Values and Persuasion During the First Bush-Gore Presidential Debate

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Appealing to values is an effective form of argumentation. In our analysis of the Bush-Gore debate, we found that values are fundamental in framing issues; their effectiveness is contingent on the issue context and the predisposition of the audience. Thus, merely constructing an appeal to values does not guarantee persuasiveness, as the appeal must be concrete in nature when attempting to move an audience to action. Such an appeal goes beyond creating a link between the value appeal and the issue, as the value appeal and the issue position must resonate with a defined audience. Our results indicate that most undecided voters who made up their minds as a result of the debate chose Gore, while a few chose Bush and some remained undecided. Those who chose Gore were clearly more egalitarian in their orientation than undecided voters who chose Bush or could not decide. Bush’s use of individualism did not seem to persuade undecided voters, nor did it seem to have a detrimental impact on support for Gore. For the most part, Bush’s support remained constant before and after the debate, at least among this particular audience.

Keywords argumentation, presidential debate, values

An audience of 46.6 million viewers watched the October 3, 2000, presidential debate between Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2001). It was the first of three presidential debates in 2000, and, according to Ronald Brownstein (2000), Los Angeles Times political writer, significant issue contrasts were evident in this debate:

In a campaign that some once feared would offer an echo, not a choice, the two men clashed over domestic and foreign issues ranging from tax cuts to Social Security and the use of American forces abroad. And neither hesitated to bundle together their differences into broader philosophical choices for the electorate. (p. A1)

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The broad philosophical choices mentioned by Brownstein and revealed in the candidates’ value appeals are the focus of this study.

Jim Lehrer served as the moderator of the debate. The candidates were questioned in turn, given two minutes to answer, and were allowed a 60 second rebuttal. This format, according to Meyer and Carlin (1994), gained favor over panel and town-hall meeting alternatives, particularly from voters, during the 1992 presidential campaign between then Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and President George H. W. Bush. The single-moderator format provided more clash between the candidates, forced them to focus on the issues, and, in general, enhanced the flow of the debate. Despite this preferred format in which candidates are perceived to focus more intently on the issues, Roderick Hart (1982) contends that political debates may lack specificity as candidates rely on strategic ambiguity to appeal to diverse audiences. Thus, successful politicians use “strategic ambiguity” to address a nation of varying interests, beliefs, attitudes, and values.1

Strategic ambiguity, according to Ceccarelli (1998), allows for the rhetor to appeal to the dominant viewing audience and, simultaneously, appeal to a certain type of audience familiar with the rhetor, thus appealing to otherwise conflicting groups. The rhetorical importance of strategic ambiguity encourages the exploration of more broad-based appeals that occur in political argumentation rather than issue-based discourse. Of particular concern to the present study is the strategic use of value appeals. Value appeals are associated with a relatively small number of core values shared by large populations. Abstract in nature, values can provide the rhetorical base for strategic ambiguity as described by Hart (1982). Other qualities of values suggest that they are content free (McGee, 1980) and detached from specific contexts, ideological or otherwise (Rokeach, 1970). Moreover, the ambiguous quality of value appeals can enhance their usefulness when attempting to unify diverse groups (Sillars & Ganer, 1982). Despite the abstract qualities of values, Rokeach (1973) argues that they account for a wide array of human behaviors. Nevertheless, Stutman and Newell (1984) argue that value appeals are “inappropriate and impractical”2 in the development of persuasive messages that are meant to call to action and change behavior unless those values are linked to specific beliefs of the audience. In the case of political debates, the desired “action” is a vote. As Hinck (1993) suggests, presidential debates “provide opportunities for candidates to win over undecided voters, to reinforce voters who have already made a decision . . . and to change the minds of those who are willing to reconsider their initial judgments concerning which candidate seems more fit to serve as president” (p. 2).3 The present study identifies various value appeals and appeal strategies as referenced in the language used by Gore and Bush in the October 3, 2000, debate. In addition, we investigate the effectiveness of these appeals and provide suggestions for political argumentation.

Value Literature

When addressing value appeals, it is important to review Rokeach’s (1973) seminal research. A value is defined “as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p. 5). Various inventories of values proposed by scholars (Minnick, 19684; Rokeach, 19735) include themes of “moral[ity] (good or right), importan[ce] (worthy, significant), beaut[y] (moving, expressive, pleasing), or fundamental preferences for certain ends (such as equality, freedom, self-actualization)
or for certain modes of conduct (such as honesty, courage, or integrity)” (Campbell, 1982, pp. 82–83). Rokeach’s (1973) terminal values describe end-states of existence, or how life ought to be. Terminal values include appeals to freedom, equality, a world of beauty, and family security.

Core values are often in conflict, as de Tocqueville pointed out. Americans have historic experience with the value of freedom, especially when it comes to freedom of speech and the press. However, there is an inherent conflict between equality and freedom that Americans fail to appreciate when attempting to rationalize hierarchical perspectives (McClosky & Zaller, 1984; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Ellis, 1992; Verba & Orren, 1995). The tension between freedom and equality remains just as prominent a characteristic of American political culture today as it did in de Tocqueville’s time. Moreover, Rokeach argues that these two universal values are organizing concepts in political thought, a far better predictor, for example, than the liberal conservative continuum. McClosky and Zaller (1984) describe a similar conflict when addressing the tension between capitalism and democracy. This conflict is most pronounced when surveying both mass and elite attitudes regarding these two values. Opinion leaders, or elites, must interpret the meaning of the values and apply values to specific policies. Then the public relies on these elite interpretations of values, thus highlighting the conflict between the two.

While Rokeach argues that equality and freedom are defining values in American culture, Bellah et al. (1985) claim that individualism is at the core of American culture. Like the conflict that exists between equality and freedom, there is an inherent conflict between individualism and equality. Individualism refers to the principle that people should get ahead on their own, pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. A person should get what he or she earns and earn what he or she gets. Assistance from government (or anyone else) is not required, nor particularly desirable. Individualism has long been considered the distinguishing American value. . . . Egalitarianism, in contrast, asserts the fundamental equal value of all people. As such, every person deserves an equal opportunity to succeed in life. If particular individuals or groups are disadvantaged, the government may have a role in leveling the playing field. (Kellstedt, 2000, p. 249)

Values and Framing

An important reality of value appeals is that they are not always argued in isolation. Whether emphasizing individualism, equality, or some other value, a fundamental strategy when building a persuasive argument is linking a particular value to a campaign issue—a process called framing. Shah, Domke, and Wackman (1996) applied framing to the construction of news. They concluded that when subjects read about the issue of health care framed in a moral way, they were more likely to interpret the issue similarly. Thus, framing can significantly affect voter decision-making strategies. Shah et al.’s conclusion supports Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) contention that as a central organizing idea, a frame makes sense out of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue. “The frames concept focuses on the manner in which the construction of communication texts influences individual cognitions by selectively focusing on particular parts of reality while ignoring or downplaying other aspects” (Shah et al., 1996, p. 510).

Whereas media framing may potentially influence voter decision-making strategies,
the familiarity that voters have with a particular frame may influence the outcome. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) contend that frames trigger beliefs and cognitions already held by an audience about certain issues instead of adding something new. The significance of this conclusion is important as it shows that framing does not by itself persuade and that voters are not deceived by the media. Instead, individuals come to understand issues through an interaction between their own beliefs and values and those presented in the media. If politicians can frame issues more favorably, then they may be able to get voters to connect certain issues with the office they seek, connecting their own candidacies with policies, offices, and voters (Popkin, 1991).

It is through value frames that competing groups vie for legitimacy (Ball-Rokeach & Rokeach, 1987; Ball-Rokeach & Loges, 1996). Ball-Rokeach and Rokeach (1987) contend that value framing provides the criteria used to determine what is relevant within a particular deliberation and with regard to issue formation. The strategic ability to control the value frame allows for the rhetor to define an issue and create an acceptable range of meanings regarding the issue. The present study looks at the strategic use of value appeals and how Gore and Bush used them to frame issues.

As with any rhetorical engagement, political candidates and their campaigns are guided by audience analyses that help to assess the values, beliefs, and attitudes held by those whom they wish to persuade. These analyses are value centered, automatic, confident, and indisputable (Hart, 1997). Value appeals, based on these value-centered judgments, are not uncommon in rhetorical studies (see Eubanks, 1978; Fisher, 1987; Perelman & Olbrichts-Tyteca, 1969; Sillars & Ganer, 1982). In an adversarial situation such as a political debate, Cook (1980) argues that certain value appeal strategies might accomplish a change in behavior. Cook’s five strategies serve as a template for assessing the use of value appeals made by Bush and Gore. The first strategy, “reconstructing,” provides a reinterpretation of a situation while simultaneously denying the relevance of a particular value. Reconstructing is unique in that the ground on which an argument is made is accepted, but the warrant linking the adversary’s position and a particular value claim is questioned. This strategy disrupts the adversary’s argument, permitting an advocate to create a barrier between an adversary’s particular policy, for example, and a value standard. Reconstructing occurs when an advocate successfully argues that the best way to achieve a particular value standard is through his or her particular policy, not that of the adversary. Cook (1980) claims that “most standards are emotionally evocative symbolic expressions, and the audience embracing a standard is wider than the audience favoring a given construction of its cognitive content. Hence manipulations of referential content are central in interpretations” (p. 525).

The second strategy of “bypassing” ignores one value while invoking another (no change occurs, but one value is shown to be more favorable than another). Cook (1980) concedes that this strategy is a “silent switch” between two values. An advocate may not care for a particular value and, instead, presents one that is more palatable. Ignoring a value that is not salient for a particular audience provides an opportunity for an advocate to make a “silent switch,” but the switch may become problematic if the adversary’s value standard resonates with a particular audience. As Cook suggests, bypassing is a more efficient strategy if the value standard is not “crucial” to the current discussion.

The third strategy of “counterblocking” includes recognition of the legitimacy of an invoked value, but a number of other values are shown to be more advantageous. Cook refers to counterblocking as a “compensated concession” in which a standard is recognized, but contextualized among other equally important ones. The compensation that occurs is often in the form of “a number of appeals to offset the weight of the adversary’s
argument” (Cook, 1980, p. 527). “Overriding,” the fourth strategy introduced by Cook, results in a direct clash of standards. The success of overrides presumes a hierarchical rank ordering. Furthermore, Cook suggests that “overrides are most likely when advocates believe that their own preference ordering of standards is relevant to the case at hand, such that at least one standard is superior to that used by the adversary” (p. 530).

The final strategy of “undermining” demonstrates that an invoked value is unacceptable and should be abandoned. A typical strategy to undermine would include a direct annihilation of a single standard in favor of another. Undermining can be risky as there is a risk of alienating an audience that may favor a particular standard. Therefore, the placing of this particular strategy becomes paramount. Rarely would an advocate begin with this strategy, and it may often be used as a last resort. As suggested, value standards are broader than any one tangible issue. Matlon (1978) argues that behaviors may change when exposed to a persuasive message, but values will simply be repositioned along a value hierarchy, thus maintaining some stability. Cook’s appeal strategies provide an appropriate guide for maintaining stability while repositioning an argument within a particular context or around a particular subject.

Whereas Cook (1980) provides rhetorical strategies to change audience behaviors, some theorists doubt the effectiveness of values in persuasion. Particularly, the very qualities of values—they are abstract in nature and enduring over time—may represent the weaknesses of value appeals, especially in political rhetoric when a specific action is being sought, such as voting. Stutman and Newell (1984) claim:

> While many people have different and conflicting views of a particular situation (beliefs), they may still have one or two relevant values in common to which a speaker may appeal. However, one is still left with the problem of how to make use of values in the persuasive message . . . the simple invocation of a particular value is seldom enough to predict or lead to action. (p. 365)

Sillars and Ganer (1982) argue that, “values represent the real link between the argument and the audience” (p. 196) and that “any argument involves reasoning and any reasoning can be driven back to a value orientation” (p. 195).

McKerrow (1990) introduced the principle of pragmatic justification and provided definitions of values and beliefs. The former is the base of practical reasoning, and the latter is the base of theoretical reasoning: “Whereas practical reasoning [values, behaviors, and actions] is oriented toward the conclusion that a particular behavior is justified, theoretical reasoning [beliefs, propositions, and adherences] provides the bases for adherence to the proposition” (p. 19). Therefore, “an action may be right according to the standards of theoretical reasoning, without being justified in a practical sense” (McKerrow, 1990). For example, one may believe that gun control laws will result in fewer guns on the streets and may save lives, but this belief is not sufficient when motivating one to change behavior and support gun control legislation because the value of individualism, for example, may encourage a position against such legislation. The relationship between values and beliefs as described by McKerrow (1990) further suggests the importance of identifying the consistencies between values and beliefs. By focusing on this consistency, we can evaluate the effectiveness of the value appeals presented in political rhetoric. Appeals to universal values and to the salient beliefs of a narrowly defined audience both may prove beneficial to a political candidate attempting to win votes. Although it may be difficult for any speaker or politician to accomplish both simultaneously, it is feasible to speculate that the gifted politician can easily attend to the
universal values held by the larger audience and appeal more directly to the salient beliefs of a more specific audience. In the case of political debate audiences, it is the undecided voter who becomes the target of persuasive appeals.

**Political Argumentation and Televised Presidential Debates**

Since the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate, much scholarly research has attempted to explain the purpose of these political events, the impact they have on viewers, and the effect they have on election outcomes. When assessing the research on political debates, several claims come to the forefront. One perspective is that issue and image information “reinforce one another” (Carlin, 1992, p. 252). Another claim addresses the informative value of debates. However, the amount and type of learning that may occur from viewing a political debate is difficult to pinpoint, as research findings are mixed (Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert, 2001; Carter & Stamm, 1994; Lemert, 1993; Zhu, Milavsky, & Biswas, 1994). To establish the rationale for looking more closely at value argumentation and value appeals, we may analyze the knowledge or value-added gains produced by political debates. Our contention is that values impart a particular type of knowledge. On the basis of values, an audience can reasonably infer where candidates stand on a variety of issues even when those issues are not part of the immediate deliberation. Therefore, we support Lemert (1993) that learning from debates does occur and that more learning occurs because of debates than if they were not held at all.

For example, McKinney, Kaid, and Robertson (2001) discovered that subjects viewing the Republican primary debate that took place in December of 1999 and included candidates Gary Bauer, George Bush, Steve Forbes, Orrin Hatch, John McCain, and Alan Keyes reacted more negatively to appeals made by lesser known candidates than the more popular candidates. This suggests that voters’ familiarity with the status of the candidate (e.g., front-runner, etc.) may condition their reactions to a candidate’s appeals. In addition, voters with lower levels of knowledge are found to shift their candidate preferences following a debate, resulting in a potentially dramatic swing of support. A shift in support was evident in Ronald Reagan’s victory over incumbent President Jimmy Carter (Lanoue, 1992). Moreover, Fredin, Kosicki, and Becker (1996) found, following an experimental study involving 706 registered voters, that voters, who view debates and attend to other forms of political news are seeking information that they perceived to be incomplete in the general media. Clearly, learning does occur, but it is limited, guided by the candidates themselves who have control over their messages. Despite the amount and type of learning that occurs, the sheer number of people exposed to these political events increases their importance. Moreover, candidates’ strategic use of value appeals may provide information to undecided voters.

Voters and candidates can communicate through a common language of values. Values yield two important sources of information for voters. First, voters can learn about and evaluate a candidate’s image by assessing the compatibility of their own values to those of a given candidate. Second, from this assessment, voters can infer a candidate’s stance on a particular issue whether that candidate has specifically addressed that issue or not. For example, voters may learn that a candidate values individual responsibility. Thus, we learn about a candidate’s general philosophy and can reasonably infer how that candidate would stand on welfare reform. However, this conclusion may be premature, as a particular belief may be inconsistent with a perceived value; therefore, the challenge may be for the candidates to fill in the blanks and provide the links between the specific issue-based beliefs and the broad-based value appeals.
Method

In addition to providing voters with information, the effects of a debate can be characterized as having no impact on voting decisions, a reinforcing effect, or a conversion effect. Many voters have already decided whom to support in an election before the debates; however, there is significant room for persuasion. As Hellweg, Pfau, and Brydon’s (1992) assessment of research on debates from 1960–1988 concludes, “For viewers with clearly defined preferences among candidates, presidential debates tend to strengthen those attitudes, thus exerting a reinforcing effect” (p. 124). They further observe that conversion is most likely to occur among those who are undecided or have weak preferences prior to the debate. Our research helps to further clarify this process of reinforcement and conversion by focusing attention on the role values play in presidential debates. We rely on a content analysis of the debate transcript to explore the candidates’ appeals to values, and a quasi-experimental design to investigate the viewer’s perceptions of these appeals and the impact of these perceptions on candidate assessment.

The strength of our design rests with the combination of content analysis and experimental design. It is part of a growing tradition that “concentrates not only on the impact of debates but also on their content” (Lanoue & Schrott, 1989, p. 276). As Lanoue and Schrott point out, the researcher can analyze the content of the debate without having to rely on viewer recall. One limitation of the design is that our quasi-experiment does not include a control group. We were unable to include a control group because this was a community event, not a group of subjects who could be asked to leave the room and not view the debate for purposes of the study. Thus, while we can compare answers on a pretest with those on a posttest, we are unable to provide comparisons between viewers and nonviewers.

The present study focuses on the first presidential debate between Gore and Bush, and responds to the following research questions related to the appeal strategies used by the candidates:

**RQ1:** Which core values do Bush and Gore use in the first presidential debate?

**RQ2:** Which value appeal strategies are used in the first Gore and Bush presidential debate?

Regarding the audience’s reaction to the first presidential debate and the previous research on debate effects, the following research questions are presented.

**RQ3:** Does the debate reinforce, convert, or have no effect on the audience?

**RQ4:** Are undecided voters more likely to support a candidate whose values are perceived to be consistent with their own?

**RQ5:** Is there a correspondence between the values appeals made in the debate and the persuasiveness of those appeals on voters who share the emphasized values?

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis in this study focuses on the transcript of the first presidential debate of 2000 held on October 3. This analysis involved a two-step process. First, the coders (coauthors) independently identified and categorized the value appeals used in this debate. Following this independent review of the transcript, the coders made decisions with relative ease about the identification of each value appeal. Disagreements
between coders required deliberation until agreement was reached with respect to the
types of value appeals being used by each candidate. Following the identification of the
value appeals present in the debate, an assessment of their use was made using Cook’s
(1980) strategies for value appeals (described earlier). This research protocol helped
achieve Maxwell’s (1992, 1996) forms of validity in qualitative research. Both descrip-
tive validity, or accuracy, and interpretive validity were achieved through detailed discus-
sions of the debate transcript between the coders. Discussions between the coders
promoted accuracy in identifying the various value appeals and Cook’s strategies. Sup-
port for validity is provided throughout this essay in the form of quotations or exem-
plars, which were then evaluated by two independent readers. In addition, a 92% intercoder
reliability rate was achieved between an independent coder and the authors’ assessment
and identification of the value appeals and strategies.

Experimental Research

Volunteers were recruited from both university and nonuniversity populations who at-
tended a public debate watch event. Because the study was held on college campuses, a
majority of the respondents were from universities. However, the event was widely
publicized in local media, and many members of the community attended the events and
participated in the study. Thus, the participants ranged in age from 18 to 71, with a
mean of 22.

Following the design of McKinney, Kaid, and Robertson (2001), the investigators
administered a pretest to measure value predispositions and candidate support. By value
predispositions, we mean the priority individuals place on each value. Rokeach (1973)
has argued that commitment to values can be thought of as hierarchical. Thus, one
individual may value equality more highly than another. It is the differences in the
hierarchy that lead to policy preferences and varying candidate assessments (Feldman,
1988). The questions used to measure value predispositions are part of the American
National Election Study (see the Appendix). To measure commitment to equality, re-
spondents were asked (through a Likert scale format) to respond to this statement: “We
have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.” To measure commitment to
individualism, respondents were asked to respond to this statement: “People should take
care of themselves and their families and let others do the same; OR people should care
less about their own success and more about the needs of society.” The response choices
included “take care of self, both, or care more about society.” Participants were also
asked to rate the importance of certain values to the candidates.

Following the debate, participants completed a posttest measuring attitude change
toward the candidates and voting intent. Our dependent variables include vote inten-
tion both before and after the debate and feeling thermometers, which have been used
in previous research on debate effects (McKinney, Kaid, & Robertson, 2001; Lanoue
& Schrott, 1989). Subjects were asked to place their feelings about the candidates on
a thermometer that ranged from 0 to 100. A score of 0 represents very cold feelings,
and 100 represents warm feelings. A rating of around 50 is considered neutral. This
measure provides a useful summary in determining generally how people feel, but it is
unable to record precise emotions (Marcus, 1988). Thus, a “temperature” comparison
can be made before and after the debates. For example, Lanoue and Schrott (1989)
utilized feeling thermometers to measure voters’ reactions to the Reagan-Mondale de-
bate in 1984. In assessing the utility of such measures for debate research, they argue:
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First, it [a feeling thermometer] provides us with a measure of respondents’ approval of candidates, regardless of the respondents’ intended vote choice. Thus we can learn if viewing the debate had any effect on our subjects’ opinions of the contenders, even if that effect did not actually result in a change of intended vote choice (we can, for example, measure reinforcement or slippage in candidate support). (p. 277)

Similarly, we use feeling thermometers towards Bush and Gore as dependent variables and viewer assessment of the candidates’ value priorities as independent variables. We also use the subjects’ own personal value priorities as predictors of their feelings towards the candidates. If viewers who already felt warm towards a candidate feel even warmer, then we have observed reinforcement. If there is no change in temperature, then we will have found that the debate had no effect. Finally, conversion can be observed when viewers choose to vote for a different candidate after the debate than before, or when previously undecided voters make up their minds following the debate.

Analysis of Candidates’ Use of Values

The first debate between Bush and Gore is an ideal setting to examine the role of values in the persuasion process. Numerous appeals to core values were present throughout the debate, including the values of democracy, family, morality, national security, and the world of beauty. The two most frequently occurring types of value appeals, those that defined distinct philosophical positions of the two candidates via their rhetoric, were equality and individualism. Bush stressed individuality throughout the debate, while Gore emphasized the importance of equality. Both candidates relied on these two values to respond to questions asked by Lehrer and rebut the other’s arguments. The following section includes examples of the value appeals made by Bush and Gore and an analysis of the strategies they employed. The rhetorical strategies of reconstructing, bypassing, counterblocking, overriding, and undermining are used to explain and assess the arguments made in this debate (Cook, 1980).

During the first presidential debate, Lehrer asked Gore if voters should view this election “as a major choice between competing political philosophies.” Gore replied, “Oh, absolutely.” Thus began a debate in which both candidates relied on the language of values. Lehrer’s introductory question invited the candidates to share their value dispositions, but the questions that followed were value neutral except when Lehrer restated a candidate’s position. Thus, the candidates and not the moderator injected the values into the debate. The philosophical conflicts match those presented in value literature: freedom versus equality and equality versus individualism. In the first few minutes of the debate, the value standards of Bush and Gore became distinct, providing voters with a clear contrast in their respective governing philosophies. One philosophical distinction became clear as both candidates responded to the first question addressing Bush’s qualifications for presidency. Although this question did present Gore with an opportunity to question Bush’s ethos, he opted to respond by addressing the economic strengths of the U.S. and to emphasize equality as an important criterion when comparing economic policies. Thus, Gore suggested that the Bush plan followed a different value hierarchy, placing individualism over equality. Specifically, the candidates’ tax plans became the primary topic to be argued in the first exchange. Gore stated that,
We have achieved extraordinary prosperity, and in this election America has to make an important choice: Will we use our prosperity to enrich not just the few, but all of our families?

Gore admits that America is prosperous, but suggests that not all citizens enjoy that wealth. Rather than respond to Gore’s question, Bush followed with an appeal to individualism, bypassing Gore’s appeal to equality. Bush does not criticize Gore’s use of an appeal to equality but frames the topic with a different value. For example, Bush rebutted by telling viewers “my vision is to empower Americans to be able to make decisions in their own lives.” In this instance, Bush is advocating individualism, and it is through individualism that prosperity can be achieved. When further arguing against Bush’s tax plan, Gore reinforced the philosophical difference between his own candidacy and that of Bush. Gore uses undermining, a direct attack against Bush’s value hierarchy, by questioning and discrediting Bush’s tax plan and spending policy:

Under Governor Bush’s tax cut proposal, he would spend more money on tax cuts for the wealthiest 1% than all of the new spending that he proposes for education, health care, prescription drugs, and national defense all combined. Now, I think those are the wrong priorities.

Gore argued that equality was superior and correct, undermining Bush’s plan, which emphasized individualism. Gore’s use of specific examples (i.e., education, health care, prescription drugs, etc.) provided more tangible support for the value of equality over the value of individualism and allowed him to establish a stronger link between the value and specific beliefs about the political issues.

In response, Bush, once again, framed the tax issue in terms of the value of individualism—the individual versus big government:

See that’s the difference of opinion; the vice president thinks its the government’s money. The payroll taxes are your money; you ought to put it in prudent, safe investments.

Similarly, Bush said:

It’s a difference of opinion; it’s the difference between government making decisions for you, and you getting more of your money to make decisions for yourself.

Concluding this section of the debate, Gore reemphasized the value of equality. However, he used counterblocking to embrace Bush’s argument, acknowledging the value of individualism and suggesting that there are other values (e.g., equality) that are more important and outweigh those supported by Bush. Gore argued:

I agree that the surplus is the American people’s money. It’s your money. That’s why I don’t think we should give nearly half of it to the wealthiest 1%, because the other 99% have had an awful lot to do with building this surplus and our prosperity.

Again, Gore describes a scenario in which individuals are not being treated equally and are losing money owed to them.
Being given the first opportunity to respond to Lehrer’s question about oil prices, Gore made an appeal to a world of beauty:

Now another big difference is Governor Bush is proposing to open up our—some of our most precious environmental treasures like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the big oil companies to go in and start producing oil there. I think that is the wrong choice. It would only give us a few months’ worth of oil, and the oil wouldn’t start flowing for many years into the future, and I don’t think it’s a fair price to pay to destroy precious parts of America’s environment. We have to bet on the future and move beyond the current technologies to have a new generation of more efficient, cleaner energy technologies.

Gore defines his position on the issue as the superior one. Bush attempts to turn our attention away from the environment and oil by reconstructing the issue as one of equality and national security. Bush responds:

First and foremost, we’ve got to make sure we fully fund LIHEAP, which is a way to help low-income folks, particularly here in the East, pay for their high fuel bills. [equality]

Secondly, we need an active exploration program in America. The only way to become less dependent on foreign sources of crude oil is to explore at home. And you bet, I want to open up a small part of—a part of Alaska because when that field is online, it will produce millions of barrels a day. Today we import a million barrels from Saddam Hussein. I would rather that a million come from our own hemisphere, our own country, as opposed to Saddam Hussein. [national security]

Although the values of freedom and equality are implied, Bush’s concern about national security, a simple mention of Saddam Hussein, was much more direct. Bush’s decision to frame the oil issue with multiple values reconstructed this argument to be consistent with his own value hierarchy in an attempt to completely overshadow Gore’s appeal to world beauty.

The philosophical positions established by Gore and Bush are evident throughout the debate when discussing a number of topics. However, an interesting shift occurred when Lehrer asked Bush, “If elected president, would you try to overturn the FDA’s approval last week of the abortion pill, RU-486?” This particular dialogue demonstrates the complex relationship among conflicting values. Bush introduces the value of morality, the only one of the two candidates to do so in the debate, as a superior value to support. He argues:

I’m worried that the pill will create more abortion—will cause more people to have abortions. . . .

This is the place where my opponent and I have strong disagreements. I believe banning partial-birth abortions would be a positive step toward reducing the number of abortions in America.

This is an issue that’s going to require a new attitude. We’ve been battling over abortion for a long period of time. Surely this nation can come together to promote the value of life.
Arguing in support of morality as the superior value when discussing abortion and RU-486 was a defining point of the debate. Borrowing from Bush’s previous statements in support of individualism to establish his own positions on the RU-486 issue, Gore states:

He [Bush] trusts the government to order a woman to do what it thinks she ought to do. I trust the women to make the decisions that affect their lives, their destinies, and their bodies.

In the discussion about RU-486, both candidates used the strategy of undermining, stating that one value is unacceptable and thus calling into question the opponent’s underlying philosophies.

Gore, in this instance, is able to provide a more specific link between the value of individualism and RU-486 than Bush is able to create with his morality appeal because of his choice to link RU-486 to partial-birth abortion. Bush’s decision to not discuss the ramifications of RU-486 and, instead, talk about abortion may have gained support from those members in the audience who are of the same mind and support his candidacy, but his response lacked specific references to the RU-486 question. As Bush stated, “We’ve been battling over abortion for a long period of time.” A reasonable conclusion could be that discussing this topic in any other terms was futile because of the centrality of this value in relation to audience beliefs about abortion and birth control.

Finally, the discussion turned once again to candidate qualifications as the debate concluded. In this line of questioning, it could be argued that values are certainly context and subject dependent. Lehrer introduced candidate character, asking Bush if there are “issues of character that distinguish you from Vice President Gore.” Bush’s response quickly turns to campaign fund raising and the Clinton administration’s moral conduct (Bush referred to the Clinton administration on several occasions when addressing Gore’s character and accomplishments). Bush undermines Gore by using his own responses to the event:

I think the thing that discouraged me about the vice president was uttering those famous words “no controlling legal authority.” I felt like—that there needed to be a better sense of responsibility of what was going on in the White House. I believe that—I believe they’ve moved that sign, “The buck stops here,” from the Oval Office desk to “The buck stops here” on the Lincoln bedroom, and that’s not good for the country. It’s not right. We need to have a new look about how we conduct ourselves in office. . . .

I don’t know the man well, but I’ve been disappointed about how he and his administration [have] conducted the fund raising affairs. You know, going to a Buddhist temple and then claiming it wasn’t a fund raiser is just not my view of responsibility.

Gore, initially, does not respond to this argument, but bypasses it, ignoring Bush’s moral criticism. However, Lehrer pushes this issue further by stating, “Are you saying all of this is irrelevant, Vice President Gore, to this election?” Gore, forced to address the criticism, responds:

This current campaign financing system has not reflected credit on anybody in either party, and that’s one of the reason’s I’ve said before, and I’ll pledge
here tonight: If I’m president, the very first bill that Joe Lieberman and I will send to the United States Congress is the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill. And the reason it’s that important is that all of the other issues, whether prescription drugs for all seniors that are opposed by the drug companies, or the patients’ bill of rights to take the decisions away from the HMOs and give them to the doctors and nurses, opposed by the HMOs and insurance companies—all of these other proposals are going to be a lot easier to get passed for the American people if we limit the influence of special interest money and give democracy back to the American people.

Admitting that the campaign finance system is flawed, but not admitting any moral wrongdoing, which was Bush’s primary criticism, Gore attempts to bypass the value of morality and relies on the prominence of the value of democracy to reshape the current state of affairs. Bush rebuts by ignoring Gore’s appeal and, once again, emphasizes the importance of morality when considering individual character:

You know, this man has no credibility on the issue. . . . And so look, I’m going to—what you need to know about me is I’m going to uphold the law.

Just as Gore was able to provide specific support for his value appeals when responding to the questions about taxes and RU-486, Bush was able to do the same here. The difference is that this particular reference was specific and directly relevant to the question as asked—candidate character. The character question, in all likelihood, was already in the mind of the audience as a result of media attention given to it prior to and during the campaign. Therefore, Bush’s morality appeal may have had more resonance with the general audience. However, Gore’s campaign finance problems had less to do with the audience and their everyday lives than other topics discussed in the debate. A distinction can be drawn when comparing the centrality of the values as related to specific beliefs. Whereas the subjects of taxes and abortion are more closely tied to one’s core values, the campaign finance issue is somewhat distant and, perhaps, less influential in overall candidate evaluation.

The appeal strategies used by Gore and Bush are similar in form, but each framed topics using different values. Clear distinctions between the two can be drawn when each candidate used the same value appeal strategies to persuade the audience that their positions on the issues were more sound and reasonable. For example, the debates involving RU-486, abortion, oil exploration, and taxes presented distinct clashes with respect to each candidate’s value hierarchy.

**Persuasiveness of Values Appeals**

The candidates’ appeals to terminal values seem to have made a difference in how viewers evaluated them. Based on the results of our quasi-experiment, audience members clearly believed that the candidates represent different values. These perceptions largely varied by party, with Republicans more likely to give Bush high marks for such values as freedom and family and Democrats rating Gore as the stronger proponent of those values. However, the most striking differences were on equality and individualism, the two most frequently invoked values in the debate. Throughout the debate, Gore made eight appeals to equality and Bush made four, while Bush made four appeals to individualism and Gore made two (see Table 1).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Gore</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World of beauty</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Entries are number of mentions.

Not only did the candidates invoke these two values at different rates, subjects perceived them as disproportionately committed to these values. The mean ratings for Bush and Gore on the 3-point equality and individualism scales are reported in Figure 1. As the subjects’ mean ratings of the candidates illustrate, Bush was perceived as more concerned with individualism and Gore was rated higher than Bush on equality, overall. Democrats gave Gore the highest mean scores on equality, but Republicans also were more likely to rate Gore higher on the equality scale than the nominee of their own party. Similarly, Bush received high ratings on individualism from Democrats and Republicans alike. This pattern suggests that the two candidates helped distinguish themselves from each other through their numerous appeals to individualism and equality.

Figure 1. Perceptions of candidates’ commitments to equality and individualism, by party. Entries are means on 3-point scales measuring the subjects’ perceptions of the candidate’s commitments to equality and individualism (1 = least committed, 3 = most committed).
The differences in value appeals played a part in subjects’ affective responses to the candidates. The subjects’ feelings toward Bush and Gore varied by their own commitments to equality and individualism as well as their partisanship. Not surprisingly, party identification was the best predictor of feelings towards the candidates. Party identifiers generally liked their nominee, but value predispositions also played a role. Mean feeling thermometer ratings of the candidates before and after the debate are reported in Table 2. Those Republicans who are most committed to egalitarianism gave Gore an average of 46.1 degrees on the feeling thermometer before the debate, and they warmed up to 65.5 degrees after the debate. Nonegalitarian Republicans did not change their feelings towards Gore. Moreover, egalitarian Republicans cooled towards Bush from an average of 54.1 degrees predebate to 51.1 degrees postdebate. Interestingly, the Democrats who valued individualism did not warm up to Bush the way egalitarian Republicans warmed up to Gore. In addition, Republicans who value individualism were warmer towards Bush before the debate than those Republicans who did not value individualism as highly, though both groups warmed up a bit after the debate.

While the differences in the feeling thermometer scores before and after the debate are not large for all groups, it is clear that values influenced how viewers intended to vote. Most viewers favored the same candidate before and after the debate, but there were also a large number of conversions. As Table 3 demonstrates, Gore won support among those viewers who were most egalitarian in their orientation. The 16 out of 29 undecided independents who switched to Gore had a mean score of 4.14 on a 5-point egalitarianism scale. The undecided independents who switched to Bush, or remained undecided, had lower mean scores on the measure. Similarly, the 9 out of 21 undecided Democrats who switched to Gore after the debate had a mean score of 3.78 on the egalitarianism scale. That was higher than the mean egalitarianism scores of the Democrats who remained undecided and the lone undecided Democrat who switched to Bush.

Table 2
Postdebate change in candidate feeling thermometer scores, by party and value orientation of subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Gore</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predebate</td>
<td>Postdebate</td>
<td>Predebate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarians (Dem)</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>20.9**</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarians (Rep)</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonegalitarians (Dem)</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>26.1**</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonegalitarians (Rep)</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualists (Dem)</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualists (Rep)</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonindividualists (Dem)</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>20.8**</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonindividualists (Rep)</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are mean feeling thermometer scores. Asterisks denote a postdebate mean score significantly different from the predebate mean score at left, as determined by a t test. “Egalitarians” are subjects placing themselves at 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale measuring commitment to equality. Subjects placing themselves at the highest value of a 3-point individualism scale were classified as “individualists.”

*p < .05; **p < .01.
Not only were the undecided Democrats that switched to Gore more egalitarian, on average, than those who remained undecided, but the difference in support for equality between all of the undecided voters who switched to Gore and those who chose Bush or remained undecided is statistically significant (t test, p < .05). Although there were few Republican switchers, those Republicans who were undecided before the debate and chose Gore afterwards had a mean score of 4.60, and were decidedly more egalitarian than the undecided Republicans who chose Bush or remained undecided. Overall, Gore gained 32 supporters.

Because Bush’s support did not change much after the debate, it is difficult to measure how much impact his message of individualism had. However, there is a pattern with individualism that echoes the relationship between equality and candidate preference. The mean scores on the individualism scale are reported in Table 4. The subjects showing the lowest commitment to individualism were Democrats who planned to vote for Gore both before and after the debate. That group had a mean score of 1.92. While those who supported Bush both before and after the debate were among the most committed to individualism—with a mean score of 2.39—the Republican Bush supporters who moved into the “undecided” category after the debate had a higher mean score on the individualism scale (2.45). Thus, Bush’s message did not seem to win many converts. For the 10 people he persuaded, he lost 11.

**Conclusion**

Clearly Bush and Gore relied on different values to appeal to voters. Bush emphasized individualism, while Gore stressed equality. The most notable exception to these emphases was with respect to the abortion issue. Gore framed the issue of abortion in terms of
individual freedom, while Bush turned to a morality frame. While there was a great deal of contrast in the values chosen, Bush and Gore were similar in the strategies they employed.

What effect did the value appeals made by the candidates have on viewers? Gore’s use of equality seems to have resonated with this particular group of viewers. Specifically, most undecided voters who made up their minds as a result of the debate chose Gore, while a few chose Bush and some remained undecided. Those who chose Gore were clearly more egalitarian in their orientation than undecided voters who chose Bush or could not decide. Bush’s use of individualism did not seem to persuade undecided voters, nor did it seem to have a negative impact on support for Gore. Why? According to Cook’s typology (1980), an explanation may reside in the appeal strategies used by Gore and Bush, respectively. Gore’s appeals to equality were among the most substantive in the debate, at times directly clashing with those made by Bush. Gore used a combination of bypassing, undermining, and counterblocking, a protocol particularly evident near the beginning of the debate when the candidates presented and criticized each other’s tax policies. First, Gore attempted to ignore Bush’s value standard with respect to individualism (bypassing), a credible decision with respect to the diverse audience viewing the debate. Bypassing was a low-risk strategy and had the potential to work particularly well with the experimental audience that seemed to parallel the value disposition of Gore more than Bush. However, Gore continued to respond to Bush in a more critical and high-risk manner: Gore directly denied Bush’s policy and subsequent value standard (undermining). A basic practice when undermining, and one suggested by Cook, is as follows: “Those who turn to the last recourse of undermining a popular standard seem willing to sacrifice immediate persuasion to the goal of facilitating future persuasion through change in the audience preference ordering of standards” (p. 532).

### Table 4

Subjects’ commitment to individualism, by predebate and postdebate vote choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote choice (predebate)</th>
<th>Gore</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>(148)</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>(77)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>(207)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(97)</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>(39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Entries are means on a 3-point scale measuring respondents’ commitment to individualism where 1 = most individualistic and 3 = least (see Appendix for question wording).
In this instance, Gore was critical of the support Bush used for his claim to individualism, but only temporarily. Gore later recognized the legitimacy of the value, but not as defined by Bush, thus employing counterblocking to reestablish the importance of individualism, but within his own value hierarchy. This strategy seems most appropriate as many members of the experimental audience, largely with respect to party lines, revered both equality and individualism. While Gore used a more direct argumentative strategy, Bush failed to respond in kind and, instead, relied on bypassing to create and support a distinctive difference between respective ideologies. However, as Cook (1980) argues, bypassing is often silent, unnoticed, and more effective when the “standard is also ranked low by the target audience” (p. 526). In this debate, both individualism and equality were preferred by large populations, rendering Bush’s bypassing strategy weak in comparison to Gore’s more risky, but direct, attempts to undermine his adversary’s position. Despite this strategic difference, Bush’s support remained constant before and after the debate, at least among this particular audience.

We have argued that appealing to core values is an effective form of argumentation. Values become fundamental when framing particular issues; however, their effectiveness is contingent on the issue context and the predisposition of the audience. Thus, merely constructing an appeal to values does not guarantee persuasiveness. As argued by Stutman and Newell (1984), the appeal must be more concrete in nature when attempting to move an audience to action. The appeal goes beyond creating a link between the value and the issue, as the value appeal and the issue position must resonate with a defined audience. Values are the ground on which appeals to belief and action are based—if unsound or out of sync, the more specific appeals will founder. Furthermore, by attending to the rhetorical strategies used by the candidates, we can determine the strengths and weakness of the individual arguments.

Finally, other aspects of debate performance and content may have influenced audience reactions. For example, Miller and McKerrow (2001) conclude that there were distinct differences in the rhetorical competencies demonstrated by Gore and Bush with respect to their use of emotional appeals. These differences were also reported by Benoit, McKinney, and Holbert (2001) in that Bush’s character was evaluated more positively than Gore’s. This evaluation draws our attention to Gore’s overall performance in the first debate. As reported in the Boston Globe, “in private interviews, Gore aides conceded that the vice president sounded bad when he sighed several times during the debate. They said he told them he did not realize his microphone was live, that he thought it was turned off when the TV camera was pointed away” (Johnson & Kornblut, 2000, p. A34). Nevertheless, a poll taken immediately after the debate indicated that 48% of registered voters surveyed thought Gore did the best job, whereas 41% felt that Bush did the best job.11

Future research that follows the progression of campaign messages from stump speeches and political advertisements to the various formats of debates could provide more insight into the use of value appeals that might be targeted toward specific audiences or reshaped for different contexts. In addition to providing more valuable information about message difference and strategy use, this, too, would allow researchers to delve more deeply into the issue positions held by audience members: a greater number of audience values and the extent to which politicians can address these issues accurately be understood. Few political events command the attention of the American people as much as a presidential debate. One can imagine that the relatively small effects demonstrated in the present study could have a significant impact on an election when magnified by 46.6 million viewers.
Notes

1. “Beliefs refer to an affirmation of what the believer takes to be factual statements . . . values are more normative in character and involve subjective preferences; they refer to standards of good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable” (McClosky & Zaller, 1984, p. 322).


3. Also supported by Jamieson and Birdsell (1988).

4. Minnick catalogs American values as theoretical values, economic values, aesthetic values, social values, political values, and religious values.

5. Rokeach categorizes values as “beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct [instrumental values] or desirable end-states of existence [terminal values]” (p. 7). Terminal values may be either personal or social, and instrumental values may be either moral or competence related.

6. References to debate will be identified in context. Quotations were drawn from transcripts found on-line, National Cable Satellite Corporation (C-SPAN) (2000).

7. Participants included 45.3% males, 54.7% females, 91.6% Caucasians, 2.5% African Americans, 1.3% Pacific Islanders, 1.5% Hispanics, 1.8% mult-racial.

8. The data from this study were collected from two locations, Athens, Ohio, and Blacksburg, Virginia. Non-students comprise 10% of the sample. This study was part of the Debate Watch 2000 study that included 1,179 participants from 15 different locations across the U.S. The participants were from California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and South Carolina.

9. A variety of questions, not related to the present study, were included. It is unlikely that the pretest itself focused participant attention on values in a way that would threaten the validity of the study. Moreover, as Yawn, Ellsworth, Beatty, and Kahn (1998) have pointed out, participants were already individuals interested enough in the debate to attend, so the pretest did not artificially create interest.

10. In addition to Rokeach’s typology, coders relied on a grounded theory approach when identifying additional categories.

11. CNN/USA Today, Gallup Poll results were obtain from the CNN Web site: http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/.

References


McKinney, M. S., Kaid, L. L., & Robertson, T. A. (2001). The front-runner, contenders, and


**Appendix: Questions Used to Measure Value Predispositions**

To measure commitment to equality, respondents were asked to respond to this statement:

> We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.

5 = Agree strongly  
4 = Agree somewhat  
3 = No opinion  
2 = Disagree somewhat  
1 = Disagree strongly

To measure commitment to individualism, respondents were asked to respond to this statement:

> People should take care of themselves and their families and let others do the same; OR people should care less about their own success and more about the needs of society.

1 = Take care of self  
2 = Both  
3 = Care more about society
Now, think about George Bush. How important are the following items to George Bush?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, think about Al Gore. How important are the following items to Al Gore?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality:</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Not important at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>