

## Personal Agendas and the Relationship Between Self-Interest and Voting Behavior

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*The moderator variable approach to the attitude-behavior relationship is applied to an understanding of the role of self-interest in predicting voting behavior. The present study addresses the question, "Under what conditions does self-interest more strongly relate to voting behavior?" This relationship may be moderated by the extent of personal involvement in the issue of interest, considered in terms of "personal agendas." Personal agendas are subjective rankings of issues in terms of their personal importance to the individual as well as their perceived importance for others. We hypothesized that only for people who accord a high ranking to a particular issue on their personal agendas would self-interest relate to their vote choice in the 1984 Presidential election. Using economic issues and related self-interest activities, clear support for this pattern was found in post-election Gallup Poll data. Such findings are consistent with research in social cognition that underscores the importance of individual difference variables such as personal involvement. In the present case, personal agendas may have moderated the issue's cognitive accessibility, and as a result, the relationship between self-interest and voting.*

Social psychologists have long been interested in the attitude-behavior relationship (Cialdini et al., 1981; Zanna et al., 1982). Political scientists have also had a long-standing interest in predicting political behavior, particularly in examining the extent to which political attitudes and beliefs may be useful in predicting voting behavior (Campbell et al., 1960; Fiorina, 1981; Kelley and Mirer, 1974; Kinder and Sears, 1985; Schuman and Johnson, 1976). These parallel interests lend themselves to the application of current approaches in social psychology to an understanding of the attitude-behavior relationship within the context of political behavior.

Of particular interest in the present research is the concept of self-interest, which has been used to predict voting behavior. As traditionally defined, self-interest refers to the degree to which a political issue impinges immediately and tangibly upon an individual's private life (e.g., Downs, 1957; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979);

attitudes based on self-interest are presumed to reflect this perceived impingement.<sup>1</sup>

Previous research has examined the role of self-interest by comparing its influence on voting behavior with that of more global, abstract orientations toward political issues, such as symbolic beliefs, issue-attitudes, or ideology. Such comparisons have typically led to the conclusion that more general beliefs and attitudes have the predominant influence on voting, while self-interest has a negligible influence on the voter's decision. For example, Kinder and Kiewiet (1979) found that collective economic judgments, such as those concerning the relative competence of the two major parties to manage national economic problems, showed more correspondence with Congressional election outcomes than did personal economic grievances. Sears et al. (1979) found that symbolic beliefs about busing had a stronger influence on voting in the 1972 Presidential election than did self-interest, as measured by the perceived vulnerability of one's children to busing. Other studies (e.g., Sears et al., 1980;

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<sup>1</sup> While we have reservations about this conceptualization of self-interest, we have opted to use this traditional working definition to render our findings compatible with previous approaches to this problem. The development of a revised approach to self-interest is beyond the scope of the present paper, although the arguments presented herein suggest several factors that such a reconceptualization should reflect.

Kinder and Sears, 1981; Sears and Citrin, 1982) report similar findings.

Under certain circumstances, however, self-interest may exert a greater influence than these findings suggest. In past studies of "symbolic politics," for example, researchers have usually specified *a priori* a particular issue (e.g., busing) that may be of great interest to the researcher, but may not necessarily be as important to the voter. That is, given an issue, it has generally been assumed that all respondents would consider that issue to be equally important. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that in an election, particularly a national election in which many different issues are involved in making a choice between candidates, there will be variability in the degree of importance or priority that any given individual affixes to any given issue. Because of this potential variability in concerns for different issues, factors moderating the relationship between voting behavior and measures of self-interest experiences should be considered. As Weatherford (1983, p. 163) has noted:

(A)n individual who saw deteriorating conditions as temporary or who compared his fortunes with others who suffered worse declines might reason that, on the whole, things were not all that bad. However, to the extent that objective changes in personal condition are generalized to a sense of dissatisfaction with current living standards and to the belief that family financial condition is in decline, there is less likelihood that an objective reversal will be interpreted as an idiosyncratic piece of bad luck.

That is, measures of self-interest experiences may not capture the subjective meanings that are attached to those experiences by different individuals. Those different interpretations of self-interest experiences probably vary with the perceptions of the issues to which they are related. In other words, people have different "personal agendas."

A "personal agenda" reflects an individual's consideration of those issues that he or she feels are important both personally and to others. Operationally defined, a personal agenda is a ranking of issues according to their importance or priority to the individual as well as their perceived importance to others. It is assumed that if an individual perceives that an issue has a high level of personal and national importance, then that individual is more likely to give careful consideration to that issue in a national election, and therefore the likelihood should be higher that the issue will affect subsequent voting behavior.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This conceptualization of personal agenda differs from "issue salience" which has typically been operationalized in the political science literature by assessing only

In the realm of politics, such personal agendas may enable the voter to distill the large amount of political information available for consideration in deciding a political preference. Presumably, because of cognitive limitations, only a subset of all available information is likely to have an impact upon one's eventual voting choice. (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). Hence, those issues at the top of one's agenda should represent a pool of more salient and cognitively accessible issues to the individual, issues for which relevant personal information should more likely be considered (RePass, 1971). In addition to indicating that such issues are personally important we can expect that individuals who are relatively more committed to the priority for a given issue may also indicate that the issue is important to others as well. Previous research has suggested that individuals assume that others tend to share their impressions of specific issues (Fields and Schuman, 1976). More recent research in social cognition (Markus and Zajonc, 1985) attributes this effect in part to the increased cognitive accessibility of those arguments, thoughts and feelings associated with their perspective on the issue.

The identification of such personal agendas might be especially relevant for assessing voting on the basis of self-interest. In order to understand how personal agendas could moderate the self-interest-vote relationship, it first must be noted that self-interest and a high position on a personal agenda are not necessarily coincident. For example, the abortion issue may not involve self-interest since an individual may consider abortion to be an important issue without having to make a personal decision about an abortion. Rather, as a function of exposure to the evening television news (Iyengar et al., 1984), to other media, or to personal

that issue which is most important *personally*. Issues that are perceived only as personally important however, will be less strongly linked to voting behavior, since the respondent may fail to attribute responsibility to the national government for the handling of the issue. For example, Sniderman and Brody (1977) suggest that unemployed persons may not attribute responsibility to the national government for their situation, blaming local economic or personal factors instead. Others (e.g., RePass, 1971) focus on issues that are considered *nationally* important, but it is reasonable to suggest that those who recognize a concern as nationally important but not of personal relevance would be less likely to base their choice on that issue compared to those who feel it is important to themselves and to the nation as a whole. By accounting for those issues that are perceived as important *both* personally and nationally, however, we can identify issues for which there is self-interest and for which an attribution of responsibility to the national government is far more likely to be made.



interactions with peers, an individual may develop a deep concern about the abortion issue as well as a perception that others also consider the issue to be highly important. This heightened sense of importance may be so strong as to override the individual's concern with other pertinent issues. In this case, we would say that the abortion issue has risen to or near the top of the individual's personal agenda. Even though other issues may involve what could be assessed objectively as self-interest (e.g., the individual may have children who would be affected by busing starting the following month), that individual nevertheless may feel that the abortion issue is still more important personally and for others. In other words, even though the individual may have some self-interest with respect to a given issue, that self-interest will not necessarily exert a strong influence upon the individual's voting behavior.

Thus, being self-interested with respect to a given issue does not in and of itself move that issue to the top of one's personal agenda. On any given day, one is likely to have many different types of direct experience, all of which may impinge upon one's welfare in some way or another. That does not mean, however, that all of those experiences are considered to have substantial implications for more long-term goals and plans that serve to motivate one's actions. Only certain experiences are likely to be remembered and viewed as useful to long-term goals and plans. Indeed, it has been argued that motivating factors such as goals and plans may serve to prime or make more cognitively accessible only certain aspects of environmental stimuli (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). Therefore, only those experiences—and, in the present case, the related political issues—that pertain to one's most important goals and plans should be considered germane to one's political choice. In addition, the determination of which goals and plans are considered to be more important could just as likely be dependent upon distal (e.g., early socialization, personality) as immediate (e.g., recent direct and indirect experience) factors.

The assessment of those issues the respondent deems most important reflects the use of a moderator variable approach to studying the relationship between attitudes and voting behavior (Sherman and Fazio, 1983). This approach involves a test of whether self-interest for those individuals for whom an issue is highly important exerts a stronger influence upon voting behavior than does the self-interest for those persons for whom the same issue is not as important. Such an idiographic approach, common to research in the personality domain (Snyder and Ickes, 1985), examines the configuration of attitudes or beliefs within an individ-

ual, rather than the traditional nomothetic approach of examining a single attitude across individuals. On the basis of this approach, the present study addresses the following question: Under what conditions does self-interest exert a stronger influence on voting behavior? It is hypothesized that the degree of perceived importance will serve as a moderator variable in the self-interest-voting behavior relationship. For those persons indicating a particular issue domain as personally important and important to others, self-interest associated with that issue domain is expected to show a stronger relationship with their voting preference. By contrast, those individuals not according such a high position to that issue domain on their personal agendas are expected to show a weaker self-interest-vote relationship.

#### METHOD

##### *Respondents*

All data came from a Gallup Poll commissioned by the authors immediately following the 1984 Presidential election. Questions were asked in personal interviews conducted by the Gallup organization with 1,509 adults, 18 and older, in more than 300 national locations selected by area probability sampling. For the purposes of our analysis, only those respondents indicating that they had voted for Walter Mondale or Ronald Reagan for president were included, producing a sample of 1,050 respondents.

##### *Personal Agenda Items*

Respondents were asked to indicate "the most important issue facing you personally" and "the most important issue facing the country today." They were handed a card listing twelve different issues from which they could choose one issue, and they were explicitly given the choice of suggesting another issue not appearing on the list. Our analysis focuses on several economic issues that played a major role in the 1984 election and for which we have attempted to measure the economic self-interest of respondents. The economic issues included taxes, budget deficits, spending on social services, unemployment and Social Security. Those persons who selected any combination of these issues for both the "personally most important" and the "country most important" questions were considered to have economic issues at the top of their personal agendas (the *high-importance condition*,  $n=363$ ). By contrast, those respondents who did not select economic issues for either the "personally most important" or the "country most important" item were considered to have economic issues at a

relatively lower position on their personal agendas (the *low-importance condition*,  $n=302$ ).

Both of these issue importance items were asked early in the survey so as to avoid contamination by more specific issue-related questions asked later during the survey. Further, the two questions were separated from each other in the survey by a battery of questions dealing with experience or involvement with that concern.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Self-Interest Index*

An index reflecting cumulative personal economic experiences was constructed as a measure of the nature of the respondents' self-interests with respect to the target issues. The items asked respondents to indicate: (1) whether they or any members of their immediate family had been unemployed or had their hours cut back in the previous four years; (2) whether any of their friends had been unemployed or had their hours cut back; (3) whether they received any benefits from governmental social service programs; and (4) whether any family members or close friends received any such benefits.

The nature of the respondents' self-interest was determined by their summated score of these four items. The self-interest index was formulated (as were all indices used in this analysis) to adjust for missing data. If more than half of the responses to items in any of the indices were missing, then that case was deleted from the subsequent analysis.<sup>4</sup> It was expected that the incumbent (Reagan) would be perceived as a threat to finding a new job or to receiving benefits through social service programs. Thus, those respondents with more personal experiences on this index were expected to have an anti-incumbent form of self-interest, and should be more likely to vote against the incumbent candidate (Reagan). By contrast, those respondents having few of these experiences should not feel threatened (and, indeed, may approve of the incumbent); they should be more likely to vote for the incumbent.

#### *Economic Policy Belief Index*

For comparison purposes, an index of policy beliefs about economic concerns was also

constructed. This index represents more generalized attitudes toward economic issues that derive from various ideological factors that were not expected to vary systematically across the two conditions.

The nature of economic policy belief was the summated score of the responses to the following items: whether the government should increase or decrease spending for social services; whether government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living; whether social security should provide for a comfortable (versus a minimal) standard of living; whether people expect too much from government to solve their problems; whether private charities are enough to help the poor without government help; and whether budget deficits should be cut by raising taxes or reducing spending.<sup>5</sup> It was generally expected that economic policy beliefs would show a consistent and fairly strong relationship with voting for both the high- and low-importance conditions, particularly because the abstract nature of policy beliefs and of political issues in a national election makes them much more likely to correlate highly with vote choice (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977).

#### *Party Identification*

A scale was constructed to assess the degree of party identification. This standard party ID scale (Campbell et al., 1960) was included to enable a simultaneous comparison of the influence of our variables with those traditionally used by political scientists.

#### *Voter Preference*

Those respondents who indicated that they had voted in the 1984 presidential election were asked for whom they had voted. Only those individuals who indicated they had voted for Reagan or Mondale were included in our analysis.

### RESULTS

Analyses comparing the correlations between the self-interest index and voter preference across the high- and low-importance conditions provided strong support for the hypothesis. For the high-importance condition ( $N=363$ ), the self-interest-vote correlation was  $r = .36$ , suggesting that respondents in this condition held economic issues high enough on their personal

<sup>3</sup> Copies of the complete survey are available upon request. The complete wordings of items used is included in the appendix to this article.

<sup>4</sup> This deletion of cases due to missing items in one or more indices led to the dropping of 18 respondents in the high-importance condition and nine cases in the low-importance condition. Ancillary analyses comparing these dropped cases with the remaining cases in their respective conditions showed no significant differences on demographic and other critical variables of interest.

<sup>5</sup> These items were scored in terms of the degree to which they tended to favor or oppose increases in government involvement in individuals' personal lives.



agendas that their direct experiences with finance-related activities was reflected in how they voted. By contrast, there was a minimal relationship between self-interest and the vote among those in the low-importance condition ( $N = 302$ ),  $r = .11$ . A Fisher  $z$  test indicated that these correlations were significantly different,  $z = 3.41$ ,  $p < .001$ .<sup>6,7</sup> Inspection of differences between the high- and low-importance conditions showed that they did not differ on such demographic factors as income and education (both  $t$ 's  $< 1$ , *ns*).

The mean level of party identification did not differ across the high- and low-importance conditions,  $t < 1$ , *ns*. Moreover, it is not clear how, or if, party identification plays a significant role in determining the influence of self-interest and policy beliefs since the overlap between these concepts has not yet been identified. Indeed, the present results suggest that such an overlap does exist for the high-importance group between self-interest and party identification,  $r = .29$ . This overlap does not appear to exist for the low-importance group, however ( $r = .05$ ), further suggesting that persons in the high-importance condition were more likely to link partisanship with their personal economic experiences.

In addition, there was no overall difference in vote choice between the high- and low-importance conditions,  $t < 1$ , *ns*. Thus, a skewed distribution on vote choice cannot explain the difference in the self-interest-vote relationship across the two importance conditions.

There was, however, a notable difference between the two conditions: the level of self-interest in the high-importance condition was different from the level of self-interest in the low-importance condition,  $M$ 's = 1.73 versus 1.60, respectively;  $t(663) = 4.96$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

<sup>6</sup> Looking only at the traditional issue-salience measure—"the personally most important problem"—yields much weaker results (Niemi and Bartel, 1985). Thus, while Sears et al. (1979) looked at the role of issue-salience in this context, their failure to find an effect suggests that issue-salience may be a less powerful variable.

<sup>7</sup> Since the self-interest index was comprised of items from two different issue domains—unemployment and social services—subscales for each issue can also be constructed. These subscales show the same pattern of correlations as the full scale: for the unemployment subscale, the  $r$ 's are .30 versus .08 for the high- and low-importance groups, respectively; for the social service subscale, the  $r$ 's are .18 versus .08 for the high- and low-importance groups, respectively. Because the conceptualization of the self-interest index involved cumulative economic experiences, regardless of the particular issue domains involved, the full scale was used in our principal analyses.

.0001. This difference between the two importance conditions, however, does not represent a confounding factor. Only those individuals high in self-interest and in the high-importance condition voted systematically for Mondale, while those low in self-interest but also in the high-importance group voted for Reagan.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, in the low-importance condition there was no such systematic difference in vote choice between individuals with high and low self-interest.

Other general items on the survey served to bolster this impression that persons in the high-importance condition were more likely to tie economic issues to their presidential voting choice. For example, persons in the high-importance condition appeared to judge differentially the impact of governmental economic policies as a function of their level of self-interest, whereas those individuals in the low-importance condition did not. Within the high-importance condition, persons higher in self-interest compared with those lower in self-interest were more likely to feel that they would be better off if the government provided more public services,  $t(361) = 6.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ; that they had been hurt by government economic policies during the past four years,  $t(355) = 5.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and that they could be hurt by government economic policies in the future  $t(347) = 3.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . By contrast, none of these variables showed any difference between those high and low in self-interest in the low-importance condition, all  $t$ 's  $< 1$ , *ns*.

With respect to the policy belief index, moderately strong relationships were found between the index and vote choice for both the high- and the low-importance conditions,  $r = .50$  and  $r = .51$ , respectively. As expected, these relationships did not differ significantly across the two conditions.

To compare policy beliefs with self-interest directly, as well as with the traditional party identification variable, all indices were entered into a multiple regression equation using vote choice as the dependent variable. For the high-importance condition, as expected, the standardized beta for self-interest was .115,  $p < .001$ ; for the policy belief index, the beta was .088,  $p < .025$ ; and for the party identification, the beta was .704,  $p < .0001$ . For the low-importance condition, the self-interest beta was .066, *ns*; for the policy belief index, the beta

<sup>8</sup> The determination of which individuals were high and low in self-interest for this analysis was made by taking a median split of individuals on the self-interest index within each importance condition. It is noteworthy that there were individuals with similar levels of self-interest in both the high- and low-importance conditions.



was .126,  $p < .007$ ; and for party identification, the beta was .683,  $p < .0001$ .

#### DISCUSSION

The results support the hypothesis generated by the moderator variable approach to attitude-behavior relations. The perceived importance of the issue must be taken into consideration in order to assess whether self-interest influences vote choice. As predicted, only for those persons who considered economic issues as "most important" personally and for the nation (the high-importance condition) was there a substantial correlation between an index of their self-interest experiences and their vote choice in the 1984 presidential election. Individuals in the low-importance condition failed to make such a connection between their personal financial situation and government intervention in the form of economic policy. It appears that personal agendas reflect a differential degree of consideration of these self-interest experiences. That is, those persons for whom economic issues were more important were presumably more attuned to the limits/luxuries afforded by their financial circumstances, whereas those persons in the low-importance condition did not realize (or were not concerned about) the significance of their economic activities and presumably were more attuned to the significance of other issue-related activities, such as abortion, civil rights, or foreign affairs. Thus, as suggested by the moderator variable approach, identification of individuals for whom attitudes and behaviors should be linked was indeed fruitful.

Our data also suggest a boundary condition for the influence of direct experience-based attitudes on behavior. Several studies have shown that attitudes based upon direct experience with some attitude object are more strongly related to subsequent behaviors than are attitudes based upon indirect experience (Fazio and Zanna, 1981). The results of the present study suggest that the influence of direct experience on the attitude-behavior relationship may be moderated by how individuals perceive the a priori importance of the attitude object. That is, the relationship of self-interest experience to voting behavior was moderated by the position accorded economic issues on the respondent's personal agenda. Moreover, previous work has suggested that direct experience enhances the attitude-behavior link by strengthening the object-evaluation association (Fazio et al., 1982). Our research also suggests that the degree of perceived importance associated with an object may influence this object-evaluation association.

The moderating effects of perceived impor-

tance and direct experience may depend somewhat upon an interaction between these two factors. Recently acquired direct experience may alone create a perception of the importance of some attitude object, particularly through the enhanced degree of cognitive accessibility conferred by such experience. Thus, to the extent that one's direct experience with an attitude object has been primed recently, then that experience may play a more prominent role in that individual's attitudinal and behavioral expressions. Indeed, priming effects play a central role in process models of attitude-behavior relations (Fazio, 1986). In addition, it has been demonstrated that the strength of the object-evaluation association may be influenced by repeated expressions of one's attitude (Fazio et al., 1982; Powell and Fazio, 1984). Outside of the laboratory situation, such repeated expressions may occur with those attitude objects that are more influential in an individual's life. Perhaps the very reason an individual has had a high degree of prior experience (whether direct or indirect) with the attitude object is that the object has figured significantly in the individual's goals and plans over time. Such repeated encounters with the attitude object may lead the individual to perceive the object as personally important by virtue of its repeated, chronic role in the individual's life. In turn, this perception of the importance of a given attitude object may enhance one's awareness of self-interest experiences associated with that object, in this case with economic issues.

As a result, certain political issues with which an individual has had recent experience may be viewed as important by virtue of their increased cognitive accessibility. Such recent experience is not essential for such an increase in personal involvement, however, since earlier repeated exposure to the issue in question may also have led to this increase in perceived importance.

The foregoing results underscore the need to incorporate personal involvement into process models that seek to describe how attitudes guide behavior. Recent research in social cognition also suggests that importance of considering individual difference factors such as personal involvement in assessing the degree of influence of a given attitude on subsequent behavior (Showers and Cantor, 1985). Studies by Borgida and Campbell (1982) and Sivacek and Crano (1982), for example, have demonstrated the increased predictive power of attitudes by considering personal experience and vested interest. The former study examined the influence of negatively valenced direct experiences upon subsequent behavior, whereas the latter examined the hedonic relevance (vested interest) of some attitude object made salient in a



person's life. Our study may be viewed in this context as well. Though the importance of considering issue salience has been emphasized in past studies of political behavior (e.g., RePass, 1971), few studies have investigated the effects of salience on the relationship between self-interest and voting behavior. More recently, however, Bobo (1983) has suggested that subjective considerations of the issue may be seen as more sensitive indicators of self-interest, particularly with respect to the goals and plans that are relevant to the issue. To the extent that relevant goals and plans are considered in analyzing objective indicators of self-interest, one may gain a greater sense of the subjective importance imputed to those indicators. The determination of precisely which goals and plans are considered to be more important is just as likely, however, to be dependent upon distal as immediate factors. While a full accounting of such antecedent factors is not possible given the present data set, the present research nevertheless highlights the importance of considering the effect of these goals and plans as represented by the personal agenda construct. The measurement of personal agendas is a step toward this approach by examining the immediate hierarchy of issues that such goals and plans produce.

#### APPENDIX

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE EXACT WORDINGS FOR THE MAJOR VARIABLES USED IN THESE ANALYSES.

**Personal agenda items:** Country most important item: Here is a list of problems that some people feel are among the most important facing our country today. Which one do you think is the most important problem facing the country today? Or do you think that the most important problem is some other problem not listed here? (List of alternatives provided included: pollution/environment, Soviet Union, spending for defense, race discrimination, women's rights, Social Security, taxes, budget deficits, the arms race, abortion, social service spending, unemployment and "other—please specify"). *Personally most important item:* Now let's refer to the list again. Which one of these political problems is most important to you personally, or do you think it is some other problem not listed here?

**Self-interest index items:** All items have yes/no format. (1) Do you receive any benefits from governmental social service programs such as veterans benefits, food stamps, or social security, among others? (2) Do any members of your immediate family receive any benefits from governmental programs such as those just mentioned? (3) In the past four years, have you or any members of your immediate family been unemployed or had their hours cut back? (4) In the

past four years, have any of your close friends been unemployed or had their hours cut back?

**Economic policy belief index items:** All items on 7-point scales. (1) Some people think the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending. Others feel that the government should increase the services it provides even if it means more spending. Still others think that what we're doing now is just about right. Where would you place yourself on this issue, or haven't you thought much about it? (2) Some people feel that the government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on his own, and, of course, some people have opinions in between. (3) Some people feel that Social Security should provide a comfortable standard of living for the elderly even if it means raising taxes. Others feel that the purpose of Social Security is to provide a minimum standard of living with lower taxes. (4) Some people feel that we depend on the government for too much help these days, that we expect too much from our government. Others feel that many of our problems are too hard to solve ourselves and that we need our government to help us out. (5) We often hear that it is important to be charitable and to help those who cannot help themselves. Some people believe that private charities are enough to help the poor and that the government should stay out of the matter. Others believe that citizens will not give enough to private charities to help the poor and that the government should set up programs to help them. (6) Some people feel that federal budget deficits need to be reduced primarily by raising taxes because government social services have already been cut heavily. Others feel that the budget deficit should be reduced primarily by further cuts in government social spending and not by raising taxes.

**Party identification:** In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a (strong or not so strong) Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

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