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ARTICLE

# The Impact of Values on Issue Stances: Evidence from Panel Studies

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**Abstract**

Which predispositions drive voters' policy attitudes? This article tests the role of political values as a driver of attitudes relative to two commonly posited sources – partisanship and symbolic ideology. Past work has found correlations between values and issue attitudes, but these cross-sectional studies have limited causal purchases. I test the effects of traditionalist and egalitarian values on issue stances using six ANES and GSS panel surveys from 1992 to 2020. I find that values drive within-voter changes in policy attitudes under a variety of specifications. Additionally, values shape attitudes on emergent policies, which I test using the cases of welfare reform in the 1990s and transgender policies in the 2010s. In all models, values have as large or larger effects on attitudes as that of partisanship or ideology. I conclude that values are a core predisposition which voters employ to make sense of policy issues.

**Keywords:** values; public opinion; ideology; partisanship

Voters' issue stances are central to representation. In prominent theories of democratic representation, these preferences over governmental policies provide guidance on how legislators ought to act (Miller and Stokes 1963; Pitkin 1967). The normative importance of issue stances in a democracy motivates the need to understand how citizens develop these attitudes. On one prominent account, voters rely on their partisan identities. If an elite partisan espouses a certain position, copartisan voters oftentimes adopt the corresponding position (Barber and Pope 2019; Broockman and Butler 2017; Jacoby 1988; Lenz 2012). An alternative account posits that voters have 'ideological' views on a left-right spectrum, and this helps them interpret policy particulars (Jacoby 1991; Peffley and Hurwitz 1985). Here, a voter knows her own ideological disposition and figures out the issue stance that best aligns with that ideological identity (Malka and Lelkes 2010). While these accounts are compelling, they are incomplete. We observe far more heterogeneity in issue stances among mass partisans than among elites, suggesting that voters do not simply match their issue stances to their partisan teams' positions (Broockman 2016; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2008). Similarly, many voters' symbolic ideologies do not line up with their issue stances (Ellis and Stimson 2012). This article evaluates another source of voters' issue stances: political values or beliefs about the ways society should be ordered and the priorities it should have.

Numerous studies have unearthed cross-sectional relationships between political values (such as traditionalism, egalitarianism, individualism, and humanitarianism) and issue stances (Berinsky 2002; Brewer 2003; Feldman 1988; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Jacoby 2006).

However, these correlational cross-sectional analyses leave unanswered the question of whether values *drive* issue stances. Cross-sectional methodologies also find correlations between values and partisanship or ideology, but panel studies provide mixed evidence on whether values drive either predisposition (Goren 2005; Hatemi et al. 2019; Lupton and McKee 2020). This study employs a similar panel-based logic to test whether values drive issue stances. While a handful of studies have tested this relationship with panel studies (Goren 2013; McCann 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993), they each rely on a single panel from the 1980s or 1990s, and two of the three do not test alternative beliefs, which might drive values – namely, partisanship or ideology. This article evaluates whether the causal role of values persists after accounting for these alternative drivers of beliefs and does so across a three-decade span – including in the twenty-first century when voters have become increasingly polarized on partisan and ideological lines (Bafumi and Shapiro 2009).

I test the role of traditionalist and egalitarian values on attitudes from six multi-wave panel studies from the ANES and the GSS ranging from 1992 to 2020. I first show that the relationship between values and policy attitudes holds not only in the standard across-individual models but also within individuals using multiple measurements of the individual's views. Furthermore, respondents' policy stances shift over time to be congruent with their previously held values. Both of these tests rely on within-individual variation in values and policy stances over time, which limits our ability to detect causal effects among those whose values and policy attitudes are stable. To address this, I look at two emergent and rapidly changing policy domains – welfare policy in the 1990s and transgender policy in the 2010s – and show that pre-existing values are major drivers of attitude development. Across all of these models, I not only test whether values have a statistically significant effect on issue stances but also how this effect compares to those of partisanship and symbolic ideology. I find that values consistently exhibit effects as large or larger than that of partisanship or ideology. That said, unobserved time-varying predispositions may also drive changes in issue stances; I discuss these threats to inference in the penultimate section and consider some alternative accounts that might limit causal inference.

In concluding that values drive the development of policy attitudes, this article makes two theoretical contributions. The first is that values serve as a core predisposition with which citizens can reason about particulars. While existing work has posited this theory (Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Goren 2013; Sniderman et al. 1991) and tested it cross-sectionally, this article provides a sturdier footing upon which to assert a causal relationship between values and issues. Elucidating the causal role of values is especially important given that other panel study-based research has cast doubt on the causal role of predispositions such as identity characteristics and racial beliefs (Egan 2020; Engelhardt 2021; Enns and Jardina 2021). The second is that this article mitigates concerns that voters do not systematically reason about political issues, which would leave voters 'innocent of ideology' (Converse 1964; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). Rather, it appears that political values can fill the role of 'crowning postures ... [which] serve as a sort of glue to bind together many more specific attitudes and beliefs' (Converse 1964, 211).

## Values, partisanship, and ideology

The effort to systematically evaluate individuals' values originates in social psychology (Rokeach 1973). Shalom Schwartz (1992, 4) posits that 'values (1) are concepts or beliefs, (2) pertain to desirable end states or behaviours, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (4) are ordered by relative importance'. Values have genetic origins (Hatemi et al. 2014; Schermer et al. 2011), are developed early on in life (Vecchione et al. 2016b; Vecchione et al. 2020), and are held stably throughout the course of one's lifetime (Searing et al. 2019). Values also correlate with individuals' political and personal behaviours (Enke et al. 2023; Schwartz et al. 2017). This article focuses on *political* values, which are beliefs about the ways in which society should be ordered and the priorities that society should have.

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Some commonly studied political values are moral traditionalism, egalitarianism, individualism, and patriotism (Feldman 1988; Goren 2005; Jacoby 2014).[1]

Values constitute one type of core predisposition – that is, a set of durable inclinations or evaluations – which could influence issue stances (Alvarez and Brehm 2002). This article tests the role of values relative to two other drivers of issue stances: ideology and partisanship. The concept of partisanship – operationalized here as an individual's identity with a political party – is clearly differentiated from values and ideology. Ideology and values, however, are conceptually similar and require careful differentiation.

The term 'ideology' is used inconsistently in political science. Gerring (1997) notes that the common threads across definitions are (1) constraint across idea elements, (2) contrast relative to other ideologies, and (3) stability through time (980). As political scientists use the term, (4) the subject matter of ideology is *politics* rather than beliefs about the world more broadly, distinguishing ideology from worldviews or belief systems (982). Most public opinion scholarship in American politics makes two additional assumptions: (5) ideology operates in a hierarchical fashion, 'in which more specific attitudes interact with attitudes towards the more general class of objects in which the specific object is seen to belong', (Campbell et al. 1960, 190) and (6) ideology operates as a one-dimensional scale on a liberal-conservative spectrum.[2] In using the term ideology in this article, I refer to the concept as delineated by these six components.

Like this left-right concept of ideology, values offer constraint across idea elements, stand in contrast to other values, are stable over time, and operate hierarchically.[3] However, there are a few key differences between values and ideology. First, values are developed with primary application to an individual's everyday surroundings (Vecchione et al. 2016a). For example, traditionalism may manifest in church attendance. By comparison, however, left-right ideology is *defined* in terms of policy content (for example, preferences over the size of the government), with potential secondary effects on one's personal life. While political values and ideology are both 'political' in the broad sense of the term, the left-right spectrum – unlike values – is intrinsically defined in terms of policy. Second, while liberalism and conservatism are logical opposites on a spectrum, values do not inherently go together or oppose each other – one can favour traditionalism and egalitarianism, but the left-right ideological concept does not permit one to be both a liberal and a conservative. Instead, each value operates in its own dimension, and individuals differ in the extent to which they prioritize a value (Jacoby 2006).[4] Since values are widely held, politicians rarely attack them (unlike how they might criticize left- or right-wingers); instead, politicians try to explain how their actions are consistent with widely held values. Third, values cut across typical understandings of left-right ideology. The same freedom-centric rhetoric of 'my body, my choice' can be used to justify abortion rights by liberals or opposition to vaccine mandates by conservatives. Values constitute substantive visions for the ways that society should be ordered that do not necessarily align with ideology.

[1]This stands in comparison to basic personal values studied in psychology, such as achievement, self-direction, loyalty, and purity (Graham et al. 2009; Schwartz 1992). These basic personal values have indirect effects on political outcomes, which are entirely mediated by political values (Schwartz et al. 2010).

[2]Some scholars postulate that ideology is multidimensional (Feldman and Johnston 2014; Treier and Hillygus 2009). This article focuses on the unidimensional definition, but the multidimensional version also differs from values for the first and second reasons described below.

[3]Another body of work finds that ideology and values both have heritable components. A number of studies have found genetic components toward aggregated effects of particular stimuli (for example, socialism, pacifism, and school prayer) (Alford et al. 2005; Hatemi et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2012). More germane to this debate, however, symbolic ideology appears partially genetic (Bell et al. 2009; Hatemi et al. 2014), although left-right self-placement does not appear to be (Hatemi et al. 2014). On the other side, both basic human values (Knafo and Spinath 2011; Schermer et al. 2011) and political values (Hatemi et al. 2014) are heritable. Thus, this literature does not provide an answer to the question of which predisposition is primordial.

[4]Of course, there may be some individuals who oppose the value altogether (for example, an anti-patriot), but this is a relatively small fraction of the population, especially relative to partisan and ideological divides.

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While this article focuses on the left-right notion of ideology standard to political science, another prominent theory in psychology defines ideology as a type of motivated social cognition (MSC) (Jost et al. 2003). On this view, the nucleus of (conservative) ideology that unites epistemic, existential, and ideological motives for conservatism is 'psychological attempts to manage uncertainty and fear. These, in turn, are inherently related to the two core aspects of conservative thought ... resistance to change and the endorsement of inequality' (Jost et al. 2003, 351). One reading of this theory suggests that values and ideology are interchangeable – that is, perhaps traditionalism (as a measure of resistance to change) and egalitarianism (as a measure of non-acceptance of inequality) themselves constitute ideology (Malka and Lelkes 2010). While this seems to be a plausible reading at first glance, researchers in the MSC tradition *do* distinguish between values and ideology in their empirical specifications; in particular, they typically operationalize ideology primarily through symbolic self-identification (Jost 2006; Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008). MSC researchers have specified a theoretical model instead in which psychological beliefs drive values, which in turn drive ideology; in doing so, they have found that egalitarianism only predicts left-right ideology in certain national contexts (Thorisdottir et al. 2007). This sort of specification and the ensuing findings suggest that those operating in the MSC tradition treat values as distinct from ideology.[5] I show that these concepts are empirically separable in Appendix Section I.

Beyond ideology, voters employ additional predispositions to make sense of politics. Group identities and affective judgments about other groups are important tools for voters in interpreting politics (Converse 1964; Elder and O'Brian 2022; Sniderman et al. 1991; Tesler 2012). Another type of predisposition is a premise or a belief about the way the world *is* rather than how it *should be* (Barker and Marietta 2022). I discuss the relationship between other predispositions and issue stances in the penultimate section.

## Do values drive issue stances?

This article tests whether values drive individuals' issue stances. Under this theory, values operate in a hierarchical fashion, exerting 'downward' effects on issue stances (Goren 2013). Existing work has also posited a hierarchical role for ideology on issue stances (for example, Peffley and Hurwitz 1985). There are two reasons why values can serve in this hierarchical role. The first is that values are centrally available heuristics for voters seeking cognitive shortcuts (Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Sniderman et al. 1991; Goren 2013). It requires more cognitive effort for a voter to study policy particulars in order to develop an opinion than it does to take an accessible, closely held general belief and quickly apply it to a particular case. A voter may come to favour the Affordable Care Act through egalitarianism (since it enables patients with pre-existing conditions to receive insurance coverage) or oppose it by reference to freedom (since it forces voters to purchase insurance). Second, values serve as evaluative standards for good versus bad policies. Even if a voter carefully researches a policy question, she will generate an opinion by applying previously held dispositions to the particulars at hand. Values offer one such standard.

Many studies show correlations between values and issue stances even after controlling for partisanship, ideology, and voter demographics (Berinsky 2002; Brewer 2003; Feldman 1988; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Jacoby 2006). However, cross-sectional studies can generate observational equivalence between causal and non-causal accounts in a number of ways (Lenz 2012). The biggest risk in interpreting correlations between values and issue attitudes as causal is that there may be other omitted variables which drive issue stances, which,

[5]A similar argument applies to Moral Foundations Theory. Haidt and his coauthors treat ideology as something that can be predicted from moral foundations – not something equivalent to it (Graham et al. 2009; Graham et al. 2011). Koleva et al., (2012, 187) also distinguish moral foundations as 'basic and generalized psychological tendencies' or ''motivational goals' that may, in turn, predispose individuals to certain sociopolitical beliefs' rather than 'ideological belief dimensions'.

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when accounted for, would attenuate the observed correlations. The benefit of panel studies is that we have multiple observations of the same individuals, which mitigates concerns regarding time-invariant confounders such as the individual's upbringing and other unmeasured individual-level characteristics that are likely to be stable over time (for example, personality traits). Furthermore, since causality requires that cause precedes effect, it is difficult to extract causal relationships from cross-sectional data. The panel studies used in this article let us explore how values and issue stances evolve over time to 'stress test' the role of values on political attitudes.[6]

These sorts of methodological concerns are especially justified for the question at hand because the cross-sectional relationships suggesting that values drive partisanship and ideology have not fully stood up to panel-based designs. Panel studies produce mixed findings on whether values influence partisanship (Evans and Neundorf 2020; Lupton and McKee 2020) or partisanship influences values (Goren 2005), and such studies also suggest that ideology influences moral foundations to a greater degree than vice-versa (Hatemi et al. 2019). The use of panel studies has also caused scholars to revisit previously held assumptions regarding the causal primacy of other predispositions, such as identity characteristics (Egan 2020) and racial beliefs (Engelhardt 2021; Enns and Jardina 2021).

A handful of studies have used panel surveys to find that values have a positive impact on future issue stances, indicating that values do exert the causal role this article theorizes, but they suffer from important limitations (Goren 2013; McCann 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993). While their use of panels obviates concerns regarding time-invariant omitted variables, they do not eliminate concerns about *time-varying* omitted variables that may influence issue attitudes. Two of the most commonly posited forces of the hierarchical constraint of issue stances are partisanship and left-right ideology, but only Peffley and Hurwitz (1993) control for these variables and compare the relative effects of different predispositions. This makes it hard to conclude that values are driving issue stances as opposed to partisanship or ideology. These studies also rely on a single panel each, which limits the findings' external validity.[7] The question of generalizability is especially salient in twenty-first-century American politics since ideology and partisanship have become increasingly correlated with issue stances (Bafumi and Shapiro 2009). Thus, it may be that values are no longer a necessary heuristic for the development of issue stances.

I generate three hypotheses to test the effects of values. In each of these hypotheses, I compare the effects of values to those of partisanship and ideology. If the effects of values are no longer statistically significant after accounting for these variables, then partisanship and ideology might instead be the drivers of issue attitudes. I also compare the coefficients on each to see whether values play a larger role than partisanship or ideology.

I begin with the basic across-voter relationships between values and issue stances. While existing work says that we ought to expect a respondent who is more traditionalist in her values to hold more value-congruent policy views, we do not know whether her attitudes instead stem from unmeasured characteristics such as her upbringing. By introducing respondent fixed effects, we hold constant many factors that might influence the individual's attitudes. I posit that there is a within-individual correlation between values and issue stances (**H1**) – that is, if we compare two different snapshots for the same individual, the snapshot in which she espouses more egalitarian values will also be the one in which she favours policies that enhance societal opportunity relative to the other snapshot.

[6]One additional concern is that correlations may arise because of consistency bias stemming from question order effects (Krosnick and Presser 2010). In Appendix Section B, I show that the cross-sectional results hold when using future observations of the policy indices (that is, current predispositions predict future attitudes). A second concern is that we may have reverse causality. Existing work with panels finds no evidence for reverse causality of this sort (Goren 2013; McCann 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993), and I review this possibility in more depth in the Discussion section.

[7]These are: a local sample from 1986-1987 for Peffley and Hurwitz (1993), the 1990-1991-1992 ANES panel for McCann (1997), and the 1992-1994-1996 ANES panel for Goren (2013).

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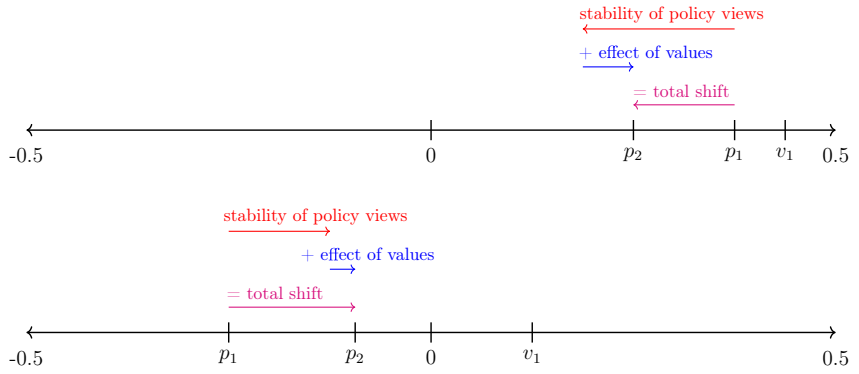


**Figure 1.** Two examples of effects under H2, where $p_2$ (policy attitudes at time 2) are a function of $p_1$ (policy attitudes at time 1) and $v_1$ (values at time 1). Red arrows reflect non-zero regression to the centre point (of 0) from $p_1$, and blue arrows reflect a positive effect of $v_1$.

H1 does not account for the temporal dynamics of the panel, though. To more thoroughly evaluate the causal role of values, I test whether values pull issue stances towards congruence with the value over time (**H2**). Put simply, if someone is more traditionalist at time 1, H2 posits that her attitudes at time 2 will be more aligned with traditionalism after accounting for her attitudes at time 1. If H2 is true, it would be indicative of a higher-order belief – namely, values – 'pulling' specific attitudes towards the position consistent with the value. This is the type of effect we would expect to see if values operate hierarchically on attitudes. Figure 1 shows two examples of the hypothesized relationship.

The first two hypotheses rely on changes in values and policy stances in order to achieve identification. While these hypotheses constitute evidence towards a causal role for values, they cannot detect causal effects among those whose values and attitudes are unchanging during the panel, even if their issue stances do, in fact, derive from their values. My third hypothesis addresses this limitation by testing whether values shape attitudes in *new* policy domains on which voters are less likely to have had stable and well-considered policy views at the time of the first survey wave (**H3**).

## Data and measurement

I employ three panel studies from the American National Election Studies (ANES): one with observations in 1992, 1994, and 1996; one with observations in 2000, 2002, and 2004; and one with observations in 2016 and 2020. I also use three panel studies from the General Social Survey (GSS): the first with observations in 2006, 2008, and 2010; the second with observations in 2010, 2012, and 2014; and the third with observations in 2016, 2018, and 2020 (the third consists of two two-wave panels, wherein half of the 2020 respondents were originally surveyed in 2016 and the other half were originally surveyed in 2018). In analyses with data pooled across survey waves, I use inverse weights such that data from each survey wave is given equal weight.

I focus on two values which have been studied extensively in the values literature: moral traditionalism and egalitarianism. Traditionalism refers to the value of sustaining historically received traditions in order to maintain a virtuous society. The family, community, and organized religion are core institutional pillars of traditionalism (Goren 2013). Egalitarianism refers to the importance of ensuring equality of opportunity and giving everyone a fair chance to succeed in society (Feldman 1999). I test these values for two reasons. The first is that we have large-scale panel surveys testing these two values, enabling thorough tests of the effects of values on issue stances. The second is that these values are not influenced by lagged partisanship or ideology in

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the ways that some other values are in experimental and panel studies (Goren 2005; Goren et al. 2009; Lupton and McKee 2020).[8] This suggests that these values are stable and enduring concepts.

I use four questions in the ANES for traditionalism and five for egalitarianism, along with six from the GSS for traditionalism (the GSS does not track egalitarianism). The ANES and GSS ask different types of questions about traditionalism – while both tap the same concept, the ANES questions exclusively use broader language like 'traditional family ties' and 'new lifestyles'. On the other hand, the GSS has a mix of broader questions (for example, the permissibility of different types of personal morality) and more specific questions (for example, whether sex before marriage is wrong). As such, I separate out the analyses between the ANES and GSS. By using two different operationalizations of traditionalism, I ensure that the findings do not derive from a specific set of values questions.

I explore the effects of values on issue stances that are conceptually linked to the value. This is because values are 'domain-specific organizing principles' (Zaller 1992, 26), which means that they have particular applications when dealing with attitudes tied to that domain. Thus, as the extant literature assumes, the relevant question is whether values drive beliefs over policies that are substantively related to those values.

Traditionalist values relating to the morality of certain behaviours and changing lifestyles bear most clearly on policies that instantiate those beliefs into law (for example, legal restrictions on unorthodox lifestyles). In this vein, past work has found relationships between traditionalism and opposition to LGBT rights (Brewer 2003). I construct a policy index that contains questions relating to LGBT issues, abortion issues, and certain school issues. Following the terminology of Goren and Chapp (2017), I label this the 'cultural orthodoxy' policy index. For example, this linkage suggests that those who favour maintaining traditional families and oppose new lifestyles will oppose same-sex marriage or legalized abortion. Especially insofar as traditional society reflected a Christian consensus, those who hold such values may also favour policies such as school prayer or vouchers for private schools (which are often used toward religious schools).

I also construct an opportunity policy index, which contains items relating to policies that improve access to basic resources and attempt to generate social mobility. This linkage is consistent with past work showing relationships between egalitarian values and attitudes on education spending (Feldman 1988). I use questions relating to the basic social safety net, educational opportunity, and non-discrimination in employment. Those who believe that we need to do more as a society to give everyone an equal chance to succeed might be more likely to favour government spending on financial aid or non-discrimination laws, for example. Notably, this index does not contain items on policies such as transportation spending or climate spending – as such, it is not merely a measure of 'fiscal liberalism'.

While the value questions reflect voters' beliefs about the priorities that society should have, one's values do not necessitate landing on a given side of a policy debate. One could favour the maintenance of traditional family ties while supporting non-discrimination laws against LGBT individuals; likewise, one could favour equality of opportunity while opposing increased spending on the poor.

The question wordings for each item are in Appendix Section A, along with scale reliabilities and stabilities. In order to provide easily interpretable coefficients, I create linear additive scales of values and domain-specific policy views that range from −0.5 to 0.5. I scale the standard

[8]In Goren (2005), partisanship has an effect of 0.1–0.2 SDs on egalitarianism and less than 0.1 on traditionalism values, and the latter is insignificant in two of the three specifications. In Federico and Kittilson (2009), the effects of cues connecting values to either a) party or b) party plus ideology are not statistically significant on voters' expressed traditionalism or egalitarianism at the level, and the effects are substantively small. In Lupton and McKee (2020), the effects of partisanship on egalitarianism are null in the South and small outside the South; by comparison, the effects of egalitarianism on partisanship are large in both regions.

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**Table 1.** Cross-sectional relationships between values and policy views

| | *Dependent variable:* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cultural Orthodoxy Policy Index (ANES) | | Opportunity Policy Index (ANES) | | Cultural Orthodoxy Policy Index (GSS) | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Trad. Values (ANES) | 0.443* | 0.080* | | | | |
| | (0.012) | (0.018) | | | | |
| Egal. Values (ANES) | | | 0.308* | 0.122* | | |
| | | | (0.012) | (0.019) | | |
| Trad. Values (GSS) | | | | | 0.520* | 0.088* |
| | | | | | (0.009) | (0.015) |
| Ideology | 0.234* | 0.037 | 0.224* | 0.066* | 0.231* | 0.026 |
| | (0.014) | (0.023) | (0.012) | (0.022) | (0.011) | (0.015) |
| Partisanship | 0.090* | 0.006 | 0.118* | 0.058* | 0.092* | 0.023 |
| | (0.009) | (0.017) | (0.009) | (0.018) | (0.009) | (0.015) |
| Respondent Fixed Effects | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Values > Ideology | Yes* | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes* | Yes* |
| Values > Partisanship | Yes* | Yes* | Yes* | Yes | Yes* | Yes* |
| Observations | 9,000 | 9,000 | 9,008 | 9,008 | 14,274 | 14,274 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.471 | 0.785 | 0.434 | 0.719 | 0.435 | 0.755 |

*Note*: Data weighted to give each survey wave equal weight. All models include survey wave fixed effects and demographic controls. Standard errors clustered at the respondent level. Ideology and partisanship variables are coded such that higher values are more conservative/Republican for cultural orthodoxy policy models and more liberal/Democratic for opportunity policy models. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

partisanship and ideology questions into the same unit domain. This approach enables straightforward interpretation of a shift in values, ideology, or partisanship on policy views. However, it implicitly assumes equal weight of all the items in a given index. In Appendix Section C, I run robustness checks that load the items onto factors rather than using additive scales (using feeling thermometers to construct three-item scales for partisanship and ideology) and find similar results. In each of this model's articles, I also test the effects of values on those of ideology and partisanship. While the unit scale invites clear interpretation, the variables may have different variances, and so in the coefficient comparison tests, I test significance using standardized models.

## Do values correlate with policy attitudes for a given voter?

Existing work shows that values correlate with domain-specific policy attitudes, but these models may suffer from omitted variable bias. I first replicate the cross-sectional models by estimating regressions of the form $Y_{it} = \alpha_t + \beta_1 V_{it} + \beta_2 I_{it} + \beta_3 P_{it} + \xi X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$ where $Y_{it}$ indexes policy attitudes, $V_{it}$ is values, $I_{it}$ is symbolic ideology, $P_{it}$ is party identification, $\mathbf{X}$ is a matrix of demographic covariates (race, gender, income, and education), and $\alpha_t$ are wave fixed effects (since the data is pooled across multiple years). To discern the degree of omitted variable bias, I replicate these models but include a term $\gamma_i$ as individual fixed effects. These models attempt to identify effects by leveraging within-individual variation over time (Allison 2009). I cluster standard errors at the individual level. I use data from all the survey waves described above except for the 2002 and 2004 ANES waves since those do not ask values questions.

In Table 1, the odd-numbered columns show across-voter models and the even-numbered ones show within-voter models. Beginning with the former set, the odd-numbered columns in Table 1 show substantively large correlations between values and issue stances. A maximally traditionalist respondent in the ANES has policy views 0.44 units more culturally orthodox than one who is minimally traditionalist (holding constant her partisanship, ideology, and basic demographics). Put in the context of one of the underlying policy items, a 0.44 unit shift is nearly equal to the

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difference between opposing any recognition of same-sex couples and permitting civil unions (0.5 units). The equivalent coefficients are 0.31 for egalitarianism in the ANES and 0.52 for traditionalism in the GSS. The coefficients on values are always larger than those of ideology and partisanship, and the gaps are always statistically significant except for the values-ideology gap in column 3.

The coefficient sizes attenuate when we introduce respondent fixed effects in the even-numbered columns. These models suggest that the across-voter estimates are contaminated by a considerable degree of omitted variable bias. Despite this, the even-numbered columns of Table 1 show that if a given survey respondent is a minimal traditionalist in one ANES wave and a maximal traditionalist in another, her policy views will be 0.08 more units more culturally orthodox in that latter wave (column 2). These effect sizes are 0.12 for egalitarianism and 0.09 for GSS traditionalism (columns 4 and 6). While such within-individual swings are unlikely, we can benchmark the effect sizes by comparing them to those of ideology and partisanship. Although we see that when respondents identify as more Republican or more conservative, they also espouse more culturally orthodox policy views (and the same for Democrats/liberals on pro-opportunity policies), these coefficients are only significant in column 4. In each within-individual test, the values coefficient is larger than that of partisanship or ideology, and in three of the six comparisons, the difference is statistically significant.

These findings give us initial reason to believe that past literature on the relationships between values and issue stances does not arise merely due to omitted variable bias. However, these models treat the timing of the waves as essentially interchangeable; to more rigorously examine claims of causality, I look at how attitudes shift within individuals over time.

## Do values drive changes in policy views?

H2 asks whether values induce *changes* in policy attitudes between one period and another. In this test, each row in the dataset corresponds to an individual, and so the model is now $Y_{i,t+1} = \alpha_t + \beta_1 V_{it} + \beta_2 I_{it} + \beta_3 P_{it} + Y_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$ where $Y_{i,t+1}$ reflects policy views measured two or four years later.[9] We should expect that the strongest predictor of current policy views is past policy views in any given domain. The main question here, though, is whether values influence policy views after accounting for attitude stability. Are these attitudes being drawn towards voters' values, as Figure 1 posits? And if this is the case, does this force appear above and beyond the extent to which voters' attitudes are pulled towards their partisan and ideological identities?

Table 2 shows the results.[10] The first two columns show that a one-unit increase in traditionalism in the ANES models leads to 0.18 and 0.12 unit increases in culturally orthodox policy views two and four years later, respectively. The third and fourth columns indicate that a maximal egalitarian's policy views become 0.16 units more pro-opportunity both two years later and four years later relative to a minimal egalitarian's. Finally, the GSS models show that maximal traditionalists shifted their policy stances 0.23 units in the culturally orthodox direction relative to minimal traditionalists both two and four years later. This effect size is equivalent to a one-response option difference on the same-sex marriage question in the GSS cultural orthodoxy scale (for example, going from somewhat opposed to same-sex marriage to being neutral on the question).

[9]Because the remaining tests use within-individual observations over time, I omit the demographic controls. The coefficients on these demographic coefficients are almost always statistically insignificant and substantively small, and they leave the main coefficients unchanged.

[10]In some cases, the stability coefficient is meaningfully higher four years later relative to two years later, but the coefficients cannot be directly compared because each model includes different sets of surveys, and there is some variation in the policy questions in each survey wave.

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**Table 2.** Relationship between values and changes in policy views

| | *Dependent variable:* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cultural Orthodoxy Policy Index (ANES) | | Opportunity Policy Index (ANES) | | Cultural Orthodoxy Policy Index (GSS) | |
| | +2 yrs | +4 yrs | +2 yrs | +4 yrs | +2 yrs | +4 yrs |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Traditionalist values (ANES) | 0.183* | 0.123* | | | | |
| | (0.027) | (0.023) | | | | |
| Egalitarian values (ANES) | | | 0.164* | 0.164* | | |
| | | | (0.022) | (0.021) | | |
| Traditionalist values (GSS) | | | | | 0.231* | 0.225* |
| | | | | | (0.013) | (0.019) |
| Ideology | 0.113* | 0.073* | 0.114* | 0.097* | 0.103* | 0.111* |
| | (0.028) | (0.022) | (0.019) | (0.018) | (0.013) | (0.019) |
| Partisanship | 0.025 | 0.022 | 0.063* | 0.054* | 0.035* | 0.012 |
| | (0.016) | (0.015) | (0.014) | (0.013) | (0.009) | (0.013) |
| Cultural Orth. Policy Index (ANES) | 0.495* | 0.626* | | | | |
| | (0.026) | (0.021) | | | | |
| Opportunity Policy Index (ANES) | | | 0.395* | 0.472* | | |
| | | | (0.023) | (0.021) | | |
| Cultural Orth. Policy Index (GSS) | | | | | 0.589* | 0.593* |
| | | | | | (0.013) | (0.017) |
| Values > Ideology | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes* | Yes* |
| Values > Partisanship | Yes* | Yes* | Yes | Yes* | Yes* | Yes* |
| Observations | 1,634 | 3,974 | 2,624 | 3,979 | 6,299 | 3,203 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.436 | 0.550 | 0.380 | 0.499 | 0.605 | 0.594 |

*Note*: ANES data pooled from three two-year panels (92–94, 94–96, 00–02) and three four-year panels (92–96, 00–04, 16–20). GSS data pooled from five two-year panels (06–08, 08–10, 10–12, 12–14, 18–20) and three four-year panels (06–10, 10–14, 16–20). Data was weighted to give each survey wave equal weight. All models include survey wave fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the respondent level. Ideology and partisanship variables are coded such that higher values are more conservative/Republican for cultural orthodoxy policy models and more liberal/Democratic for opportunity policy models. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

In each of the models, symbolic ideology generates shifts in policy stances; for example, more conservative individuals' views shift towards cultural orthodoxy. However, the coefficient on partisanship is only significant in three of the six specifications. In other words, once we account for values and ideology, we do not see Republicans and Democrats shifting their viewpoints in the culturally orthodox or pro-opportunity directions. Table 2 also shows that in every case, the magnitude of the values coefficient is larger than that of partisanship and ideology. The difference between values and ideology is not significant in any of the ANES models but is significant in both of the GSS traditionalism models. The gap between values and partisanship, though, is significant in every model except for the two-year egalitarianism panel (column 3).[11] The difference between values and partisanship is especially notable insofar as it runs counter to the theory that partisanship is the primary driver of policy views (for example, Achen and Bartels 2016).

I verify these results by testing each of the two-wave panels separately in Appendix Section D. The results in that section show that the effects of values relative to those of ideology and partisanship remain consistent over time. This mitigates concerns that values mattered in the 1990s but have since been supplanted by partisanship or ideology. Even in the 2016–2020 ANES panel, the coefficient on values is larger than that of both partisanship and ideology in three of the four comparisons at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

[11]The values-partisanship gap in column 3 of the equivalent model using factor analyses is statistically significant, though (see Appendix Table C.2).

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One limitation of testing differences in policy stances between time 1 and time 2 is that values and issue stances could simultaneously shift. As a refinement of H2, then, I use the three-wave panels to test whether *changes* in values affect *subsequent changes* in policy views – that is, whether shifts in values between times 1 and 2 drive changes in the respondent's policy views in time 3. Lenz (2012) employs a version of this test to causally identify the effects of persuasion on political evaluations. This test is overly strong insofar as a values shift could generate an ensuing attitude shift before the second wave is captured. To take an example with the 2010-2012-2014 panel, if values shift between 2010 and 2011 and then attitudes shift between 2011 and 2012, this test would fail to uncover an effect on 2014 attitudes because the effects had already been completed by the 2012 wave. This test also identifies effects only among those whose values change. Nonetheless, I find evidence in Appendix Section E that shifts in values drive subsequent shifts in issue attitudes. Furthermore, these shifts are larger than the effects stemming from equivalent shifts in ideology and partisanship (although the gaps are significant in only one of the four tests).

Across a variety of tests and robustness specifications, it appears that values drive the development of issue stances, and these effects are at least as large, if not larger than those of ideology and partisanship.

## Do voters use values to develop issue attitudes?

### *Welfare reform*

H3 tests the role of values in shaping attitudes in emergent policy domains. Welfare policy in the 1990s presents a useful case study because we see a steep rise in the salience of the issue combined with a rapid change in terms of the policy debate. Only 7 per cent of Americans in 1992 considered welfare one of the country's most important problems, but 27 per cent did so in 1996 (Soss and Schram 2007), due in large part to a sharp rise in elite discussion of welfare between 1990 and 1995 (Schneider and Jacoby 2005). The policy terrain also shifted drastically in this period. While welfare reform was not a new political issue, Bill Clinton's promise to 'end welfare as we know it' in 1992 shifted the debate from preserving the status quo program (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to devising new policy solutions, culminating in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Weaver 2000).

On the elite side, we see a sharp increase in public discourse not just regarding welfare generally but with respect to policy specifics, as Figure 2 shows. Coverage of 'welfare' in 1995 is 1.9 times that of coverage in 1990, but usage of policy-specific phrases ranges from 7.4 to 28 times higher in 1995 relative to 1990. Public opinion on particular policy components is initially volatile but stabilizes by the mid-1990s. For example, support for family caps increased by almost thirty percentage points between early 1992 and late 1993 before stabilizing in 1995 (Weaver 2000, 179).

Existing work shows cross-sectional correlations between values and welfare attitudes (Berinsky 2002; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001), but the 1992-1994-1996 ANES panel enables us to see how lagged values in 1992 and 1994 drive 1996 policy attitudes. Voters had an opportunity to learn about the policy programme from 1992 to 1996, and one way that they could do so was by applying broadly applicable values (for example, equality of opportunity) to particular policy debates (for example, not restricting eligibility for welfare programs). To test this, I construct an index from the ANES welfare policy questions (see Appendix Section A). Higher levels indicate support for increases in spending and more lenient rules for eligibility (that is, opposition to the reforms).[12] I compare the effects of egalitarian values to those of partisanship and ideology on these attitudes. Schneider and Jacoby (2005) use the same ANES panel to show that ideology and partisanship drive shifts in welfare policy attitudes – the question here is whether they continue to do so once voters' values are taken into account.

[12]The question of welfare spending levels was fairly salient and 'easy' prior to the 1990s. I include it for the sake of robustness, but the results are unchanged if the item is excluded.

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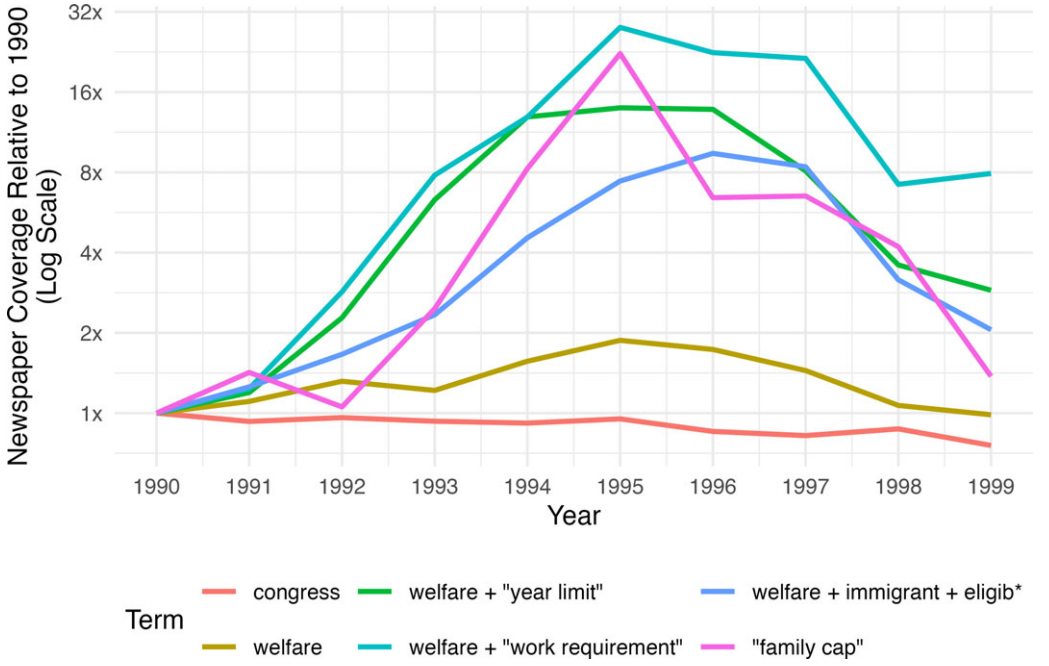


**Figure 2.** Newspaper frequency of different welfare-related terms by year from newspapers.com. Each term count is divided by the frequency of 'Monday' to index relative to aggregate newspaper volume (Beach and Hanlon 2022), and the ensuing ratio is indexed to the 1990 ratio for that term.

**Table 3.** Relationship between values and future views on welfare reform

| | *Dependent variable:* | |
|---|---|---|
| | Welfare Policy Index (1996) | |
| | (1) | (2) |
| Egalitarian Values (1992) | 0.159* (0.052) | |
| Ideology (1992) | 0.153* (0.044) | |
| Partisanship (1992) | 0.028 (0.033) | |
| Welfare Policy Index (1992) | 0.291* (0.033) | |
| Egalitarian Values (1994) | | 0.137* (0.033) |
| Ideology (1994) | | 0.128* (0.032) |
| Partisanship (1994) | | 0.046* (0.020) |
| Welfare Policy Index (1994) | | 0.458* (0.024) |
| Egal. Values > Ideology | Yes | Yes |
| Egal. Values > Partisanship | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 471 | 1,049 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.283 | 0.412 |

*Note*: Ideology and partisanship variables are coded such that higher values are more liberal/Democratic. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

Table 3 shows the results of predicting welfare attitudes from prior predispositions and attitudes. The empirical specification is similar to that of Table 2, except it employs welfare policy questions rather than opportunity policy ones. Column 1 indicates that maximal egalitarians in 1992 developed attitudes that were 0.16 units more opposed to welfare reform by 1996 relative to

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minimal egalitarians. While symbolic ideology in 1992 predicts subsequent opposition to welfare reform, partisanship is not significant after accounting for ideology and values, suggesting that voters were not following partisan cues. The muted effects of partisanship perhaps stem from elite Democrats' ambiguous positions on welfare. The second column shows that 1994 egalitarianism, ideology, and partisanship all drive 1996 views on welfare policy. We see similar coefficients on the predispositions across models but a marked increase in the effects of lagged attitudes. This suggests that voters were developing views on the topic between 1992 and 1994 – perhaps due to the rising salience of the issue as a component of the Republican's Contract with America in 1994. In each model, values play a major role in the development of 1996 welfare attitudes, but we cannot say that the effect is greater than that of ideology or partisanship at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

Of course, other values such as hard work and individualism surely influence welfare attitudes along with predispositions such as racial group attitudes and external factors such as racialized media coverage (Gilens 1996). I account for one of these factors in Appendix Table F.5 by showing that the results hold after controlling for racial group attitudes. At a minimum, it appears that egalitarian values offered voters one tool with which they could develop attitudes towards welfare policy in the 1990s.

### *Transgender policies*

Although debates around transgender issues have existed for decades, they became increasingly salient in the 2010s. President Obama signed Executive Order 13672 in 2014, which prevented discrimination on the basis of gender identity in federal hiring and government contracting. In 2016, his administration directed public schools to permit transgender students to use bathrooms corresponding to their gender identities and reversed the ban on transgender people openly serving in the military. In 2017, the Trump administration reinstated the ban, in 2021, the Biden administration revoked Trump's ban renewals, and in 2025, the Trump administration once again reinstated the ban. These questions have also arisen in state politics, as North Carolina famously passed a law in 2016 requiring individuals to use the bathroom corresponding with the sex listed on their birth certificate. The law produced outcry from activists and corporations, and the state partially repealed the law. In recent years, policy fights have arisen over gender reassignment surgeries for minors and participation by transgender individuals on women's sports teams.

During this period, transgender rights became a core tenet of the Democratic Party's platform. In the 2012 platform, a single sentence mentions gender identity as one of many dimensions along which the party opposes discrimination. The issue becomes more prominent in the 2016 platform, with two subsections relating to LGBT rights and references to particular issues (for example, transgender individuals being denied service at restaurants). In the 2020 platform, not only is there a section on LGBTQ+ rights, but policy questions relating to transgender people and gender identity appear in the sections on the military, immigration, education, employment, housing discrimination, criminal justice, homelessness, and hate crimes, among others. In short, transgender policy goes from a single sentence in the 2012 platform to infusing almost every policy domain in the 2020 platform.

Figure 3 shows that newspaper coverage of these issues rose exponentially from 2010 to 2016 before tapering off. While discussions of the terms transgender and bathroom in tandem have subsided relative to their 2016 peak, most of these terms in 2022 are near or past their 2016–2017 highs. The 2016–2017 coverage peak reflects the media shining attention on an issue that had previously received little coverage, but the tapering off in media coverage should not lead one to conclude that the issue also peaked in salience in the electorate at that time. Rather, Google Search Trends indicates that the most commonly searched phrase with 'transgender' between 2010 and 2022 is 'transgender' + 'meaning', indicating that people are attempting to learn what the meaning of transgenderism is. Figure 4, showing search trends for those terms over time, reveals steadily

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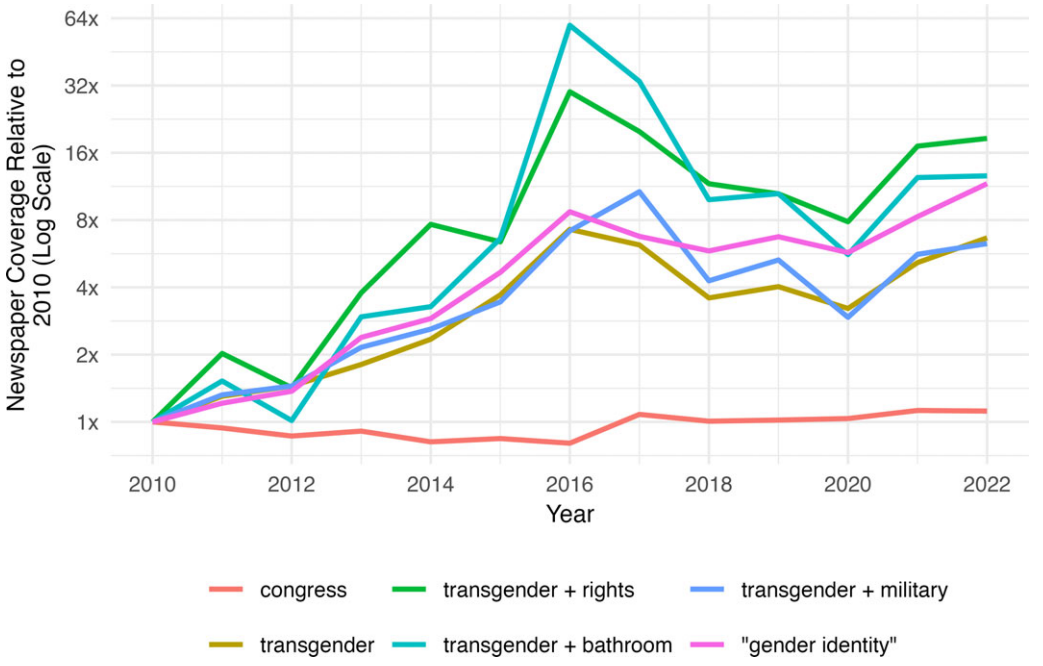


**Figure 3.** Newspaper frequency of different transgender-related terms by year from newspapers.com relative to 2010 (see Figure 2 for methodology).

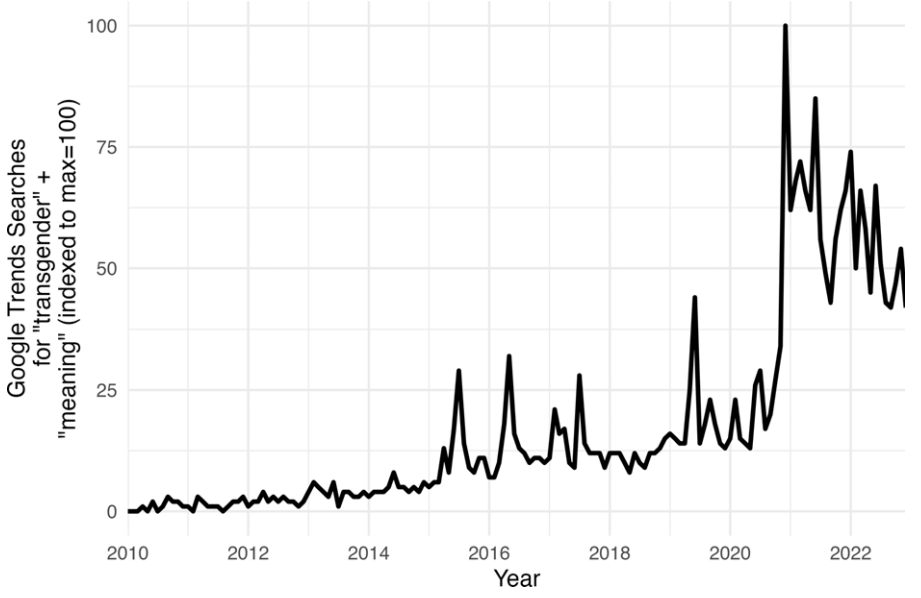


**Figure 4.** Google Search trends by month for 'transgender' + 'meaning'.

increasing traffic for the search, with significant spikes in 2021 and 2022 relative to past years. This suggests that the public is increasingly learning about these issues.

It appears that transgender issues were a quickly emerging policy domain during the 2010s and one that Americans were still learning about. This offers a prime opportunity for traditional values

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**Table 4.** Relationship between values and future views on transgender policy

| | *Dependent variable:* |
|---|---|
| | Trans. Policy Index (2020) |
| Traditional Values (2016) | 0.295* (0.023) |
| Egalitarian Values (2016, Reversed) | 0.106* (0.024) |
| Ideology (2016) | 0.121* (0.026) |
| Partisanship (2016) | 0.099* (0.016) |
| Trans. Bathroom (2016) | 0.349* (0.013) |
| Trad. Values > Ideology | Yes* |
| Trad. Values > Partisanship | Yes* |
| Egal. Values > Ideology | No |
| Egal. Values > Partisanship | Yes |
| Observations | 2,691 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.572 |

*Note*: Ideology and partisanship variables are coded such that higher values are more conservative/Republican. The egalitarianism variable is reverse-coded such that higher values indicate lower degrees of egalitarianism. * indicates $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed tests).

(that is, opposing new lifestyles and changes in traditional gender roles) and egalitarian values (that is, treating all people equally before the law) to drive attitudes on these policies. I test whether these values, along with ideology, partisanship, and transgender policy attitudes, all measured in 2016, influence transgender policy attitudes in 2020. The ANES asks two questions with respect to transgender policy. The first asks whether transgender people should be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice (2016 and 2020), and the second asks whether they should be allowed to serve in the military (2020 only).

Table 4 shows the results. Traditional values are the largest driver of transgender policy attitudes in 2020 out of all four predispositions, even after accounting for lagged views. The coefficient is larger than that of egalitarian values, ideology, and partisanship in each model at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. This suggests that if we compare two otherwise identical voters in terms of egalitarianism, ideology, partisanship, and attitudes towards transgender people in bathrooms in 2016, a maximal traditionalist in 2016 would end up 1.5 response options more anti-transgender on the bathroom question in 2020 (for example, feels very strongly that transgender people should use the bathroom of their birth gender) compared to a minimal traditionalist (for example, landing between feels 'a little strong' and 'moderately strong' on the question). Similarly, the maximal traditionalist would, on average, respond 2 points more opposed to transgender individuals serving in the military relative to the minimal traditionalist (for example, oppose a moderate amount versus neither favour nor oppose). These effect sizes are quite meaningful given that we have already controlled for the respondents' attitudes towards transgender bathroom policies in 2016. While egalitarianism also influences attitudes on transgender policy, it does so at rates that are comparable to ideology and partisanship.

One possibility is that welfare reform and transgender policy issues constitute the most likely causes for the effects of values since they are 'easy' policies for politicians to connect to values such as traditionalism, individualism, and egalitarianism. However, politicians can make these connections even on technically complex and 'hard' legislation, as they did on the Affordable Care Act with egalitarianism and freedom. Lee and Culpepper (n.d.) show that egalitarian values are one of the strongest correlates of voters' policy attitudes on the more complex topic of financial regulation. In sum, it appears that values are a key tool for voters to develop opinions on new issues, making them a central component of voters' belief systems.

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## Discussion

The evidence presented is consistent with a story in which values drive the development of voters' policy attitudes. Of course, since we cannot randomly assign voters to hold different values, we cannot declare that values definitively cause issue stances. However, we can consider which alternative stories are ruled out based on the evidence presented in this article and which stories remain. Panel studies improve over their cross-sectional counterparts because they follow the logic that cause precedes effect. They also allow us to explore within-individual shifts in values and issue stances, reducing the risk of omitted variable bias. The causal conclusions of this article are consistent with experimental evidence showing that value frames shift issue stances (Feinberg and Willer 2015; Nelson and Garst 2005).

Despite these improvements, there are two other accounts that could preclude causal interpretation of the results. One is 'reverse causality'. That is, perhaps voters first develop issue stances and then use them to inform their values. While this is an important concern when studying the effect of higher-level concepts on each other (for example, the effects of values on partisanship), standard cognitive models posit that individuals use general concepts to make sense of particulars rather than the reverse (Conover and Feldman 1984). In other words, it is less plausible that a voter's views on education spending exogenously change and that attitude shift influences her egalitarian values. Thus, as we might expect, all of the existing work using panel studies to test the relationship between values and issues finds that values drive issue attitudes but issue attitudes do *not* drive values (Goren 2013; McCann 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1993). For the sake of robustness, I explore the possibility of reverse causality using structural equation models incorporating lagged values and policy variables along with controls for partisanship and ideology, and I find no evidence that policy attitudes drive future values.[13]

The second, more serious concern is that we have not fully accounted for time-varying omitted variable bias. This article tests symbolic ideology and partisanship (along with demographics) as alternative time-varying drivers of issue attitudes. However, it is possible that changes in other core predispositions are driving issue attitudes, and once these variables are accounted for, values do not actually drive attitude change. Perhaps the most likely alternative driver of issue attitudes is effects towards groups such as gays and lesbians, blacks, or the poor. For example, perhaps respondents' shifts in culturally orthodox policy attitudes are driven by evaluations of gays and lesbians rather than traditional values. In Appendix Section F, I use the ANES data to test this possibility. It appears that group effects play a major role in driving issue attitudes – the coefficient on group effect is larger than that of values in most specifications, and the difference between the two is significant in half of the specifications. Nonetheless, the values coefficients remain statistically and substantively significant after accounting for the effects of group affect. Subsequent scholarship should dive more deeply into the interrelationships between values and group effects. Another possibility is that voters rely on operational ideology rather than symbolic ideology in developing issue stances. Appendix Section G displays models controlling for preferences over the size of government from the ANES and finds that the main results hold.[14] Besides group effects and operational ideology, though, there may be other omitted variables (for example, shifts in premises about the efficacy of government) that drive these attitude

[13]Testing the eight possible cross-lagged panels in the ANES, the coefficient of lagged policy on future values is positive in five and negative in the other three, suggesting little meaningful relationship. The GSS cross-lagged models produce unstable coefficient estimates due to non-convergence. Insofar as any statistical relationship appears, it likely stems from measurement error in the value that is correlated with measurement error in the policy index or some omitted variable (for example, a shift in group-level affects or racial resentment).

[14]Many scholars measure operational ideology as an aggregation of policy stances. Those who take this view may consider the policy indices in the main models as measures of operational ideology, in which case the concern that operational ideology drives issue stances would be circular. A second approach measures operational ideology through trans-situational questions about the role of government (Goren 2013; Yeung and Quek 2024). The appendix models test the effects of operational ideology using this second approach.

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changes. Nonetheless, given that the results are robust to the inclusion of the most important predispositions in the public opinion literature, incorporating secondary predispositions is less and less likely to explain away the findings.[15]

Besides these concerns with causal identification, there may be other questions regarding the interpretation of the various predispositions. For example, it could be that the traditionalism and egalitarianism measures are tracking substantively equivalent content to the ideology measure. If so, then the finding that values rather than ideology drives issue stances could be reduced to a tautology. However, Appendix Section I shows that there are important differences between the values and ideology measures. While the correlations between values and ideology range between 0.35 and 0.54, there are meaningful differences between the two concepts. A *majority* of symbolic conservatives endorse egalitarianism, and only a quarter of conservatives both a) endorse traditionalism and b) do not endorse egalitarianism. Even among those who identify as 'extremely conservative', less than a majority endorse anti-egalitarianism (and, of course, the proportion supporting both anti-egalitarianism and traditionalism is even smaller). These results should reassure us that these values measures are not merely tracking the MSC concept of ideology as resistance to change and acceptance of inequality in particular.

Finally, the data used in this article employs data from US politics, but the theory therein ought to transport beyond American borders. I also test the theory using panel surveys from Germany, which ask voters to rate basic human values (Schwartz 1992). In Appendix Section J, I find that these values consistently drive the development of issue stances even after accounting for partisanship and ideology.[16]

## Conclusion

Given the importance of voters' issue attitudes to American democracy, it is vital to better understand the sources of these beliefs. This article employs panel studies to show that political values are a major driver of these attitudes. Individuals' values drive changes in policy attitudes over time. Additionally, as new political issues come to the fore, values help voters to develop opinions on these issues. These findings run counter to the position that voters' attitudes are primarily structured by partisanship (Achen and Bartels 2016; Lenz 2012; Barber and Pope 2019). Partisanship often matters, but voters' issue attitudes are also driven by voters' political values—and much of the time, these values matter more than partisanship. Furthermore, while left-right ideology is a useful marker of voters' beliefs, it misses key variations in voters' beliefs about the world. Voters' values inform their issue stances above and beyond whether voters consider themselves 'liberal' or 'conservative'.

Future research should build on the analyses developed in this article to further test the causal role of values on issue stances. This study analyzed two values and a particular set of domain-specific policies. As several scholars have noted, however, values operate as structures of beliefs (Schwartz 1992; Jacoby 2006). Voters may place high weight on most values – indeed, that is what is part of what makes them 'values' in the first place. As such, additional research is necessary to analyze whether rankings of voters' values drive issue stances across a wide range of policy attitudes rather than only domain-specific ones. Furthermore, while measurement invariance tends to hold across these values across racial and gender lines, the cross-sectional relationships between values and issue stances vary along these demographic lines (Saavedra Cisneros et al.

[15]One other causal concern is that the models control for values, ideology, and partisanship simultaneously; however, if partisanship is a consequence of values and ideology, we would introduce post-treatment bias. In Appendix Section H, I rerun the models without partisanship and find substantively identical results for values and ideology.

[16]While the German models generally show that values play a larger role than ideology, a handful of specifications show that ideology plays a larger role than values.

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2023).[17] Thus, the average relationships estimated in this article may vary based on individual-level demographics.

It appears that values assist voters in fulfilling the role broadly ascribed to 'ideology' in the study of public opinion – a coherent system of beliefs by which voters can make sense of politics. While symbolic left-right ideology offers one such tool, it is hard for many voters to employ and fails to fully capture voters' beliefs (Ellis and Stimson 2012; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). This is not to undermine the role of symbolic ideology, of course. Rather, even if voters do not use the concepts of conservatism and liberalism in the same ways that elites do, this does *not* constitute evidence that voters do not think about politics in structured and stable ways. We can improve our understanding of 'ideology' more broadly by considering the central role that values play in voters' belief systems. Voters do not need to have well-formulated opinions on every policy issue that arises in political debate. Instead, they can apply their beliefs about the ways in which society should be organized to particular policy debates.

**Supplementary material.** The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123425000183

**Data availability statement.** Replication data for this article can be found in the Harvard Dataverse at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/7GYE2M.

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