

Economics and Politics: Egocentric or Sociotropic?

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Since at least the late 1970s, we have had to grapple with the question of how economics influences politics. Before scholars made use of extensive survey research, most observers, noting the relationship between the state of the economy and election outcomes, argued that individual voters were driven by their own financial concerns. Using survey data, scholars found that individual economic concerns were not strongly related to vote choice. The work of Kinder and Kiewiet (1979, 1981) further upset this consensus by showing that voters were more concerned with the collective than their own concerns. The research presented here, making use of the rather unique 1992 ANES, argues that voters are concerned with both. The apparent non-existent relationship between egocentric economic evaluations and political evaluations is the result of question wording. When appropriately worded egocentric and sociotropic economic survey items are put in equations predicting political phenomena, both are important.

Since publication of the works of Kinder and Kiewiet (1979; 1981), students of political behavior have had to take into account the idea that voters might be sociotropic, rather than egocentric. They looked at the available evidence on economic voting and found a disjuncture. At the aggregate level, election outcomes appeared to be strongly influenced by economic conditions (Bloom and Price 1975; Garand and Campbell 2000; Kramer 1971; Tufte 1975; 1978). While scholars found that different macro-economic indicators influenced election outcomes, many, if not most, were in agreement that economics did influence voting behavior. When, however, the investigation turned to the micro-foundations of this phenomenon, the evidence was at best weak. Economics might be related to election outcomes, but evidence that individual voters were basing their votes on economic concerns was scant (Fiorina 1978; Sears and Funk 1990; Sears and Lau 1983; Sniderman and Brody 1977).¹ The answer to this puzzle, according to Kinder and Kiewiet, is that voters are sociotropic. Kinder and Kiewiet found that voters in presidential and congressional elections appeared to be more focused on the economic condition of the nation, rather than themselves. Instead of looking at how their personal financial situation had changed and voting for the incumbent party if there had been an improvement and voting against the incumbent party if there was a decline, voters look at the national economy.² Voters reward the incumbent party for an improving national economy and punish the incumbent party for a faltering

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economy. In short, voters focus upon the collective, rather than the personal, when making political decisions.

While Kinder and Kiewiet (1979; 1981) have gone to great pains, especially in the later manuscript, to make certain that the research community did not read their work as saying that voters are altruistic, a fair number of subsequent authors read as though they are making just that interpretation of the work on sociotropic politics. Rohrschneider (1990), Markus (1988), Alford and Legge (1984), MacKuen (1983), and McAdams and Johannes (1983) all argue that sociotropic evaluations are the equivalent of other regarding, or public regarding, evaluations.³ Many authors implicitly, if not explicitly, make the argument that egocentric and sociotropic reflect self-interested and collectively oriented concerns, respectively. In short, they make just the leap that Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) urge us not to make.

This is not to say that every scholar has assumed that sociotropic politics and self-interested politics are antonyms. Lane (1986, 316), for example, has argued, aside from altruism, there are several different interpretations of the sociotropic items. Unable to see the personal effects of public policy, people may use the national economic indicators as a means of assessing how the government has influenced their own well-being. If the national economy has improved, the role of the national government has probably been positive. If the national economy has deteriorated, the national government has probably done a poor job. People may view the national economy as a collective good. For one to have low inflation, others must also get it. Low inflation, or more generally, a healthy national economy, is an indivisible good. The extent to which one person is well-off influences the probability that others are also well-off financially.

Welch and Hibbing (1992) implicitly make such an argument when they interpret the results of their analysis of whether men or women are more sociotropic. They argue that women may be more likely to be sociotropic voters than men because women see the world as being more interconnected than men. Similarly, Lockerbie (1992) argues that voters may be using these sociotropic evaluations as a diagnostic tool for evaluating the performance of the incumbent party at providing personal prosperity. Miller and Wattenberg (1985) argue that these sociotropic items are related to vote choice, not because they reflect a concern with the well-being of others, but rather because they are politicized. Conover, Feldman, and Knight (1987) make a similar, though clearly not identical, argument when they state that these sociotropic items, especially the prospective ones, that mention the parties' names are hopelessly contaminated by partisanship.⁴ Shah, Watts, Domke, Fan, and Fibison (1999) make the quite simple argument, consistent with Kinder and Kiewiet (1979; 1981), if a voter is using sociotropic evaluations, it simply means that the voter is making use of information that goes beyond one's own circumstances. Nagler and De Boef (1999) make the

argument that voters are concerned with their own sector of the economy. Voters look at the close-by world and evaluate the president accordingly. If their sector of the economy has improved, they approve of the president. Conversely, if the wages of their sector have declined, they disapprove of the president. In short, voters are going beyond themselves to diagnose what the government has done to their own situation. Unlike Lane, they suggest that the locus is much closer to home. While many have made use of these sociotropic items, there is by no means a consensus on what they mean.

The early tests of the egocentric/sociotropic nature of the electorate were hindered by data difficulties. The examinations of this question that have the strongest findings make use of sociotropic items that explicitly mention the government and egocentric items that make no mention of the government. In the terminology of Fiorina (1981), the egocentric items are simple economic evaluations and the sociotropic items are mediated economic evaluations. It is not surprising that the tests show the sociotropic items consistently outperforming the egocentric items. Below are some examples of the different questions employed in previous studies.⁵

Egocentric (Personal) Economic Items

“We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days.

Would you say that you (and your family) are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?”

“Are you making as much money now as you were a year ago, or more, or less?”

“How satisfied are you with the income you (and your family) have?”

Sociotropic (Collective) Economic Items

“As to the economic policy of the government—I mean steps taken to fight inflation or unemployment—would you say that the government is doing a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job?”

“Thinking about the steps that have been taken to fight inflation—would you say that the government has been doing a good job, only fair, or a poor job?”

“Would you say that at the present time business conditions are better or worse than they were a year ago?”

“Do you think the problems of inflation and unemployment would be better handled by the Democrats, by the Republicans, or about the same by both?”

Looking at the items listed above, we can see that there are some important differences. First, as Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) point out, there is

the distinction between the collective and the personal. Second, however, is the locus of responsibility. With the first set of questions, it is, at best, unclear who is responsible. The respondent is simply asked to evaluate his or her own financial situation. One could be quite pleased or displeased with the state of one's income without any attribution of responsibility to the government. One's income could have improved through the dint of one's own efforts. One's income could have suffered because one slacked off at work or a new competitor came along and undercut one's company's ability to turn a profit. A simplistic view of the egocentric model might be that voters are going to look at their respective wallets and reward or punish upon the basis of what is there. A more complex, and I argue more realistic view, is that voters look at what is in their wallet, untangle what is the government's responsibility and what is others' responsibility, and vote on the basis of what is in their wallet (or not there) that is attributed to the government.⁶ Unless one attributes responsibility to the government for most, if not all, of the changes in one's financial well-being, we should not expect to see a relationship between these personal economic evaluations and vote choice or any other political evaluation.⁷

When we turn to the sociotropic items, we can see that they typically make reference to the government's role. Aside from the third question listed, either the government or the political parties are mentioned. It is not terribly surprising that these items are related to vote choice. The third item listed is without reference to the government. We should also note that it is among the weakest items in Kinder and Kiewiet's (1981) model of vote choice. The fourth item under the sociotropic heading mentions the political parties. Aside from getting at the egocentric/sociotropic distinction, this item also involves the retrospective/prospective distinction. Fiorina (1981) argues that this item is prospective, not retrospective. Similarly, in their discussion of retrospective and prospective voting, Miller and Wattenberg (1985) argue the results of their factor analysis demonstrate that this item loads most strongly on a prospective factor. Given the volume of work that shows the strength of the prospective evaluations on voting behavior (Abramowitz 1980; Kuklinski and West 1981; Lewis-Beck 1988a; 1988b; Lockerbie 1992; etc.), it is not startling to find that this item is strongly related to vote choice.

The 1992 American National Election Study is unique in that it contains egocentric and sociotropic items that are virtually identical, except, obviously, for the referent: the well-being of the national economy or the well-being of the person's financial situation. By making use of these two items, we can make certain that any differences that we observe are the result of the changing referent and not the other aspects of the questions. Below are the two survey items that are employed.⁸ Of course, we should be

somewhat reserved in drawing conclusions based upon a comparison of two survey items. Nonetheless, an examination of these two items might lead us to additional inquiries that are more fruitful, should additional items become available.

Retrospective Egocentric: “Over the past year have the economic policies of the federal government made you (and your family living here) better off, worse off, or haven’t they made much of a difference either way? Is that much better (worse) off or somewhat better (worse) off?”

Retrospective Sociotropic: “Over the past year would you say that the economic policies of the federal government have made the nation’s economy better, worse, or haven’t they made much of a difference either way? Would you say much better (worse) or somewhat better (worse)?”

There are only two differences between these two questions. The first difference, while inconsequential should be noted, is that one item includes the word “off” while the other does not. Second, and more important, is the changed referent. In the first question, the respondents are pointed toward their personal financial situation. Is the respondent better off or worse off? The second question points the respondent toward the national economy. Has it gotten better or worse? The major distinction between these two questions is where the respondents are directed. If these two items are placed in an equation explaining a political behavior or an attitude, we should be able to see if voters are directed inward or outward, or perhaps they are pulled in both directions.⁹

Lewis-Beck (1988b) in his examination of voting behavior in Europe makes use of such items. In the bivariate case, he finds that both the egocentric retrospective and the sociotropic items are positively related to vote choice. In his multivariate equations, however, the egocentric item is significant only in the equation for Britain. His multivariate equations are, however, rich with economic items. The inter-relationships among these variables might be obscuring a relationship between the egocentric items and vote choice. Moreover, his work on the United States in this study does not entail an examination of the egocentric/sociotropic distinction.

Before we go too far, however, we should assess the degree of correspondence between these two items. If the collective items are simply a means of expressing what the respondent thinks the national government has done to one’s personal financial situation, then we should see something approaching a one to one relationship between the two items. If this is the case and we put the two items in a model predicting some political outcome, we should encounter severe collinearity. To assess the degree of correspon-

dence between these two items, the personal item is regressed on the sociotropic item. First, the ability of one to predict the other is low; the R-square is a modestly strong .10 ($r=.31$). Also, the regression coefficient for the sociotropic item is 0.27. This indicates that there is not a one to one correspondence between the two items with error surrounding the predictions. The sociotropic item apparently is not simply a surrogate for one's evaluations of the national government's influence on one's personal financial situation.

What we should do now is use these two items to predict scores on several political variables. Using several items will give us greater confidence if the findings are consistent. If the findings are not consistent across several variables, any conclusions that are drawn will be tempered appropriately.¹⁰ Regardless of the low relationship between the two items, we should examine the relationship of each to the dependent variables to follow controlling for the other. Perhaps what little shared variation that exists between the two items also overlaps with the dependent variables. Consequently, by placing both items in the equations to follow, we can see if each exerts a unique influence on the dependent variables. Here, the dependent variables are presidential and House vote choice; adjusted Bush, Clinton, Democratic party and Republican party feeling thermometers; and Bush approval.¹¹ First, the two vote choice models are easiest to explain. Here, the work to follow simply replicates the earlier work of Kinder and Kiewiet. Rather than simply stop with these two very important variables, we should take advantage of other potential dependent variables. Page and Jones (1979) and Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1999), for example, have made use of candidate feeling thermometers as surrogates for vote choice. By making use of this array of items, we should be able to make some assessment of the generalizability of the findings.

A simple two independent variable equation, both the egocentric and sociotropic retrospective items are statistically significant: the sociotropic every single time and the egocentric all but once.¹² Moreover, as we can see in Table 1, both of these items are of roughly equivalent power, as measured by the standardized coefficients. At a minimum, it looks as though those who argue that we are much more sociotropic than egocentric were relying upon survey items that did not put the two ideas in a fair fight.

The question now becomes why is the sociotropic item significantly related to these political variables when faced with the more narrowly constrained egocentric item. Once we've controlled for the egocentric item, there is not a clear explanation of the significance of this item in terms of self-interest. We should look back to the arguments about the meaning of the sociotropic items. Lane's (1986, 316) discussion of what the sociotropic items might mean is a good place to start this investigation. Below is a list of the various explanations that he offers.

Table 1. Retrospective Egocentric and Sociotropic Items Predicting Political Attitudes and Behaviors, 1992

	Pvote	Hvote	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat	Bush Approval
Egocentric	.60/.24* 6.22	.36/.14* 3.69	5.64/.18* 8.55	-5.05/-.17* -7.75	4.46/.17* 7.74	-5.05/-.18* -8.56	.31/.21* 10.20
Sociotropic	.51/.23* 6.48	.45/.21* 5.38	5.26/.20* 9.25	-4.77/-.18* -8.48	3.21/.14* 6.47	-3.71/-.16* -7.29	.33/.25* 12.29
Incumbency		.07/.49* 3.61					
Constant	-3.24*	-2.13*	-30.42*	26.61*	-22.82*	26.63*	.58*
R-square	.07	.15	.09	.08	.06	.08	.14
N	1303	1258	2253	2253	2253	2253	2294

Note: Pvote, (0=Clinton vote, 1=Bush vote), Hvote (0=Democratic vote, 1=Republican vote), Bush, Clinton, Republican, and Democrat (Feeling thermometer score - average of the four feeling thermometer scores), Bush Approval (1=Strong Disapproval to 4=Strong Approval), Egocentric and Sociotropic (1=much worse to 5=much better). Incumbency (-1=Democratic incumbent, 0=Open seat, 1=Republican incumbent). The equations for Pvote and Hvote are logit equations. The equations for the other dependent variables are OLS regression equations. The standardized logit coefficients are calculated according to a formula found in Hilde (1997). The first number presented is the unstandardized coefficient, the second number is the standardized coefficient, and * significant at the .05 level, two-tailed. The number below is the z or t-score for the coefficient.

1. Unable to see the personal implications of policies, people use the well-reported national news as evidence of their present or future well-being.
2. People's standards of well-being are inevitably comparative; the reports on national well-being are used for the purposes of social comparison.
3. People so identify with good of others and national well-being that they take some satisfaction in "good news" and evidence that the nation is doing well; in that sense, what happens to the nation happens to the self.
4. Because people cannot achieve the benefits of such collective goods as peace and low inflation without others also benefitting, their self-interest is served by policies benefitting others as well as the self.
5. In a world of uncertainties and unknown probabilities, the degree to which others are well off affects the probabilities that the self will be well off.
6. As William James (1892-1961) wrote, the self embraces everything to which 'mine' applies: my brother-in-law; my wife's niece; a favorable national milieu serves my self-interest by serving those related others. Without using self-interest in the tautological sense, we can see that sociotropic politics serves a variety of self-interests including those of the altruistic version, caring about the fate of the nation.

Looking at the above explanations, we can see that, to varying degrees, there are some testable hypotheses. In number 1, for example, if people are using the sociotropic items as some measure of their present well-being, we should have seen no relationship between the sociotropic item and the political items (the dependent variables), once the egocentric item is in the mix. If, however, people are using these sociotropic items as evidence of their future well-being, it is not at all unreasonable to see both of them as related to the dependent variables described above. Lane suggests in numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 that we might conceive of the sociotropic items as making reference to the national economy as a collective good. We as individuals benefit when the national economy prospers. These ideas to a greater or lesser extent are examined when both the egocentric and sociotropic retrospective items are placed in the same equation. Last, in number 6, Lane suggests that sociotropic evaluations may be synonymous with altruism.

We can most easily test the second portion of Lane's suggestion in number 1. If sociotropic evaluations are getting at people's expectations, when we include expectations alongside them, the retrospective sociotropic evaluation should wash out of any explanation of political attitudes and behavior. The egocentric evaluation, however, may or may not be reduced to statistical insignificance. Below is the prospective item.

Prospective: Which party do you think would do a better job of handling the nation's economy, the Democrats, the Republicans, or wouldn't there be much difference between them?

Unfortunately, this item while focused on the future is also sociotropic. At best, any conclusions drawn from an analysis of this item will be highly speculative. Nonetheless, the findings may lead us toward a greater understanding of what questions need to be asked in subsequent surveys so that we might get around this problem. If, however, the retrospective sociotropic item still shows through as statistically significant, we will be able to discount both the first and second half of Lane's six suggestions as to the meaning of these sociotropic items.

Looking at Table 2, we can see that the findings are at best murky. In the presidential vote equation, the retrospective egocentric item is significant, but the retrospective sociotropic item is not. If we stopped here, we might conclude that the sociotropic item was tapping into people's expectations, despite the retrospective wording. Fortunately, we have more to examine. In the House vote equation, only the sociotropic retrospective item is significant. Looking at the feeling thermometers, we see that the egocentric item is significant at every opportunity and the sociotropic item is significant in three out of four opportunities. Last, looking at approval of President Bush, we see that both the retrospective items are statistically significant. Comparing the relative power of these items also shows us that they are not terribly different. While the egocentric item is typically the more powerful of the two, the differences are relatively minor. In short, the conclusions we can draw at this point are by definition tentative. The upside to all of this is we know more than if we had simply relied on a single dependent variable. Fortunately, by making use of several dependent variables, we are kept from quickly leaping to an erroneous conclusion.

Before leaving this investigation, we should look at more fully developed equations with these dependent variables. Specifically, we should add measures of ideology and party identification. The ideology measure is the standard liberal/conservative item asking respondents to place themselves along a seven point scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. The party identification item is the traditional three point item (Democrat, Independent, Republican). By including these items we can get a better sense of how these economic items hold up when placed in a more thoroughly specified equation.

Table 3 looks much like one would expect it to look. First, we look at the most straightforward. As one would expect, party identification and one's position along the liberal/conservative continuum are related to all these dependent variables in the conventional manner. Next, the prospective economic item is also related to all these dependent variables in the manner most would expect it to be. When we turn to the two retrospective items, we still have a decided lack of clarity. In neither of the vote choice equations are these items statistically significant. Looking at the equations for the Bush

Table 2. Retrospective Egocentric, Sociotropic, and Prospective Items Predicting Political Attitudes and Behaviors, 1992

	Pvote	Hvote	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat	Bush Approval
Egocentric	.28/.11* 2.10	.08/.03 0.72	2.67/.09* 5.11	-2.06/-.07* -3.94	1.91/.07* 4.08	-2.52/-.09* -5.33	.19/.13* 7.12
Sociotropic	.21/.10 1.90	.23/.10* 2.44	2.12/.08* 4.66	-1.85/-.07* -4.07	.68/.03 1.67	-.96/-.04* -2.32	.20/.15* 8.52
Incumbency		1.04/.48* 12.00					
Prospective	2.91/1.20* 17.56	1.31/.54* 12.90	18.99/.63* 38.85	-18.23/-.62* -37.42	15.90/.62* 36.35	-16.65/-.63* -37.67	.74/.51* 29.28
Constant	-7.18*	-3.35*	-49.38*	44.68*	-38.74*	43.45*	-.13
R-square	.47	.26	.46	.44	.41	.44	.38
N	1284	1231	2208	2208	2208	2208	2244

Note: All is as described in Table 1, with the addition of Prospective (1=Democrats better, 2=no difference, 3=Republicans better).

Table 3. Retrospective Egocentric, Sociotropic, Prospective Economic Evaluations, Ideology, and Party Identification Predicting Political Attitudes and Behaviors, 1992

	Pvote	Hvote	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat	Bush Approval
Egocentric	.27/.11 1.60	-.02/-.01 -0.18	2.52/.08* 4.61	-1.82/-.06* -3.27	1.34/.05* 2.80	-2.04/-.07* -4.23	.18/.12* 6.28
Sociotropic	.19/.09 1.27	.23/.11* 2.13	1.71/.06* 3.58	-1.45/-.05* -2.97	.30/.01 0.72	-.57/-.02 -1.35	.18/.14* 7.36
Incumbency		1.00/.46* 9.91					
Prospective	2.26/.93* 10.86	.75/.31* 5.58	12.70/.42* 19.75	-12.43/-.42* -18.97	9.46/.37* 16.79	-9.73/-.37* -17.15	.49/.35* 14.43
Lib/Con	.80/.62* 7.92	.29/.22* 4.23	2.87/.18* 9.72	-2.80/-.18* -9.31	2.12/.15* 8.23	-2.20/-.15* -8.43	.11/.15* 7.40
Party Id	1.25/.54* 7.67	.84/.36* 6.68	7.19/.25* 11.86	-6.64/-.23* -10.75	8.07/.33* 15.19	-8.61/-.34* -16.10	.26/.19* 8.14
Constant	-10.48*	-4.12*	-55.08	50.30*	-40.66*	45.43*	-.34*
R-square	.63	.34	.56	.53	.53	.56	.45
N	1022	1008	1678	1678	1678	1678	1681

Note: All is as described in Table 2, with the addition of Lib/Con (1=extremely liberal to 7=extremely conservative) and Party Id (0=Democrat, 1=Independent, and 2=Republican).

and Clinton thermometers, both the retrospective items are significant. When we turn to the thermometers for the two parties, only the egocentric economic evaluations are statistically significant. When we look at these retrospective items and assess their power, we see that the egocentric items are typically more powerful. That the egocentric items are more powerful should not be overstated. First, the differences between the egocentric and sociotropic retrospective items are not that large. Second, and perhaps more important, neither of the retrospective items looks terribly powerful when one also looks at any of the other items in the equations.

Conclusion

Regardless of what is thrown at the sociotropic items, we can see that there is support for the findings of Kinder and Kiewiet (1979; 1981). Sociotropic evaluations matter. When people make political evaluations, there does appear to be some attention paid to the political collective. The results of this analysis also show that the unimportance of egocentric evaluations is much exaggerated. The weakness of these egocentric items in earlier works appears to have been the result of the choice of items to measure retrospective egocentric economic evaluations. Here, with items that make reference to the government, retrospective egocentric items are strongly related to political evaluations. The results of the analysis reported here suggest, quite strongly, that people are concerned with both their own well-being and the well-being of others. We should keep in mind that even “extremists in the self-interest school” admit that a modest, very modest, portion of what we do is not motivated by selfishness (Mansbridge 1990, 12).¹³ The results also suggest that we need to grapple with the question of why both egocentric and sociotropic concerns influence political evaluations.

From a pure self-interested perspective, the statistical significance of the sociotropic items when faced with egocentric items has been puzzling. Why should we expect individuals to be concerned with the well-being of others? Several potential explanations have been considered and all of them have left us wanting. Perhaps we look at the collective economy as an environment in which we reside. We can look upon our relation to the economy as akin to our relationship to our neighborhood. We want our home to be as nice as possible, but we also want our home to be in a nice neighborhood. We do not want to look out our front window and have a view of a cesspool. Consequently, we want our neighbors to have nice homes too. Similarly, we want to have economic prosperity for ourselves, but we want the comfort of being in a prosperous area. If nothing else, it provides us a certain security. We have less to fear if the overall economy is doing well. Moreover, if the economy is prosperous, we have a more pleasant environ-

ment in which to make use of our economic resources. While this is not necessarily pure altruism, it does express some concern for others. This well-being of your neighbors might entail some sacrifice on your own part, but not necessarily. It might be costless, or almost costless, for you.¹⁴ Additionally, Becker (1976) argues that one might be better off in the long run if one acts altruistically today. While that may well be true, it is hard to reconcile that with genuine altruism. It instead seems like long run self-interest.

Regardless of what is motivating the electorate, we need to consider that there are multiple considerations that come into play. Moreover, these considerations *may* entail both self-interest and altruism. Most certainly, it appears that people are taking both egocentric and sociotropic evaluations (whatever each is exactly) into account when making political decisions. While this paper does not address directly the question of why we might take both egocentric and sociotropic evaluations into account, it does strongly suggest that we look into this neglected question.

APPENDIX

Retrospective Egocentric and Sociotropic Items Predicting Political Attitudes, 1992

	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat
Egocentric	6.93/.19*	-3.88/-.11*	5.84/.18*	-3.82/-.12*
Sociotropic	7.58/.24*	-2.24/-.08*	5.51/.20*	-1.24/-.05*
Constant	15.49*	72.04*	22.63*	72.14*
R-square	.12	.02	.09	.02
N	2338	2305	2288	2283

Note: Bush, Clinton, Republican, and Democrat (Feeling thermometers scored 0-100). All else is as described in the Tables.

Appendix continues . . .

APPENDIX (continued)**Retrospective Egocentric, Sociotropic, and Prospective Items Predicting Political Attitudes, 1992**

	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat
Egocentric	4.07/.11*	-.78/-.02	3.42/.11*	-1.06/-.03
Sociotropic	4.65/.15*	.85/.03	3.11/.11*	-1.54/-.06*
Prospective	17.41/.49*	-19.71/.61*	14.31/.46*	-18.10/-.59*
Constant	-1.42	92.23*	9.03*	90.96*
R-square	.34	.36	.29	.35
N	2283	2254	2240	2236

Note: All is as described above.

Retrospective Egocentric, Sociotropic, Prospective Economic Evaluations, Ideology, and Party Identification Predicting Political Attitudes, 1992

	Bush	Clinton	Republican	Democrat
Egocentric	3.72/.10*	-.62/-.02	2.80/.09*	-.75/-.03
Sociotropic	4.09/.13*	1.05/.04	2.55/.09*	1.85/.05*
Prospective	11.11/.32*	-13.90/-.43*	7.86/.26*	-11.32/-.38*
Lib/Con	3.62/.19*	-2.12/-.12*	2.92/.18*	-1.47/-.09*
Party ID	6.62/.19*	-7.20/-.23*	7.46/.25*	-9.18/-.32*
Constant	-9.65*	95.47*	4.29*	90.59*
R-square	.43	.44	.38	.45
N	1705	1699	1693	1688

Note: All is as described above.

NOTES

¹Theoretically, both outcomes are possible. The mass of voters might be voting without regard to economics. If, however, the swing voters, the voters who move from party to party from election to election, are voting on the basis of economics, we might well observe the phenomenon described. The swing voters might be consumed by economic considerations. If, however, they are a small portion of the electorate, their economic voting will not show up in studies of individual voting choices.

²We should, of course, note that the personal finance questions we employ encompasses more than the survey respondent. The American National Election Study, for example, explicitly has the respondent include one's family members. Technically

speaking, this is getting beyond a pure egocentric item. See Nagler and De Boef (1999) for example of attention to the various groups of which people might consider themselves a part.

³I provide this list not to give an extensive review of each of these strains of literature, but rather to show that the interpretation of the sociotropic items is still very much up in the air.

⁴See MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson (1989) for an argument that the party names being in the survey item simply gives the respondent information. They are related to vote choice because voters have some sense of what the parties will do in the future.

⁵Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) have a listing of survey items in the appendix to their article. I have selected from this appendix in drawing up this list of survey items.

⁶I am not saying that people have an exact understanding of what the government is responsible for. Rather, I am saying that only if a person attributes responsibility to the government for changing financial conditions should we expect there to be a relationship between economic evaluations and political evaluations or vote choice. Kramer (1983) argues that the reason the collective items are related to election outcomes is that these aggregate economic statistics are a reflection of what the government has done to the individuals' personal financial situation. The purely personal component is cancelled out.

⁷Funk and García-Monet (1997) make such an argument. In their manuscript, they first discern whether the respondent attributes responsibility to the government for changes in their financial well-being. Second, they look at the relationships between the simple retrospective economic item and political evaluations for this subset of the sample. As this assumes that all the changes that took place for a respondent are governmentally induced, it, no doubt, understates the relationship between economics and political evaluations. One can, for example, think the government has had a negative effect on one's finances, but at the same time experienced an increase in one's financial well-being. In short, one might believe the government has limited the improvement in one's well-being. Alternatively, one could experience a downturn in one's financial well-being because one lost a job. Nonetheless, one might think the government has ameliorated this condition. Consequently, one's evaluation of the government's performance may be just the opposite of what has happened to one.

⁸It would, of course, be preferable to have more than one item for each side. The ANES, however, does not contain such clearly worded items that divided along the socio-tropic/egocentric dimension aside from the items employed here.

⁹Sears and Lau (1983) argue that the proximity of the economic items to vote choice might explain the relationship they have with vote choice. Lewis-Beck (1985), however, argues that the items are not close enough in the American National Election Studies to stimulate such an effect. Nonetheless, the reader should note that these economic questions are in the pre-election survey while the vote choice items are in the post-elections survey. Clearly, the items are not so close that they induce an artificial consistency.

¹⁰See King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) for an argument on using multiple dependent variables as a check on one's hypotheses.

¹¹The feeling thermometers were adjusted by subtracting the average of the four feeling thermometer scores for the individual from the one under consideration. See Knight (1984) for a discussion of this procedure.

¹²Because of the overwhelming amount of work that finds incumbency to be so powerful in House elections (Alford and Hibbing 1981, Bullock and Scicchitano 1982, Collie 1981, Cover 1977, Erikson 1972, Fiorina 1989, Johannes and McAdams 1981, Mayhew 1974, etc.), the House equations also include an incumbency variable.

¹³Mansbridge is referencing Tullock's (1976) assertion that most of our behavior is driven by selfishness.

¹⁴See Monroe (1994) for the argument that altruism occurs only when it entails some cost.

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