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From Big Ben to the Breakfast Table: Basic Values and Political Attitudes Among Politicians and the Public.

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Author Biography:

Dr James Weinberg is Lecturer in Political Behaviour at the University of Sheffield, where he currently holds a three-year Leverhulme Fellowship to investigate how politicians govern in an age of distrust. His research interests span the fields of political psychology and youth politics, and his research on topics such as citizenship education in England and the psychology of political success has been published in leading journals including the British Journal of Political Science, British Journal of Politics and International Relations, British Educational Research Journal, the Journal of Education Policy, Political Studies, Parliamentary Affairs and in a recent monograph with Bristol University Press. In May 2020, James was elected to the executive committee of the UK Political Studies Association (PSA). He is also a prior recipient of the PSA's Walter Bagehot prize for the best doctoral research in the fields of government and public policy completed in 2018 and in 2016, James co-founded the PSA's Political Psychology specialist group. The group continues to flourish and welcomes new academic and non-academic members alike. James completed his PhD in Politics at the University of Sheffield, his MA in Political Science at the University of Manchester, and his BA in History at the University of Oxford. James started his career as a qualified secondary school teacher in West London.

Abstract:

Representative democracy relies on those who are willing and able to put themselves forward for political office. Yet at the same time, elections involve a drastic transfer of democratic power from the many to the few. Elections decide 'who' has that power, but they do not necessarily decide 'what' is done with it. The latter may well depend on the personal proclivities, desires and predispositions of those who seek a political career in the first place. Here, existing research suggests that political aspirants not only form a tiny minority of wider populations, but they are distinct in their personality characteristics by comparison to those they govern or seek to govern. Reviewing and building upon this literature, this chapter draws on original data gathered from political elites and members of the UK public to understand how the unique psychologies of politicians might also precipitate and/or explain differences and similarities between their political opinions and those of the citizens they govern. Drawing on dynamic theories of attitude formation that acknowledge the dual influence of psychological, partisan and socio-contextual factors, this chapter finds (a) psychological predispositions (particularly personality characteristics such as basic values) share meaningful relationships with people's political attitudes, (b) that politicians and candidates differ to the public in their basic values, (c) basic values have a stronger effect upon political attitudes among elites than masses, but (d) in any case, the explanatory potential of a predisposition model is improved by accounting for partisan conflict and socio-demographic factors.

Key words:

Politicians – Basic Values – Political Opinion – Representation – Attitudes

Politicians are central to representative democracy. In all of its formal and informal guises – liberal, authoritarian, populist, consensus, majoritarian – democracy relies on and is shaped by those who stand for political office. Among elite groups in modern society, politicians hold unique power in their ability to achieve far-reaching legislative outcomes with ramifications that stretch throughout different tiers of governance in any single democracy as well as beyond its borders. In local, national and increasingly supra-national democratic parliaments and assemblies, politicians formulate and scrutinise policy directives; they hold executives to account and either grant or withhold support for sitting governments; they shape the tenor of political discourse and debate through discursive cues broadcast in print and news media; and they contribute to the incremental evolution of state institutions (see also Best and Vogel, 2018). Above all, politicians take on the formidable task of 'representing' the sovereign people at the heart of a democracy.

It is in the trappings of this principal-agent relationship that the importance of 'politicians as people' becomes starkly apparent. The institutions of democratic representation, elections in particular, involve a drastic transfer of democratic power from the many to the few. Elections decide 'who' has that power, but they do not necessarily decide 'what' is done with it. In the absence of imperative legal mandates, election candidates and elected representatives are judged according to their values, opinions and ideological discourse – elsewhere referred to as 'political fictions' (see Kelsen, 1992). Indeed, a constructivist turn in the study of representation focuses specifically on how political actors within and without formal parliaments and legislatures make 'representative claims' on behalf of real or imagined communities of interest (e.g. Saward, 2006, 2010; Näsström, 2015). In this sense, politicians not only respond to popular will, but they have the potential to shape it and bring broader palettes of public opinion into formal political debate that may, or may not, fit within the normative and ideological boundaries of 'being democratic'. For those students or concerned observers of the degenerative slide to mainstream populism and dog-whistle 'claim-making' seen in western democracies (for an overview, see Dean and Maiguashca, 2020), the psychology of politicians has taken on new meaning and urgency.

This chapter does not focus, then, on the institutional mechanisms by which democracy is enacted, but rather the psychological characteristics of the people who are deemed eligible to act in citizens' best interests. Over the last decade, political scientists and political psychologists have made significant headway in this field by acquiring and analysing self-report data on the psychological predispositions of politicians in comparative contexts. In the US, Canada, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Belgium and the UK, research has shown that politics is a job few 'ordinary' people

care to enter (Best, 2011; Caprara et al., 2010; Hanania, 2017; Norgaard and Klemmensen, 2018; Scott and Medeiros, 2020; Weinberg, 2020a). On personality characteristics such as traits and basic values, elected politicians (as well as those who stand for election) differ in a myriad of ways to those who elect them as well as each other when divided by party, gender, and ethnicity. Psychological predispositions such as personality characteristics also influence who climbs the greasy pole of electoral politics to enter executive office (Joly et al., 2018; Weinberg, 2019) as well as how politicians act out a variety of legislative behaviours (Weinberg, 2020b).

Whilst these findings raise a host of practical and theoretical questions about the conduct of democratic leadership and the accessibility of politics as a vocation, there has been relatively little attempt to understand how the unique psychologies of politicians might also precipitate and/or explain differences or similarities between their own political opinions and those of the citizens they govern. This research agenda matters for our collective understanding of the psychology of democracy and, by implication, for the successes and failures of democratic representation. If governor and governed fundamentally disagree in their political preferences, then why? If they do not, then why not? The rest of this chapter addresses this dilemma through theoretical engagement with existing studies of public opinion and personality in politics (specifically focusing on basic human values), and through empirical analysis of original data collected from over 900 elected politicians and unsuccessful political candidates (Table 1). This analysis shows that elites and masses (to use common parlance from political research) in UK politics do differ substantively in their political opinions and that these differences can be partly explained by dynamic models of individual preference formation that account for the effects of psychological predispositions as well as environmental factors.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (percentages rounded to the nearest whole number).[1]

	Members of Parliament (N = 62)	Councillors (N = 415)	Unsuccessful Parliamentary Candidates (N = 134)	Unsuccessful Council Candidates (N = 331)	British Public – ESS 9 (N = 2204)
Gender					
Male	65	62	71	68	45
Female	35	38	29	32	55
Age					
18-30	4	4	9	18	13
31-45	23	18	16	28	24
46-60	37	34	45	27	27
60+	36	44	31	27	36
Education (highest qualification)					
Postgraduate Degree	31	31	31	34	13
Undergraduate Degree	57	47	52	43	20
A-Levels/Vocational Diploma	8	14	11	15	25
Apprenticeship	4	2	2	2	8
None of the above	1	6	5	6	34
Religion					
Christian	60	52	44	40	14
Non-Christian	5	6	7	10	1
Non-Religious	35	42	49	50	85
Party					
Labour	40	32	16	24	37
Conservative	27	17	8	10	42
Liberal Democrat	14	30	19	22	8
Green	< 1	7	20	21	2
Scottish National Party	8	< 1	0	< 1	4
UK Independence Party	< 1	< 1	7	4	3
Other	9	12	30	18	3

[1] Participants were identified through the Democracy Club database of political candidates, which contains details of all candidates that have stood in a UK election since 2010 and whom made their contact details available to the Electoral Commission at the time of standing. Surveys were fielded online in early 2019 and attitudinal questions were selected from the 2018 (ninth) round of the European Social Survey for elite-mass comparisons. Comparative data for the British public was downloaded here:
https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/

Political attitudes among elites and masses

In observing the democratic linkages between elites and masses, there has been a tendency to seek causal relationships between the public policy preferences of each. Put simply, who leads and who follows when it comes to defining the political zeitgeist? On one hand, a top-down approach to opinion formation has long contended that elites share a broad governing consensus that is transferred to a 'largely passive, apathetic and ill-informed' public (Dye and Ziegler, 1978, p.6; see also Federico, 2015; Johnston et al., 2017). On the other hand, a democratic-responsiveness model suggests that elected representatives act as delegates who follow the opinions of mass publics (for an extended discussion, see Page and Shapiro, 1983). Both models have been used to explain similar structures in elite and mass opinions: one accounting for the dissemination of elite preferences and the other suggesting sensitivity to public views by electorally attentive politicians.

Unsurprisingly, longitudinal studies of elite and mass opinion tend to support both of these theoretical (and tautologically interlinked) propositions. In the US, Cunningham and Moore (1997) carried out time-series analysis of opinion polls conducted with American members of Congress and voters every four years between 1974 and 1994. Focusing specifically on foreign policy attitudes, Cunningham and Moore note that elites and masses share similar patterns of opinion change over time whilst holding and maintaining very different opinions at any individual time point. Moreover, the time-lagged effects of elite and mass opinions linked to the attitude changes of each other were significantly weaker than the lagged effects over time of each group's own prior opinions. Of possibly more interest, elite *perceptions* of mass opinion over the time series were substantially different from *actual* mass opinion across four out of five issues polled. These nuanced dynamics of elite and mass opinion have been studied in greater detail in comparative contexts. In France, for example, Tiberj and Kerrouche (2013) find that the distance between MPs and voters changes according to the hegemony of the opinion and its issue domain (whether social, cultural or economic), that MPs in certain parties are more alienated from public opinion than others (particularly those on the ideological fringe), and that MPs are more polarised in their political opinions than voters (see also Jost, 2006; Zaller, 1992). Taken together, this research base points to something more complex than either explanation offered by leader-follower models of representative democracy.

For the purpose of this chapter, elected politicians and unsuccessful political candidates in the UK (surveyed in early 2019) were asked to complete attitudinal items that had been fielded to the British public in the previous round of the European Social Survey only months beforehand. Table 2 compares these subsamples across 19 survey items that cover two diffuse and *affectively* oriented political opinions (trust in politics and satisfaction with democracy) and three specific and *cognitively* oriented political opinions (on immigration, climate action, and inequality). The data show interesting yet nuanced similarities and differences between the political opinions of British politicians, candidates and the public. Elected politicians generally have higher levels of trust in politics than the public, especially regarding the European Parliament, the legal system, political parties and politicians themselves. However, the same cannot be said of unsuccessful candidates, who are equally if not more distrustful of political actors and institutions than the general public. At the same time, elected politicians and candidates are, on average, considerably less satisfied with UK democracy and domestic public services than the public (whose satisfaction remains lukewarm at best). On specific policy issues, politicians and candidates are both considerably more liberal than the public – at an aggregate level – in their attitudes towards the cultural and economic benefits of immigration, action on climate change, and inequality.

Table 2 also reports the average distances between the self-reported attitudes of Labour and Conservative Party supporters in each subsample.[2] As anticipated by theories of elective affinity (Jost et al., 2009) and the congruency principle (Caprara and Zimbardo, 2004) – which stipulate psychological and sociological determinants of partisanship at elite and mass levels – these differences run in the same direction across all of the subsamples reported here. For example, Labour Party politicians, candidates and voters are less trusting of and less satisfied with domestic politics (and its associated institutions and actors) than their Conservative Party counterparts, but much more supportive of immigration, climate action, and social equality. These latter differences confirm longstanding comparative research on the organising principle of the left-right divide in elective democratic politics. Put simply, left-wing preferences for greater equality and change tend to conflict with right-wing preferences for social hierarchy and less social change (e.g. Jost et al., 2003; Benoit and Laver, 2006; Federico, 2015).

Within subsamples, the average distance between the substantive issue positions of Labour and Conservative elites (politicians *and* candidates) is much larger than between corresponding

[2] To avoid confusion and in order to simplify the analysis, only the two main parties in British politics from the left and right are compared.

voters in the general public. Empirically, these findings support prior research showing greater polarisation of opinion among elites than publics around the Western world (e.g. Jost, 2006; Sood and Iyengar, 2014). Theoretically, the data also support seminal studies of attitude formation that suggest stronger ideological coherence and self-presentation among elites than voters, which is generally attributed to comparably higher levels of education, political interest, and political expertise (Converse, 1964; Sniderman et al., 1991; Zaller, 1992). In a similar vein, these findings add empirical nuance to John May's (1973) classic descriptions of *leaders as extremists* and *deviants*. May argued that party leaders (1) hold stronger ideological views than those lower down the party hierarchy because they are most likely to benefit from ideological conflict (i.e. '*leaders as extremists*'), and (2) are more right-wing than the median voter by virtue of gravitating to political leadership from positions of high social status (i.e. '*leaders as deviant rightists*'). On the first of these assumptions, the data presented in Table 1 suggest that UK citizens and elites *do* share patterns of opinion formation within samples but *diverge considerably* between samples. On the second assumption, however, the data contradict May's proposition. Instead, UK politicians appear to be *deviant liberals*. This chapter now turns to the question of why these differences exist and how they might form.

Table 2. Diffuse and specific political opinions among elected politicians, unsuccessful political candidates and the British public.

	Members of Parliament (N = 62)		**Councillors (N = 415)**		**Unsuccessful Parliamentary Candidates (N = 134)**		**Unsuccessful Council Candidates (N = 331)**		**British Public – ESS 9 (N = 2204)**	
	Mean (SD)	Con-Lab distance	Mean (SD)	Con-Lab distance	Mean (SD)	Con-Lab distance	Mean (SD)	Con-Lab distance	Mean (SD)	Con-Lab distance
Trust										
How much do you personally trust each the following? (0-10, where 10 = completely trust)										
…the UK Parliament.	**4.85** (2.59)	1.36	**4.74** (2.26)	.11	3.91 (2.59)	.03	4.19 (2.55)	.86	4.21 (2.51)	**.72**
…the legal system.	**6.35** (2.08)	-.11	**6.35** (2.12)	.39	5.41 (2.66)	-1.14	5.86 (2.43)	**1.59**	5.72 (2.44)	.17
…the police.	**6.05** (1.95)	.33	**6.23** (2.01)	**.81**	**5.02** (2.38)	-.62	**5.68** (2.40)	**1.76**	6.58 (2.39)	.13
… political parties.	**4.18** (1.94)	.75	**4.13** (2.01)	-.19	**2.89** (2.08)	-.92	3.65 (2.14)	.59	3.50 (2.24)	**.27**
…the European Parliament.	**4.95** (2.54)	**-2.94**	**4.97** (2.78)	**-3.89**	**4.48** (2.85)	**-3.68**	**4.57** (2.88)	**-1.78**	3.39 (2.52)	**-1.01**
…the United Nations.	5.5 (2.5)	**-2.25**	**5.79** (2.38)	**-1.66**	5.21 (2.73)	-1.75	**5.38** (2.59)	**-1.18**	5.07 (2.48)	.04
…politicians.	**4.84** (2.02)	.38	**4.60** (2.16)	-.45	3.21 (2.36)	-1.06	**3.78** (2.24)	.59	3.43 (2.31)	**.50**
Satisfaction										
On the whole, how satisfied are you with the following? (0-10, where 10 = completely satisfied)										
… the present state of the economy.	**3.40** (2.55)	**4.89**	**3.40** (2.42)	**4.59**	**3.10** (2.53)	**4.79**	**2.92** (2.45)	**4.46**	4.65 (2.14)	**1.28**
… the performance of the current UK government.	**1.56** (2.19)	**3.83**	**1.30** (1.87)	**3.12**	**0.96** (1.72)	**2.71**	**1.16** (1.88)	**4.11**	3.75 (2.40)	**1.81**
… the way democracy works in the UK.	**3.13** (2.42)	**2.75**	**3.26** (2.48)	**1.54**	**2.27** (2.32)	.89	**2.79** (2.29)	**2.01**	4.99 (2.45)	**.99**

… the state of education in the UK.	**3.84**	**2.75**	**3.70**	**2.25**	**3.23**	**1.88**	**3.37**	**3.38**	5.53	**.28**
	(2.00)		(2.16)		(2.27)		(2.40)		(2.14)	
… the state of healthcare in the UK.	**4.47**	**2.94**	**4.13**	**2.43**	**3.75**	**2.69**	**3.97**	**2.95**	5.73	**.72**
	(1.96)		(2.43)		(2.56)		(2.52)		(2.40)	
Immigration										
Would you say it is generally bad or good for the UK economy that people come to live here from other countries? (0-10, where 10 = good)	**8.06**	**-1.39**	**7.77**	**-2.29**	**7.74**	**-2.12**	**7.74**	**-1.37**	5.89	**-.61**
	(1.74)		(1.94)		(2.18)		(2.09)		(2.42)	
Would you say the UK's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people who come to live here from other countries? (0-10, where 10 = enriched)	**8.15**	**-2.28**	**7.84**	**-2.88**	**7.66**	**-3.67**	**7.78**	**-2.08**	5.88	**-1.21**
	(1.87)		(2.19)		(2.72)		(2.34)		(2.64)	
Climate action*										
To what extent are you in favour or against the following policies in the UK to reduce climate change? (5-point Likert scale, where 5 = Strongly in Favour)										
Increasing taxes on fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal.	**4.02**	**-.92**	**3.91**	**-1.58**	**3.85**	**-1.55**	**3.98**	**-.99**	2.87	-.09
	(1.05)		(1.19)		(1.47)		(1.27)		(1.16)	
Using public money to subsidise renewable energy such as wind and solar power.	**4.44**	**-1.08**	**4.35**	**-1.34**	**4.18**	**-1.53**	**4.34**	**-1.16**	3.73	**-.17**
	(0.84)		(1.02)		(1.32)		(1.08)		(1.05)	
A law banning the sale of the least energy efficient household appliances.	**3.94**	**-1.22**	**3.97**	**-1.03**	**3.70**	-.96	**3.95**	**-.84**	3.44	-.01
	(1.10)		(1.14)		(1.41)		(1.16)		(1.14)	
Inequality										
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (5-point Likert scale)										
Society is fair when hard-working people earn more than others. (0-5, *where 5 = Strongly Disagree)*	**3.27**	**-2.72**	**3.57**	**-2.34**	**3.60**	**-2.42**	**3.51**	**-2.32**	2.20	**-.18**
	(1.48)		(1.33)		(1.44)		(1.38)		(0.80)	
Society is fair when income and wealth are equally distributed. (0-5, *where 5 = Strongly Agree)*	3.44	**-1.19**	**3.74**	**-1.59**	**3.69**	**-1.97**	**3.75**	**-1.85**	3.17	**-.62**
	(1.24)		(1.21)		(1.29)		(1.24)		(1.13)	

Note: coefficients in bold indicate statistically significant differences between a specific 'political' sample (i.e. MPs, councillors, unsuccessful parliamentary and council candidates) and the ESS public sample ($p<.05$ or less) **OR** statistically significant differences between Labour and Conservative (left and right-wing) supporters within samples ($p<.05$ or less). Mean differences and associated p-values are calculated using independent samples t-tests with Bonferroni corrections. Standard deviations were not pooled to account for non-homogeneity of variance across subsamples. Negative Con-Lab distances indicate higher mean scores for Labour Party supporters, whereas positive Con-Lab distances indicate higher mean scores for Conservative Party supporters.

**Questions about climate action were not included in the ninth round of the ESS. Instead, public attitudes on climate action are calculated using data collected by the previous eighth (2016) round of the ESS (N=1557). These elite-mass comparisons are not robust to period effects on mass attitudes between 2016 and early 2019 when elite data were collected. These comparisons should be read as indicative only.

Theories of attitude formation

For many decades, political psychologists have investigated those salient characteristics that may anchor, cause or moderate attitude formation and political behaviours. They have sought, in particular, to move beyond a Rational Choice Theory (RCT) of action, which typically draws on notions of utility maximisation and value expectancy to suggest that people form opinions (and later act upon them) that will optimise their own economic satisfaction and personal success (e.g. Binmore, 2009; Opp, 2017). In contrast, a 'Predisposition Model' in political psychology is concerned with delineating and testing the 'primary ingredients' of public opinion (see Kinder, 1998). These 'ingredients' include individuals' personality characteristics, ideologies, group attachments and social identity, genetic make-up, and even evolution (for extended discussions, please see Huddy et al., 2013). Taken individually or together, these hidden phenomena provide blueprints by which to understand when and why citizens are predisposed to favour one policy, one candidate, one party, or even one political opinion over another. For example, personality characteristics have now been used to explain political behaviours such as vote choice (Schoen and Schumann 2007), party affiliation (Gerber et al., 2010), ideological self-placement (Jost, 2006), candidate preferences (Barbaranelli et al., 2007), as well as public policy preferences (Riemann et al., 1993).

The Predisposition Model does, however, suffer from an often generalised assumption that citizens exist in a vacuum. In reality, predispositions only become meaningful and actionable in specific contexts. As McGraw (2000, p.821) argues, '[t]he social context in political cognition research is largely ignored, even though citizens learn and think about the political world in complex environments.' At the same time, the mechanisms by which predispositions are translated from generic psychological principle to contextual application are not straightforward. The former often do not map neatly onto the messy and complex world of political reality and, as such, citizens require heuristics (or 'shortcuts' in processing information) to achieve cognitive or affective harmony between predispositions and political opinions or preferences (e.g. Feldman, 2003; Hatemi and McDermott, 2012). For this reason, there is merit to be found in conjoining top-down (e.g. elite cues) and bottom-up (e.g. individual personality) approaches to understanding political preferences.

The reconciliation of these theoretical and empirical approaches is captured in a 'Partisan Conflict-Predisposition Model' (see Leeper and Slothuus, 2014, p.132). From this perspective,

political parties (and the competition between them) facilitate the application of predispositions to political contexts by structuring the alternatives available to voters. Put another way, '[c]itizens can overcome informational shortfalls about politics, not because they (mysteriously) can simplify public choices effectively, but because these choices are systematically simplified for them' (Sniderman, 2000, p.81). Unlike individual politicians and party leaders, who come and go at regular intervals, parties and their associated platforms, symbols and socio-political identities offer long-term bellwethers of political competition by which citizens are activated, mobilised, informed and persuaded (e.g. Lavine et al., 2012). At one step removed, it is citizens' predispositions that attract them to a party in the first place. A powerful congruency principle binds citizens (elites and voters) in partisan blocs; individuals seek and identify congruency between their own predispositions and those of the political 'families' available to them (Caprara et al., 2010; Weinberg, 2020b). This theoretical approach helps to make sense of parallel patterns in attitude formation such as those reported between elites and masses on the left and right of British politics (Table 2).

Similar 'dynamic' models of attitude formation might also help political scientists to understand the enduring differences between the discrete attitudes of political elites and masses. Giving primacy to neither person nor situation – and by implication understanding political attitudes and choices as the combination of individual predispositions as well as situational contexts, experiences and socialisation – it may be possible to determine when and why those with democratic power align or diverge from those on whose behalf they wield it. In terms of socialisation and situation, it is possible, for example, that unsuccessful candidates are less trusting of political institutions and actors than the average citizen because of the emotional rebuff of trying to enter the political world and being found wanting. Conversely, elected politicians may well be more trusting of 'the political' because of the savoir faire acquired in doing the job and seeing behind the curtain. Equally, politicians and candidates may well be less satisfied with the political system and more supportive of specific policy options than the public because of an asymmetry of information afforded by high intensity political participation or, indeed, because they have experienced a system of otherwise opaque decision-making processes. On the flip side, a dynamic model of attitude formation suggests that differences in political attitudes between elites and masses will simultaneously rely on differences in psychological predispositions. It is to one such predisposition, basic values, that this chapter now turns.

Basic values

In operationalising psychological predispositions to explain attitude formation and attitudinal differences between elites and masses, this chapter focuses on individuals' basic values. According to Schwartz (1992), basic values can be summarised as cognitive representations of sought-after, trans-situational targets that act as guiding principles in people's lives. Personality studies in psychology now advance an integrative view of the individual that gives greater attention to values alongside traits (see, for example, Cervone, 2005; McAdams and Pals, 2006; Barenbaum and Winter, 2008). There is growing evidence to suggest that values and traits capture distinct yet complementary data about personality (Saroglou and Munoz-Garcia, 2008; Park-Leduc et al. 2015); people also find their own values more desirable than their traits and express less of a wish to change them (Roccas et al., 2014).

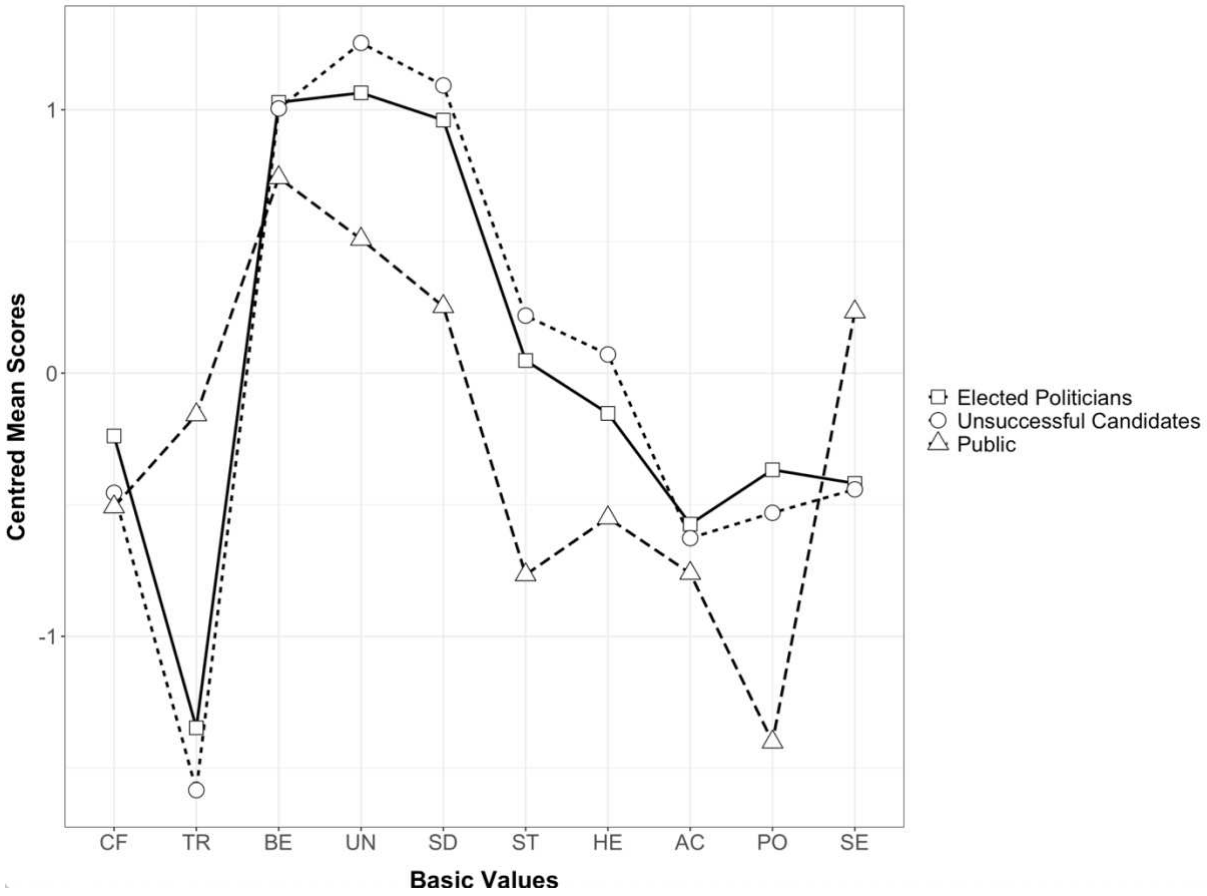
Schwartz's original theory identifies ten basic values that sit within four so-called 'higher-order' values on two orthogonals: Self-Enhancement values (Power, Achievement) oppose Self-Transcendence values (Benevolence, Universalism), and Conservation values (Security, Conformity, Tradition) oppose Openness to Change values (Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-Direction). Openness to Change values emphasise receptivity to change as well as independent thought, feeling and action, whereas Conservation values motivate submissive self-restriction, a desire to maintain stability and the preservation of traditional ideas, practices and customs. Self-Transcendence values encourage the acceptance of others as equals and place importance on regard for others' welfare, while Self-Enhancement values give weight to the pursuit of personal success and dominance over material and human resources.

The closer that values are situated to one another within the circle that encompasses the orthogonals, the greater the level of compatibility between their motivations and by implication it becomes more probable that they can be achieved or expressed through the same sentiments and actions. As values increase in distance around the circle, the greater the level of conflict between them and the more likely it is that the actions and attitudes used to express them will diverge. The content and structure of the Schwartz theory of basic values has been tested and reaffirmed across different socio-demographic and cultural contexts in a long list of studies worldwide (see Cieciuch et al., 2013, p.1216). According to Borg (2019, p.336) '[t]hese theorems have been replicated so many times in so many countries and cultures that they can almost be considered psychological laws' (see also Bilsky et al., 2011).

In politics, basic values have accounted for more variance in voting than personality traits as well as demographic variables such as education, location and income (Caprara et al., 2006). Basic values have also been used to explain mass political attitudes and ideologies in a range of comparative contexts and political systems (Piurko et al., 2011) as well as levels of political activism and participation among different publics (Pacheco and Owen, 2015; Vecchione et al., 2015). At an elite level, unique self-report data on the basic values of MPs have been studied in Italy and the UK (Caprara et al., 2010; Weinberg, 2020b). These studies suggest that (a) basic values contribute to political ambition more so than socio-demographic factors and political opportunity structures, (b) MPs are psychologically distinct from those they govern, (c) politicians differ in their basic values according to gender, age, education and partisanship, but these differences are still smaller than those between MPs and their corresponding socioeconomic and demographic groups in the general population, and (d) congruence between the basic values of political elites and voters occurs to a much greater extent on the Right of British politics than the Left. Attesting to this personality gap between elites and citizens, Figure 1 compares the basic values of elected politicians, unsuccessful political candidates and the public in the UK.

Figure 1. A comparison of basic values among political elites and citizens in the UK.[3]

[3] Politicians and candidates completed the Twenty Item Values Inventory (TwIVI), which is a shortened version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) designed to measure basic values (Schwartz et al., 2001). All PVQs emphasise context-free thinking and contain short verbal portraits of individuals, gender-matched with the respondent. For each portrait, participants respond to the question "How much like you is this person?" using a six-point Likert scale that ranges from 'very much like me' to 'not like me at all'. A similar instrument – the PVQ-21 – was administered to the British public by the ESS. A full comparison of these survey instruments, including convergent and divergent validity, can be found in Sandy et al. (2017). For a full discussion of robustness checks on the data used here, please refer to Weinberg (2020b).



Note: CF – Conformity values; TR – Tradition values; BE – Benevolence values; UN – Universalism values; SD – Self-Direction values; ST – Stimulation values; HE – Hedonism values; AC – Achievement values; PO- Power values; SE – Security values.

In line with existing research, elites and masses in these samples show distinct differences in their basic values. Elected politicians and candidates attribute much more importance to Self-Transcendence and Openness to Change values than the general public, whilst the latter score higher for Conservation values. Elected politicians and unsuccessful candidates also display stronger motivations towards leadership and resource domination (Power values) than the British public. That these differences exist between the public and both elected and unelected candidates reinforces prior conclusions that personality characteristics delineate psychological differences between all those desiring a political career and those who would never contemplate one. Put simply, these data circumscribe the political animal. A small pool of research into elite and mass personality traits (the Big 5 in particular) finds parallel trends in comparative contexts (Best, 2011; Hanania, 2017; Norgaard and Klemmensen, 2018; Scott and Medeiros, 2020).

The focus of this chapter is not, however, the differences between elite and mass basic values per se, but the explanatory potential of these predispositions when it comes to

understanding differences in political attitudes. Existing research suggests that basic values carry powerful importance as central aspects of the self and as behavioural codebooks (e.g. Bardi and Schwartz, 2003; Verplanken and Holland, 2002). Basic values are theorised to predict behaviours and situational preferences through a series of 'linking processes': they can be activated by the external context in which an individual finds themselves (i.e. value activation); they can motivate individuals to reach value-associated goals through planned value-expressive behaviours (i.e. value planning); and they guide an individual's attention to or perception and interpretation of external stimuli (i.e. value guidance). In each case, the strength of these linking processes is heightened for an individual's most important basic values. There is no reason, then, why this same logic should not help to illuminate (a) attitude formation in the context of politics generally, and (b) differences in political attitudes between groups with varying value hierarchies (e.g. elites and masses).

To test the first of these assumptions, Table 3 presents univariate statistics for five attitudinal variables created from items fielded to politicians, candidates and the British public (see Table 2). These aggregate measures of opinion are correlated with all ten of participants' lower order basic values. Bivariate correlations indicate meaningful and theoretically predictable associations between political attitudes and psychological predispositions across four of the five opinion domains. [4] At an aggregate level, Self-Transcendence values (Benevolence and Universalism) are positively associated with support for immigration, climate action and equality, and negatively associated with satisfaction with democracy. The opposite is true of Conservation values (Conformity, Tradition and Security). Only levels of political trust appear to be weakly correlated with participants' basic values.

[4] Participants' mean scores for each basic value have been centred using their average response to all items on the survey in order to correct for individual differences in scale use.

Table 3. Univariate statistics and correlation coefficients for latent political attitudes and basic values.

	N	Mean	SD.	Cronbach alpha	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	CF	TR	BE	UN	SD	ST	HE	AC	PO	SE
(1) Political trust	3016	4.7	1.9	.88	**1**	**.42**	**.39**	X	.02	**.08**	**-.08**	-.01	**.09**	**-.05**	**-.04**	**-.04**	**.12**	**.08**	**-.05**
(2) Satisfaction with democracy	3065	4.3	2	.84		**1**	**-.12**	X	**-.43**	**.09**	**.32**	**-.21**	**-.36**	**-.32**	**-.24**	**-.14**	**.08**	**-.15**	**.21**
(3) Immigration	3104	6.4	2.4	.86			**1**	X	**.27**	**-.11**	**-.35**	**.16**	**.42**	**.22**	**.22**	**.09**	**.04**	**.12**	**-.28**
(4) Climate action	2390	3.6	.94	.69				**1**	X	**-.14**	**-.38**	**.13**	**.45**	**.24**	**.20**	**.06**	-.03	.02	**-.28**
(5) Inequality	3124	3.0	.98	.54					**1**	-.01	**-.28**	**.22**	**.37**	**.22**	**.19**	**.11**	**-.10**	**.13**	**-.19**

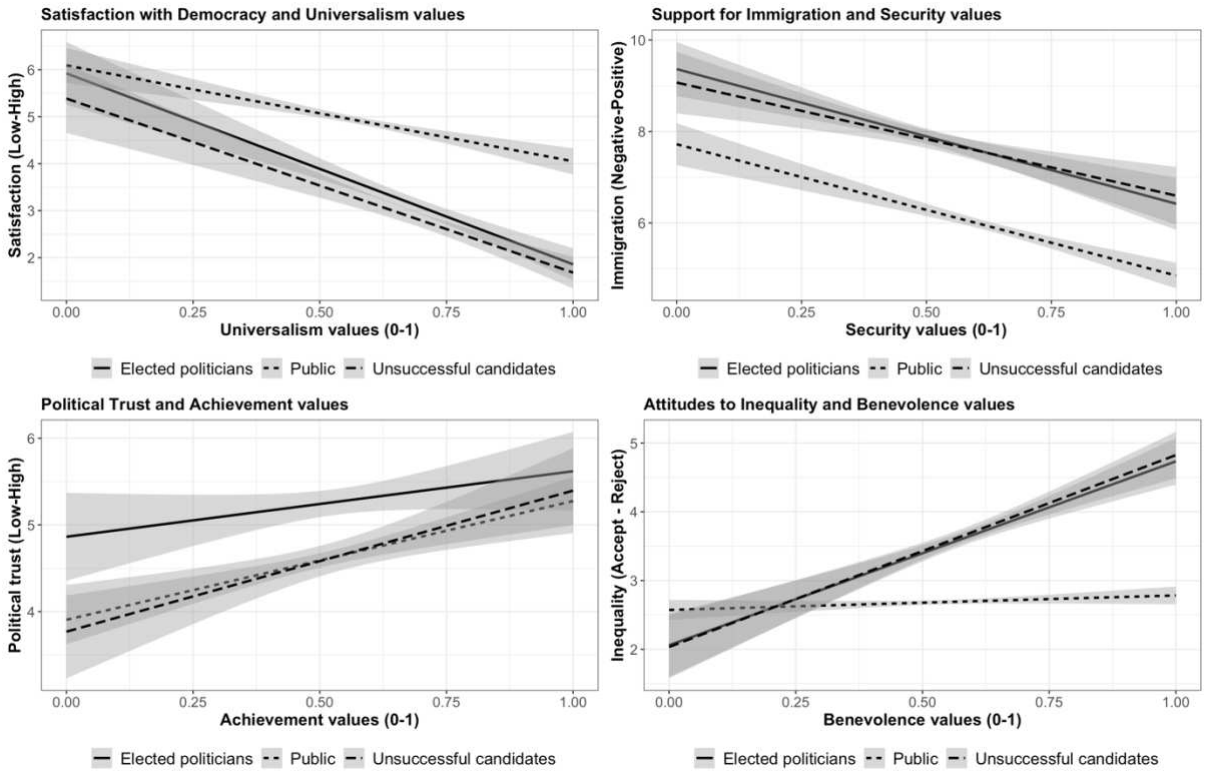
Note: CF – Conformity values; TR – Tradition values; BE – Benevolence values; UN – Universalism values; SD – Self-Direction values; ST – Stimulation values; HE – Hedonism values; AC – Achievement values; PO- Power values; SE – Security values. Correlation coefficients in bold are statistically significant at $p < .05$ or less. Correlations between attitudes to climate action and basic values combine elite data with public responses collected in the eighth rather than the ninth round of the ESS.

A dynamic model of attitude formation among elites and masses

The previous section of this chapter showed that political elites (those who enter office as well as those who do not) are distinct in their psychological predispositions by comparison to the general UK public. It also demonstrated associations between basic values and political attitudes at an aggregate level. The purpose of the present section is to tease apart the implications of these findings vis-à-vis understanding and explaining differences in elite and mass political attitudes using dynamic theories of preference formation.

A series of simple mixed models with random effects suggests that the strength of the connections between basic values and political attitudes differs across elected politicians, unsuccessful candidates and the public. Specifically, the examples illustrated in Figure 2 show that (a) salient basic values may be activated when individuals are presented with political choices, (b) these basic values are correlated with meaningful variation in political attitudes regardless of subsample (i.e. changes in political attitudes mapped by basic values run in the same direction), but (c) basic values appear to share stronger associations with elite rather than public preferences. Even Security values – which are attributed [relatively] more importance by the public than political elites – have a broadly comparable predictive relationship with attitudes towards immigration across all three subsamples. As per existing research and earlier discussions in this chapter, it is possible that the differential strength of these relationships reflects an asymmetry of information and resource between political elites and masses, which in turn contributes to greater coherence in the activation and application of psychological predispositions to political choices among politicians as compared to the public.

Figure 2. Basic values and political attitudes among elites and masses.



Note: basic values have been rescaled 0-1 so that the regression slopes extend from the lowest scores in the target population to the highest. Scores on the y axis run from low to high in the direction of the scale terms provided in parentheses. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals.

In line with dynamic theories of attitude formation, it is probable that the effects of basic values upon political attitudes are dependent upon or work in conjunction with an individual's social identity and their exposure to partisan conflict in the political environment. To test the joint impact of these variables upon political attitudes, a series of nested OLS regressions were conducted for each subsample. In each case, political attitudes are regressed on basic values (specifically the eight most highly correlated with the target attitude). Partisanship (coded broadly on the left and right) and socio-demographics are then added sequentially. Model statistics are reported for each of these iterations in Appendix A. At an aggregate level, these results support a dynamic approach to studying political attitudes: the addition of partisanship and socio-demographic controls increases the amount of variance in participants' political attitudes that is explained in these models by an average of six percent for the public, 16 percent for elected politicians, and 10 percent for unsuccessful candidates.[5] At the same time, it useful to note that basic values still account for as much or more variance in political attitudes, on average, than the

[5] The akaike information criteria (AIC) – which is a useful measure of prediction error and therefore the relative quality of statistical models – also decreases in all instances where partisanship and socio-demographics are added.

additional controls: six percent for the public, 19 percent for elected politicians, and 25 percent for political candidates.

Two additional observations arise from these analyses (see Appendix A). Firstly, basic values appear to explain considerably more variance in political attitudes among elites than masses. This supports the random effects reported in Figure 2 and suggests that public attitudes may rely to a greater extent on confounding variables that are not considered here. It is possible, for example, that public opinion is influenced more by elite cues or by media coverage of politics than predispositions, socialisation at the micro level, or partisanship. These inferences cannot be tested here since they require reliable time series data, but they may inform future research in this field. Secondly, the models reported in Appendix A are much better at explaining attitudes towards specific policy issues as opposed to diffuse attitudes about the state of politics and the political system. This may say something interesting about the applicability of basic values across a broader range of public opinion. It is possible that diffuse, system-level evaluations such as trust and satisfaction – as measured here – are either too broad to activate specific values or to allow for direct application of predispositions per se, or that these attitudes are more affective than cognitive and therefore based on intuition rather than conscious deliberation (the latter aids the predictive strength of basic values when explaining political behaviour; see Caprara et al., 2006).

To illustrate the explanatory potential of these individual variables, the average marginal effects of two 'dynamic' models are presented in figures 3 and 4.[6] These figures show the average change in response scores for attitudes to immigration and climate action for each one unit increase in any single independent variable, within each sample, whilst controlling for the constant effects of all other variables in the model. In terms of predispositions, Universalism values continue to exert positive effects on both attitudes across all subsamples. For example, candidates and members of the public most motivated by caring for others, engaging with outgroups and protecting their environment scored, on average, approximately five points (on a ten-point scale) more positively in their attitudes to immigration than those who scored lowest for Universalism values. In contrast, Power and Tradition values were negative predictors of support for climate action, although these effects only reach statistical significance amongst the public. It is possible that those most psychologically wedded to 'the way things have always been' and most motivated by control over their personal or material resources are less likely to support system-level changes

[6] Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were calculated to rule out multicollinearity. Nearly all VIF scores were below two and none exceeded three.

aimed at revolutionising how we consume energy and how much we are allowed to consume. In both models, additional controls also have meaningful effects on political attitudes. In particular, partisans on the right of British politics (those who vote for or represent the Conservative Party or UKIP) are more opposed to climate action and think more negatively about immigration than those on the left (those who vote for or represent the Labour Party, Scottish National Party, Green Party, or the Liberal Democrats). These partisan effects are also more pronounced amongst elites than masses.

Figure 3. Predictors of support for immigration amongst UK politicians and the UK public.

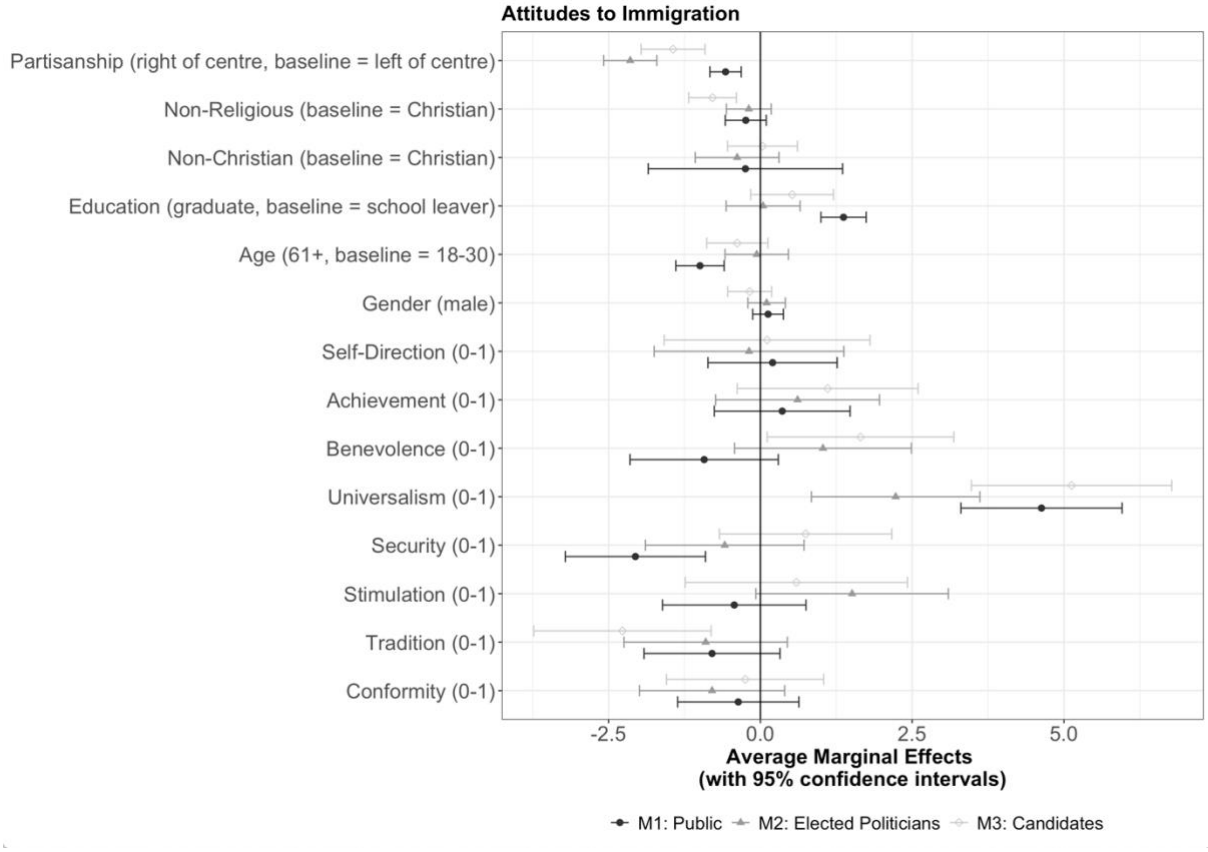
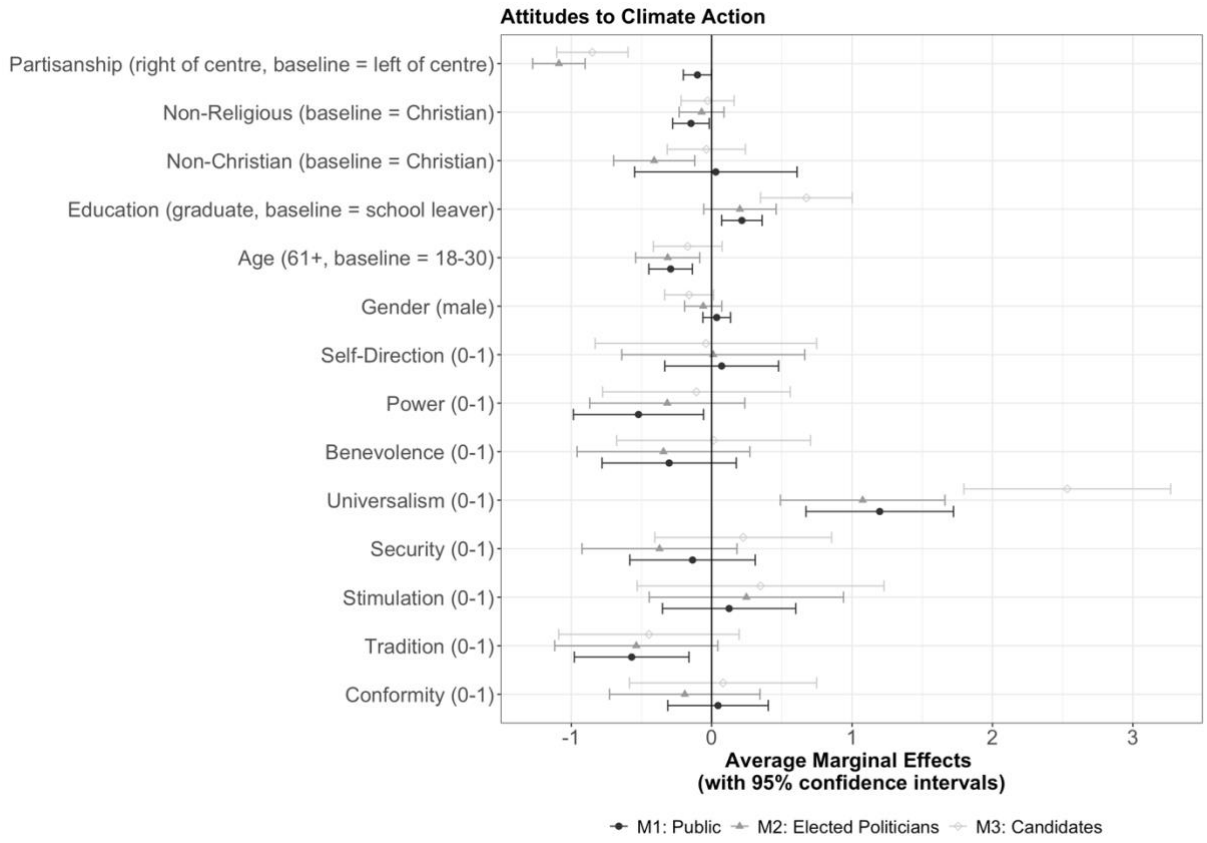


Figure 4. Predictors of support for climate action amongst UK politicians and the UK public.



Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to add holistically to the central aims of this edited collection: that is to further the psychological study of democracy and to add specifically to the study of political attitudes among elites and masses. Theoretical discussions have been matched with original empirical analysis of a unique dataset to show that (a) psychological predispositions (particularly personality characteristics such as basic values) share meaningful relationships with people's political attitudes, (b) that politicians and candidates differ to the public in their basic values, (c) basic values have a stronger effect upon political attitudes among elites than masses, but (d) in any case, the explanatory potential of a predisposition model is improved by accounting for partisan conflict and socialisation within politics.

At a broad level, this chapter adds theoretically and empirically to a specific research base on democratic elitism, largely conducted in the United States and touched upon earlier in this chapter, that has demonstrated the superficial and often illiberal nature of public opinion as compared to elites across a series of policy domains (see also McCloskey, 1964; Lupia et al., 2000;

Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2013; Kinder and Kalmoe, 2017). At an aggregate level, for example, UK politicians and candidates surveyed for this study are more liberal in their outlook than the public on policy domains such as immigration, climate action, and inequality. At the same time, this chapter goes further in anchoring these claims of democratic elitism in a dynamic model of attitude formation. Unlike prior studies that start their analysis from the point of departure between self-reported elite and mass attitudes, and thus risk simply measuring an asymmetry of information or political interest between elites and masses, this chapter advances a joined-up approach that takes into account the psychological characteristics of politicians and those they govern. Put simply, politicians may be more liberally inclined in their political attitudes than the average citizen because their basic values are also uniquely oriented to such opinions. These assumptions obviously require qualification, not least given that prior research has demonstrated much larger differences between the basic values of voters and politicians on the Left than the Right of UK politics (see Weinberg, 2020b, Chapter 4). As such, claims of democratic elitism undergirded by a predisposition model of attitude formation may require further ideological demarcation.

It is worth stressing that the findings in this chapter are offered as a preliminary foray into this line of inquiry and, as such, they suffer from a number of limitations. Firstly, it is regrettable that the survey of politicians and candidates did [and could not] take place simultaneously to the ninth round of the ESS. That said, the surveys were fielded just a matter of months apart and, in any case, variables like basic values remain remarkably stable after adolescence. Regardless of any fluctuations in political attitudes that could have occurred in the intervening months, it is thus highly unlikely that either sample changed their value priorities or orientations (for a related discussion, see Sagiv and Roccas, 2017). Secondly, the instruments used to measure basic values in each survey were slightly different in some of their item descriptors. It is not possible, therefore, to be entirely confident of measurement invariance across the two datasets. Thirdly, only time series data could account for the lagged/lead effects of each group's attitudes on the other (as per top-down and democratic-responsiveness models of public opinion). These challenges should be addressed in future research. Finally, it is worth reiterating, on one hand, that there are case studies within western liberal democracies that defy the conclusions drawn above (the Presidency of Donald Trump in the US being a case in point) and, on the other hand, that these conclusions may not replicate in authoritarian regimes or even among political elites in extreme populist parties in liberal democracies.

Nevertheless, the arguments advanced in this chapter – that psychological peculiarities put elites out-of-step with actual popular political opinions – do raise a number of pertinent questions about the principal-agent relationship in representative democracies such as the UK. Can elites actually claim to represent the interests of their electors or some nebulous common good if, in fact, they do not place importance upon the same motivational goals? What does it say about the state of our political institutions and the accessibility of a political career if the people who enter the profession are comparatively unique in how they think and feel about politics as well as life in general? Given that elites are more polarised from each other in their political attitudes than masses – and these differences in attitudes in turn arise from distinct psychological predispositions on the Left and Right – then is it possible that the level of political conflict seen in the legislative arenas of contemporary democracies fails to reflect a popular psyche more attuned to consensus? These and many more questions will continue to fascinate scholars of democracy and, in particular, those studying the psychology of politicians.

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Appendix A. Model statistics for OLS regressions of political attitudes amongst the British public (P), politicians (E), and unsuccessful candidates (C).

		Trust			Satisfaction			Immigration			Climate Action		
		P	E	C	P	E	C	P	E	C	P	E	C
Model 1	R^2	.028	.054	.127	.040	.140	.128	.112	.247	.331	.088	.279	.355
	AIC	7885.673	1724.797	1726.805	7623.56	1765.481	1692.439	9242.336	1767.784	1760.743	3399.263	1069.789	1134.198
Model 2	R^2	.025	.085	.230	.088	.371	.207	.169	.358	.368	.097	.476	.473
	AIC	5549.736	1711.502	1674.501	5392.811	1623.438	1652.057	6337.388	1695.866	1736.942	2306.241	788.621	783.097
Model 3	R^2	.068	.106	.260	.093	.376	.210	.216	.367	.391	.127	.489	.499
	AIC	5435.03	1673.542	1640.585	5338.639	1594.847	1631.794	6203.566	1666.543	1706.661	2258.802	756.092	746.966

		Inequality		
		P	E	C
Model 1	R^2	.009	.214	.296
	AIC	4593.228	1338.524	1275.935
Model 2	R^2	.082	.397	.385
	AIC	3161.227	1217.826	1217.435
Model 3	R^2	.097	.403	.392
	AIC	3114.299	1194.383	1200.828

Note: Model 1 = Basic values only (up to eight salient predictors); Model 2 = Model 1 + Partisanship (left-right); Model 3 = Model 2 + Socio-demographics (age, gender, education, religion).