without blatant cues, and the tactical needs are to avoid the alienation of potentially large-scale “hazard” support from the lower-status clientele.

These simple social biases in the presence of ideological constraints in belief systems thus register to some degree in the calculations of practical political elites. Fully as interesting, however, are the miscalculations that arise when the low incidence of these constraints in the middle and lower reaches of mass publics is forgotten. While this forgetting is more common among academic commentators than among practical politicians, it is sometimes hard to avoid—particularly where an elite with a distinctive ideology captures a broad surge of mass support. Here it is difficult to keep in mind that the true motivations and comprehensions of the supporters may have little or nothing to do with the distinctive beliefs of the endorsed elite. Yet we believe that such hiatuses or discontinuities are common and become more certain in the degree that (1) the distinctive elements of the elite ideologies are bound up in abstractions or referents remote from the immediate experience of the clientele; (2) and that the clientele, for whatever reason, is recruited from the less informed strata of a population. We shall close by applying these propositions to historical cases.

Abolition and the Rise of the Republican Party

Historians have devoted a great deal of prose to the rise of abolitionist ferment in the North after 1820. Popular sentiment against slavery seems to have gathered momentum in the relatively unbroken line that is so typical of *successful* reform movements, from the persistent agitations of Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison through the formation of antislavery societies in the 1830s, the development of the underground railroad, the birth of the Republican Party in the name of abolition, and its final electoral triumph in a popular majority for Lincoln outside the South in 1860. A number of figures are commonly cited to express the deep penetration of the ferment into the consciousness of the general public, including the membership of 200,000

attracted by the American Anti-Slavery Society in the seven short years after 1833 and the truly remarkable sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852 and after.

We obviously do not challenge the mountains of evidence concerning the high pitch of this controversy. We assume from the outset that this ferment among the elites and near-elites was in point of fact most noteworthy and has been accurately described. If we take the figures at face value, for example, we can compute that the Anti-Slavery Society's membership amounted to between 3 and 4% of the adult population outside of the South at that time.⁴⁶ Against what we have considered to be the commonly "visible" part of the political public (5 to 15% of the total adult public), this figure does indeed represent a vigorous development of antislavery sentiment. What interests us instead is the gap between the figure of 4% indicative of a sturdy ideological movement, and the 46% of the nonsouthern popular presidential vote won by the Republican Party two years after its conception in Wisconsin and birth in Michigan under the pure banner of abolition. The question is, Essentially what part did beliefs in abolition play in attracting the votes of the mass base that made the Republican Party a political success?

The question seems particularly worth asking, for among events or causes that have commonly been assumed to have had some substantial resonance among the mass public in American history, few would strike us as less plausible than abolition. Panics, the promise of free land in the West, railroad charges for transportation of farm produce, and competition by immigrants for urban jobs could all be expected to have had some immediate impact on at least limited portions of the mass public. Similarly, the threat of abolition would have had some concrete and day-to-day meaning for many citizens in the South. But it is hard to imagine that the ordinary nonsoutherner in 1855 would have had reason to be concerned about the plight of his "black brother" in a land several days' journey away—certainly not reason sufficient to make any visible contribution to his political responses. Indeed, we are tempted to the heresy that there were very substantial portions of the nonsouthern population in that period who were only dimly aware that slavery or a controversy about it existed.

If this latter statement seems dubious in the light of the torrents of literature poured out on the subject in the 1850s, the reader might reflect upon the feeble impact registered in the mass public by "the communist hysteria" of the McCarthy era in the early 1950s. At an elite level, the controversy was bitter and all-pervasive for a considerable period of time. Yet, during the nationally televised hearings that climaxed the affair, Stouffer found that 30% of a cross-section public could not think of any senator or congressman investigating internal communism, and the low salience of the whole controversy for most of the public was clearly demonstrated in other ways as well.⁴⁷ In the 1952 presidential campaign, the Republican charges against the Democratic Party were summed up in the handy slogan "Corruption, Korea and Communism." Our materials drawn at the time from a mass electorate showed a strong spontaneous response to the issues of corruption and Korea (although there was little understanding of the "Great Debate" that was in full swing over how the Korean conflict should be terminated) but almost no response at all to the third item, even though it referred to a controversy that, like abolition in the 1850s, has tended to remain in elite

minds as the principal struggle of its period.⁴⁸ And evidence of this lack of public recognition or resonance emerges despite the existence of a population that relative to that of 1850, was highly literate, leisured, and exposed to mass media of a speed, breadth, and penetration that simply had no counterpart in an earlier day.⁴⁹ The controversy over internal communism provides a classic example of a mortal struggle among elites that passed almost unnoted by an astonishing portion of the mass public. Quite clearly, there is no necessary connection between the noise, acrimony, or duration of an elite debate and the mass penetration of the controversy, however automatically the equation is made. A better guide to penetration seems to be the character of the issue itself.

A student recently decided to analyze the contents of caches of letters from the 1850s and 1860s, which had been preserved by old families in the various attics of a small Ohio community. He was interested in tracing the development of abolitionist sentiment, and Ohio had been the first state to give the new Republican Party a mass base in the election of 1854. The problem was that no references to abolition were ever found in any of the letters, despite the fact that their writers necessarily represented the "upper" stratum of the community, the stratum that, by all odds, would be most likely to have some awareness of the controversy. In letters written on the eve of the Civil War, there were increasing "ideological" references to the disruption of the Union. Once political events had passed to the dramatic point at which the South was clearly in treasonable rebellion against the Union, the mass penetration of the controversy in the North is not difficult to understand. But it is likely that this stage was reached at a mass level much later than is customarily assumed. And for the preceding period, the Ohio letters betrayed no concern for abolition.⁵⁰

There is, furthermore, a major leap from some awareness that a controversy is in the air to opinion formation of a strength sufficient to register in an individual's own political behavior. Once again, modern data are instructive. Although civil rights and the race question have been primary controversies in the past five years and although a very large majority of the public was aware of the struggles at Little Rock and the University of Mississippi, opinion formation on the subject among a cross-section of nonsouthern whites was far from intense. While everybody responds to opinion items on the matter, the true issue publics are made up very disproportionately of Negroes and southerners. A sprinkling of nonsouthern whites shows some genuine interest in the issue, and the bulk of them is positively disposed toward the Negro. But a measure of the salience of the Negro question as a political problem stringent enough to register two-thirds of nonsouthern Negroes as intensely concerned leaves scarcely one nonsouthern white out of ten qualifying at the same level. It should be remembered that this indifference is evident at a time when the Negro has become an important problem in urban areas outside the South, a situation that did not exist in 1850 or 1860. Most northern whites with intense positive or negative concern also live in areas where Negroes live or are inordinately interested in politics. In the hinterland, opinion is superficial or indifferent.

If the population of the hinterland that gave initial mass impetus to the

Republican Party had indeed felt some deep humanitarian concern about the plight of the Negro in the South, then we would be forced to conclude that empathy in human nature has suffered an astonishing decline in the past century. In fact, however, there are enough anomalies in the voting records of the period to leave room for fair doubt about the nature of the Republican mass base in its first three years. Fringe votes for the earlier abolitionist parties (the Liberty and Free Soil Parties) were never strong in the urban centers—Boston and New York—which were generating much of the intellectual ferment about abolition, although they were concentrated in smaller towns in Massachusetts and New York outside these centers and probably reflect the lines of genuine if thinly sprinkled abolitionist feeling. When, however, the Whig Party no longer presented itself as an alternative to the Democrats and when broad-gauged mass support had to turn either to the Republicans or to the anti-Catholicism of the "Know-Nothing" American Party, the patterns were somewhat different. In 1856 the largest northeastern centers (excluding all but the potentially abolitionist North⁵¹), where intellectuals had pursued abolition most doggedly and where Catholic immigrants were accumulating, gave the Know-Nothings their clearest mass support and the Republicans their weakest harvest of former Whig or Free-Soil votes. The capacity to move these votes into the Republican column was greater in those surrounding areas that had shown the strongest traces of support for the earlier abolition parties, although in many of these areas the Know-Nothings cut into the vote as well. The least blemished successes of the new Republican party lay in the deeper hinterland, which had given the feeblest support to abolition in preceding elections.⁵²

While any evidence pertaining to the thoughts and motivations of the mass of citizens who did not make public speeches or leave written records must be circumstantial, it is worth suggesting that there was probably an important discontinuity between the intransigent abolitionism associated with the Republican Party at an elite level in its early phases and its early mass successes. How great this discontinuity was we do not and doubtless shall not ever know, although we have some confidence that, if the truth were known, the discontinuity would be large enough to shock many students of documents and data from more elite levels.

Of course, from the point of view of historical outcomes, all that is important is that this particular conjunction of circumstances occurred when it did and was interpreted as it was by political elites in both North and South. These facts shaped history and placed the abolitionist movement in the forefront of "popular" American reforms, set apart from other reforms that have either achieved general elite acceptance without need for mass support or have faded into semioblivion because times were not propitious for the capture of a mass base. Nonetheless, our understanding of history may be improved at some points if we recognize the possibility that such discontinuities can occur.

The Mass Base of the Nazi Party

The rise of the Nazi Party in Germany between the two World Wars entrained such a tragic sequence of events that the experience has provoked

diagnoses from every school of thought concerned with people, politics, or societies. Typically, the question has been, How could the German people have lent support to a movement with an ideology as brutal and authoritarian as that of the Nazis? Some years ago, Bendix argued that it was important to differentiate between the top Nazi leaders, the party members, and the masses whose sudden surge of support at the polls converted the National Socialists from simply another extremist fringe group of the sort that many societies harbor much of the time to a prominence that permitted them to become masters of Germany soon after 1932.⁵³

Few would now question that the simple magnitude of economic collapse Germany suffered in the wake of World War I was the critical catalyst, both for the organizational strength the cadre of Nazi activists had attained prior to 1930 and for the sweeping successes they attained at the polls in that year. Once this point is made, however, we concur with Bendix that the explanatory paths for the mass and the elite are likely to diverge. Our interest here has to do solely with the relationship between the new-found mass of Nazi voters and the ideology of the movement they endorsed.

Who was particularly attracted to this mass base? Once again, there is fair agreement among analysts that there was a significant connection between the marked increase in voter turnout and the sudden surge in Nazi votes that marked the 1928-1932 period. Bendix noted that the staggering increase of 5½ million votes picked up by the Nazi Party in 1930 over its 1928 totals coincided with a rapid influx into the active electorate of nearly 2½ million adults who had failed to vote in 1928. These figures for new voters are exclusive of the estimated 1,760,000 young people who became eligible and voted for the first time, and there is reason to believe that these young people flocked to the Nazis in disproportionate numbers.⁵⁴ In addition, there is convincing evidence from Heberle and others that, among older voters, the most dramatic shifts from other parties to the Nazi Party occurred in rural areas and especially among peasants.⁵⁵ We conclude therefore that, whatever the social backgrounds or motivations of the activist cadre of the Nazis, its mass base was disproportionately recruited from among customary non-voters, the young and the peasantry.

Of course, chronic nonvoters would lie at the bottom of any scale of political sophistication or ideological comprehension. In a matrix constructed after the fashion of Table III, there is a very sharp gradient in voting fidelity from the upper left-hand corner to the lower right. As we have noted, too, there is a decline in average age from the upper right-hand corner to the lower left, despite the negative correlation between age and education: The young are also the most politically unsophisticated age grade, despite their higher average education. Finally, for American data at least, it is clear that political information and political involvement decline systematically with declining mean education from urban areas to increasingly rural areas. Even taken as a whole, farmers in modern America are more remote from and comprehend less of the normal political process than do the lower echelons of the urban occupational hierarchy.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Heberle data for Germany suggest that, among farmers, it was the most isolated and the poorest educated who shifted in the most dramatic proportions to the Nazi ticket in the crucial years.⁵⁷ In sum, it seems safe to conclude that the

mass base of the Nazi movement represented one of the more unrelievedly ill-informed clienteles that a major political party has assembled in a modern state.

Heberle, who was anxious to show that Nazi popularity in Schleswig-Holstein was not the result of an ingrained antidemocratic bias, commented on how incredible it seemed that the Nazis should be so widely acceptable to these "generally sober-minded and freedom-loving North Germans, who were not at all accustomed to a tradition of authoritarian government." He devoted a lengthy analysis to an attempt to find comparable belief elements in earlier ideational movements of Schleswig-Holstein that could explain the area's receptiveness to the new ideology. While occasional common threads could be discerned, their number was meager enough to be quite accidental, and antithetical elements predominated.⁵⁸ Heberle concluded that farmers and other rural people respond to politics less in terms of "ideologies and general political ideals" than in terms of "concrete advantages and disadvantages" of one party relative to another, and he closed with the hope that, under better circumstances, these rural people would "revert" to their more innocuous attitudes of the past.⁵⁹

Even had the clientele of the Nazi Party been of average education and political sophistication, there would be strong reason to doubt the degree to which prior awareness of Nazi ideology among its voters could be claimed. In view of the actual peculiarities of its mass base, the question verges on the absurd. The Nazis promised changes in a system that was near collapse. Under comparable stresses, it is likely that large numbers of citizens in any society (and particularly those without any long-term affective ties to more traditional parties) would gladly support *ad hoc* promises of change without any great concern about ideological implications. And typically, they would lack the contextual information necessary to assess these implications, even if some stray details were absorbed. We believe this response would be true of any mass public and not only those that, like Germany, had experienced only a brief democratic tradition.⁶⁰

To the farmers in particular, the Nazis promised a moratorium on, if not an abolition of, all debts.⁶¹ Furthermore, they had the disciplined and motivated party organization capable of disseminating such propaganda through the hinterland. While they had conceived of themselves as an urban party (which by origin and personnel they were), the Nazis appeared to have made a conscious discovery in the late 1920s that a golden harvest of votes had ripened in rural areas, and they set about to exploit this fact systematically, having become quite discouraged with their lack of progress in urban areas. The Communists had preceded them among the peasantry—but in an earlier and less propitious period—and they had relaxed their efforts. Furthermore, in view of Marxist dogma on the dubious political utility of the peasant, it is unlikely that their energies had ever been concentrated in quite the same manner. In principle, however, there is no reason to believe that, had the Communists instead of the Nazis arrived freshly on the rural scene at the same point and with similar vigor and sketchy propaganda, European history would not have taken a dramatically different turn. All evidence suggests that, in this historical case, the link between specific ideology and mass response was probably of the weakest.

X. Conclusion

We have long been intrigued, in dealing with attitudinal and behavioral materials drawn from cross-section publics, at the frequency with which the following sequence of events occurs. An hypothesis is formed that seems reasonable to the analyst, having to do with one or another set of systematic differences in perceptions, attitudes, or behavior patterns. The hypothesis is tested on materials from the general population but shows at best some rather uninteresting trace findings. Then the sample is further subdivided by formal education, which isolates among other groups the 10% of the American population with college degrees or the 20% with some college education. It frequently turns out that the hypothesis is then very clearly confirmed for the most educated, with results rapidly shading off to zero within the less educated majority of the population.

We do not claim that such an analytic approach always produces findings of this sort. From time to time, of course, the hypothesis in question can be more broadly rejected for all groups, and, on rare occasions, a relationship turns out to be sharper among the less educated than among the well-educated. Nevertheless, there is a strikingly large class of cases in which confirmation occurs only, or most sharply, among the well-educated. Usually it is easy to see, after the fact if not before, the degree to which the dynamics of the processes assumed by the hypothesis rest upon the kinds of broad or abstract contextual information about currents of ideas, people, or society that educated people come to take for granted as initial ingredients of thought but that the most cursory studies will demonstrate are not widely shared. As experiences of this sort accumulate, we become increasingly sensitive to these basic problems of information and begin to predict their results in advance.

This awareness means that we come to expect hypotheses about wide-ranging yet highly integrated belief systems and their behavioral consequences to show results among relative elites but to be largely disconfirmed below them. It is our impression, for example, that even some of the more elaborate "ideological" patterns associated with the authoritarian personality syndrome follow this rule. Some recent results that have accumulated in connection with the Protestant-ethnic hypothesis of Weber seem to hint at something of the same pattern as well.⁶²

In this paper, we have attempted to make some systematic comments on this kind of phenomenon that seem crucial to any understanding of elite and mass belief systems. We have tried to show the character of this "continental shelf" between elites and masses and to locate the sources of differences in their belief systems in some simple characteristics of information and its social transmission.

The broad contours of elite decisions over time can depend in a vital way upon currents in what is loosely called "the history of ideas." These decisions in turn have effects upon the mass of more common citizens. But, of any direct participation in this history of ideas and the behavior it shapes, the mass is remarkably innocent. We do not disclaim the existence of entities that might best be called "folk ideologies," nor do we deny for a moment that strong differentiations in a variety of narrower values may be found

within subcultures of less educated people. Yet for the familiar belief systems that, in view of their historical importance, tend most to attract the sophisticated observer, it is likely that an adequate mapping of a society (or, for that matter, the world) would provide a jumbled cluster of pyramids or a mountain range, with sharp delineation and differentiation in beliefs from elite apex to elite apex but with the mass bases of the pyramids overlapping in such profusion that it would be impossible to decide where one pyramid ended and another began.

NOTES

1. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York, 1946), especially pp. 39 ff.
2. Minar has compiled a useful if discouraging survey of this diversity. See David W. Minar, "Ideology and Political Behavior," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, V (November, 1961), No. 4, 317-31.
3. Garner uses the term "constraint" to mean "the amount of interrelatedness of structure of a system of variables" when measured by degree of uncertainty reduction. Wendell R. Garner, *Uncertainty and Structure as Psychological Concepts* (New York, 1962), pp. 142ff. We use the term a bit more broadly as relief from such polysyllables as "interrelatedness" and "interdependence."
4. Measures of correlation and indices of the goodness of fit of a cumulative scale model to a body of data are measures of two types of constraint.
5. Definitions of belief systems frequently require that configurations of ideas be stable for individuals over long periods of time. The notion of centrality fulfills this requirement in a more flexible way. That is, once it is granted that changes in the perceived status of idea-elements are not frequent in any event and that, when change does occur, the central elements (particularly in large belief systems) are amply cushioned by more peripheral elements that can be adjusted, it follows that central elements are indeed likely to be highly stable.
6. Minar, *loc. cit.*
7. See A. Campbell, P. E. Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York, 1960), pp. 204-9.
8. William J. McGuire, "A Syllagistic Analysis of Cognitive Relationships," in Milton J. Rosenberg, Carl I. Hovland, William J. McGuire, Robert P. Abelson, and Jack W. Brehm, *Attitude Organization and Change*, Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication, Vol. 3 (New Haven, 1960), pp. 65-111.
9. Joseph R. Gusfield, "Status Conflicts and the Changing Ideologies of the American Temperance Movement," in Pitman and Snyder, eds., *Society, Culture and Drinking Patterns* (New York, 1962).
10. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York, 1957), p. 79.
11. It should be understood that our information dimension is not so perfectly correlated with formal education as this statement implies. Since educational strata have a more ready intuitive meaning, however, we shall use them occasionally as convenient ways of measuring off levels in the population. In such cases, the reader may keep in mind that there are always some people of lesser education but higher political involvement who are numbered in the stratum and some people with education befitting the stratum who are not numbered there because their interests lie elsewhere and their information about politics is less than could be expected.
12. There is a difference, of course, between this statement and a suggestion that poorly educated people have no systems of belief about politics.
13. This observation is valid despite the fact that surveys showing ignorance of crucial political facts are much more likely to run in a range from 40-80% "unaware." At the height of the 1958 Berlin crisis, 63% of the American public did not know that the city was encircled by hostile troops. A figure closer to 70% is a good estimate of the proportion of the public that does not know which party controls Congress.
14. In this regard, it was enlightening to read the stunned reactions of the political columnist Joseph Alsop when, during the 1960 presidential primaries, he left the elite circuits of the East Coast and ventured from door to door talking politics with "normal" people in West Virginia. He was frank to admit that the change in perceived political worlds was far greater than anything he had ever anticipated, despite his prior recognition that there would be some difference.
15. The phrase "less adequately" is used to show recognition of the frequent complaint

that the liberal-conservative dimension has different meanings in different politics at different times. More importantly, it takes into account the fact that in most politics new issues are constantly arising that are difficult before the fact to relate to such a yardstick. Some of these intrinsically "orthogonal" issues may remain unrelated to the dimension, and, if they become of intense importance, they can split existing parties and redefine alignments. More typically, however, elites that are known on some other grounds to be "liberal" or "conservative" ferret out some limited aspect of an issue for which they can argue some liberal-conservative relevance and begin to drift to one of the alternative positions in disproportionate numbers. Then, either because of the aspect highlighted or because of simple pressures toward party competition, their adversaries drift toward the opposing position. Thus positions come to be perceived as "liberal" or "conservative," even though such alignments would have been scarcely predictable on logical grounds. After the fact, of course, the alignments come to seem "logical," by mechanisms discussed earlier in this paper. Controversy over British entry into the European Common Market is an excellent example of such a process. Currently the conservatives are officially pro-entry, and Labour leadership has finally declared against it, but the reverse of this alignment had frequently been predicted when the issue was embryonic.

16. All American data reported in this paper, unless otherwise noted, have been collected by the Survey Research Center of The University of Michigan under grants from the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Social Science Research Council.

17. This account of the "levels of conceptualization" is highly abbreviated. For a much more detailed discussion and rationale, along with numerous illustrations drawn at random from interviews in each stratum, see Campbell, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 10.

18. Some modest internal support for the validity of the distinction between those who spoke in terms of broad philosophy and those who offered narrower explanations may be seen in the fact that only 5% of the former category had previously judged the Democrats to be more conservative than the Republicans. Among those giving less elevated "best answers," 14% deemed the Democrats the more conservative party. And, to give some sense of the "continental shelf" being explored here, among those who had responded that a certain party was more conservative than the other but who subsequently confessed that they did not know what the distinction implied, 35% had chosen the Democrats as the more conservative, a figure that is beginning to approach the 50-50 assignment of sheer guesswork.

19. In all candor, it should probably be mentioned that a teacher grading papers would be unlikely to give passing marks to more than 20% of the attempted definitions (or to 10% of the total sample). We made an effort, however, to be as generous as possible in our assignments.

20. This cell is laden, of course, with people who are apathetic and apolitical, although more than half of them vote in major elections. Flanagan, working with the total sample, set aside those who never vote as politically inconsequential and then set about comparing the remainder of self-styled independents with strong partisans. Some of the customary findings relating political independence with low involvement and low information then became blurred or in some cases reversed themselves altogether. Our highly sophisticated independents contribute to this phenomenon. See William H. Flanagan, "Partisanship and Campaign Participation" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1961).

21. As a general rule, questions broad enough for the mass public to understand tend to be too simple for highly sophisticated people to feel comfortable answering without elaborate qualification. The pairing of questions, with those for the mass public given first, are as follows:

Employment. "The government in Washington ought to see to it that everybody who wants to work can find a job." "Do you think the federal government ought to sponsor programs such as large public works in order to maintain full employment, or do you think that problems of economic readjustment ought to be left more to private industry or state and local government?"

Aid to Education. "If cities and towns around the country need help to build more schools, the government in Washington ought to give them the money they need." "Do you think the government should provide grants to the states for the construction and operation of public schools, or do you think the support of public education should be left entirely to the state and local government?"

Federal Housing. "The government should leave things like electric power and housing for private businessmen to handle." "Do you approve the use of federal funds for public housing, or do you generally feel that housing can be taken care of better by private effort?"

F.E.P.C. "If Negroes are not getting fair treatment in jobs and housing, the government should see to it that they do." "Do you think the federal government should establish a fair employment practices commission to prevent discrimination in employment?"

Economic Aid. "The United States should give economic help to the poorer countries of the world even if those countries can't pay for it." "First, on the foreign economic aid program, would you generally favor expanding the program, reducing it, or maintaining it about the way it is?"

Military Aid. "The United States should keep soldiers overseas where they can help countries that are agitated Communism." "How about the foreign military aid program? Should this be expanded, reduced, or maintained about as it is?"

Isolationism. "This country would be better off if we just stayed home and did not concern ourselves with problems in other parts of the world." "Speaking very generally, do you think that in the years ahead the United States should maintain or reduce its commitments around the world?"

22. We are aware that drawing an average of these coefficients has little interpretation from a statistical point of view. The averages are presented merely as a crude way of capturing the flavor of the larger table in summary form. More generally, it could be argued that the coefficients might be squared in any event, an operation that would do no more than heighten the intuitive sense of contrast between the two publics. In this format, for example, the elite-mass difference in the domestic-issue column of Table VIII would shift from .53 vs. .23 to .28 vs. .05. Similarly, that in the party column would become .15 vs. .01.

23. Herbert McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," *American Political Science Review*, LVIII (June, 1964), No. 2.

24. James W. Prothro and C. W. Grigg, "Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," *Journal of Politics*, 22 (May, 1960), No. 2, 276-94.

25. There is unquestionably a class of social behaviors for which this description is more rather than less apt, although one need not have recourse to mystical or unexplained terms to understand the processes involved. In any social system, some beliefs and behavior patterns are learned by the young in such a way that there is no awareness of the possibility of alternatives. Where beliefs are concerned, a phrase like "unspoken cultural assumptions" provides an appropriate description, and there are analogues in socially learned behaviors. Most of politics, however, involves competition between explicit alternatives, which means that conscious belief systems and conscious behavior choices have an important influence—which is not to say that these belief systems are not often better understood if one takes account of the sociostructural position of the actor who holds them. It is to say that, whether or not they are present is not a matter of indifference for the course of behavior, as we shall see.

26. The reader is cautioned, in comparing Figures 1(b) and 1(c), that women classed (for example) as "no issue content" are not necessarily the wives of husbands who are also "no issue content." Indeed, the point of the comparison is that wives tend themselves to be qualified at less elevated levels than their husbands but organize their behavior in terms of their husband's "opinion leadership."

27. It should be remembered in assessing Figure 1(c) that the complete absence of this kind of opinion-leading would not produce a graph with a single tall bar at the left and an absence of height for the three other bars. That is, opinion-leading quite aside, we should expect some kind of slope, albeit a steep one, since people represented by the second and (to a fainter degree) the third bars have cruder versions of the intervening images of politics that we are arguing have key behavioral importance. It is only the people represented by the fourth bar who give no evidence of this type of intervening organization at all.

28. The empirical base for this argument becomes even more dramatic than is shown by Figure 1 if we consider all the psychological terms that a class orientation in voting presupposes. That is, Figure 1 treats the relationship between objective status and vote. To the degree that there are ideologues whose class identifications are not what their objective statuses would lead us to expect, they lower the degree of the association. Figure 13-3 of Campbell, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 352, which is conceptually parallel to Figure 1 of this paper, shows that ideologues with reported awareness of their social classes have a towering monopoly on the association of *subjective status* and vote partisanship.

29. Much of the ensuing passage can be read as a slight restatement of Herbert Hyman's insights concerning "reference groups." If we add anything at all, it is to suggest some of the circumstances under which groups *qua* groups are more or less likely to be central in individual belief systems (more or less potent as points of reference), as opposed to other kinds of belief object.

30. Florian Znaniecki, *Modern Nationalities* (Urbana, 1952), pp. 81-2.

31. Even in the modern United States, there are scattered pockets of the population that are rather vague about national identity. We encounter respondents, for example, who when asked if they were born in the United States, answer "No, I was born in Georgia," in what is clearly ignorance rather than a throwback to secession or kitchinist state pride.

32. McClosky observes more generally: "Members of the active minority [the political

elite sample] are far better able than the ordinary voter to name reference groups that fit both their party affiliation and their doctrinal orientation. . . . Clearly the political stratum has a much better idea than the public has of where its political sympathies lie and who its ideological friends and enemies are. The ability to recognize favorable or unfavorable reference groups is, on the whole, poorly developed in the populace at large." McClosky, *op. cit.*

33. With regard to the postwar increase in relevance of social class, see Philip E. Converse, "The Shifting Role of Class in Political Attitudes and Behavior," in E. L. Maccoby, T. W. Newcomb, and E. E. Hartley, eds., *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York, 1958), p. 388.

34. The items portrayed in Figure 3 are the same as those in Table VII and are described at that point.

35. We regret that we did not get measures of pure affect for other groupings in the population, for all population members. A copious literature on intergroup attitudes in social psychology contains, however, much presumptive evidence of extreme stability in these attitudes over time.

36. Unfortunately we lack the longitudinal data for elites that would permit the following analysis to be comparative. Let us keep in mind, however, that the relatively high constraint among belief elements already demonstrated for elites is almost certain proof of high stability of these elements over time as well. The phenomenon we are analyzing is thus a mass not an elite phenomenon.

37. More technically, such a configuration is mathematically incompatible with the assumption based on simple Markov chain theory that a single matrix of transition probabilities can account for the change process. For the benefit of the nontechnical reader, we use the phrase "change process" in the singular to denote a single specified matrix of transition probabilities.

38. This model has been discussed as a hypothetical case in Lee M. Wiggins, "Mathematical Models for the Interpretation of Attitude and Behavior Change: The Analysis of Multi-Wave Panels" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1955).

39. The logic of the test is rather simple. If the model pertains, then any respondents who change sides of an issue between t_1 and t_2 are from the random part of the population, while those who do not change sides are a mixture in known proportions of perfectly stable people and random people who happened to have chosen the same side twice by chance. If we divide the population into these two parts on the basis of their t_1 - t_2 patterns and if the model is appropriate to the situation, then the turnover correlations between t_2 and t_3 for each of the two divisions of the population are determinate. The purely random group should show a correlation of .00 between t_2 and t_3 ; the adulterated stable group should show a correlation that falls short of unity as a direct function of the known proportions of random people still in the group. For our critical test, the original total-population turnover correlation (1956-1958) was .24. With the population properly subdivided as suggested by the model, this over-all correlation could be expected to fork into two correlations between t_2 and t_3 of .00 and .47, if the model was applicable. The empirical values turned out to be .004 and .49.

40. For instance, in terms parallel to the expectations of the final sentence of Note 39, the correlations may fork into a pair that are .07 and .35, rather than .00 and .47.

41. For example, a random path of responses would be laid down over time by a set of people for whom the content of the item was very meaningful, yet put each individual in such a quandary that his pro-con response potential balanced exactly at .50-.50. In such cases, it could be assumed that slight rewording of the item, making it "harder" or "easier" in a Guttman sense, would shift the response potentials away from this .50-.50 balance and would thus begin to produce correlations between individual responses over time. This view cannot be challenged in any decisive way for issues generating responses that depart continuously across the total range of response probabilities is entirely compatible with the data. It is even possible to describe the empirical situation surrounding the private-enterprise item in these terms. The problem is that such a description seems patently absurd, for it implies that the question was somehow constructed so that the content drew highly unequivocal responses from one class of people but left all the rest in perfect and exquisite conflict. Intermediate classes—people with probabilities of responding to the content positively at a level of .6, .7, .8 or .9—are simply not necessary to account for the data. Such a description lacks verisimilitude. Our assumption is rather that, had the private-enterprise item been rendered "harder" or "easier" in a Guttman sense, the respondents we call "random" would have continued to respond randomly, at least across a zone of items so broad as to bracket any plausible political alternatives. In other words, the problem is not one of specific wording that puts the respondent in particularly delicate conflict; it is rather that the whole area from which this item is drawn is so remote to the respondent that he has not been stimulated to any real opinion formation within it.

42. Results of this sort lend considerable weight to Scott's proposals for assessing cultural values through analysis of responses to open-ended questions. William A. Scott, "Empirical Assessment of Values and Ideologies," *American Sociological Review*, 24 (June, 1959), No. 3, 299-310.

43. The definition of these boundaries is necessarily crude. While we have means of improving upon it in the future, it rests for the moment upon the exclusion of those people with unstable opinions, along with those who at one point or another confessed that they had no opinions. We know that each public, so defined, contains some respondents who give stable patterns of response by chance alone and therefore do not belong in the issue-public conceptually. On the other hand, for those issues where it is necessary to posit some small "third force" undergoing conversion on the issue, these people are inadvertently overlooked. Nonetheless, these two contingents appear to be small, and the issue-public boundaries are thus roughly accurate.

44. And if we take as a goal the explanation of political changes touched off by movements in mass political decisions in this period, as opposed to questions of more static political structure, then the explanatory utility of the social-class thread is almost nil, for the ideological class voters were least likely to have contributed to these changes by corresponding changes in their voting patterns.

45. P. E. Converse and G. Dupeux, "Politicization of the Electorate in France and the United States," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26 (Spring, 1962). For complementary evidence covering an earlier period, see Duncan MacRae, "Religious and Socioeconomic Factors in the French Vote, 1945-1956," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXIV (November, 1958), No. 3.

46. This figure is for 1840, and it undoubtedly advanced further in the next decade or two, although one deduces that the expansion of membership slowed down after 1840. Our estimates do not take into account, however, the standard inflation of claimed membership (intentional or unintentional) that seems to characterize all movements of this sort.

47. S. A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties* (New York, 1955).

48. Campbell, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

49. In 1954, the average circulation of daily newspapers amounted to about 20% more papers than households. In 1850, one newspaper had to stretch across five households. These estimates are calculated from Bureau of the Census figures in *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1961).

50. Informal communication from Professor Robert L. Crane.

51. We set aside Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, all of which had been slow in moving toward complete abolition and which tended to follow southern voting patterns through the election of 1856.

52. A simple ordering of potentially abolitionist states according to apparent success in transfer of 1852 Free-Soil and Whig votes to the Republicans in 1856 is negatively correlated with an ordering of these states according to the relative amount of fringe support they had tended to contribute to the abolitionist parties of the 1840s.

53. Reinhard Bendix, "Social Stratification and Political Power," in Bendix and S. M. Lipset, eds., *Class, Status and Power* (New York, 1953), pp. 596-609.

54. Bendix, *ibid.*, pp. 604-5.

55. Rudolf Heberle, *From Democracy to Nazism* (Baton Rouge, 1945). See also Charles P. Loomis and J. Allen Beegle, "The Spread of German Nazism to Rural Areas," *American Sociological Review*, 11 (December, 1946), 724-34.

56. See Campbell *et al.*, *op. cit.*, Chap. 15. The above remarks on the Nazi movement are a condensation of a case study originally written as part of this chapter.

57. The most extreme shifts to the Nazis, arriving at a peak of between 80 and 100% of the votes in some hamlets, occurred in the central zone of Schleswig-Holstein, the *Geest*. To the East and West lay the sea, a somewhat more cosmopolitan coast, better farmland with larger estates, and a more stratified rural population. While the farmers of the *Geest* owned their own family farms and have been designated as "lower middle class," they appear to have been subsistence farmers on land that did not interest gentry. Heberle describes them as being "in mentality and habits still more of a real peasant" than farmers in the other sectors, who regarded the *Geest* farmer "very much as the Southern hillbilly or redneck is looked upon by the planters," Heberle, *ibid.*, p. 39.

58. Heberle and others have argued that the Nazi Party had particular appeal for villagers and rural people living in simple *gemeinschaft* societies because it demanded a degree of active and disciplined participation not required by other parties and such rural folk had a need to give themselves totally to a cause. At another point, however, Heberle implies that, although Schleswig-Holstein was the "most Nazi" province at the polls in both 1930 and 1932, it contributed but a meager share of activists or members to the party. See Heberle, *ibid.*, p. 87. What the mass base of the Nazi Party in its urban and rural segments seemed to share, in addition to a desperate desire for a change that would

bring respite from economic duress, was low education or, in the case of the young, low political sophistication.

59. Heberle, *ibid.*, pp. 100, 124.

60. This is not to challenge the importance of a lengthening democratic tradition or of the bearing of its absence in the German case. But we suspect that once beyond the stabilizing influence of mass identifications with standard parties, the primary salutary effects of a longer democratic tradition are limited to elite political processes. Two hundred years of democracy and several decades of elementary civics courses in the United States have not given the model citizen much capacity to recognize antidemocratic maneuvers and movements, particularly when they occur "at home."

61. Heberle, *ibid.*, p. 112.

62. All investigators have had success in showing high "achievement motivation" among American Jews (a remarkably well educated group). Furthermore, some early findings confirmed Weber's thesis, in a modern setting, by showing higher achievement motivation among Protestants than among Catholics. Veroff, Feld, and Gurin, working with a national sample, were able, however, to replicate these findings only among higher-status Catholics and Protestants (with income the criterion) in the Northeast. This more sophisticated subpopulation is alleged to be the one within which the original confirmations were found. See J. Veroff, S. Feld, and G. Gurin, "Achievement Motivation and Religious Background," *American Sociological Review*, 27 (April, 1962), No. 2, 205. While even poorly educated adherents of differing creeds can probably be counted on for fairly accurate knowledge of concrete matters of ritual and mundane taboos, they would be much less likely to absorb the broad and abstract theological conceptions that are the crucial "intervening variables" in the Weberian hypothesis.