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HIERARCHY OF INTERESTS:
THE ROLE OF SELF-INTEREST, GROUP-IDENTITY, AND SOCIOTROPIC
POLITICS IN POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND PARTICIPATION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

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ABSTRACT

Over the past three decades, there has been a considerable amount of research on the role of self-interest in people's political attitudes. The majority of this research has brought the notion of self-interest into question and has led many to conclude that citizens are not forming opinions on the basis of their own self-interests. I argue that this conclusion is premature and based on assumptions in the literature that have, thus far, remained untested. Specifically, researchers have made the assumption that people utilize the same decision calculus, whether or not their own interests are involved.

In this dissertation, I develop a hierarchical theory of interests that combines the research on self-interest, group conflict, and sociotropic politics. According to the theory, people progress through a chain of reasoning when forming opinions on "hard issues". When self-interest is present, it is the basis for people's policy choices. In the absence of clear self-interest, people rely on other rational alternatives including group-interest and sociotropic politics. Therefore, self-interested and non-self-interested people may reach similar conclusions, while relying on separate considerations. In addition, I hypothesize that, due to the nature of self-interest, traditional measures of the concept will be more successful at predicting political action than political attitudes. Since action requires resources, people must have a higher interest in order to justify the costs of participation.
The theory of hierarchical interests is tested using both experimental and survey research. The experimental design measures the role of self-interest, group-identification, and sociotropic politics in students' attitudes toward senior comprehensive examinations. The survey data looks at the theory of hierarchical interests in terms of people's attitudes towards government spending on unemployment compensation. The results of both studies support the theory and indicate that (1) interests are rank-ordered, such that self-interest is dominant and (2) in the absence of direct self-interest, people rely on other "rational" alternatives such as group-interest and sociotropic concerns. These findings have wide implications for the study of public opinion, political behavior, and democratic theory and suggest that citizens are demonstrating a level of competency that has been questioned in the past.
Dedicated to Matthew
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the process of writing a dissertation, one becomes indebted to a number of people whose expertise and encouragement have guided the project along the way. I wish to thank those who have assisted me in this project, although I am afraid my words will not do their contributions justice.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Matthew, who supported me when I was frustrated, was patient with me when I was aggravated, and believed in me when I was unsure of myself. This dissertation would still not be completed, had I not felt threatened that his accomplishments would outshine my own. He is one of the most hard-working people I have every known and being in his presence inspired me to push myself.

My greatest debt is to my advisor, Herbert Weisberg, who never ceases to amaze me with the breadth of his knowledge. His expertise and advice shaped this project at every step along the way. Mostly, I am grateful for his time and encouragement. Despite his many responsibilities, somehow he always managed to make me feel like I was his first priority. I cannot thank him enough for his contribution to this project and to my graduate education as a whole.

I would also like to thank my other committee members, Janet Box-Steppensmeier and Thomas Nelson, for their guidance on this project. Both shaped the project in their
own unique ways, Jan with her incredible knowledge of statistics and research methodology, and Tom with his expertise in experimental manipulations.

I am grateful for the financial support I received for this dissertation from the Ohio State University graduate school. The questions I added to the Buckeye State Poll were funded by the Graduate Student Alumni Research Award.

My family, as always, has been a source of strength to me during this time. My mother, Theresa Harkless Woods, was willing to scan countless versions of this document for typos. Her patience, with proofreading and with her children, is remarkable. Mostly, however, I am just thankful for her love and support.

Last, and also least, I would like to thank my Australian Shepherd, Brady, who reminds me everyday, that there is a time for work and a time for play. This process would have been much more difficult, were it not interrupted by an occasional game of fetch.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When the framers of the constitution met in Philadelphia to construct a new form of government, the issue of citizen competency was on many minds. Statesman Elbridge Gerry argued that government should be protected from the false opinions of the people: “The evils we experience flow from an excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue; but are the dupes of pretend patriots . . . they are daily misled into the most baneful measures and opinions by the false reports circulated by designing men.” Others went as far as to argue that, “The people should have as little to do as may be about the government” (Farrand’s Records of the Federal Convention, 1987, Vol. 1, pg 48).

In modern times, skepticism about the ability of the citizenry to make competent political choices continues. One segment of the debate has focused on the apparent lack of self-interest in people’s political beliefs. In the absence of self-interest, many scholars argue that other seemingly-less-rational considerations are the basis for policy preferences. According to these studies, symbolic concerns and prejudices are believed to play a larger role in people’s decisions than do rational cost-benefit calculations. If this is the case, then the framers’ warnings about public sentiment are well founded and may still apply today. However, if citizens are found to act in self-interested ways, then
we may be more confident in their ability to choose elected officials and make important policy decisions.

A number of researchers have attempted to address the issue of citizen competence in modern times. However, given the implication of their findings, scholars must be careful when drawing conclusions about the apparent lack of self-interest in citizens' policy choices. Thus far, scholars have argued about the role of self-interest by analyzing a number of issue areas, but the results of these studies are often contradictory. Given these conflicting findings, it is necessary to move the debate around self-interest from the simple question of “Is it or is it not important?” to the more complicated question, “When is self-interest important, and what happens when it is not?” This study attempts to answer this second question through the use of both experimental and survey research. The findings of the study will have important implications for democratic theory and our faith in citizens to make competent political choices.

Citizen Competence and Self-Interest

For centuries, political theorists have debated over the ability of citizens to self-govern. In ancient Greece, all citizens participated in the decision-making body known as the assembly. In larger societies, this idea of direct democracy became impractical, as large bodies of citizens could not easily reach a consensus. In addition, more-educated elites began to question the ability of the masses to make competent political choices. In modern times, direct democracy has given way to representative
democracy, whereby elected officials meet to make decisions on behalf of the public. Even though the role of the people is indirect, the public still has considerable influence over the decisions that government makes. Not only do citizens elect public officials, but also candidates and political parties tailor their platforms to public sentiments and opinions polls. In addition, some forms of direct democracy still exist in the form of voting on public initiatives or referendums and traditional New England town meetings. Since our government is responsive to public opinion and demands, we must constantly ask, “To what extent are citizens capable of making sound political choices?” This question of citizen competency has direct consequences for democratic theory and is one of the most important questions in the study of political science.

The issue of citizen competence has several layers. First, citizens appear to pay little attention to the political process and demonstrate limited knowledge of public affairs (Converse, 1964; Campbell et al, 1960). Second, some scholars argue that public opinion does not influence elite action, but rather, political elites manipulate public opinion (Zaller, 1992). This suggests that people’s opinions are not based on rational self-interest but are unstable and malleable. Others also suggest that public opinion is unstable over time (Converse, 1964) and that the majority of citizens do not have complex cognitive structures underlying their political beliefs. As a result of these arguments, some scholars conclude that elected officials cannot be held accountable for their policy decisions by an uninformed, apathetic citizenry that seems unwilling to participate in the political process (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996).

Skepticism about citizen competency may be laid to rest if scholars could demonstrate that citizens’ political choices are based on their own rational self-interest.
While lack of self-interest does not necessarily mean that citizens are incapable of making informed political choices, the presence of self-interest would go a long way toward demonstrating citizen competence. This would demonstrate that people's political beliefs are based on something rather concrete and stable. Unfortunately, the majority of evidence, to date, has been that citizen choices are not motivated by self-interest (Sears et. al., 1979; Huddy and Sears, 1989; Sears and Funk, 1991). Despite the evidence against self-interest, the debate over the issue continues with scholars attempting to redefine the conditions and situations under which self-interest may be a factor (Stoker, 1992; Feldman, 1982; Kinder, 1998; Green and Cowden, 1992).

A Brief History of Self-Interest

One of the earliest arguments for the role of self-interest in everyday life is Thomas Hobbes' (1651) conceptualization of humans as purely self-maintaining entities. According to Hobbes, the state of nature is one of competition, lawlessness, and aggression, with every individual looking out for his or her own survival. Hobbes' description of mankind implies that people are selfish and calculating, ever aware that they are in competition with others for mere survival. This depiction of human nature would imply that one always acts in one's own self-interest and opposes those who conflict with those interests. Later works in the field of politics support Hobbes' description of human nature as selfish and competitive. In *The American Voter* (1960), Campbell and colleagues state that public policy attitudes are based, not on ideology, but on people's "primitive self-interest" (pg. 205). More recently, the debate over the
role of citizens' self-interests in political choices has received considerable attention (Mansbridge, 1992; Sears and Funk, 1991; Feldman, 1982; Sears et al., 1980; Sears et al, 1979). Perhaps the greatest contribution to the field of research is Anthony Downs' *Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957). It is Downs who is credited with the beginning of economic models and rational choice theory from which the self-interested depiction of human beings has grown.

Early theories of self-interested behavior were not isolated to the world of politics but were incorporated into biology and the natural sciences as well. Charles Darwin (1859), for example, defined the world according to fitness and survival. In his view, human nature is one of competition, where the strong survive at the expense of the weak. Those who do not act in accordance with their own material interests are doomed to extinction. Not unlike Hobbes' depiction of the world, the Darwinian view suggests that self-interest and preservation of the self are the basis for human action. This biological interpretation of human political behavior has experienced a recent resurgence (Masters, 1983) and has had tremendous influence on the study of human behavior.

Although the self-interested nature of human beings is well developed in political theory, the incorporation of social psychology into the field of politics has raised serious questions about both the desire and the ability of citizens to pursue their own self-interest. We now know that human beings are not cold, calculating thinkers, but rather that they interpret information imperfectly and are subject to bias (Lord, Ross and Lepper, 1979). People are often driven by unconscious motives that influence their interpretation of events and cloud "rational" judgments (Kunda, 1990). In more modern
times, the debate over self-interest has revolved around the seemingly contradictory findings of social psychology. As we will soon see, unconscious motives have been strongly linked to people’s policy preferences. In many cases, these motives are based on predispositions acquired early in life and have been labeled “symbolic politics” (Sears et al, 1980; Sniderman and Tetlock, 1986; Tedin, 1994). According to the symbolic politics theory, there is a very limited role for self-interest in people’s political views.

A Theory of Hierarchical Interests

In the existing literature, there appears to be a dichotomy between self-interest and other mechanisms for decision making, such as group conflict or symbolic politics. To date, there has been no systematic attempt to find the linkages between self-interest and other influences on political attitudes and behavior. In the upcoming chapters, I hope to demonstrate that there is a relationship between self-interest, group-level interest, and more broad considerations. More precisely, I believe that this relationship is hierarchical, with self-interest occupying the top tier.

In addition, this study seeks to test assumptions in the existing literature that have, thus far, remained untested. Past studies on self-interest assume that the decision calculus is the same for those with or without a tangible self-interest in the matter. Therefore, researchers conclude that, if people with and without a legitimate self-interest reach similar conclusions, then self-interest must not be the motivating factor for either group. I believe that this assumption may be flawed and that the
considerations one makes in any policy choice may vary, depending on whether or not self-interest is involved. The assumption of an identical decision-making process is the basis for many scholars’ conclusions that self-interest is not an important component in people’s political choices. If we question this assumption, these findings fall into question as well, and we may draw new conclusions about the rationality of the American citizenry.

In the following chapters, I will empirically test the theory that people form political attitudes based on a decision tree, where self-interest is at the top of the hierarchy. In the absence of direct material self-interest, people rely on other rational alternatives such as group-interest and larger sociotropic concerns. This theory is based on the assumption that the considerations one has for a specific policy vary according to the interests that are activated. Self-interested individuals may use different calculations than do those without self-interest. I will also test the theory that people with self-interest are more likely to engage in political action than are those without a direct personal stake in the issue.

In chapter two, I will take an in-depth look at past research on the role of self-interest in people’s political attitudes and behavior. A review of the self-interest literature shows several shortcomings in the current research, which will be discussed in depth. In addition, I will consider the evidence for the importance of self-interest on people’s political behavior. Reviews of interests lower on the hierarchy are included, including both group and sociotropic concerns. The issue of symbolic politics is also covered as it relates to findings about self-interest. Throughout the discussion, I will consider the influence of rational choice theory on the study of self-interest.
In chapter three, I will introduce a theory of hierarchical interests, whereby self-interest dominates and is followed by group and sociotropic interests. According to the hierarchical interest theory, people progress through a series of considerations when forming an opinion on an issue. The first consideration is whether or not the issue impacts them personally. If the issue does have direct personal consequences, people will form opinions based on these interests. If the issue does not have personal implications, the individual next considers the impact of the policy on groups with whom they identify. Under this condition, attitudes are based on group-interests and beliefs about how the policy will impact the group. In the absence of both group and self-interests, people must then consider broader sociotropic or national concerns. Opinions are then based on the costs and benefits that the policy would have on society as a whole. Similarly, action for or against the policy is determined, in part, by the level of interest that is relevant. People with a strong self-interest will be more likely to engage in political action than those with lower level interests. This chapter covers the theory and the potential limitations of the theory, including its applicability to "hard" issues and not necessarily to "easy" issues.

Chapter four is the first of two empirical tests of the theory. Using undergraduate students at the Ohio State University, the theory of hierarchical interests is tested in an experimental setting. Students are assigned to receive one of four random treatments that include combinations of self and group interests. Students are asked questions about the university's adoption of senior comprehensive examinations that would be required for graduation. The information about the university's adoption of an exam policy is fictitious, which allows for manipulation of the impact of the exams.
Some students are led to believe that the exams will impact them personally, since they will be implemented as soon as next quarter. Other students are told that the exams will impact incoming students only, thereby involving no direct self-interest. In addition, students also receive either a group or no-group-interest manipulation. Some students are told that women do more poorly on standardized tests, while others are not given this information. Together, the self and group-interest manipulations form a four treatment, 2x2 design. This design allows isolation of the causal mechanisms through random assignment of subjects. Manipulated interests are then evaluated to compare the effects of self and group-interests on opinions towards comprehensive exams. Also included in this chapter is an analysis of likely participation against senior exams. Students are asked a number of questions concerning their likely participation in protest activity, petition circulation, and campus meetings on the topic. According to the theory of hierarchical interests, the level of interests involved will influence people’s political participation and behavior.

The following chapter, chapter five, retests the theory using survey data from a large-scale state survey. As part of the Buckeye State Poll, 500 adults are asked questions concerning the issue of unemployment. Self-interest in the form of respondents’ job security is expected to influence people’s opinions toward the dependent variable, feelings towards government spending on unemployment compensation. In the absence of self-interest, group-interests or sociotropic concerns will influence opinions. Group-interest is measured by the respondents’ feelings of closeness to unemployed people and whether or not any people in their inner circle are

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1 The Buckeye State Poll is a monthly poll of Ohioans conducted by the Center for Survey Research at the Ohio State University.
currently unemployed. This study also includes analysis of response times on the question of government spending on unemployment. Using an event history or duration model to measure latencies, we can see if self-interest influences response times to the question. If the theory of hierarchical interests is correct, we should expect self-interest to result in quicker response times, since this is the first consideration in the hierarchy. In the absence of self-interest, response times should be slower, since additional interests must be considered.

The final chapter is a conclusion and a discussion of the importance of the findings. Here I recap the findings of the previous chapters in a broader context and discuss the implications for the findings on the study of public opinion and political behavior. I also discuss the normative implications for the research findings on the theory of democratic rule. The chapter will end with suggestions for future research.

The findings of this research are important for many reasons. First, it seeks to address what is among the most important questions in the study of political science: Are citizens competent to self govern? In exploring the role of self-interest and other considerations in people’s policy preferences, this study is important to the field of public opinion. As mentioned earlier, the findings of the research presented in the next several chapters will also have broader implications for democratic theory. I will also examine the impact of self-interest on political participation, which makes this study of interest to those who study mass political behavior. In sum, this research is important to the study of public opinion, mass political behavior, political psychology, and democratic theory, among others.
Thus far, the bodies of literature on self-interest, group-interest and sociotropic politics have all remained fairly isolated from one another. Even when group-interest and self-interest have been considered in the same body of research (Bobo, 1983), the two are seen as a dichotomy, where either one or the other is present. There has been little effort to integrate these three theories into a comprehensive model of attitude formation. The theory of hierarchical interests presented in the next chapter is one such attempt. However, before we can integrate these three separate theories into one, it is useful to review the existing literature on each.

**The Role of Self-Interest in Political Attitudes**

According to the “Cardinal Rule of Policy”, Garrett Hardin (1977) warns that one should “never ask a person to act against his own self-interest” (pg. 27). Despite the “cardinal rule”, the notion of self-interest as a determinant of people’s policy preferences and political behaviors has a large number of critics. Debates about the role of self-interest continue to crop up in journals of political science, psychology, economics, sociology, and family studies, to name but a few. Some have even extended the debate to the field of “sociobiology”, emphasizing the evolutionary role of self-
interest (Masters, 1983). What follows is a brief discussion of the debate surrounding the notion of self-interest and its importance in political attitudes and behaviors.

In order to consider the role of self-interest in people’s political decisions, we must first come to a general understanding of what is meant by “self-interest.” Self-interest, in the tradition of neoclassical economics, assumes three basic psychological conditions (Sears and Funk, 1991). The first and most important assumption is that of rationality. Theories of self-interest assume that people are rational actors who reach decisions through a process of cost-benefit analysis. Many researchers add that the cost and benefits of any given outcome are uncertain. Therefore, people must weigh the expected costs and benefits of the outcome and the probabilities associated with each in order to reach the most rational decision (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Edwards 1954; Feather, 1982; Sears and Funk, 1991).

The second assumption borrowed from social psychological traditions is that of materialism. According to this assumption, material wants and needs take priority over other desires. This assumption is perhaps best illustrated by Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, human action is motivated by five basic needs which are ordered according to their importance: physiological needs; safety and security; affection and belongingness; esteem; and lastly, self-actualization. The ordering of the needs is important, with physiological needs having priority. Subsequent needs only motivate human behavior after the more basic needs have been met. According to this theory, we would expect material wants to be most important. Therefore, materialistic needs are used to measure self-interest as a minimal requirement. We would expect material self-interest to be the strongest.
The third of the assumptions surrounding the theory of self-interested behavior is that of egoism. Simply put, egoism states that the costs and benefits to one's self are weighed more heavily than are costs and benefits to others or to society as a whole. According to the elaboration likelihood theory, personal involvement in an issue will lead to more careful analysis of the costs and benefits and to the merits of the arguments for and against the policy (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). This personal involvement is essential to the self-interest theory, which is usually defined narrowly and does not include the interests of one's social groups or even family (See Campbell, 1975 and Wallach and Wallach, 1983 for a discussion on the dominance of egoism in rational models).

Given these three basic assumptions, self-interest has been routinely defined as a rational, personal, material, and imminent stake in the outcome of an event or policy. For the most part, self-interest has been defined, not according to theoretical principles, but according to our ability to operationalize the construct. The most stringent restriction in our self-interest definition is the requirement that there be a material cost or benefit involved. One can easily imagine that people support certain policies because it makes them feel good to help others (Stoker, 1992). Others oppose government policies on the basis of philosophical beliefs, such as the belief that government has grown too large. The affect that people have towards certain policies, whether positive or negative, may be based on their need and motivation to feel good. However, if we include affect and feelings in the definition of self-interest, the concept becomes so all-inclusive as to be non-falsifiable. Therefore, we limit the operationalization of the concept of self-interest to concrete interests and avoid the more subjective measures.
Self-interest has also been defined as strictly personal. Again, we can easily imagine circumstances where this definition may not apply. People are obviously concerned for their family members. Furthermore, the impact of a policy on a family member or close personal friend may have impacts on one's own life. People are not immune to the economic and political struggles of those who are close to them. For example, respondents who had friends and relatives in Vietnam took a greater interest in the conflict (Lau, Brown and Sears, 1978). However, we cannot always measure the impact of friends and family on individual's attitudes since we cannot easily determine how far the circle of influence extends. Do we consider siblings, cousins, neighbors, or even co-workers?

In addition, the impact of friends and family on one's personal self-interest varies across individuals. A relative's loss of her job, for example, is much more meaningful to someone who vacations or socializes with that relative on a regular basis. Surely a loss of income would hinder the friend or relative's ability to share the costs of their regular interactions. The relationships that one considers important vary, such that we cannot simply say that sisters, cousins, etc., always impact one personally. Again, the inclusion of all personal contacts into the self-interest definition becomes so broad as to be meaningless. While one could argue for the influence of a few key influences, it is hard to objectively define these interests for everyone. Subjective measures of interest would likely blur the distinction between self and group interests, as people would say that things that did not impact them personally were of interest to them. Most importantly, the assumption of egoism is not that others never matter, simply that the immediate self is most important. While we cannot count concern for friends and
acquaintances in measures of self-interest, there is some consensus in the existing literature that the immediate family (children and spouse) may qualify as an immediate extension of the self. Surely things that impact one’s most immediate family will have implications for that person as well.

In many definitions of self-interest, the imminent or immediate impact of the event or policy is stressed. Sears and Funk (1991) define self-interest as the “short to medium-term impact on the material well-being of an individual’s own personal life.” The timing of the event is again important for our measurement of self-interest. With the assumption of timing relaxed, one could argue that people are ignoring immediate short-term impacts in order to pursue their long-term self-interest. Thus, we could expect young people to support Social Security programs at the same rate as the elderly because they are anticipating future impacts of the program. However, if we allow long-term projections into the analysis, we can always find some abstract form of self-interest. People may oppose policies that do not affect them, with the belief that those policies will extend to them at some unforeseen point in the future. The definition, again, becomes non-falsifiable.

While the operational definition of self-interests may seem rather narrow, this narrow definition is useful for a number of reasons. First, we have already discussed the need for falsifiable hypotheses. More comprehensive definitions of self-interest would be meaningless, as we could find “self-interest” anywhere. Second, by adopting a narrow definition of self-interest, we are reducing our chance of making a type one error. That is, we err on the side of caution by excluding considerations that may not truly be self-interested. If we can identify cases of self-interested attitude formation
with the strictest of definitions, then we can be confident that our results are real and that the impact of self-interest on attitude formation is significant. With that said, however, we must also wonder if, in the case of null results, our definition is too stringent. This may, in fact, prove to be the case, as the majority of studies on self-interest have failed to produce the expected results. There is little or weak evidence that people form opinions on the basis of their own immediate, material interests.

In the past couple of decades, a number of researchers have attempted to sort out the process of attitude formation. According to Hobbes' definition of human nature, we would expect people to consider their own well-being first and base their political attitudes on the personal costs and benefits that would result. However, a number of scholars have found that this does not appear to be the case. Huddy (1989) found that age is not related to people's support for Social Security, as one would expect. Young people were just as favorable as the elderly to the program, implying that if self-interest is involved, it is not the imminent material interest required by our strict definition. In addition, susceptibility to the draft was a weak determinant of opposition to the Vietnam War (Lau, et al., 1978; Mueller, 1973), even though the material interests of those who would be drafted are obviously greater than those who would not be.

The most damaging claim for the self-interest hypothesis involves attitudes towards various racial policies and programs. In a series of studies on white attitudes toward school busing and desegregation, the self-interest hypothesis continuously falls short. White attitudes toward busing for desegregation seem to be unrelated to whether or not people have children in public schools. Nor is there an impact on busing attitudes according to whether or not busing has been discussed or threatened in the
respondent's area (McConahay, 1982; Sears et. al. 1979; McClendon and Pestello, 1983).

In other race-related studies, Huddy and Sears (1989) find no evidence for self-interested attitudes in non-Hispanics' opposition to bilingual education. One would expect people with children to be more opposed to bilingual education since they would argue that time would be taken away from other, more traditional subjects like math and reading. However, the opposite of our expectations appears to be true. Non-Hispanics' with children in these bilingual programs are actually more likely to favor bilingual education than are people without children in these programs. Several explanations for this finding are possible.

Huddy and Sears (1989) argue that people are not acting in their self-interest but are responding to prejudice towards Hispanics. However, we must be careful before dismissing the self-interest hypothesis, as other alternative explanations are possible. For instance, the threat of bilingual education may be far worse than the program itself. Therefore, people whose children are already enrolled in such programs see that the program does work and does not detract from other subject areas. These same people may have opposed the program before it was implemented but changed their minds over the course of time. Others can only speculate about the effects of such programs, if they were to come, and they may be acting in their own self-interest by opposing the changes. That is, the estimated costs of the program may be greater than the actual costs, causing people to "rationally" oppose the program in advance, but not once it is implemented. Furthermore, people in areas where bilingual education is being implemented are likely to be exposed to information and arguments about the benefits
of the program. Therefore, the benefits of bilingual education would be emphasized more in areas where the program is in place, and the self-interest calculation may be biased in favor of the benefits of the program. In addition, Huddy and Sears may have the causality reversed, in that these programs are more likely to be implemented in areas where feelings towards bilingual education were already favorable. In a study of attitudes toward school busing issues, Sears and Allen (1984) find that the influence of self-interest appears to disappear after program implementation. Again, the fear of what is to come may be greater than the actual costs incurred once the program is in place. The respondents may be overestimating the expected costs of the program in their overall evaluation of the program. Once the program is in place, the cost estimate is reduced.

There has been a fair amount of research into the role of self-interest in other areas as well, including attitudes towards unemployment policies and tax-reduction initiatives. Kiewiet (1983) for example, argues against the notion of self-interest when he finds that personal unemployment does not predict support for Democratic candidates for office. The Kiewiet study illustrates one of the flaws found in much of the self-interest research. Authors often infer onto the public the impact that they believe self-interest should have. Rather than examine the process of attitude formation, we simply look for a single expected outcome. In this case, the outcome is Democratic support, and failure to find the outcome results in the conclusion that self-interest is not important. The problem is that people may be self-interested and produce different outcomes, depending on the reason they attribute to their unemployment. It is not safe to assume that the unemployed would automatically choose the Democrats.
because they tend to be more supportive of unemployment programs and social programs. If people believe in a more conservative role of government in the economy, they may choose to support the Republicans. People may believe that unemployment is caused by interference in the free market. Imagine the logger who loses her job because liberal environmentalists pass legislation to protect forests that provide the habitat for the spotted owl. The logger, in acting in her own self-interest, would support Republicans. Similarly, many people may blame their job loss on unionization and the increasing burdens placed on businesses to provide childcare and health insurance. The link between unemployment and party support needs to be better specified by looking at the reasons people attribute to unemployment. As Stoker (1992) warns, we must identify people's goals before we can determine whether or not they are pursuing those goals rationally.

Feldman (1982) makes a similar claim about the importance of how people assign responsibility for a problem. The author examines the attitudes of people who have suffered a loss in personal income, towards various economic policies. If the problem is viewed as a government problem, then people are more likely to act in a typically "self-interested" manner and favor government-aid programs. However, due to belief in the free market, many people do not see a connection between personal income and government activities. They do not, therefore, favor governmental policies because they do not see economic problems in a political context. Returning to the classical economic models of politics, the belief that the economy is not a government problem would reduce the overall expected utility calculation. If there is little or no
expected gain from government policies towards the economy, then it is not rational to expend the costs of these programs, since there are assumed to be no real benefits.

There are a few studies that claim to find evidence of self-interested attitudes. The most convincing evidence comes from a study on Proposition 13 in California, which involved property tax reductions. Sears and Citrin (1982) find that the initiative to reduce the property tax was favored more by homeowners, who would have the most to gain. Similarly, public employees were more likely to oppose such tax cuts because this would result in government spending cuts. Green and Gerken (1989) also found that smokers were far more likely to oppose cigarette taxes and smoking restrictions than non-smokers were (see also Dixon et al. 1991). In looking at these reports, Kinder (1998) claims that self-interest appears to be significant when the benefits and costs are “clear, imminent, and well publicized” (see also Fiorina, 2000).

Several other studies have claimed to find a role for self-interest in political attitudes, but some are seriously flawed and cannot be considered concrete evidence. For example, Wolpert and Gimpel (1998) find that gun owners are more likely to oppose gun control legislation and conclude that self-interest is the motivating factor. The authors fail, however, to establish a clear line of causality. It is quite possible that the types of people who purchase guns have different policy attitudes towards guns than do people who do not own guns. Therefore, it is this approval of the gun culture that causes people to own guns and to reject government policies limiting gun ownership. Crowe and Bailey (1995) fall into a similar trap in looking at self-interest and legislative proposals to control drunk driving. People who drink may be less likely to favor legislation controlling alcohol due to their feelings about alcohol and not any measure
of self-interest. The authors do, however, find that parents with children under the age of 18 are less likely to support parental liability for their children's underage drinking than are people without children, suggesting a self-interested effect.

The defense of self-interest in political science seems, at times, too adamant. Despite numerous findings where self-interest does not appear significant, researchers continue to cling to the idea that people are thoughtful, self-interested decision-makers. The defense of self-interest is based on the belief that a democratic nation requires a well-informed citizenry. If citizens fail to act in their own self-interests, then they cannot represent true public preferences or perform their basic duty to hold political elites accountable (DelliCarpini, and Keeter, 1996). We are hesitant to dismiss the notion of self-interest since doing so has normative implications for the theory of democracy.

Overall, the evidence for the role of self-interest in the formation of people's political attitudes is weak. Self-interest appears to be relevant only when the stakes are unusually clear and the threats to the self are especially large (Sears and Citrin, 1982; Kinder and Sears, 1981). In a recent review article on self-interest in politics, the authors concluded that "self-interest ordinarily does not have much effect upon the ordinary citizen's sociopolitical attitudes... there are only occasional exceptions (Sears and Funk, 1991)^2". The failure of the self-interest hypothesis to explain people's political attitudes leads us to the obvious question: If not self-interest, then what determines people's attitudes?

^2 It is important to note that the role of self-interest changes when we look at political behavior instead of attitudes. Later in this chapter, I will discuss, in more detail, the role of self-interest on people's political actions.
If Not Self-Interest, Then What?

Given the apparent inability of citizens to form self-interested preferences, several theories of attitude-formation have been advanced to explain the very attitudes that the self-interest argument fails to resolve. Among them, the dominant view is that, especially in terms of racial attitudes, people possess symbolic attitudes based on predispositions that are acquired early in life. Others believe that these attitudes can be explained by examining the conflict and competition that exists between groups vying for valuable resources. More idealistic studies claim that people are not driven by self-interest, but rather, by sociotropic values and the public good. It is important to examine each of these counterclaims and the impact that each has on our understanding of the self-interested citizen.

Symbolic Politics

According to the symbolic politics theory of attitude formation, people acquire learned affect towards objects early in life. These learned responses to objects are the results of early experiences or socialization, which influence later adult attitudes. They take many forms; the most commonly recognized of these being party affiliation, ideology, and racial prejudice. More importantly, they exert substantial influence over other attitudes, as new attitude objects are encountered (Sears and Funk, 1991). According to the theory, new attitudes form as the result of cognitive consistency pressures to make adult attitudes consistent with pre-adult socialization (Sears et al., 22).
1979). Thus, underlying predispositions from early socialization are activated by current events. For example, partisan predispositions are activated by policy and candidate alternatives (Campbell et al, 1960, Feldman, 1988; Sears et al, 1980). Likewise, black candidates for office and issues centering on race activate racial prejudices (Sears and Kinder, 1971).

In attempting to explain public opinions towards government spending on childcare, Henderson and others (1995) find that self-interest is a weak determinant of opinions when compared to symbolic politics variables. Unfortunately, this study falls short in the measure of self-interest. Self-interest is measured as whether or not people have children, ages of their children, and various other factors such as income, race, and gender. The study fails to ask the real self-interest question: Do you need childcare for your children? We cannot even tell, from the study, which families consist of two working parents versus a family with a stay-at-home mom. Furthermore, several variables that could reflect self-interest are highly significant, including family income, age of respondent, and gender.

Although symbolic politics can refer to attitude formation on a large number of issues, the overwhelming number of studies in political science have focused on racial attitudes. According to the symbolic politics theory, early socialization creates negative affect towards racial minorities. These feelings are then activated by events in adulthood and result in what has been termed symbolic racism. Accordingly, attitudes towards race-oriented policies are not the result of self-interest, but are a reflection of an underlying prejudice against blacks.
One of the earliest studies on the symbolic racism topic examined white support for a black mayoral candidate in a suburb of Los Angeles, California (Sears and Kinder, 1971). The authors looked at a number of indicators that were intended to measure racial threat, including threat of neighborhood desegregation, economic threat from blacks, racial busing, and fear of black crime. These factors were then used to explain differences in evaluations of the black challenger for mayor. The authors found little evidence to show that these perceived threats lead to candidate evaluation. Thus, they concluded that self-interest, even when widely defined as perceptions of threat, did not contribute to opposition to the black mayoral candidate. Rather, people who were not threatened were equally as likely to oppose the candidate. Therefore, the opposition to the mayor must have been due to underlying prejudice against blacks in the form of symbolic racism.

It is important to note several things about this early study. First, the evidence does not necessarily rule out the importance of self-interest in candidate evaluation. Rather, people who opposed the candidate may have had some interest in doing so that was not racially based. Rather, it is possible that they opposed some specific policy he supported that was against their direct self-interest. Second, the measures of self-interest used in this study are more in line with theories of group-conflict, which we shall discuss later. Finally, even if self-interest is excluded as the cause for candidate preferences, symbolic racism is not, by default, the only explanation. Rather, people are cognitive misers and cannot contemplate and make sense of all the information available to them. Therefore, they may judge candidates based on media cues, interest group support, or other available heuristics.
In subsequent studies on symbolic racism, the measures of self-interest are more in line with the assumptions that were laid out previously. That is, self-interest is a direct, immediate, material concern to the individual. A well-known series of studies focuses on the issue of school busing for desegregation. As mentioned previously, self-interest is measured by whether or not people have children in public schools and whether or not busing is an issue in their area (Bobo, 1983; Sears et al, 1979). These measures of self-interest indicate that whites do not oppose busing for self-interested reasons. Those people who do not have children in public schools, for instance, are equally as likely to oppose school busing. Measures of prejudice and negative feelings towards blacks, however, do predict opposition to busing, leading one to conclude that symbolic racism is the answer. Similar conclusions are reached when the issue is affirmative action (Jacobson, 1985).

The literature on symbolic politics has received mixed support. The most valid criticism is that proponents of symbolic racism confuse the traditional American values of individualism with racism (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993; Sniderman and Tetlock, 1986). They contend that opposition to race-targeted policies is merely a reflection of the belief in a limited role for government. This research seems to suggest that opposition to programs is due to ideological values, not to racial prejudice (Sniderman et al, 1991). Bobo and Kluegel (1993) find that whites oppose policies that are based on equality of outcomes more than programs that are directed at providing equal opportunities. They conclude that this is evidence for the fact that white opposition to race-based programs is based on people’s beliefs in individualism and the American work ethic. McClendon (1985) finds little support for the symbolic racism argument when compared to rational
choice explanations for opposition to busing. The author finds that individuals who oppose busing do so because they believe the program has too many costs and too few benefits. Therefore, people are simply acting in ways that maximize utility. Although McClendon finds no support for the symbolic racism theory, the author does find an indirect effect of old-fashioned racism, where prejudice influences perceptions of the costs and rewards. It is important to note that these measures of "prejudice" may be tapping into some measure of group conflict that would "rationally" influence people's cost-benefit analyses.3

The symbolic politics theory, although open to criticisms and debate, does provide some useful insight into people's political attitudes. Most notably, attitudes cannot be isolated from early predispositions and experiences. People often interpret new political information according to existing beliefs or biases. In the absence of clear and strong interests, people may rely on symbolic attitudes to supply meaning to political events. However, these symbolic attitudes may not be devoid of self or group interests. It is possible that people simply determined self-interests early in life and based their subsequent beliefs on these early interests.

3 Some of the items used as measures of racial prejudice may more appropriately be labeled "group conflict" as they deal with people's attitudes towards intergroup contact. For example, subjects are asked if they would prefer their children to go to all white schools vs. mixed schools. Also, people were asked if they prefer to live in a white neighborhood or one that is more mixed. These measures and others may be tapping into subjective feelings of threat from minorities. Furthermore, the question about how people would feel if a black family moved into their block may reflect perceptions of economic interests, as some whites feel that minorities would decrease their property values.


**Realistic Group Conflict**

Given the absence of apparently self-interested behavior, we cannot automatically assume that symbolic politics is the dominant attitude-forming influence. One theory of attitude formation seeks to explain the same results that the symbolic politics theory addresses. That is, in the absence of material self-interest, why do so many whites oppose racial policies? The answer may be that people form attitudes about political issues according to the levels of competition and conflict between the various groups that the issue would impact. Several studies find evidence that intergroup relations are by nature more competitive than interindividual relations (Insko et al, 1992; Insko et al 1987, McCallum et al, 1985). Realistic group conflict theory argues that this natural competition between groups leads to feelings of ethnocentrism and hostility toward the other group (Campbell, 1965; LeVine and Campbell, 1972). This idea is not totally devoid of self-interest. Rather, people’s evaluations of a policy are based more broadly on how it will affect them and people like them and can be regarded as a form of extended self-interest. The subject no longer thinks in terms of the individual self but in terms of the collective self (Dawes et al. 1988, 1990).

Realistic group conflict is rooted in the idea of social identity theory. An individual’s concept of the self transcends beyond the physical self to membership in various social categories. Therefore, one identifies not only as an individual, but also as a member of the group (Brewer and Schneider, 1990). This group identity results in a sense of collective interest. Social membership and collective interest then influence political opinions. For example, Converse (1964) found that, even when evaluating the political parties, survey respondents often spoke in terms of the benefits that the parties
could bring to the various social groups with which they associated. Simon (1995) argues that “people often identify their economic welfare with the welfare of one or more of the groups to which they belong” and refers to actions which are beneficial to one’s own group as “rational altruism”.

According to Lau (1989), the groups with whom people identify and the cohesion of the group are based on three factors. The first is salience. The salience, or temporary prominence of a group, is determined largely by political elites and the way in which they frame the political issues of the day. For instance, if the political debate is based on women’s rights and related issues, black women may identify more with women than with blacks. If, however, leaders tend to campaign and focus on racial issues, the same women may identify first as blacks and less so as women. There is some recent work on the competition between various group identities in these cases (Gay and Tate, 1998), but we are just beginning to understand the dynamics of competing group identities. The second determinant of group identity is social density. The relationship between group identity and social density is curvilinear. Both extremely small numbers and large numbers of group members in close proximity do not promote group identification. However, moderate numbers of one’s own group, in the presence of a competing group, results in increased identification with in-group members. The third factor is similarity. Group identity is increased if you perceive the people around you to be more like you. For example, we would expect group cohesion among whites in a community to be stronger if they also share the same religious background. Also, people who share the same values are more likely to identify closely as a group (Lau, 1989).
Much of the work on realistic group conflict and group identity focuses on groups defined by race and ethnicity. Judd and colleagues (1995) look at the attitudes of black and white college students towards each other. Racial identity is also found to be a strong predictor of attitudes towards social policies, even when controlling for other factors such as education and income (Knoke, 1979). This would suggest that blacks who do not benefit directly from the policies still favor programs designed to help the group get ahead. Others consider the effects of group conflict more directly. Glaser (1994), for example, finds that racial group conflict does lead to white opposition towards racial policies. Similarly, Bobo (1983) finds that group conflict measures, which include objective as well as subjective measures of threat, successfully predict white opposition to school busing policies.

Group conflict motives of behavior need not be based on race alone. Studies of various social classes demonstrate that income can also cause feelings of group identity (Feldman, 1983). In fact, social class conflict has been the focus of heavy debate since the times of Karl Marx (1848), who claimed that society was divided on the basis of social class. Other researchers focus on gender identities (Gurin, 1985) and find that women’s collective identities are a powerful force in political choices. Whatever the group, it is apparent that group identity and collective interests are quite often reliable predictors of political attitudes.

When looking at the role of group affiliations on political attitudes (Gurin, 1985; Feldman, 1983; Knoke, 1979), it is often difficult to separate group effects from individual interests. For example, African Americans may favor affirmative action policies because they believe they will benefit their racial group. It may be, however,
that those policies benefit the individual in their own job search, with little or no regard for the group as a whole. Therefore, when measuring group interests, we must look for an effect of group identification over and above any measure of self-interest. In other words, is there an independent relationship between group identification and policy attitudes once we have controlled for measures of individual interests? Also, it is important to note that self-interest and group-interests are not in conflict. The assumption of egoism simply states that the self comes first, not that the self is the only consideration.

**Sociotropic Interests**

Another theory involving collective identities is the sociotropic politics theory. The difference between group conflict theory and sociotropic politics is that (1) sociotropic preferences are for the common good and (2) no conflict is necessary to induce collective considerations. Rather, people do what is good for the country as a whole. In other words, people are often motivated by the public interest, and they evaluate policies and political leaders according to expected societal benefits (Reich, 1988; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Sears and Funk, 1991).

Sociotropic politics is often equated with the study of economic interests and voting behavior. Self-interested people would evaluate their own economic circumstances in deciding their vote preferences. The research in this area, however, shows that, rather than voting according to one's own pocketbook, people base their
votes on overall perceptions of the national economy (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979, 1981)\textsuperscript{4}.

The evidence for sociotropic voting does not necessarily exclude a role for self-interested behavior in the process. Rather, Kinder et al. (1979) conclude that people's own economic circumstances influence their perception of the national economy. In this indirect way, self-interest has a weak, but notable, effect on the formation of people's economic judgments and, thus, their voting behavior. In addition, Kiewiet (1983) does find a modest, but direct, effect of personal finances on presidential voting.

Like the other theories on attitude formation, the evidence on sociotropic politics is mixed\textsuperscript{5}. Again, however, there are some valuable insights to consider. People do not always form opinions about political issues on the basis of short-term, material self-interests. Rather, they may consider the potential benefits and costs of political decisions to their social groups and even the country as a whole.

**The Relationship Between Interest and Behavior**

According to economic models of politics and public choice theory, people must act in ways that are consistent with their goals and the maximization of expected utility. Simply stated, preferences determine behavior (Aldrich, 1993). As such, we would expect there to be a direct relationship between self-interest and political behavior. We

\textsuperscript{4} The sociotropic politics literature differs from the group conflict and self-interest literature in that it deals largely with political behavior (i.e. voting), while the other theories place more emphasis on attitudes. As I shall argue, both attitudes and behaviors play an important part in a theory of hierarchical interests. We need to consider a comprehensive model that includes measures of attitudes and behaviors and examines the relationship between them.

\textsuperscript{5} See the debate on pocketbook vs. economic voting. (Kinder, Adams, and Gronke, 1989; Kramer, 1983; Rivers, 1987; Marcus, 1988).
must remember, however, that this may not always be the case. The basis of rationality is that people weigh the costs and benefits of taking any course of action. Therefore, we would expect self-interest to impact people's benefit assessments. Something that promises a direct, material benefit to the self will be weighed more heavily than more abstract benefits. However, this does not mean that self-interest will always result in political action, as self-interest does nothing to the cost part of the equation. If the cost is greater or the expected probability of change, given action, is small, self-interest may still fail to predict political action.

Why does self-interest increase people's expected benefits? The answer may be found in analyses of the various opinion strengths that people assign to self and group interests. Boninger et al (1995) find that self-interest elicits stronger attitudes than does social identification. Yet social identification has stronger implications on the importance of attitudes than on measures of value relevance. This suggests a hierarchy of preferences. People who have stronger attitudes about a policy will receive more utility from that policy than will people with weaker attitudes. Therefore, we expect that, if behavior is generated by a cost-benefit analysis, people with stronger attitudes will be more likely to engage in actions to bring about desired ends. As expected, Sivacek and Crano (1982) find self-interest to be a moderator between attitudes and behavior, with self-interested attitudes producing greater likelihood of political action.

Therefore, given equal costs and expected probabilities of results, people with self-interest are more likely to participate than people without a personal stake in the issue. Green and Cowden (1992) do find that people who had a personal interest in the school busing policy were more likely to engage in protest activities. Similarly, women
who worked outside the home were more likely to participate in pro-ERA groups (Tedin et al., 1977; Mueller and Dimieri, 1982), and people personally impacted by the Three Mile Island incident were more likely to engage in anti-nuclear protests (Walsh and Warland, 1983). Also, age was found to be strongly related to students’ willingness to participate in campaign work against Michigan’s drinking age proposal (Sivacek and Crano, 1982). The evidence seems to support the notion that self-interest is a determinant in people’s willingness to engage in political action.⁶

This is not to say that in the absence of self-interest, people do not engage in political action. In fact, Mason (1984) finds evidence for a group dimension to political protest. The author argues that participation in race-related riots is based on the goal of reducing discrimination. Others find evidence of group-based interests on evaluations of the economy (Conover, 1985) and on the decision to turn out to vote (Morton, 1991). Simply put, group-interests do matter. However, I expect these interests to be less successful in predicting action than are immediate self-interests.

The debate over sociotropic interests and political behavior is particularly sticky. Most of the contention has been around the issue of sociotropic and pocketbook voting. Cross-sectional studies suggest that self-interest has no role in economic voting (Kinder, Adams, and Gronke, 1989). Others question the use of cross-sectional data (Kramer, 1983) and find pocketbook voting to be significant with other types of analysis (Rivers, 1987; Marcus, 1988). Therefore, I chose to avoid the methodological debate involved in economic voting and examine sociotropic politics with other issues.

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⁶ This is not to say that there is a consensus on this issue. Diana Mutz (1998) argues that it is only when the collective is threatened that people join neighborhood action groups (pp. 103).
In the next chapter, I develop a theory of hierarchical interests, which integrates theories of self-interest, group-interest, and sociotropic politics. Throughout the remaining chapters, the discussion will return, at times, to the studies discussed in this chapter. In doing so, I hope to address some of the disagreements between earlier theories and place the new theory of attitude formation and political behavior in a broader context.
CHAPTER 3
A THEORY OF HIERARCHICAL INTERESTS

Given the various theories explored thus far, it seems as if one interest does not dominate people’s decisions consistently, but that interests vary across issues and circumstances. In this chapter, I will develop a theory of hierarchical interests. This theory integrates previous work on self-interest, group conflict, and sociotropic politics. These three theories are combined to form a comprehensive model of attitude formation and political behavior.

It is important to recognize that, like the individual theories of political attitudes, a more comprehensive theory also has limitations in its applicability. The theory of hierarchical interests presented here may be limited to what Carmines and Stimpson (1980) refer to as “hard issues” and may be more problematic when dealing with “easy issues” since they involve an immediate, pre-formed response.

In many circumstances, individuals have an automatic response to various issues. These immediate, affective responses are the result of many factors, some of which may include socialization, previous experiences, group-conflict, and basic utility calculations. In their article on issue voting, Carmines and Stimpson (1980) refer to these types of issues as “easy issues”. According to the authors, an easy issue is one that has become “so ingrained over a long period that it structures voters’ ‘gut responses’ to candidates and political parties”. Although the definition used by
Carmines and Stimpson refers to issue voting, the classification is useful in understanding opinion formation and political behavior more generally. For the purpose of this study, the discussion of easy issues will refer to those issues that elicit an automatic response or judgment, whether or not that response structures opinions towards political parties or candidates.

Unlike "easy issues", some issues do not prompt pre-existing responses, but rather require "a sophisticated decisions calculus (Carmines and Stimpson, 1980)". In the case of issue voting, these hard issues result in careful consideration of policy preferences in people's electoral decisions. Again, the concept may be applied outside the realm of issue voting. Hard issues are those issues that require thoughtful cost-benefit analysis to reach an opinion and most closely resemble the calculated decision process described by Anthony Downs (1957).

When examining the role of self-interest on people's political attitudes and behaviors, it is important to consider this distinction between hard and easy issues. The "gut responses" brought on by easy issues are difficult to explain. These responses may be the result of socialization, past experience, or outright prejudice. Many of the past studies on self-interest deal with these types of "easy" issues. Issues dealing with race, for instance, tend to prompt immediate gut-level reactions. This is not to say that self-interest is not a factor in people's decisions, merely that it is more difficult to identify since opinions on these issues were formed earlier in life (perhaps due to self-interest or other considerations at the time). Since people have pre-formed opinions about such issues, it is difficult for researchers to sort out exactly where these opinions came from. Even if asked, people are not likely to remember all of the considerations that went into
their initial opinion on the subject. It is possible that people’s opinions were formed “on-line” (Lodge et al., 1989; McGraw et al., 1990) and that a long history of forgotten events defines their opinions.

The “hard issues” are much less problematic. Since opinions to the issues are not as automatic, it is possible to determine what considerations were relevant in people’s decisions. For this reason, the studies presented in the upcoming chapters will focus on the analysis of “hard issues”. Although the distinction between hard and easy issues is not always clear, I shall avoid those issues which seem most likely to prompt immediate gut reactions. For that reason, I will steer away from the controversial race issue, which is confounded with multiple considerations and life experiences.

The theory presented in this chapter may apply to all issues. Due to the nature of the analysis, however, I can only test for the validity of the theory as it applies to hard issues. In order to test the theory on easy issues, it would be necessary to pinpoint the earliest evaluation of the issue and determine the considerations that lead to that evaluation. This is beyond the scope of this study and, therefore, I can only claim that the following hypothesis applies to hard issues.

When considering hard issues, a number of considerations enter into a person’s decision calculus. It is likely that the order of considerations is hierarchical, with the self being thought of first, followed by considerations of group-level-interests and more broad considerations. In fact, Batson et al. (1995) find that, in experimental settings, people act primarily in ways that promote their own material interests. However, after their own interests, subjects were more likely to allocate resources to individuals with whom they felt empathy. Considerations of a collective good were the least prominent.
In a somewhat related study, Monroe (1991) concludes that people operate in altruistic ways when she finds feelings of empathy to be the best predictor in people’s “altruistic” actions. I would argue that Monroe may be tapping into feelings of closeness to the groups in question and that these are not “altruistic” actions but, rather, are based on group identities. The research by Batson and others would suggest that people will consider self-interest first, group-interest second (based on the assumption that closeness to a group produces greater empathy), and the collective good last. If there is a direct cost to the self, then a policy will be opposed. If there is a strong material benefit to one’s self, then attitudes will be favorable. However, if the policy does not appear to impact the immediate self, or if people cannot immediately identify the direct impact, then they will rely on considerations of social groups, and then the public good.

Critics of the self-interest theory argue that self-interest is not sufficient to explain people’s political opinions and behaviors. According to Sears and colleagues (1980), political attitudes “are formed mainly in congruence with long-standing values about society and the polity, rather than short-term instrumentalities for satisfaction of one’s current private needs”. The problem with many of these studies is that, even in the studies that claim to find strong evidence of symbolic politics, people are not acting against their own self-interests. For instance, people without children who oppose busing may not be self-interested, but they are not not-self-interested either. They have no direct material interest in the outcomes of the policy and, therefore, can rely on things other than self-interest to form attitudes on the policy. It is important to note that, whatever these people decide on the issue of busing, they will not be acting in their own self-interests. Researchers who claim to measure the role of self-interest in this
way set citizens up to fail. Notice that these studies do not claim that people with children fail to oppose the busing policy, rather, that people without children are equally as likely to oppose them (Sears et al., 1979; McConahay, 1982). As we can see, however, these people who do not have children cannot act in their own self-interest, whether they oppose busing or favor it. Busing imposes no costs or benefits to them personally. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that self-interest, when present, is the dominant motivating factor in people’s attitudes and behaviors. In other words, it may not be the case that “one’s political and personal lives exist largely isolated from one another” (Sears et al, 1980). Rather, one’s personal life influences one’s political interests when a direct stake in the issue is present and cannot when no personal interest is involved.

If busing imposes no personal costs, why do these people oppose busing? Given the lack of any measure of self-interest, these people must rely on something to formulate opinions. Although self-interest is dominant, it is not always present in people’s assessments of policy choices. When self-interest is not an issue, people rely on other interests. More specifically, if the policy will not hurt or benefit one specifically, then a person considers how it affects them indirectly. Given no self-interest, this is the most logical alternative. People must ask first, “Does this policy affect me?” If the answer is, “No,” then the next question people ask is, “Does this policy affect people like me?” If the answer to this question is, “Yes,” then people make decisions based on costs and benefits to the social group with whom they identify on the issue. Since attitude formation bears no costs, it would be irrational for people not to form an attitude on something that affects them, even if the consequences are indirect.
If the answer to the, "Does this policy affect people like me?" question is, "No," then the next tier in the interest hierarchy is to consider sociotropic interests. "How does this affect the public good?" (see Figure 3.1).

![Diagram of Issue Consideration]

**Figure 3.1: Hierarchy of Interests in Attitude Formation and Political Action**

We need not infer that, in the absence of individual concern, the average person then fails to weigh the costs and benefits of these attitudes, as some would suggest. Rather, the costs and benefits are considered on the basis of indirect self-interest. More precisely, one must consider how the various alternatives impact the groups with whom one most closely identifies. It is not a far leap for a person to reason that policies that
impact those people with whom one identifies, will indirectly impact their own lives. Simply stated, there is little cost involved in forming an opinion and hence, most people will express an opinion on any given issue. However, I expect people with a stronger level of interest (where self-interest > group-interest > sociotropic concerns) to have stronger feelings about the issue. Passion and intensity involve costs on the individual’s life and, therefore, are more likely if the issue hits closer to home.

When considering political action, the theory changes. Because political action involves costs, it becomes less rational for people to continue down the chain of interests. As such, self-interest can successfully predict political action. When self-interest is not present or obvious, people may still engage in political action. This only happens, however, when group identities are so strong that people see the plight of the group as their own. For instance, even high-income blacks may favor affirmative action programs. They may perceive the economic depression of blacks as a threat to their own interests. If blacks were to gain in socio-economic status, then the individual would benefit from the increased acceptance of the minority group as well.

In sum, the theory presented here is that people form attitudes on the basis of interests, where self-interests dominate group-interests, and group-interests overpower sociotropic concerns. Attitudes are stronger at the top of the hierarchy (see Figure 3.1), and political action is more likely. As one moves down the chain of reasoning, from self-interest to group-interest and from group-interest to sociotropic concerns, attitudes become weaker and political action less likely. Looking at this model, it is likely that some people will ask about the role of ideology and values in my theory. I believe that ideology does play a role in the model, but indirectly through the
sociotropic interest variable. People's ideology will influence whether or not they believe a policy is harmful (or beneficial) to the country. Take the issue of tax cuts, for example. Conservatives believe that tax cuts benefit the nation by putting money back in the hands of the people and encouraging more spending and investments. Liberals, on the other hand, believe that tax cuts would harm the nation by reducing social programs and government spending. Therefore, ideology influences the sociotropic interests variable.  

Given the earlier discussion of rational choice theory and the assumption of self-interest, it is useful to ask what a rational choice theorist would think of Figure 3.1. While I can only speculate to some degree, recent arguments between scholars over the usefulness of rational choice approaches give some insight into how they would view this model (Friedman, 1996; Green and Shapiro, 1994). Some rational choice theorists place a great deal of emphasis on the role of self-interest. In fact, self-interest is often equated with rational choice; "The grammar of rational choice employs only the instrumental case, in which everything people do is a deliberate means to a self-interested, material end (Abelson, 1996)". In this view, a model of hierarchical interests appears to contradict rational choice theory. However, as rational choice theory has evolved, less emphasis has been placed on the role of self-interest.

Freidman (1996) argues that the association of rational choice with self-interest is due to the imprecise use of the terms "rational choice" and "public choice". The

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7 It is likely that the sociotropic interest variable also influences people's ideologies and that the relationship between these variables flows in both directions. However, I believe that ideology is also the result of pre-adult socialization and is somewhat less flexible than people's policy positions. Therefore, I expect that ideology has a larger impact on sociotropic interests than the other way around. The important point is that the two are likely to be correlated.
author distinguishes between the two and explains that public choice theory “has a decidedly thick connotation, referring to the alleged propensity of political actors to pursue their material self-interest (pg 2).” Rational choice, on the other hand, is a much broader claim that “regardless of what sort of ends people pursue, they do so through strategic, instrumentally rational behavior”. If we adopt this definition of rational choice, then a hierarchical model of interests becomes less problematic. We no longer care what interests people are pursuing, only that they pursue ordered preferences. In this view, I believe the model presented here to be completely compatible with rational choice theory. This is not to say, however, that support for this model is any indication that rational choice theory is correct, as the model is not designed to test empirically whether or not people are behaving in a cost-benefit sort of analysis. I tend to agree with Green and Shapiro (1996), that “advances in political science are more likely to come at the level of hypothesis or middle-level generalizations than at that of grand theory or paradigmatic innovation (pg. 270).” The research presented in this paper is simply one such hypothesis.

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8 I do not think that rational choice includes a model of hierarchical interests. It is in the participation phase of the model that I believe rational choice theorists would have the most insight. According to my theory, as the level of interest declines, political action becomes less likely. This is not inconsistent with rational choice. As the level of interest declines the “benefits” portion of the equation becomes weaker. Therefore, we expect that for people without self-interest or a strong group-interest, the costs of participation will outweigh the benefits. For people with self-interest, the costs of participation may be outweighed by the personal gain/loss that would result if they were not to take political action. I also claim that rational choice theory is compatible with my model based on past precedent. It seems as if rational choice theorists are able to adapt their theory to any empirical findings, and I have no doubt that they could do the same here.
CHAPTER 4
STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

This chapter uses experimental research techniques to test the theory of hierarchical interests described in the third chapter. The hierarchical interests theory has several components. The first is that people make political decisions by considering a number of hierarchically arranged considerations. At the top of the hierarchy is concern over self-interest. When there are clear benefits or threats to the self, those considerations are weighed most heavily. This claim is consistent with the assumption of egoism described in the self-interest literature. However, people are often found to reach decisions in the absence of self-interest. According to the theory of hierarchical interests, secondary considerations of group-interest are the basis for political choices in the absence of self-interest.

The second component of the hierarchical interests theory is that due to the costs involved with political participation, traditional measures of self-interest will be more successful in predicting political action than attitudes. Since attitude formation has little cost, everyone can form an opinion on an issue, whether or not that issue personally affects him or her. However, since political action requires time, effort, and other costs, one must have a personal stake in the outcome to justify participation. Therefore,

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political participation declines as one moves down the interest hierarchy, with self-interested people being the most likely to participate. Accordingly, one should expect to find that the difference between self-interested and non-self-interested behavior is greater than the difference between self-interested and non-self-interested attitudes.

Finally, the theory of hierarchical interests challenges the assumption that people use the same considerations to reach decisions in self-interested and non-self-interested conditions. In past studies, researchers compare attitudes between those with self-interest and those without. When the choices made by the two groups are similar, many conclude that self-interest is not an important component of political attitudes. The theory of hierarchical interests states that self-interest can be a consideration for those with a clear stake in the issue. In the absence of self-interest, others can make similar choices on the basis of alternative considerations, such as group-interests. That is, the considerations used to reach political decisions may vary depending on the level of interest involved.

In order to test the theory of hierarchical interests, I utilize both experimental and survey data. The experimental format used in this chapter allows for the direct manipulation of self-interest and group-interest, thereby allowing greater internal validity and isolation of the causal mechanism. In contrast, the survey data presented in the following chapter allows analysis in a real-world environment and provides greater external validity.

The first of the two major studies was an experiment conducted on undergraduate students at the Ohio State University. Students agreed to complete a questionnaire in exchange for a small amount of extra credit in their political science
Four hundred students participated (166 male, 234 female) during the spring, summer, and fall of 2000.

The study conducted at the Ohio State University was inspired, in part, by the work of Sivacek and Crano (1982) who conducted a similar study at the University of Michigan. The authors found that students were more likely to oppose senior comprehensive examinations if they believed the exams would impact them strongly. As such, students were asked to rate their own perceptions of self-interest by indicating the extent to which they believed the exams would impact their lives. The study presented here differs in that the researcher actively manipulates self-interest. In addition, I have included a manipulation designed to measure the role of group-level considerations on student's opposition to exams.

The questionnaire that the students received at Ohio State was designed to measure the role of self-interest and group-interest in students' attitudes toward comprehensive senior exams. The issue of comprehensive exams was chosen due to the ease with which I could manipulate both self-interest and group-interests surrounding the issue. Although the issue of senior exams may not seem "political" at first, the issue is similar in many ways to political issues facing the general public. For college students, the university performs a similar function as the government. The university determines the "laws" and rules that students must follow. The university can raise student's fees to add additional services. For instance, at the Ohio State University, students are required to pay a mandatory bus fee, whether they choose to use public transportation or not. If students wish to change the environment in which they live, they must petition the university to do so. In many aspects, the university
administration serves a function that is similar to government for university students. Students are familiar with the university's bureaucracy and regard the administration as the ultimate authority in their college community. They are "taxed" by the university for services that the college community deems necessary.

Furthermore, in the experiment, the issue of comprehensive exams becomes even more political when we add the issue of gender bias. Some students are told that the exams have a gender bias against women. Since Ohio State is a public university, the issue of gender bias in mandatory exams is a very political issue and one that would likely be addressed by the courts. The reactions of students to the gender bias also have implications for our understanding of group conflict and the women's movement in general.

The measures of likely action are also political in nature. This study will examine the role of self-interest in prompting various forms of political behavior. Students are asked to rate the likelihood that they would participate in a protest, sign a petition, circulate a petition, or attend a public meeting on the issue. Students are also asked to indicate the total number of hours they would donate to the cause. We would expect that if self-interest is a predictor of political behavior for college students, it would also predict behavior among other groups in society.

Furthermore, I selected an issue that would have a direct impact on students. Students would not respond to the same types of issues as the general public. Most of them do not own homes, hold jobs, or even pay a significant amount of taxes. Therefore, they would not suffer immediate personal consequences from many government policies (taxes, social security, etc). Finally, it is not the issue that is of
interest here, but rather the processes by which people make decisions about various issues that may or may not impact them personally. The process of opinion formation is expected to be the same across a variety of issues. In total, I will examine the theory across two issues. Using experimental research, I will examine the role of self-interest in students' attitudes toward senior comprehensive exams. In the following chapter, I will use survey data to look at attitudes toward government policies on unemployment (chapter 5).

**Research Design**

As part of a questionnaire, subjects were told to read a paragraph on the possible adoption of senior comprehensive exams. They were told that the university is considering the adoption of such exams and that passing these exams would be a requirement for graduation. Subjects read a brief description of the exams, which were described as being similar to the Graduate Record Examination but with an emphasis on each student's major field of study\(^\text{10}\). After reading the paragraph, students were asked to answer a number of questions about the exams, including whether or not they support adoption of these exams, how likely they thought they were to pass the exams, and how likely they would be to participate in various activities designed to prevent passage of the exam policy.

In reality, four different versions of the questionnaire were administered. Subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of the four versions. In the first

\(^{10}\) A copy of the paragraph is attached at the end of this chapter in Appendix A.
version, subjects are told that the exams, if adopted, would take effect the following quarter. This version of the questionnaire is the pure self-interest version, as subjects would personally be impacted by the adoption of senior comprehensive examinations. The second version of the questionnaire is the no interest version, as students are told that the policy, if implemented, would take effect for incoming students only. Therefore, the subjects of the study would not take the exams. The third and fourth versions of the survey include a paragraph that claims that women do more poorly on these types of standardized exams than do men. The third version adds this new paragraph to the self-interest version, such that self-interest and gender-group-interests are prompted. The fourth version of the questionnaire adds the gender-group-interest to the version where exams take effect only for incoming students. Thus, group-interests are activated in the absence of self-interest. In sum, the four treatment groups are as follows, self-interest/no group-interest, no self-interest/no group-interest, self-interest/group-interest, and no self-interest/group-interest.

In addition, group affiliation depends on gender. Women students would be more threatened by the exam policy in the group-interest conditions, while male students would not. Therefore, gender is a necessary consideration. The inclusion of gender produces a 2x2x2 design (self-interest x group-interest x gender).

In order to consider the effects of self-interest, group-interest, and sociotropic concerns on attitudes toward comprehensive exams, students were asked a series of questions dealing with each of these three dimensions. In terms of self-interest, 

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11 Graduating seniors would not be impacted directly and are, therefore, recoded into the corresponding no self-interest category.
students have a direct self-interest in the exam if they receive treatment one or three (either treatment where exams are said to take effect in the next quarter). Although direct interest in the exam is manipulated, we cannot assume that all students would be equally threatened by the prospect of senior comps. Therefore, several secondary measures of self-interest are included in the study.

As described earlier, self-interest involves the maximization of utility. Therefore, we would expect a student's likelihood of passing the exam to impact her utility calculations. Students who believe they are likely to pass would have little to fear from the exams and may even favor an exam policy. In the brief paragraph about the exams, students read that some graduate and professional schools may prefer students from universities where comprehensive exams are in place. It may, therefore, be in the best interest of some students to favor the exam policy. Several other measures are also included that factor into a student's expected utility. For instance, some students may feel that college has become too easy and that the lax standards adopted by the university devalue their own education. These students would favor exams to weed out weaker students, even though they too would have to take them.

We must also consider whether or not a student is graduating at the end of the current quarter. Graduating seniors would not be subject to the exam policy, even in the "self-interest" conditions and, therefore, cannot be included in the direct self-interest category. Therefore, these graduating seniors have been recoded into the corresponding "no self-interest" category, depending on whether or not they received the group-interest treatment.
In addition to the manipulated group-interest, some students may have additional group-interests. For instance, subjects may identify strongly with other college students and, therefore, oppose exams due to sympathy with fellow students who would be forced to take the exams. Some subjects may identify with people who do poorly in school and, therefore, sympathize with those who would likely be harmed by the exam policy because they tend to do poorly in academic pursuits. Therefore, it is important to look for group interests that may exist naturally, in addition to the manipulated gender-group-interest.

Data Reduction of Academic Variables

There are a number of control variables included in the analysis that have to do with a student's academic performance. We would expect that better students would be less threatened by the prospect of exams than would students who do poorly. Also, students may have different philosophical beliefs about what college education should entail. Those who believe that the purpose of college is to challenge the individual will be more likely to support exams. This measure of the students' belief in the purpose of college is the closest measure to what might be considered "sociotropic" interests. A commitment to high academic standards reflects a belief about what college should entail and what is best for society. Overall, five questions were asked concerning students' academic pursuits. Students were asked to give their current GPA, to rate their test-taking ability, to rate the difficulty of college, to indicate the

\[1\] For copies of these questions, see Appendix B.
number of hours they spend studying and to indicate the relative importance of academics and social life in the college experience.

Due to the limited number of subjects in the study, these academic variables were combined into two variables. As demonstrated by the factor analysis results (Table 4.1), two distinct dimensions are present. One appears to measure academic success and includes GPA, test taking skill, and the belief that college is too easy or too difficult. This factor indicates the level of difficulty that college presents to the subject. The other factor appears to represent a more philosophical commitment to academia and includes students' judgments about the relative importance of academic success and social pursuits in college, as well as the number of hours that students spend studying. These variables measure students' commitment to academic studies and their beliefs about the purpose of attending college. The five variables are thus collapsed into these two factors: academic commitment and college success.

The component measuring college success may be considered a measure of self-interest in regards to comprehensive senior exams, with those who find college to be

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13 Factor Analysis examines correlations between variables and attempts to identify a number of hypothetical factors or "dimensions" that may account for the observed covariation. For example, if we find correlations in people's attitudes towards issues such as gun control, abortion, and welfare, the correlations may be due to people's ideology. Thus ideology is the underlying factor and explains the correlations between the other variables. It would be possible to collapse attitudes on these issues into a single liberal/conservative scale. This is essentially what we are doing when we perform exploratory factor analysis for the purpose of data reduction. We are searching for hypothetical factors that may account for relationships between the variables. Furthermore, we are seeking to identify the minimum number of hypothetical factors that may account for the observed correlations among the variables. The first factor explains as much covariation as possible, the second factor explains as much of the remaining variance as possible and so on and so forth. At some point, the amount of variance being explained by additional factors becomes relatively small. Eigenvalues are often used to specify the number of factors to be identified. Eigenvalues identify the proportion of total variance being explained by each factor. As a general rule, we retain factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, where an eigenvalue of 1 means the factor accounts for 100/n percent of the variance, where n is the number of variables. For a basic explanation of factor analysis and its applications, see Kim and Mueller's (1978a). For a more thorough discussion of the statistical methods involved in using factor analysis, see Kim and Mueller (1978b).
difficult being more opposed to exams. The other component is more complicated. The commitment one has toward academic excellence reflects a philosophical belief that the purpose of college is to challenge individuals and that hard work and effort are valued. In the absence of self-interest and group-level-interests, this philosophical belief in the purpose of college may influence student’s opinions towards exams. Students who believe that the purpose of college is to become better educated and to work hard will want others to take exams in order to strengthen academic standards. However, if a student is personally impacted by the exams, the theory of hierarchical interests would predict that measures of self-interest (especially how likely they believe they are to pass the exam) would be more successful in predicting opposition to exams than these more philosophical principles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Matrix</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;college success&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;academic commitment&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test taking skills</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current GPA</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College too difficult</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College purpose</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours on course work</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax (Orthogonal) Rotation with Kaiser Normalization
2 components extracted.

Table 4.1: Data Reduction of Academic Variables

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14 Components with eigenvalues of 1 or greater are extracted. The initial eigenvalue for the first component is 1.821, and for the second component is 1.119. The third component, which is not extracted, falls below the cutoff point with an eigenvalue of .867. The cumulative variance explained by the rotated factors is 58.79% (34.49% for the first factor and 24.31% for the second factor).
Results: Student Attitudes Towards Exams

The first question in this study is whether or not people's attitudes are influenced by self-interest. Since self-interest is manipulated in an experimental setting, we can simply compare the means of various treatment groups. Since treatment conditions have been randomly assigned to the subjects, we can assume that the groups were identical before receiving the treatment. Therefore, any differences between groups may be attributed to the different treatments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>treatment</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Self Interest</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 No Self Interest</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Group Interest</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Self Interest</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Interest</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 No Self Interest</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Interest</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>102</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>3.59</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>3.79</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Mean Attitudes Toward Exams by Treatment and Gender

Table 4.2 shows the effect of the treatments on students' attitudes toward comprehensive exams. Attitudes toward exams are coded on a five-point scale with 1 meaning that the students strongly support the exam policy and 5 representing strong opposition to the exams. Therefore, a higher number is equated with stronger opposition. A one-way ANOVA (F = 2.04, p < .10) confirms that there are differences in opinions toward comprehensive exams among treatment groups. A quick look at the
data suggests that the treatments did have some impact. Those individuals who received both the self-interest and group-interest manipulations are the most likely to oppose exams, while those with neither self nor group-interest are the least likely to oppose exams.

In order to consider the effects of treatment factors on opposition to exams, one can conduct a slightly more sophisticated analysis of variance, which considers the simple main effects of both self-interest and group-interest manipulations, as well as interactions between these factors. In addition, the sex of the subject is included as a covariate in the model. The results of the univariate between-subjects analysis are presented in Table 4.3. The ANOVA demonstrates that the treatments the subjects received did have some impact on their opinions of senior exams. Most importantly, the group-interest manipulation is statistically significant at the .05 level. Those subjects who were told that the exams might be biased against women were more likely to oppose the exam policy. Since the covariate for gender is not significant, this holds true for men as well as for women. This would suggest that the addition of the paragraph on gender bias in the exams did not simply activate self-interest from women who would be affected. Rather, men also are more likely to oppose exams if the gender-group-interest is activated. If not for self-interest, then why does the addition of gender bias increase opposition to exams? It is likely that gender biased exams produce empathy for the women who would be unfairly disadvantaged by the exams. We should expect, then, to see opposition for these exams to be strongest for those people

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15 A separate version of this ANOVA included interactions between sex of the subject and treatment factors. These interactions were not significant and were dropped from later ANOVAs for parsimony sake.
who identify most closely with women. This should be true especially in the group-interest-only case, since group-interests are thought to be secondary to self-interest. Therefore, the effect of group-interest should be less pronounced when self-interest is also present. This point will be examined further in a series of ordered probit models.

The self-interest variable is not statistically significant in the ANOVA, nor is the interaction term. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. The significance of the group-interest manipulation may be due to the fact that the gender-group-interest manipulation is purely negative. Few people would consider a gender bias in exams to be a positive factor. Even men, who might benefit from the gender bias, are more likely to oppose the exam when group-interest is manipulated. This suggests that the gender-group-interest is not merely a form of self-interest, whereby women would oppose the exam due to the impact of the exam on women. Rather, there appears to be some consideration of fairness, with both men and women being opposed to the idea of a gender-biased exam. It appears as if the manipulation of group-interests in this experiment produces only negative feelings towards the exam policy. Self-interest, on the other hand, can generate either positive or negative utility, depending on the likelihood that a student would do well on these exams. We can image that some students would actually benefit from the exams. In the paragraph on the exam policy, students are told that some graduate and professional schools prefer students from universities that have comprehensive exams. Some students would not be harmed by the exams and might even benefit if they believe that they would perform well on the test. In sum, the group interest manipulation only produces more opposition to exams, while the addition of self-interest can potentially create positive or negative feelings.
As a result, we need to look at attitudes towards the exams while controlling for other factors, such as college success and the likelihood that one would pass the exam. It is possible that self-interest is still more important, but that the effect of self-interest is both positive and negative, making the overall net effect appear less than that for the purely negative group-interest.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>10.910^a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.727</td>
<td>1.620</td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>233.379</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>233.379</td>
<td>138.624</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>4.046</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.046</td>
<td>2.404</td>
<td>.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFIN</td>
<td>1.788</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.788</td>
<td>1.062</td>
<td>.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUPIN</td>
<td>6.976</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.976</td>
<td>4.143</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELFIN * GROUPIN</td>
<td>1.371</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.371</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>537.050</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>1.684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4985.000</td>
<td>324</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>547.960</td>
<td>323</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a. R Squared = .020 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

Table 4.3: ANOVA for Self and Group Interest on Opinions of Exams

It is also important to note that the insignificance of the self-interest manipulation is of minor importance to the theory of hierarchical interests presented in earlier chapters. Remember that past studies show no difference in attitudes between self-interested and non-self-interested individuals. This does not mean that those who had a personal interest in the matter did not act in accordance with that self-interest. Rather, it is possible that the self-interested and non-self-interested groups reached similar conclusions, yet base their conclusions on different considerations. The self-
interested individuals may have been acting in accordance with their own self-interest when making decisions. In fact, their choices do not appear to contradict their self-interest. Rather, those without self-interest are acting in similar ways. A theory of hierarchical interests suggests that those who do not have a material self-interest may reach similar conclusions on the basis of alternative considerations. More specifically, people without self-interest would act on the basis of group-interest or other considerations.

In order to examine the attitudes and considerations of individuals under different conditions, it is necessary to run a series of ordered probit models, one for each of the four treatment categories. The theory of hierarchical interests questions the assumption that people in self-interested and non-self-interested groups use the same decision calculus to reach policy conclusions. If this assumption is not true, we cannot rule self-interest out as a factor in policy choice.

A series of ordered probit models is presented in Table 4.4. One model is included for each of the four treatment categories. In addition, a number of self-interest and group-interest variables are included in the models. According to the hierarchical interests theory, we should expect to see different variables be relevant for each treatment group. Most importantly, we should expect to see the group-interest variable be strongest when group-interest is manipulated, but self-interest is not.

As mentioned previously, the academic variables have been collapsed into two separate factors, one measuring college success and the other measuring academic commitment. These are both entered as control variables in the equation.
are more successful in college may be less threatened by the prospect of exams. Similarly, those who expend more effort and take their studies more seriously are likely to favor exams more than "lazier" or less-committed students. In addition, students' perceptions about the likelihood that they would pass the exams are expected to influence their positions, especially in the self-interested categories. This variable may also extend beyond the self-interested category to the group-interested treatments as well. Students who feel empathy for a group would feel stronger empathy if they felt that, under the same circumstances, they could not pass the exams. Students who feel the exams were easy would have less empathy for others taking the exams.

Based on the findings in Table 4.3, it is clear that gender is not the basis for opposition to exams in the group-interest treatments. Rather, we expect that feelings of closeness to women would be more directly involved in judgments about the exams. Therefore, both men and women who feel closer to women as a group would be more opposed to the exams than would those who did not feel close to the group. The measure of group closeness is rated on a scale from 1 (not at all close) to 7 (very close) and is included in each model. In addition, non-manipulated group-interests may also be a factor and are included in the analysis. For example, subjects who feel close to fellow college students or to those who struggle in school may be more opposed to exams, while those who identify closely with students who excel in school may be more in favor of exams. All group closeness variables are seven-point scales with 1 being not at all close and 7 being very close.

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16 Exact wording of these questions is provided in the Appendix B at the end of the chapter.
In addition to respondent’s sex, one other characteristic may be relevant: year in school. Since self-interest is often considered an immediate concern, first-year students may be less threatened, since the impact is less immediate. One would expect this variable to be significant in the self-interested groups but not in the absence of self-interest.

The results of the analysis suggest that different considerations are relevant for different levels of interest. For subjects in the first treatment group (self-interest only), the likelihood that they will pass the exams is highly significant in predicting opposition to the exams. This variable is an important part of the cost-benefit analysis. Likelihood of passing the exams is a five-point scale, with 1 being extremely likely to pass and 5 being extremely unlikely to pass. Therefore, the variable is in the predicted direction with those who feel they are less likely to pass being more opposed to the exams. Since the subjects in this treatment category believe they would have to pass the exams to graduate, their estimates of their likelihood of passing are entirely self-interested.

Among this treatment group, no other variables are statistically significant. Therefore, non-manipulated group-interests, such as closeness to college students and those who excel or struggle in school are not relevant, at least in the presence of self-interest. Furthermore, without the manipulation of gender-group-interest, it does not appear that a subject’s gender or feelings of closeness to women impact opposition to exams.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment 1</th>
<th>Treatment 2</th>
<th>Treatment 3</th>
<th>Treatment 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>No Group Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Group Interest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold ExamOpinion1</td>
<td>.676 (2.734)</td>
<td>-3.794* (1.867)</td>
<td>2.440 (3.105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold ExamOpinion2</td>
<td>1.903 (2.734)</td>
<td>-2.232 (1.840)</td>
<td>4.516 (3.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold ExamOpinion3</td>
<td>2.665 (2.740)</td>
<td>-1.747 (1.835)</td>
<td>5.040 (3.082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold ExamOpinion4</td>
<td>3.760 (2.751)</td>
<td>-.410 (1.827)</td>
<td>6.797* (3.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CloseWomen</td>
<td>-.243 (.232)</td>
<td>.167 (.170)</td>
<td>.309 (.209)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CloseCollegeSt</td>
<td>.114 (.182)</td>
<td>-.054 (.115)</td>
<td>.197 (.180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CloseExcel</td>
<td>-.200 (.206)</td>
<td>-.110 (.147)</td>
<td>-.212 (.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CloseStruggle</td>
<td>.157 (.141)</td>
<td>.050 (.127)</td>
<td>.132 (.140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PassLikely</td>
<td>1.008** (.323)</td>
<td>.277 (.232)</td>
<td>1.031** (.354)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CollegeSuccess</td>
<td>.137 (.135)</td>
<td>-.083 (.109)</td>
<td>.174 (.144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcademicCom</td>
<td>.125 (.138)</td>
<td>-.245* (.114)</td>
<td>-.112 (.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.460 (.494)</td>
<td>-.132 (.424)</td>
<td>-.305 (.467)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YearCollege</td>
<td>-.111 (.179)</td>
<td>.115 (.170)</td>
<td>.516** (.194)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psuedo R-Squ Cox and Snell</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N*</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

Self-interested categories have fewer respondents due to the adjustment of graduating seniors into corresponding non-self-interested categories. Since seniors would graduate before the change takes effect, it would not affect their own interests.

One asterisk indicates p<.05, Two asterisks indicates p<.01

Table 4.4: Ordered Probit Analysis of Opposition to Exams by Treatment Group

When self-interest is removed from the equation (treatment group 2), the variable that measures a student’s perceived likelihood of passing the exam is no longer
significant in predicting opposition to exams. Also remember that this is the group least likely to oppose the exam policy (Table 4.1). It is possible that this group is not motivated by self-interest or group-interest but is evaluating the exam on the basis of larger philosophical issues.

In fact, the only variable that is significant in the second model is the one that measures a student's commitment to academics. Remember that this variable is a combination of two variables which factor loaded on each other: the number of hours a student spends on studies outside of class, and the students' belief that the purpose of college is academic versus social. The relationship is in the predicted direction, with those with higher academic standards being more likely to favor the exam policy. Therefore, in the absence of self and group-interests, students are relying on other, more philosophical considerations. These students base their opinions of exams on what they believe college education should entail. These ideological views about education reflect students' opinions on the role that college education should play in society and may be considered "sociotropic" concerns, since they involve considerations beyond the self and group-level-interests.

In the third treatment group, both self-interest and group-interests were manipulated. The likelihood that a student will pass the exams is again significant. Therefore, the addition of group-interest did not seem to alter students' considerations of their own self-interest. Perhaps the most puzzling finding is that the year in school variable is significant for the third treatment group (group and self-interests), but not for any other category. One would expect that this measure of self-interest immediacy
would be relevant for both self-interest groups (one and three). The relationship is in
the expected direction, with those closer to graduation (and the exams) being more
likely to oppose the exams. It is possible that the combination of self and group
interest, along with proximity to the exams, causes a greater threat to students than self-
interest and proximity alone. However, since the effect of exam proximity is not
relevant for the pure self-interest group, I would be cautious about drawing conclusions
about the effects of this variable on opposition to exams.

The most interesting discovery in the models has to do with the variable that
measures feelings of closeness to women. This variable is not significant in the third
treatment group (self and group-interests). Therefore, when self-interest is present,
consideration of group-interest does not add significantly to students’ opposition to
exams. However, this variable is statistically significant in the fourth treatment group.
That is, when self-interest is not a factor, considerations of group do matter. This
finding supports the claim that interests are ranked hierarchically, such that self-interest
dominates. In the absence of self-interest, secondary group-interests may come into
play. The variable measuring a student’s likelihood of passing is also significant in this
model. Upon further investigation, it appears that expectations of passing the exam are
important for both self-interested and group-interested people. In the self-interested
groups, perceptions that one would pass determine the costs of the exams on the
individual. In the group-interested category, subjects may feel greater sympathy for
their fellow students if they believe they would not do well on the exams. If one would
expect to do poorly on the exams themselves, then they can empathize more with those
who might suffer similar misfortune.

63
Notice that if we simply asked people whether or not they supported or opposed exams, then there would be little difference between those who are self-interested and those who are not. Sixty-eight percent of those who are self-interested oppose the exams (either slightly or strongly), compared to sixty-three percent with no self-interest. When opposition to exams in measured as a dichotomous approve/disapprove variable, a chi-squared test shows no significant difference in opinions among the self-interested and the non-self interested (p = 0.656). If we think back to earlier studies of self-interest, the authors conclude that if the two groups are equally as likely to oppose a policy, then self-interest is not a factor. However, the research presented in this chapter suggests that this is not the case. Rather, there are slight differences in strength of opinions based on self-interest and, more importantly, different considerations are used to form these opinions based on whether or not self-interest is involved. When self-interest is present, people act on the basis of self-interest. Only when self-interest is not a factor, does group-interest become relevant. Furthermore, in the absence of both self and group-interests, broader philosophical concerns may come into play.

**Data Reduction of Participation Variables**

As discussed in chapter two, the theory presented here also suggests that self-interest is more likely to predict political behavior than political attitudes. Since political attitudes have very little cost, anyone can take a position on an issue. However, since political behavior involves some amount of cost, one must have something at stake in order to justify participating. Therefore, we should expect to see
greater political involvement among those with a personal interest in the matter than among those without.

There are six different participation variables in the questionnaire. Rather than run a series of ordered probits on each, we can simply combine the variables into a single participation index. Using exploratory factor analysis, we can determine if the covariation in the participation variables explains an underlying "participation" dimension. Factor analysis indicates that the variables all load on one factor (Table 4.5). Since only one factor explains the variance, a principal component analysis is sufficient. Therefore, we can simply add the variables together to get a total measure of likely participation. The range for the composite participation scale is 6 through 40, with six being the lowest level of participation and 40 being the highest level of likely participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign petition</td>
<td>.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulate a petition</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post fliers</td>
<td>.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a meeting</td>
<td>.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours willing to donate</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Factor Loadings on Participation Variables

17 The single component extracted in this analysis explains 62.13% of the variance. This component has an eigenvalue of 3.728. The next largest eigenvalue is .732. For a more detailed description of factor analysis, see footnote 13.

18 Possible scores range from 6 to 42 (Six scales from 1 to 7). However, the actual range of the data was 6 through 40, with no subjects selecting the highest likelihood of participation on all six variables.
Results: The Role of Self-Interest in Political Behavior

In order to compare the effects of self-interest on political attitudes and political participation, we can compare independent sample t-tests with a dichotomous variable for self-interest. Therefore, treatment groups 1 and 3 are collapsed into “self-interest” and treatments 2 and 4 are considered “no self-interest”. Thus, one can determine if self-interest is more significant in explaining attitudes towards comprehensive exams or in explaining participation in activities designed to prevent adoption of exam policy.

Table 4.6 presents the results of the t-tests. As one can see from the results, the difference between self-interest and no-self interest is more significant for participation than for attitudes. Again, this is due to the higher costs involved in political action. In the absence of self-interest, many people still form attitudes on policies, especially when asked for their opinion on a survey. Participation in various activities requires more effort than simply formulating a response. Therefore, the role of self-interest is more apparent in predicting political behavior, since there is a greater cost involved. Those individuals who will be personally impacted by the exams have more at stake in the issue and can more easily justify the costs involved in political participation.
Independent sample t-tests for participation and attitude variables. Grouping variable is a dichotomous self/no-self variable.

Table 4.6: Comparison of Effects of Self-Interest on Participation and Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Participation</th>
<th>Attitudes towards Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean for Self-Interest</td>
<td>21.41</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean for No Self-Interest</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-test (One-Tailed Sig.)</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, this difference remains even when controlling for other factors. As stated in the second chapter, I suspect that traditional measures of self-interest will be more successful at predicting political behavior than political attitudes. By "traditional measures" I mean those that do not allow separate models or processes for self-interested and non-self interested people. The results of ordinary least squares regression analysis are included in Table 4.7. The first model predicts attitudes towards comprehensive exams with a dichotomous variable for self-interest. The second model uses the same independent variables to predict political behavior.

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19 Although ordered probit analysis, as used in table 4.3, are technically more appropriate, OLS is used to allow comparison across models since the participation model is more suited to OLS. I did conduct an ordered probit analysis of the attitudinal model in table 4.6, and the results did not differ from the OLS model in any meaningful way. Thus, the OLS results are presented to allow for easier comparisons and interpretation.

20 Treatment groups 1 and 3 are coded as 1 on the dichotomous self-interest variable, and treatment groups 2 and 4 are coded as 0.
### Table 4.7: Comparison of Attitudinal and Behavioral Models with Traditional Measures of Self-Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1: Attitudes Toward Exams</th>
<th>Model 2: Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Women</td>
<td>0.095 (0.061)</td>
<td>1.512 (0.422)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close College St.</td>
<td>0.010 (0.045)</td>
<td>0.240 (0.313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Excel</td>
<td>-0.046 (0.054)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.374)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Struggle</td>
<td>0.065 (0.043)</td>
<td>0.411 (0.298)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass Likely</td>
<td><strong>0.432 (0.079)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.815 (0.543)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Commitment</td>
<td>-0.055 (0.041)</td>
<td>-0.269 (0.282)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Success</td>
<td>0.041 (0.038)</td>
<td>-0.163 (0.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.007 (0.149)</td>
<td>-0.176 (1.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year College</td>
<td>0.200 (0.056)</td>
<td>0.156 (0.389)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dichotomous Self-Interest</td>
<td>0.196 (0.129)</td>
<td><strong>2.016 (0.888)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.011 (0.712)</td>
<td>6.970 (4.901)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>385</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R Square</strong></td>
<td><strong>.106</strong></td>
<td><strong>.113</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors. *p < .10, **p < .05

As one can see from the results, self-interest as a dichotomous variable in a single regression model is statistically significant in the behavior model, but not in the attitudinal model. Rather, these students reached similar conclusions on the basis of group and sociotropic interests. The dichotomous self-interest variable is statistically significant in the behavioral model. Those students who will be personally impacted by the exams are more likely to participate in various activities aimed at prevention of the exam policy. Since participation involves costs, the likelihood of participation is lower for those who do not have a personal stake in the issue.
The results of the two models, combined with earlier results from Table 4.4, indicate that researchers must be cautious about interpretation of self-interest when measured as a dichotomous variable in a single model. If self-interested and non-self-interested people reach similar conclusions, then a single-model approach leads to the conclusion that individuals do not act on the basis of self-interest. This approach is seriously flawed if people can reach the same conclusions while utilizing different considerations, as the results of our separate models in Table 4.4 would suggest.

Discussion and Conclusions

The study on student comprehensive exams suggests that there is a role for self-interest in political attitudes and behaviors. It seems that the effect of self-interest is larger in predicting political participation than attitudes. Since political action requires time and effort, the cost of participation reduces action among those who would not directly benefit from the action. On the contrary, there is little cost in forming an opinion. Therefore, people form opinions on issues, whether or not their personal self-interest is involved.

In past studies, this attitude formation among those without self-interest has led others to conclude that self-interest is not a factor in people's political attitudes, since those without self-interest are equally as likely to support or oppose various policies. However, these conclusions are based on the untested assumption that people's decision processes are the same across levels of interest. That is, those with self-interest are using the same criteria to reach decisions as those without self-interest. Since those
without a personal stake in the issue cannot be forming opinions on the basis of self-interest, many conclude that those with a direct self-interest are not basing decisions on those interests either.

The study presented in this chapter suggests that this previously-held assumption does not always hold true. In a series of ordered probit models, I demonstrate that different considerations are relevant for different treatment groups, where treatment groups manipulate both self-interest and group-level interests. Furthermore, feelings of closeness to the group whose interests are manipulated are significant only when self-interest is not present. This suggests that, in the presence of self-interest, group considerations are less relevant. They become more important in the absence of self-interest. In other words, it appears that self-interest is the first consideration and that group-interests are secondary. People in all four of the treatment groups reach similar conclusions about the exams, with most people opposing them. However, the considerations one utilizes in evaluating the policy vary depending on the level of interest involved.

In sum, the results presented in this chapter support the theory of hierarchical interests. Although the results are suggestive, they are not conclusive. Therefore, we must test the theory across different issue areas and conditions. The next chapter utilizes survey data to retest the theory of hierarchical interests with the issue of government spending on unemployment programs.
CHAPTER 5
HIERARCHY OF INTERESTS AND GOVERNMENT COMPENSATION FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

As mentioned previously, the theory of hierarchical interests presented in this dissertation is tested in two separate studies. The first of these, an experimental study that measures the role of self-interest on students’ attitudes towards comprehensive exams, is presented in chapter four. While the experimental design has many advantages, including the ability of the researcher to actively manipulate subject’s interests in a controlled setting, there are disadvantages to this type of design as well. The most common criticism of experimental research is that it fails to measure “real-world” events and examines behavior in an artificial setting. Therefore, it is often a good idea to combine the use of experimental research with survey data, which measures people’s opinions in the “real-world”. While surveys may also be problematic, in that it is often difficult to isolate the causal mechanism, the two approaches combined can often present a clear picture of the process being studied.

In order to add some external validity to our theory, the second study was conducted through telephone interviews of a random sample of adults living in the state of Ohio. During the fall of 2000, a sample of 500 adults was telephoned by the Center

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21 The survey was conducted from September 5, 2000, through September 30, 2000.
for Survey Research at the Ohio State University for the monthly Buckeye State Poll\textsuperscript{22}. As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked a number of questions about their economic well-being, including several questions about their current employment status and their perceptions of the national unemployment rate. This study focuses on the role of self-interest in people's attitudes towards government unemployment compensation. Since the survey already contained items dealing with the issues of unemployment and economic security, it was only necessary to add a few additional questions to capture people's interests and policy preferences. As stated earlier, I am less interested in the topic of debate than I am in the process by which people form opinions about the issues. Therefore, the issue of unemployment was used because it was only necessary to add five additional items to the existing survey and was a fairly cost-effective approach.

Although the issue of unemployment was chosen mostly for convenience and budgetary considerations, the topic is not new to the study of self-interest. As mentioned in chapter 2, a study by Kiewiet (1983) finds that personal unemployment does not predict support for Democratic candidates for office and concludes that self-interest is not a factor in people's political choices. Again, the Kiewiet study has many flaws in that it fails to recognize that unemployed people may vote for the Republican Party if they believe that Republicans would do better at reviving the economy and providing more jobs. In contrast, this study will focus more directly on people's support for specific unemployment programs and not on the indirect link between unemployment and candidate choice.

\textsuperscript{22} The additional questions I included on the Buckeye State Poll were funded by the Graduate Student Alumni Research Award, Ohio State University.
If the theory of hierarchical interests is correct, then we should expect that people’s attitudes towards government unemployment programs will be influenced, first and foremost, by their own self-interest. People who would be the most likely to benefit from unemployment compensation should be the most likely to favor government spending on unemployment programs. In the absence of self-interest, people’s attitudes towards unemployment will be impacted by group-level concerns and larger sociotropic concerns. People who identify closely with the unemployed are expected to be more in favor of increasing unemployment spending. Similarly, people who believe that unemployment is a large problem for the country will be more likely to support government intervention than will those who do not believe the issue is of much national concern. People’s perceptions of the nation’s unemployment problem are not expected to be as important when self-interest is involved, since self-interest will dominate.

According to the theory of hierarchical interests, people reach decisions based on a decision tree, where self-interest is the first consideration. Only in the absence of self-interest do people consider more secondary group and national concerns. Therefore, we would expect that the decision making process would take less time when self-interest is involved. Since this consideration is first, answers based on self-interest would be more accessible. If self-interest is not apparent, people must continue down the reasoning tree to consider other interests as well. Accordingly, one would expect there to be differences in response times based on the level of interest involved, with self-interest eliciting the most immediate response and lower level interests requiring more contemplation.
Research Design

As part of the Buckeye State Poll, 500 Ohio residents were asked a series of questions about their employment status, their contact with and closeness to unemployed people, their concern over the impact of unemployment on the nation, and their feelings about government compensation to the unemployed.

The dependent variable in the study is people's opinions toward government compensation for the unemployed. Since government spending on unemployment compensation would also impact taxes, people were asked to judge spending in relation to tax cuts or tax increases. Therefore, people were given the choice of increasing unemployment compensation even if it means higher taxes, increasing compensation only if it would not raise taxes, reducing unemployment if doing so would lower taxes, and reducing unemployment benefits even if doing so would not lower taxes. In addition, respondents are given the option of neither increasing nor decreasing benefits. Individuals who select this option were given a follow-up question asking if they leaned more towards increasing or more towards decreasing unemployment benefits. In all, a seven-point scale is compiled, with 1 being the belief that the government should increase unemployment benefits, even if it would mean higher taxes, and 7 being the belief that benefits should be cut, even if doing so would not lower taxes.

Although unemployment would be the most obvious and best measure of self-interest, we cannot merely look at the unemployed. Fortunately for the state of Ohio, and unfortunately for this researcher, there are very few (9) unemployed people in our
sample due to the low unemployment rates in the state (and the nation as a whole) in 2000\(^23\). Therefore, other measures of self-interest are necessary. Since most people in the sample are employed, a measure of respondents' current job security is used to determine self-interest. Those who feel that their job is not very secure would be more likely to believe that they will benefit from unemployment compensation. Those with high job security are not likely to believe they will benefit from unemployment programs, since they do not think they will become unemployed. Job security is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being no security and 10 being very high security. Therefore, those people on the lower end of the scale would have the most to gain from unemployment programs.\(^24\)

This measure of self-interest is not as clear as the dichotomous variable for self-interest used in the experimental design. Furthermore, we cannot manipulate self-interest and group-interest as we did in the previous chapter. Thus, in order to compare the important considerations for self-interested and non-self interested people, we must divide the sample at some cut point on the self-interest/job security scale. Since the average measure of job security for the sample is 7.47\(^25\), we can split the sample into above average and below average levels of security. Therefore, those who scored 0 through 7 on the job security scale are considered to have high (above average) self-interest.

\(^23\) According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in September of 2001, the unemployment rate was 3.9% for the United States and 4.1% for the state of Ohio.

\(^24\) The nine unemployed people in the sample were not asked the question dealing with job security. It would be possible to add these people to the job security scale at 0 (no security). However, after looking at the data, I decided not to do this for a number of reasons. Most importantly, there is a difference in terms of self-interest between those who are employed with no job security, and those who are unemployed. Although people in the no security situation may benefit from government unemployment programs in the future, the unemployed are currently benefiting from the program. Lumping these two different groups together increases the standard error and reduces the power of the statistical tests.

\(^25\) The median score on the job security scale was 8. Therefore, splitting the sample on the median would have created a similar division.
interest, and those who score 8 or higher are considered to have low (below average) self-interest. This will allow for comparison of the two groups and their considerations as in the experimental design.

Measures of group-level interest are also included in the study. Respondents are asked if there is anyone among their close friends or family members who is currently unemployed. They are also asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 10, how close they feel to people who are unemployed, with 0 being not at all close and 10 being very close. These two variables represent the extent to which people’s group-interests are involved. In the absence of self-interest, people ask themselves how a policy will impact people like them and use this consideration as the basis for their opinions on the issue.

In the absence of both self-interest and group-level interests, people may judge unemployment policies on the basis of larger, national concerns. These sociotropic concerns are measured by two questions. People are asked if they think that there will be more, less, or the same amount of unemployment in the next year. They are also asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 10, how big of a problem they believe unemployment is in America today. In the absence of group and self-interests, people’s decisions on unemployment compensation will be based on their belief that unemployment is a large problem facing the country.26

The theory of hierarchical interests suggests that, when forming opinions, people first consider whether or not the issue impacts them directly. If there is no direct self-

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26 In reality, two models are presented: one for self-interest people (those with below average job security) and one for non-self-interested people (those with above average job security). I did not further divide respondents into categories based on group-interests due to the small n problem this would create. Therefore, our tests will identify if, in the absence of self-interest, group and sociotropic interests come into play. The hierarchy between group and sociotropic concerns is difficult to untangle in the survey design and is addressed more directly in the previous chapter.
interest involved, then people consider the extent to which the issue will affect people like them, or the nation as a whole. If the theory holds, one might expect that answers based on self-interest will be formed more quickly than those based on group or sociotropic concerns. In order to test this theory of latency effects, a timer was included in the Buckeye State Poll to measure how long it took for people to answer the question regarding government spending on unemployment compensation. One would expect there to be a difference in response time based on the level of interest involved.

**Attitude Results**

As stated previously, there are too few unemployed in our sample to compare employed people to unemployed people. Although not everyone in the sample is employed, people who are retired or in school would not have a personal stake in unemployment compensation. As such, the statistical analysis in this section focuses on those people who are employed, either full time or part time. Self-interest is measured by asking people to rate their job security on a scale from 0 to 10. I would expect that those respondents who feel they have low job security would have a stronger self-interest in government unemployment programs than would respondents with high levels of job security. This is based on the assumption that people who have low job security feel that they are much more likely to become unemployed in the near future and would then benefit from unemployment compensation.

A simple t-test indicates that there are differences in people's opinions toward government spending on unemployment depending on their self-reported job security.
Those with above average job security\textsuperscript{27} had an average of 3.65 on the unemployment compensation scale, where a higher number means that people are less in favor of government spending on unemployment. Respondents who reported below average job security scored an average of 2.88 on the same seven-point scale, indicating that this group was more likely to favor spending on unemployment compensation. The independent sample t-test for this comparison is statistically significant at the .01 level ($t=3.537$, $df=308$).

Although there are apparent differences between the two groups, it is not yet clear why these differences appear. In order to understand why these groups differ in their opinions about unemployment compensation, it is useful to conduct separate regression analyses for each group, with a number of independent variables designed to measure self-interest, group-interest, and sociotropic concerns. I have also included a control variable for party affiliation, since partisanship is often a strong predictor of people’s political attitudes. If the theory of hierarchical interests is correct, one would expect to see different significant considerations for the two groups.

For the self-interested group (low job security), one would expect to see evidence that people are considering their own welfare. The first noteworthy variable in

\textsuperscript{27} The groups are divided such that people below the average job security rating of 7.47 are included in the low security group, and people scoring above the average are included in the high security group.
the equation is the respondents' placement on the job security scale\(^{28}\). The variable is statistically significant (at the .05 level, two-tailed test) and in the predicted direction with those who have higher job security being less likely to favor increases in government unemployment compensation.

In addition, the variable measuring respondents' education may also be a measure of self-interest. People with higher levels of education would be better able to find a new job if they were to become unemployed. Not only does education provide skills necessary to find a new job, but also people with more education are likely to be more confident about their abilities and qualifications. Those with lower levels of education may have difficulty finding a new job in the event that they were to become unemployed. However, the variable measuring education is not statistically significant and does not add to our understanding of people's opinions toward unemployment compensation.

\(^{28}\) Although the initial job security scale is from 0 to 10, remember that the sample is divided into two groups: those who fell below the average of 7.47 and those who scored above the average. Therefore, the range of job security for the self-interested group is 0 to 7, and for the non-self-interested group the range is 8 through 10. The sample is split at 7.47 to allow for more equal distribution of cases into each category. Unfortunately, the range of response to the job security question is uneven, and the job security scale may be insignificant in the second group due to small variance. One could also choose to divide the sample at the midpoint of the scale, 0-5 and 6-10. However, this leaves only 64 cases in the first category. Since there are potential problems with both methods, I experimented with each. When divided at the midpoint, the results for both groups are similar to those presented in table 5.1. For the low interest group (0-5), the level of significance for both the job security scale and the party identification variable fall to .10 due to the low n. The high-interest group (6-10) has a higher n than in the original split sample, and the variance is much greater for the job security variable. Yet the job security variable, even in these favorable conditions, fails to meet statistical significance (p = 0.92). This indicates that the insignificance of this variable for the self-interested group in the original model is not due to limited variance. Rather, people with above average job security do not base their opinions of unemployment compensation on their own levels of job security, as is the case for those with below average levels of job security. The other variables in this model remain the same in terms of direction and statistical significance, with only slight differences in the coefficients.
### Table 5.1: Regression Analysis, Opinions on Unemployment Compensation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Below Average Job Security (Self-interested Respondents)</th>
<th>Above Average Job Security (Non-self-interested Respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.909 (1.259)</td>
<td>4.663 (1.849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Interest Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security Scale</td>
<td>.232**(.099)</td>
<td>-.052 (.154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.010 (.082)</td>
<td>-.012 (.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group-Interest Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Unemployed</td>
<td>-.078 (.058)</td>
<td>-.193**(.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know Unemployed</td>
<td>-.030 (.382)</td>
<td>.607**(.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociotropic Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More/Less Unemployment</td>
<td>-.101 (.256)</td>
<td>-.135 (.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Scale</td>
<td>-.041 (.073)</td>
<td>-.053 (.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Variable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>.238**(.080)</td>
<td>.228**(.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square (adjusted)</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable is opinion about government unemployment compensation on a seven-point scale, with 1 favoring increases in unemployment compensation and 7 favoring decreases. Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors. **p<.05, *p<.10

Two variables measuring group-level interests are also included in the model. The first of these asked respondent’s to rate on a scale from 0 to 10 how close they feel to unemployed people. The second asked if respondents had a friend or family member who was currently unemployed. Approximately 30% of the people surveyed reported that they had an unemployed friend or family member. However, neither of these
variables is statistically significant for the self-interested group. This supports the findings of the previous chapter that, in the presence of self-interest, group-interest does not enter into people’s decision calculus.

There are two measures of sociotropic interests in the model. These variables measure respondents’ feelings about unemployment in the United States and whether or not the issue is of large national concern. First, respondents were asked to indicate whether they believe unemployment will increase, stay the same, or decrease in the next twelve months. Second, respondents were asked to rate how big of a problem they believe unemployment is in American today on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being no problem and 10 being a very large problem. Neither of these variables is significant for the self-interested, low job security group.

The control variable for party identification is statistically significant and in the direction one would expect. That is, democrats are more likely to favor increases in unemployment compensation and republicans are more likely to support decreases in unemployment compensation. Although party identification appears to provide the most explanation for people’s attitudes towards unemployment with a standardized beta coefficient of .293, the job security variable is surprisingly close with a standardized beta of .237. Given that we would expect party identification to have a large impact on people’s policy preferences, the fact that job security is almost as strong of a predictor really underscores the importance of self-interest in this model.

When the model is repeated for the high job security group, the results are different. This supports the claim made in past chapters that the considerations people use to reach decisions may vary, depending on the level of interest involved in the issue.
People who are self-interested ask how the policy will impact them. Thus, for the low job security group, placement on the job security scale was useful in explaining people's opinions about unemployment compensation. However, among the high job security group, this measure of self-concern was not significant in predicting people's attitudes.

As with the experimental study in the previous chapter, in the absence of self-interest, people appear to rely on group-level-interest. Both group-interest variables are statistically significant in the high job security model. The only other variable that is significant is the control for party identification. In this model, respondents' feelings of closeness to unemployed people are the strongest predictor of people's attitudes toward unemployment compensation, with those who feel close to unemployed people being more likely to favor increases in unemployment compensation. The standardized beta coefficient for this variable is -.289, compared to .260 for the party identification variable. Again, the party identification variable is in the predicted direction with democrats being more likely to favor unemployment spending.

The other group-interest variable, knowing someone who is unemployed, is also statistically significant with a standardized beta of .145. What is most notable is that the relationship is in the opposite direction from what one would expect. People who have a friend or family member who is unemployed are actually LESS likely to support increases in unemployment compensation. There are several possible explanations for this finding. The first is that knowing someone who is unemployed causes one to feel closer to unemployed people. There is a positive and statistically significant correlation between these two variables, with those who know someone who is unemployed feeling
closer to unemployed people.\textsuperscript{29} Therefore, the impact of having an unemployed friend works through the closeness variable. Since I have controlled for feelings of closeness to unemployed people, I have eliminated this effect from the regression.

In addition, it appears that it is not enough to just know someone who is unemployed. Rather, people must identify with or feel close to these people in order for it to impact their opinions toward the policy. Furthermore, the people in the high job security group do not, in general, feel very close to unemployed people.\textsuperscript{30} If a person does not feel close to unemployed people, then simply knowing unemployed people may actually increase opposition to unemployment compensation. If a family member or acquaintance is unemployed and living off of government assistance, then employed people may actually resent the fact that these people are not working. In sum, knowing unemployed people may increase feelings of closeness to the unemployed. When we control for feelings of closeness, the effect of knowing an unemployed person is small, and even negative. This may coincide with some of the research on group conflict that shows contact between groups may actually increase hostility (Sherif, 1961). If one does not feel close to unemployed people, contact with them may perpetuate stereotypes about them being lazy and undeserving of government assistance.

Overall, the results of this study coincide with the findings in the previous chapter. When self-interest is involved, people form decisions on the basis of that self-interest. In the absence of clear self-interest, people rely on group-interests and consider how the policy will impact people to whom they feel close. It appears that it is

\textsuperscript{29} The correlation between these variables is .232 and is statistically significant at .01.

\textsuperscript{30} There is a negative correlation between closeness to unemployed people and job security of -.136, with a significance level of .016. Therefore, people with higher job security would feel less close to unemployed people.
this feeling of closeness to people that guides opinion formation in the absence of self-interest, and not merely knowing someone who may be involved in the issue.

In both models, our sociotropic variables failed to provide statistically significant findings. As stated earlier in the dissertation, I believe that people's ideology is intertwined with sociotropic interests. People base their perceptions of what is good or bad for the country on ideological, or even partisan beliefs. This may help to explain the insignificance of the sociotropic variables, since we have controlled for party identification. In fact, when party identification is removed from the models, one of the sociotropic variables is statistically significant: the one measuring people's perception of how big a problem unemployment is for the country. However, it is only statistically significant in the high job security group, suggesting that sociotropic concerns only enter the equation in the absence of self-interest.

Latency Results

According to the theory of hierarchical interests, people first consider whether or not a policy or issue will impact them directly. In the absence of self-interest, people then rely on alternative considerations. Since self-interest is the first consideration in the chain of reasoning, one might expect that people who are more self-interested will have more immediate responses when asked about their opinions on the issues. Therefore, if there is a difference in response time according to self-interest, this would confirm the theory presented throughout this dissertation. However, if the findings are null, they do not necessarily disprove the theory. Rather, differences in response times
may be too small to measure. Furthermore, it is possible that the reasoning chain does
exist, but that no differences in response time occur. People may have already
formulated opinions on these issues and have readily available answers. While these
answers may have been formulated by the hierarchal considerations proposed by my
theory, the difference in time would not show-up in the survey, since the process of
opinion formation occurred at some time prior to the survey. With that being said, it
appears that the theory about latencies is somewhat non-falsifiable. Therefore, the
latencies in and of themselves are not sufficient evidence for a theory of hierarchical
interests. However, in conjunction with the previous findings, they may add some
credibility to our theory and present a more complete story. In addition, the tests are
falsifiable if they are statistically significant but in the opposite direction from what had
been hypothesized.

During the Buckeye State Poll, people's responses to several questions were
timed. The computer used in the CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing)
process was programmed to record the time, in hundredths of seconds, from the time the
question appears on the screen, until the interviewer enters the subject's response. The
question about government employment compensation is a branching question. Some
subjects indicate initially that they fall in the middle and cannot decide between
increasing and reducing benefits. These subjects are then asked in a follow-up question
to choose between the alternatives. The response times for both of these questions are
then added to give a total decision time. Since these people are, at first, undecided, their
response times include both the initial question and the follow-up question and are
longer due to their initial indecision.
There will inevitably be differences in timing among interviewers, since the reading of the question is included in the response time. Therefore, it is necessary to include a control variable that accounts for the variance between interviewers. This control variable is simply a separate timer, which was included on a question that could be answered easily and with little hesitation. In this case, response times to the question “Do you have a computer that is used in your home?” were recorded and will be used as a control variable. Theoretically, this will not only control for interviewer speed, but also for the overall response time of respondents, since some people may naturally respond more quickly to questions than others.\footnote{For research on the use of response latency measures and survey timers, see Bassili 1993, 1996; Bassili and Fletcher, 1991; Fazio, 1990.}

In addition to the control variable for interviewer timing, several other controls are necessary. For instance, response time may vary by respondents’ education, as people with less education may take longer to formulate an opinion and may not be as likely to have a preformed opinion. This variable may also be a measure of self-interest, since people with less education would be more in favor of government unemployment compensation since they would have a more difficult time finding employment. Therefore, this variable, if statistically significant, could go in either direction.

The remaining independent variables to be included in the model predicting response times are the same variables used in earlier analysis to represent self-interest, group-level-considerations, and sociotropic concerns. In order to predict response times, these variables are included as independent variables in an event history model. An event history model allows us to examine the impact of covariates on the timing of
an event. In this case, the dependent variable is response time to the survey question concerning government spending on unemployment compensation. Of the various event history models available, the Cox model is the most flexible and allows the data to speak, so to say, rather than imposing a structural form on the data. Therefore, the Cox model will be used to test for latency effects in the Buckeye State Poll data.

The Cox model is commonly referred to as the "proportional hazards model" due to the assumption that the hazards are proportional, or that "for any two individuals at any point in time, the ratio of their hazards is a constant (Allison, 1984)". Therefore, we expect the effects of covariates in the model to be independent of time. Many researchers argue that failure to satisfy the assumption may have important implications for the results of the model. Therefore, a cautious researcher will test the validity of the assumption in her own data. The results of Grambsch and Therneau’s global tests for proportionality suggest that the data used from the Buckeye Poll do not violate the proportional hazards assumption of the model ($X^2 = 10.10, df=7, p>.10$).

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32 For a general discussion on the use of event history models in social science, see Allison, 1982; Petersen, 1991; Singer and Willett, 1993; Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 1997.
33 See Appendix A at the end of the chapter for a discussion of event history models, the proportional hazards assumption and the reasons for using this type of model for the analysis of latency effects.
34 However, in reality, other event history models also assume proportional hazards, such as the Weibull model.
35 Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2001) demonstrate that violations of the proportional hazards assumption may bias coefficients and argue that researchers need to test for the proportionality of their hazards when using event history analysis. See also, Collett, 1994; Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1999; and Klein and Moeschberger, 1997.
36 The Grambsch/Therneau global test for proportional hazards indicates a p value of .18, where a significant p value (.05 or less) indicates that we cannot reject the hypothesis that we have proportional hazards. This test was conducted using both time, and ln(time), with similar results. See Appendix C for a more detailed discussion of this test.
Table 5.2 shows the results of the Cox model\(^{37}\), with the timed responses to the unemployment compensation question set as the failure time predicted by the independent variables in the model. Since the timer starts when the researcher reads the question, the start time is 0. The results shown indicate predicted failure (as opposed to survival). In this case, failure simply means a response to the question. Therefore, a negative coefficient indicates that as the variable increases, it causes a decrease in failure or increases the time to answer the question. A positive coefficient means that as the independent variable increases, so does the failure rate. In other words, a positive coefficient shows that the time to answer the question decreases as the independent variable increases. It may be more useful to think of the hazard rate as the response time. A high hazard rate means a quick response. A low hazard or failure rate means a slow response.

Looking at the results from the Cox model, we can see that only two variables are statistically significant. The control timer on the computer ownership question is statistically significant at the .05 level. The control timer is in the predicted direction, with longer times on the computer question predicting longer response times on the unemployment compensation variable.

\(^{37}\) It is also possible to use a traditional regression model here, with the response time as the dependent variable. Although I believe that an event history model is most appropriate, for reasons explained in Appendix C, the results of OLS produce similar results. The variable for job security is significant in the OLS model ($\beta = 541.77$, $p = .06$), as is the control timer ($\beta = .741$, $p = .01$).
Covariates | Coefficients | Hazard Ratio
--- | --- | ---
Dichotomous Job Security | -.216* (.124) | 0.806* (.099)
Education | -.004 (.027) | 0.996 (.026)
Close Unemployed | .015 (.019) | 1.015 (.019)
Know Unemployed | -.199 (.131) | 0.819 (.107)
More/Less Unemployment | .064 (.085) | 1.066 (.090)
Problem Scale | -.019 (.024) | 0.982 (.023)
Control Timer | -.001**(.000) | 0.999**(.041)

Note: Numbers in Parenthesis are standard errors. **p<.05, *p<.10
See Appendix C for a more detailed discussion of Event History Models.

Table 5.2: Cox Model, Response Time for Unemployment Question

The other variable of interest is the job security variable. This is a dummy variable, representing the low-security and high-security groups analyzed earlier in the chapter. The variable is not statistically significant at the .05 confidence level, but does meet a looser .10 criteria, with a p value of .08. Given that we expected the effects of this variable to be subtle, this significance level is reassuring. More importantly, the relationship is in the direction hypothesized. The negative coefficient indicates that, as job security increases, the hazard rate decreases. That is, the length of response (survival) increases. The hazard ratio of .805 indicates that people with above average job security are .8 times as likely to fail than are people with below average security, at any given point in time. Therefore, a hazard ratio below 1 means that the independent variable decreases the hazard, or in this case, increases the response time. As predicted,
It appears that people who have a self-interest involved form policy opinions more quickly than do those with less interest. This supports the theory of hierarchical interests, which states that, in the absence of self-interest, people must continue down the chain of considerations to consider group and sociotropic interests.

Furthermore, this finding is true even when controlling for variables such as respondents’ perceptions that unemployment is a problem. Were this variable not included in the model, one could argue that people who are self-interested consider the issue to be a bigger problem. This would cause them to have pre-existing beliefs about the issue and would result in faster response times, not due to the hierarchy of considerations but simply due to the importance they assign to the issue. Not only is this variable included as a control in the model, but it is not significant in predicting response times. The second of the sociotropic variables, perception that unemployment will increase or decrease, also fails to produce statistically significant results.

Of the two group-interest variables, neither closeness to the unemployed nor knowing someone who is unemployed, is a significant predictor of response time. Thus, group-interest does not appear to have an effect on response time. It appears that, once a person moves down the interest hierarchy from self-interest to group and sociotropic interests, there is no difference in time consideration between group-interested people and sociotropic thinking people (those without self or group interests). This does not mean that there is not a hierarchy to thinking, merely that the response times do not differ. It could be the case that group-level interests are more complex than sociotropic considerations. Therefore, someone contemplating group-interests may consume the same amount of time as someone who moves quickly through the group-
level consideration, determines they have no group interests, and then answers on the basis of larger sociotropic and philosophical concerns. In sum, the evidence for self-interest effects on latency is strongest, with self-interested people answering more quickly.

Discussion/Conclusion

In this chapter, I tested the theory of hierarchical interests using survey data. The analysis was not as clean as in the previous chapter, due to the inability to control the variables as in the experimental design. However, the results of this chapter, while less precise and with less internal validity than the previous chapter, do add to our understanding of the process by which people form opinions on political issues. Most importantly, the study in this chapter confirms the findings of the previous chapter, while looking at a political issue in a realistic setting. Thus, the analysis in this chapter adds external validity to the theory of hierarchical interests. Furthermore, the use of survey data may satisfy critics who are skeptical about the use of undergraduates as research subjects.

Although there are differences in the means between the self-interested and non-self-interested groups in this study, both groups' average scores indicate that they are in favor of increasing unemployment compensation. What differs between the groups is the strength of people's feelings and the considerations that lead to their choices. While both groups, on average, believe that unemployment compensation should be increased (although the majority would do so only if taxes were not increased in response), the
group with low job security has more extreme positions and is more likely to favor increases even if taxes were to increase as a result. As mentioned in the theory of hierarchical interests presented in chapter three, the strength of a person's opinion is expected to decrease as one moves down the hierarchy chain, from self-interest, to group-interest, to sociotropic interest. This appears to be the case, at least as we move from self-interest to other interests. The change in opinion strength from group-interest to sociotropic interest is not established here.

More importantly, the considerations that influence people's positions on issues vary according to the level of interest involved. In this study, we see that people with self-interest are influenced by different factors than those without self-interest. The opinions of the group with below average job security were dependent upon party identification and their precise position on the original job security scale (0 to 10 rather than collapsed into above average and below average). The self-interested group relied upon considerations of personal risk. Those with the lowest job security were most likely to favor government unemployment compensation because they are most likely to benefit from such increases.

People with high job security did not feel threatened by possible unemployment, and were able to rely on considerations other than these measures of personal interest or threat. In both studies (here and in chapter 4), the feeling of closeness to a group appears to be an important factor in people's decisions when they do not have a personal interest at stake. As seen in this chapter, simply knowing a person who would be affected by the issue is not enough. People who had a friend or relative who was unemployed were not more likely to support unemployment compensation, except to
the extent that knowing someone who is jobless increased feelings of closeness to unemployed people. In fact, when controlling for feelings of closeness to the unemployed, knowing someone who is out of work may actually decrease support for unemployment compensation. This finding may tie into work on group conflict that indicates that contact with other groups may actually increase tensions between groups. It is possible that someone who is working resents the fact that others are getting a free ride. Knowing someone who is not working may simply reinforce this resentment, as they see that person with more free time and living off of others. The employed person may even regard the unemployed friend or relative as lazy and undeserving of assistance.

The latency measures included in this chapter indicate that the response time for respondents in our self-interested group were less than the response times for the high job security group. This would suggest that self-interest considerations precede considerations of group and sociotropic interests. This again is consistent with the theory of hierarchical interests defined in chapter three of the dissertation.

In sum, there are several important findings in this chapter. First, after considering the results from this chapter, as well as the previous chapter, I can say with some degree of certainty that people do not always use the same criteria to reach decisions. Furthermore, it appears that self-interested and non-self-interested people may reach the same decisions or form similar opinions about an issue, while relying on a different set of considerations.

Second, it would appear that when present, considerations of self-interest dominate people’s choices. Respondents who rated their job security as being very low
would have the most interest in increasing unemployment compensation, since they feel the threat of job loss. Therefore, self-interested people are acting on the basis of their own rational, material interests. In addition, since response time on the unemployment compensation question was shorter for the self-interested group, we may conclude that this consideration is the first in a chain of reasoning.

The non-self-interested people may be reaching similar conclusions, while utilizing different considerations such as group-interest. It is, therefore, not responsible to simply rule out self-interest as a motivating factor when both groups reach the same conclusions. According to the results of this study, in the absence of self-interest, people rely on considerations of group-interest to determine their policy preferences. More specifically, group-interest as defined by feelings of closeness to unemployed people determines attitudes toward unemployment compensation. Why is “closeness” and not simply knowing someone who is unemployed important? I speculate that the “closeness” question is tapping into feelings of empathy. If one feels close to a group, then they can empathize with that group’s situation. The fact that you know someone who is unemployed is not sufficient. Although knowing unemployed people often causes one to feel closer to the group, it is these feelings of closeness that matter and not merely contact. In future studies, I would hope to measure feelings of “empathy” more directly and examine the factors that cause one to feel “close” to any given group.

Finally, after reading this chapter, I hope that people will begin to question the previously held assumption that self-interest is not a powerful force in people’s political attitudes. Rather, the dismissal of self-interest was based the untested assumption that all people use the same decision calculus to form opinions. Researchers assumed that if
self-interested and non-self-interested people reached the same conclusions, than self-interest must not be a factor. I hope that the simply dichotomous self-interest variable in future studies will be examined in light of the evidence presented here, and that separate models will be run to uncover the considerations that are utilized by both groups.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Over the past three decades, there has been a considerable amount of research on the role of self-interest in people's political attitudes. The majority of this research has brought the notion of self-interest into question and has led many to conclude that citizens are not forming opinions on the basis of their own self-interests. In this dissertation, I argue that this conclusion is premature and based on assumptions in the literature that have, thus far, remained untested. Specifically, researchers have made the assumption that people utilize the same decision calculus, whether or not their own interests are involved.

In most cases, self-interest has been measured as a dichotomous variable and included as one of many independent variables in a model predicting political attitudes. As such, when the self-interest variable is not found to be statistically significant, researchers conclude that people are not acting on the basis of self-interest. However, this method fails to account for the possibility that people who are directly impacted by an issue or policy are, in fact, acting on the basis of self-interest, while those who do not have a personal stake in the issue are using a separate set of considerations and reaching similar conclusions.

The model tested in this dissertation attempts to address this oversight in the literature and challenges the assumption that everyone utilizes the same decision
calculus when determining his or her policy preferences. According to the theory of hierarchical interests presented in chapter three, people proceed down a chain of consideration when formulating opinions. The first consideration an individual makes is whether or not the issue bears a direct cost or benefit to one's self. If self-interest is apparent, then one forms an opinion on the basis of this concern for personal welfare. However, in the absence of self-interest, people consider how the issue will impact those people with whom they identify. If people do not feel close to the groups involved in the issue, they then consider the overall societal costs and benefits and formulate opinions on the basis of these sociotropic concerns.

Furthermore, political participation is expected to be more likely when self-interest is involved. According to the assumption of egoism discussed in Chapter 2, costs and benefits to the self are weighed most heavily. A number of studies have indicated that this is, in fact, the case, and that self-interest is often a moderator between political attitudes and behavior (Sivacek and Crano, 1982; Green and Cowden, 1992). Since participation is costly, those who are not personally impacted by the issue are less likely to expend the energy required for political participation given the limited benefits they will receive from doing so. On the contrary, anyone can formulate an opinion on an issue, and even those with little at stake will express an opinion. Thus, at all levels of interest, opinions are formed while participation drops off as we move down the hierarchy of considerations.

The theory of hierarchical interests is tested with both experimental and survey data. The experimental design allows active manipulation of both self-interest and group-interests. Since subjects are randomly assigned to the various treatment groups,
isolation of the causal mechanism is possible. The survey design, while less precise, allows the theory to be tested in a more realistic setting with an issue that is more political. While both approaches have their strength and weaknesses, together they present the most convincing case for the theory of hierarchical interests.

When considering the role of self-interest on people’s attitudes and behaviors, it may be useful to distinguish between “hard” and “easy” issues. Since “easy” issues prompt an immediate gut level response, it is difficult to identify the reasoning behind these pre-formed attitudes. It is likely that opinions on these “easy” issues were formed long ago, and that respondents now only retain a positive or negative view on the matter with little evidence of the original considerations that led to those views. Thus, the theory presented in this dissertation may be limited to “hard” issues, and cannot be applied to easy issues until tested further.

Summary of Results

In the experimental test of hierarchical interests, students at the Ohio State University were asked to read a paragraph on the possible adoption of senior comprehensive examinations. According to the paragraph, passage of the exam would become a requirement for graduation from the university. Students were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups, which were comprised of various combinations of self-interest/no self-interests and group-interest/no group-interest.

Self-interested was manipulated by informing students that the exam policy would take effect next quarter and, thus, they would have to pass the exams to graduate.
Students in the no self-interest group were told that the policy would impact incoming students only. The group-interest manipulation involved claims that the exams were biased against women. Students were also asked to rate the likelihood that they would participate in various activities aimed at preventing the adoption of the exam policy.

The experimental test in chapter four presented several important findings. Separate ordered probit models were run for each of the four treatment groups with opinions towards the exam policy as the dependent variable. The most important finding was that different independent variables were significant for the various treatment groups. This suggests that people utilize different considerations when formulating opinions, depending on the interests involved. Most importantly, feelings of closeness to women were only important when group-interest was manipulated but self-interest was not. That is, in the presence of self-interest, feelings of closeness to women did not impact opposition to the exams. However, when self-interest was not a factor, feelings of closeness to women did matter with students who felt close to women being more likely to oppose gender-biased exams.

Furthermore, the self-interest manipulation was not statistically significant in an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), suggesting that the self-interested and non-self-interested students reached similar conclusions about the exams. Furthermore, when self-interest is included as a dichotomous variable in a more traditional model, the variable does not yield statistically significant results. Therefore, students were reaching similar conclusions, yet these attitudes are based on different considerations for the various groups. This result questions the assumptions of previous studies on the
role of self-interest in people's attitudes and suggests that separate models are necessary for various levels of interest.

As expected, the students who received the self-interest manipulation were more likely to engage in political activity than were those who received the no-self-interest manipulation. Therefore, traditional dichotomous measures of self-interest are more successful at predicting political behavior than political attitudes. Again, since political participation involves some costs, students with little stake in the issue are not likely to act. Since attitude formation involves little costs, students form opinions whether self-interest is an issue or not. In the absence of self-interest, feelings of closeness to the group impacted by the exams are an important consideration.

The results of the survey design supported the experimental findings. As part of the Buckeye State Poll, respondents were asked a number of questions involving opinions about the state of the nation's unemployment, their current employment status and job security, and their feelings about government compensation to the unemployed. Since few people in the sample were unemployed, respondents' placement on the job-security scale was used to measure the role of self-interest in people's opinions about government unemployment compensation. As part of the survey, a timer was included on the government compensation question to measure response times to the question. If considerations of the self are first on the interest hierarchy, then we should expect to find that self-interested people respond more quickly to the question.

In the survey data, measures of self-interest were successful in predicting respondent's attitudes. Individuals with below average levels of job security were more likely to favor increases in government unemployment compensation than those with
higher levels of job security. More importantly, when separate models were run for those with below-average job security and those with above average job security, different variables were again significant in predicting respondent’s attitudes. For the low job security group, people’s opinions about government unemployment were influenced by their placement on the job security scale and their party affiliation. The relationships were in the expected directions. People with lower job security were more likely to favor increased spending on unemployment programs than were those with higher job security, and Democrats were more likely to favor increases in spending than were Republicans.

In the low-self-interest group, placement on the job security scale was not a significant predictor of people’s attitudes. However, both variables measuring group-interest were significant, as was party identification. The standardized beta coefficient was the strongest for the variable measuring people’s feelings of closeness to the unemployed. As in the experimental design, feelings of closeness to the group involved are important, but only in the absence of self-interest. The other group-interest variable was in the opposite direction from what we might expect. Respondents who know someone who is unemployed were actually less likely to support unemployment spending. As explained earlier in the chapter, this may be due to the fact that we are controlling for feelings of closeness to the unemployed. People who knew someone who was out of work felt closer to the unemployed. Therefore, having an unemployed friend or relative works through the closeness variable. Also, contact with unemployed people to whom one does not feel close may actually increase group conflict and hostility.
The latency effects were also statistically significant, suggesting that individuals with self-interest (in this case, low job security) responded more quickly to the question on government unemployment compensation than did the high security group. This is consistent with the theory of hierarchical interests. When self-interest is not apparent, individuals must continue down the decision tree, making further considerations to formulate an opinion on the issue.

Discussion

Given the results of the following chapters, what can we conclude about the role of self-interest in people’s political attitudes and behaviors? While both studies have their shortcomings, the fact that the results of each were extremely similar gives a great deal of credibility to the theory of hierarchical interests.

In both studies, people who had a direct stake in the issue appeared to be making decisions on the basis of self-interest. Furthermore, I would argue that past studies on self-interest do not contradict this. They do not find that people are not acting against their self-interest, but rather that non-self-interested people are behaving in a similar fashion. Thus, when self-interest is included as a dichotomous variable in a statistical model, the results are deceptive. This is demonstrated in chapter four, when traditional models are run to predict attitudes and behaviors. In the model predicting attitudes, self-interest is not statistically significant. Yet, when separate models are run for each treatment group, there is evidence that self-interest does matter. Therefore, I would
suggest that we reexamine past claims and, when possible, test the theory of hierarchical interests with the data from these previous studies.

In the absence of self-interest, people relied on group-interest. It would appear that group-interest is not simply an extended form of self-interest. It is not merely group-membership that determines group-interest, but rather feelings of closeness to and empathy with the group involved. Gender was not found to predict opposition to gender-biased exams, but feelings of closeness to women did matter in the absence of self-interest. Furthermore, contact with group-members may actually increase resentment towards the group and lead to policy decisions that are against the group’s interest. It is apparent that more research needs to be done to determine if measures of closeness to a group cause one to empathize with the group’s struggles. It would also be interesting to examine the relationship between self-interest and group-interest when the two come into conflict. I would expect that self-interest would dominate in this case, but that is an empirical question.

Perhaps the weakest component of this research is the claim that sociotropic concerns enter into people’s opinions in the absence of self-interest and group-interest. While the relationship between self-interest and group-interest is fairly well supported by the two studies, there is little evidence concerning the role of sociotropic politics. In fact, the only evidence for sociotropic concerns is in the experimental design. In the absence of both self-interest and group-interest manipulations, opinions towards comprehensive exams were influenced by students’ opinions about the role of college in student’s lives. While this consideration may be sociotropic in nature, with students being concerned for the common good, it is also possible that this is a more ideological
concern. In fact, sociotropic concerns and ideology seem difficult to untangle. People's ideological, or even partisan, leanings influence their perceptions of what is good for the nation or their community. In addition, there may be elements of motivated reasoning, with people believing that their party's position is naturally best for the country. In the future, I would like to extend this research to consider, more carefully, the role of sociotropic concerns in attitudes and behaviors. Since this would require breaking people into multiple groups (on the basis of self-interest, group-interest, etc.), a large national survey may be ideal.

The evidence for the role of self-interest in political behavior is not surprising, although it is reassuring to find that these results support previous research on this relationship. Since the costs of participation should be the same for self-interested and non-self-interested people, it is in terms of expected benefits that self-interest alters the cost-benefit calculation. This is consistent with the assumption of egoism and the idea that costs to the self are weighed more heavily than are costs to others. However, there are, obviously cases where people act on behalf of a group with whom they identify strongly. For example, student protests against racial injustices, workers' wages, or even the Vietnam War, do not appear to be motivated by self-interest. However, even here, students are not acting against their own interests. The theory of hierarchical interests states that the self is considered first and that self-interest is weighed more heavily. However, this is not to say that group-interest cannot motivate political behavior when the costs to a group with whom one identifies are viewed as very high.

The latency effects on the survey data are interesting and suggest that the theory of hierarchical interests is correct. If people consider self-interest first, then decisions
based on the self should be made more quickly than those based on later considerations. However, I am still cautious about drawing this conclusion since it contradicts the elaboration likelihood theory. According to this theory, people spend more time considering issues that impact them personally and consider the issue more deeply. I believe that further research is needed to draw firm conclusions about the effect of self-interest on response time.

The theory presented throughout this dissertation is also limited in its application to what we have defined as "hard issues". Since many of the previous studies on self-interest have dealt with "easy issues" such as race, this study does not necessarily contradict earlier findings. I plan to continue the research begun here and examine the theory as it applies to "easy issues". The first step may be to reexamine the data on school busing and run separate models for people with children in school and for those without school-aged children to see if different considerations are relevant for the two groups. The issue of race and other "easy issues" could also be addressed in an experimental setting, much like that conducted in chapter four.

Despite these weaknesses, I believe that the evidence presented in this dissertation for a theory of hierarchical interests is convincing. The way in which self-interest has been studied in the past is problematic, and future studies will need to grapple with the assumption that people utilize an identical decision calculus no matter what the level of interest involved. This is clearly not always the case.

In addition, the findings presented throughout this dissertation offer some important methodological insights into the study of self-interest, group-interest, and sociotropic politics. Previous studies on these topics may need to be reevaluated. If
there is a hierarchical structure to people’s interests, then previous studies may have reached incorrect conclusions due to their failure to account for this hierarchy. For example, the lack of evidence for sociotropic concerns may be due to the fact that, in the policy areas being studied, self-interest was present. Researchers must also be cautious about running a single regression analysis on any process where a hierarchical structure may be present. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, a single statistical model fails to account for the hierarchical structure of considerations and more sophisticated analysis is needed to capture the underlying process.

**Concluding Remarks**

There has been a lot of discussion in the field of political science about the ability of citizens to self-govern. The debate over the role of self-interest in people’s attitudes and behaviors has played an important role in this discussion. After three decades of research, prominent scholars in the field have concluded that self-interest is not the motivation behind people’s policy preferences. As I warned earlier, however, we must be careful about drawing such a conclusion, since it has enormous implications for our understanding of the democratic process. If people are not forming “rational” opinions, then public policy may be reflecting non-attitudes or, worse yet, prejudice.

The overwhelming evidence against self-interest, to date, is due to the fact that researchers continue to make the same assumptions when testing for the influence of self-interest. The results have been reliable, but not valid. This dissertation is not merely another attempt to find evidence for self-interested attitudes in yet another
policy area. Rather, I have redefined the method for studying self-interest. In doing so, I hope to restore some of the faith in the American citizenry that has been lost.

It appears, from the evidence in the previous chapters, that Americans are behaving rationally. Not only are they acting in accordance with their own self-interests, but in the absence of self-interest, people rely on other “rational” alternatives. The hierarchy of interests may be thought of in terms of spheres of influence. Self-interest exerts the most influence, followed by group-interest and sociotropic concerns. Thus, people’s preferences are ordered. Policies that benefit the self are the first preference, followed by those that benefit people to whom one feels close.

The issue of self-interest needs to be revisited in light of this new evidence. The way in which self-interest has been measured in the past has set citizens up to fail. As researchers, we owe citizens the benefit of the doubt and should not draw premature conclusions about their “irrationality”. A democracy is heavily dependent upon the ability of citizens to make competent policy choices, and self-interest is an important component of competency. If public policy reflects the will of the people, we should hope that public sentiment is based on self-interest to ensure that public policy represents the people’s needs as well.
APPENDIX A

EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATION

Treatment 1: Self-Interest, No Group-Interest
We are interested in your attitudes about a specific policy that is being considered at The Ohio State University that would impact current OSU students. The university has not yet come to a decision on this policy, and we are interested in students' opinions towards the change. The University is considering a proposal, which calls for the implementation of senior comprehensive exams at the university. The exams would be similar to the Graduate Record Examination, but would place an emphasis on the student's major field of study. Other schools which have implemented such exams claim that comprehensive exams result in increases in students' motivation and performances. In addition, many graduate and professional schools prefer students from universities that require comprehensive exams. Students who fail their examinations would not be permitted to graduate until they pass. Exams may be retaken at the end of the following quarter. The change, if implemented, would be effective beginning with the end of next quarter.

Treatment 2: No Self-Interest, No Group-Interest
We are interested in your attitudes about a specific policy that is being considered at The Ohio State University and would impact incoming students. The university has not yet come to a decision on this policy, and we are interested in students' opinions towards the change. The University is considering a proposal, which calls for the implementation of senior comprehensive exams at the university. The exams would be similar to the Graduate Record Examination, but would place an emphasis on the student's major field of study. Other schools which have implemented such exams claim that comprehensive exams result in increases in students' motivation and performances. In addition, many graduate and professional schools prefer students from universities that require comprehensive exams. Students who fail their examinations would not be permitted to graduate until they pass. Exams may be retaken at the end of the following quarter. The change, if implemented, would be effective beginning with incoming students and would not change the graduation requirements of current OSU students.

Treatment 3: Self-Interest, Group-Interest
We are interested in your attitudes about a specific policy that is being considered at The Ohio State University and would impact current OSU students. The university has not yet come to a decision on this policy, and we are interested in students' opinions towards the change. The University is considering a proposal, which calls for the implementation of senior comprehensive exams at the university. The exams would be similar to the Graduate Record Examination, but would place an emphasis on the student's major field of study. Other schools which have implemented such exams claim that comprehensive exams result in increases in students' motivation and performances. In addition, many graduate and professional schools prefer students from universities that require comprehensive exams. Several women's groups oppose such exams, claiming that women are more likely to fail than men. Students who fail their examinations would not be permitted to graduate until they pass. Exams may be retaken at the end of the following quarter. The change, if implemented, would be effective beginning with the end of next quarter.

Opposition to the exams from women's organizations arose after a study by the National Science Foundation found that among men and women with similar college grades, women tend to fail comprehensive exams at a higher rate than do men.
Treatment 4: No Self-Interest, Group Interest

We are interested in your attitudes about a specific policy that is being considered at The Ohio State University and would impact incoming students. The university has not yet come to a decision on this policy, and we are interested in students' opinions towards the change. The University is considering a proposal, which calls for the implementation of senior comprehensive exams at the university. The exams would be similar to the Graduate Record Examination, but would place an emphasis on the student's major field of study. Other schools which have implemented such exams claim that comprehensive exams result in increases in students' motivation and performances. In addition, many graduate and professional schools prefer students from universities that require comprehensive exams. Several women's groups oppose such exams, claiming that women are more likely to fail than men. Students who fail their examinations would not be permitted to graduate until they pass. Exams may be retaken at the end of the following quarter. The change, if implemented, would be effective beginning with incoming students and would not change the graduation requirements for current OSU students.

Opposition to the exams from women's organizations arose after a study by the National Science Foundation found that among men and women with similar college grades, women tend to fail comprehensive exams at a higher rate than do men.
APPENDIX B

VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

Group Closeness Variables:
Now we are going to ask you about how close you feel to different groups of people. Think about each of
the groups below and indicate how close you feel to members of that group on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1
being not close at all and 7 being very close.

| Close Women | In general, how close do you feel to women? (Give a number between 1 and 7) |
| Close College St- | In general, how close do you feel to college students? (Give a number between 1 and 7) |
| Close Excel- | In general, how close do you feel to people who excel in school? (Give a number between 1 and 7) |
| Close Struggle- | In general, how close do you feel to people who struggle to get by in school? (Give a number between 1 and 7) |

Academic Variables:

College Success: Additive function of following variables: Test taking skills, Current GPA, College too difficult

Academic Commitment: Additive function of following variables: College Purpose, Hours on course work

Test Taking Skills: Some people do well on tests, while others are not good test takers. How good do you consider you test taking ability? (1=very poor, 2=poor, 3=average, 4=good, 5=very good)

Current GPA: What is your current GPA (grade point average)? (1=0.9 or under, 2=1.0-1.4, 3=1.5-1.9, 4=2.0-2.4, 5=2.5-2.9, 6=3.0-3.4, 7=3.5-4.0)

College Too Difficult: Some people believe that getting good grades in college has become too difficult, while others believe that college has become too easy. Where would you place yourself on this scale? (1=Much too difficult, 2=Slightly difficult, 3=Just Right, 4=Slightly easy, 5=Much too easy)
Hours on course Work: On average, how many hours per week do you spend on your course work, not including time spent in class? (1 = 0-3 hours, 2 = 4-7 hours, 3 = 8-11 hours, 4 = 12-15 hours, 5 = 16-19 hours, 6 = 20 hours or more)

College Purpose: Some people believe that the purpose of college is to do course work and academic pursuits, while others believe that most important part of college is the social experience and interaction with others. Which of the following best describes your attitudes about college life? (1 = Social interaction is by far the most important part of college, 2 = Social interaction is slightly more important than academics, 3 = Both academics and social interaction are equally important in college life, 4 = Course work and academics are slightly more important than interaction with others, 5 = Course work and academics are by far the most important part of college)

Participation Variables:

Political Participation: Additive function of following variables: protest, sign petition, circulate petition, post fliers, attend a meeting, hours willing to donate

Suppose you were contacted by a group on campus and asked to volunteer time to prevent the adoption of senior comprehensive exams. On a scale from 1 to 7, with one being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely, how likely would you be to participate in the following activities?

Protest: How likely are you to participate in student protests against senior comprehensive exams? (On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely)

Sign petition: How likely are you to sign a petition against senior comprehensive exams? (On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely)

Circulate petition: How likely are you to circulate a petition against senior comprehensive exams? (On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely)

Post fliers: How likely are you to post fliers against senior comprehensive exams? (On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely)

Attend a meeting: How likely are you to attend a campus meeting to discuss senior comprehensive exams? (On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being not at all likely and 7 being extremely likely)

Hours willing to donate: How many hours of your time are you willing to donate to prevent passage of comprehensive exams? (1 = 0, 2 = 1-3, 3 = 4-6, 4 = 7-9, 5 = 10 or more)
Other Variables:

Pass Likely: If senior comprehensive exams were given at The Ohio State University, how likely do you believe it is that you would pass? (1=Extremely likely that I would pass, 2=Fairly likely that I would pass, 3=Neither likely or unlikely, 4=Fairly unlikely that I would pass, 5=Extremely unlikely that I would pass)

Sex: What is your sex? (0= Male, 1 = Female)

Party Id: Seven point branching scale: (1=strong democrat, 2=weak democrat, 3=independent leans democrat, 4=independent, 5=independent leans republican, 6=weak republican, 7=strong republican)

Year College: In what year of college are you currently enrolled? (1=First year, 2=Sophomore, 3=Junior, 4=Senior, 5=Graduate)

Exam Opinion: Do you support or oppose the policy of senior comprehensive exams as a requirement for graduation from the Ohio State University? (1=I strongly support the policy of senior comprehensive exams, 2=I slightly support the policy of senior comprehensive exams, 3=I neither support or oppose the policy of senior comprehensive exams, 4=I slightly oppose the policy of senior comprehensive exams, 5=I strongly oppose the policy of senior comprehensive exams)
APPENDIX C
EVENT HISTORY ANALYSIS

Why Event History?

Given the limited use of event history models in the field of political science, I feel that some explanation of the model and its application in this dissertation is warranted. Event history or duration models allow researchers to examine patterns of change in variables, and the causes of those patterns. These models predict, not only whether or not an event occurs, but also when it occurs. Thus, this type of analysis is ideal for modeling latency effects and response times. A researcher can determine, not only whether or not a subject gave a response, but also when the response was recorded and which independent factors contributed to variations in response times.

In the event history model in chapter five, I am looking to see whether or not measures of self-interest contribute to the response times of respondents, with the theory that self-interest will decrease response time. Some people would suggest that the same information could be gained by doing a regression analysis, with response time as the dependent variable. However, there are a number of reasons why an event history model is preferable to ordinary least squared regression models (OLS). Most importantly for my work, OLS assumes linearity, while event history models do not.
Also, OLS tends to produce negative durations, which are obviously not possible when dealing with the dependent variable “time”.

**The Cox Model**

Once a researcher has chosen to use event history analysis, a specific model must be selected. There are a number of duration models. With the exception of the Cox model, all are parametric and assume a particular shape or distribution of the underlying hazards. The Weibull model, for example, assumes that the hazards are monotonically increasing. The exponential model assumes that the hazard rate is invariant to time (or flat). Furthermore, researchers do not often have sound theoretical reasons to assume one distribution over another. The Cox model utilized in Chapter 5 allows one to estimate an event history model without having to specify a particular distribution. The Cox model allows the data to speak, rather than imposing assumptions on the data. As such, the Cox model is also likely to produce more conservative estimates than would a model chosen to match the distribution of the underlying hazards. This allows one to have even greater confidence in the results of the analysis.

**The Proportional Hazards Assumption**

A number of event history models, including the Cox model, assume that the hazards are proportional. That is, the effect of each explanatory variable on the hazard is the same at different points in time. Violations of the proportional hazards assumption have been shown to produce biased coefficients. Fortunately, there are a
number of statistical tests that allow one to easily address the validity of the assumption in a given model. The test used in this dissertation is the Grambsch and Therneau test for proportionality. This is a residual based global test, which saves the Schoenfeld residuals and tests to see whether or not the residuals interact with a measure of time (either time, ln(time), etc). A significant $X^2$ indicates that the effect of a covariate interacts with time and that the proportional hazards assumption may be violated. If this is the case, one may conduct covariate specific tests, which utilize the scaled Schoenfeld residuals and report time interactions for each covariate in the model. This will identify the offending variables. Violations of the assumption may then be corrected by including a new variable in the model that is an interaction of the offending variable and time.
APPENDIX D

VAR\IRE\BLE LIST FROM THE BUCK\EYE STATE POLL SURVEY

Self-Interest Variables

Job Security Scale — “Some people have little job security and feel they could lose their job at any time. Others have high job security and feel there is little chance that they will lose their job. On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no job security, 5 being average job security, and 10 being very high security, where would you rate your current job security?”

Education — “Now we’d like to ask you about your education. But first we’d like to remind you that this information is going to be used for statistical purposes only and is entirely confidential. However, that does not mean that your answer is not important. For us to understand the opinions of Ohioans, it is very important that we know how many years of education you have completed. So, please think carefully for a moment and tell me, what is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?”

1-8 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
9-12 HIGH SCHOOL
13 SOME COLLEGE
14 ASSOCIATES CERTIFICATE/2 YEAR PROGRAM
15 BACHELOR’S DEGREE
16 SOME GRADUATE SCHOOL
17 MASTER’S DEGREE
18 DOCTORATE/ADVANCED DEGREE

Group-Interest Variables

Close Unemployed — “Now we are going to ask you how close you feel to unemployed people, where close means how much you relate to or feel connected with these people. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being not at all close, 5 being moderately close, and 10 being very close, how close do you feel to unemployed people?”

Know Unemployed — “Is there anyone among your close friends or family who is currently unemployed or underemployed and looking for work?”

1 YES
0 NO
Sociotropic Variables

More/Less Unemployment — “How about people out of work during the coming 12 months? . . . Do you think that there will be more unemployment than now, about the same, or less?”

1  MORE
2  SAME
3  LESS

Problem Scale — “On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being no problem, 5 being a moderate problem and 10 being a very large problem, how much of a problem do you think unemployment is in America today?”

Dependent Variable

Government Spending on Unemployment — “Some people believe that the government should increase unemployment compensation for those who cannot find work, even if it means raising taxes. Others believe that it is not the government’s responsibility to provide for unemployed people and that we should cut unemployment benefits to reduce taxes. Which of the following do you think the government should do?”

1. Increase unemployment benefits even if it would mean higher taxes
2. Increase unemployment benefits only if it would not raise taxes
3. Neither increase nor reduce unemployment benefits
4. Reduce unemployment benefits if cuts would lower taxes
5. Reduce unemployment benefits even if cuts would not lower taxes

Follow up question: If respondent chooses option 3, they are then asked: “If you had to choose, would you say that you lean more toward increasing or more toward decreasing unemployment programs?”

1. Increasing
2. Decreasing
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