The Formation of Issue Concepts and Partisan Change

The popularity of the conservative-liberal distinction has been particularly notable in analyses of partisan change from election to election. If a liberal party wins an unusually strong popular vote, we are frequently informed that the public mandate is for a shift toward the left in governmental policy; if the party of the right gains new support, the public has become "cautious" or conservative about further political change. When the parties are loose coalitions of conservative and liberal wings, the meaning of the election outcome may be pursued at the level of legislative seats. Which wing within each of the parties showed the higher mortality rate in the balloting?

Any election may elicit diverse explanations, for change can hinge upon several crucial terms in the equation. If the Democratic Party is buried under a landslide of Republican votes, it may be argued that the electorate has become more conservative, that the Democratic Party has pushed too far to the left, that the Republican Party has moved in to capture votes of the "center," or any combination of the three. Other ingenious analyses incorporate still further plausible variables. The staunch partisan, finding that his party has lost strength in an election, may resist the conclusion that the public is departing from his ideological position, and claim instead that his party, by compromising its principles to win votes of the center, has left a large body of its more extreme clientele too disgruntled to participate in the election.

Despite their differences, all these accounts depend on similar assumptions concerning the frames of reference used by the electorate.
to assess political events. Such accounts presume that some significant portion of the electorate is (1) sensitive to its own policy mood in terms of a left-right continuum; and (2) is sensitive as well to the shifting policy positions of both parties on the same continuum. The notion of the continuum is as crucial as the content here. The assumption is not simply that people consider one party to be “left” and the other “right” in a dichotomous sense. Instead, there is presumed to be some perception of distance separating the parties, and this distance can be discriminated as greater or lesser at differing points in time. Often it is presumed as well that people also have a sense of the distance of either party from a neutral point, a “middle of the road.”

In view of the data we have presented these assumptions strain our credulity; yet, we cannot reject them out of hand. We have found some evidence to suggest that for a fraction of the American population these assumptions may be realistic. And the changes in the partisan vote division that attract these ideological descriptions rarely exceed a magnitude of ten per cent of the active electorate. Thus it is conceivable that a balance of power may be held by a small minority of ideologues who are sensitive to shifts of the parties along a left-right continuum. Whether this view is valid is critical to an understanding of the issue meaning of partisan change.

If the liberal-conservative notion is not common, as we have maintained, the question remains as to what frames of reference for ordering issue concerns do enjoy more widespread use. Certainly the process of political evaluation is carried on by most citizens, and this process leads to more or less predictable organization of behavior. Furthermore, there are broad currents to this behavior, as observed in the mass, which lend themselves admirably to treatment in the ideological terms discussed above. The great exodus of voters from the conservative party during the dire economic stress of the 1930’s in this country is an excellent case in point. Since the migration was toward a party more receptive to change in the existing structure of political, social, and economic relationships, this trend has been taken to reflect the rejection of the old order by an exercised populace. More recently, the increasing electoral success of the Republican Party has been taken to signify a return to the middle of the road, a “revolt of the moderates” after a sharp detour to the left.

If ideology in a sophisticated sense is not widespread in the population, there must be surrogates for ideology that bring large aggregates to act as though propelled by ideological concerns. It is important to understand the character of these surrogates not only to satisfy intel-
lectual curiosity, but also because the fact that they are surrogates rather than full-blown ideology may from time to time lead to crucial differences in behavior.

The Formation of Political Concepts at a Mass Level

Smith, Bruner, and White, in their volume *Opinions and Personality*, report an intensive analysis of the political attitudes of ten relatively well-informed and intelligent subjects. Nine of the ten, on the basis of their performance in a standardized test, ranked within the top 10 per cent of the national population in intellectual capacity. Of the tenth, the authors write:

Many of the verbal coins used in the exchange of opinions were unfamil iar to him, so that we had to learn his views without relying on such standard pieces as "Socialism," "Liberalism," "veto" and "isolationism." . . . At a concrete level he functioned effectively, showing good common sense and practical judgment. It was in the realm of abstraction that his limitations were most marked. . . . He never read books, rarely listened to the radio, and did little more than scan such newspapers and magazines as came his way. Both his information and his opinions were arrived at almost wholly through channels of conversation.1

Now "Sam Hodder," as this anonymous subject is called, was not a person of meager intelligence. He was well above the average in basic intellectual capacity, standing in the top twenty per cent of a cross-section population. But limited to a grade school education and subsequent life as a factory employee, events had not conspired to foster those habits of abstract concept formation taken for granted in intellectual strata of the society. Despite substantial innate capacity, then, even Sam Hodder did not in practice measure up to the expectations of political concept formation that often seem assumed for the bulk of the electorate.

Politically, Sam Hodder seems an average sort. He is not, without opinions on public issues that have caught his attention. To be sure, there are numerous "prominent" political debates of which he is unaware, and his issue opinions have not sprung from any differentiated view of history, of government, or of social process. But he has undoubtedly arrived at an abiding preference for one of the major parties and implements this preference with fair regularity at the polls. In fact, he may have been one contributor to the mass shift of the

American public to the party of the “left” under the burden of events of the 1930’s. What makes Sam Hodder tick politically?

The description provided by Smith, Bruner, and White is rather truncated, in part because Sam Hodder was not the most rewarding subject they examined, and in part because they were restricting their attention to attitudes toward Russia rather than partisan political behavior. Enough background is given, however, to make us feel that we have met Sam Hodder many times in our own free-answer protocols from a national population. We know that he is a union member, and “had taken a part, though not a prominent one” in the original union organization of the plant. Nonetheless, his union participation is described as “casual,” and he is “little interested in long-range plans for social betterment.”

We would imagine that if we asked Sam Hodder what he liked and disliked about the major parties, his predominant opinion would be that he liked the Democratic Party because “it is the party of the working man.” If his political world was largely undifferentiated, he might have few perceptions beyond this. If there were further differentiation, he would perhaps indicate that the Republican Party had shown him it was actively against labor or the worker, or actively for big business, management, or one of the “natural” antagonists of the working man. He might be able, also, to document his impressions by reference to specific events or policy debates: the role of the parties in the Depression, or the championing of legislation such as Taft-Hartley or social security. His view of partisan politics might be more or less differentiated, but his evaluations would revolve around the perception that one of the parties took special pains to look after the day-to-day interests of a significant grouping in the population with which he identified.

This is not ideology in a programmatic sense. There is little comprehension here of the basic problems that lead to the need for political protection; nor is there, as we have said, any interest in “long-range plans” that would aim at resolution of these problems. In fact, there is little that requires abstract thinking at all: the most significant elements of this sort implied are the quasi-abstractions “group” and “interest.” As the authors note, “because of his concrete thinking he could not [attribute evil to] an abstract construct such as the economic order.” He is concerned with politics to the degree that he feels that political change might rob him and others like him of their jobs or of concrete benefits involving wages, working conditions, and the like. He has no conception of the modes whereby political power secures

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or protects interests—these are the concerns of group leadership, whether that leadership be of union or of party. Having perceived some correlation between group success and the emergence of concrete benefits, he is willing to put his faith in any leadership that has shown enough interest in his group to figure out what must be done to maintain its welfare. He partakes of ideology by endorsing a leadership that has ideology. He engages, so to speak, in an "ideology by proxy."

This is not to say that Sam Hodder could never be jarred loose from these loyalties. Quite to the contrary, we must suppose that he remains a perceiving, evaluating individual with a healthy capacity for suspicion. If he were to suffer economic distress under circumstances in which the union appeared impotent or indifferent, or if the party stopped doing things that he felt made his lot a better one, he would undoubtedly cast about for new loyalties, new leadership.

But the difference between ideology and "ideology by proxy" is more than academic. For at points of political change the concepts employed by Sam Hodder in his evaluations make for critical differences in attitude and behavior. Let us suppose that union and party are committed to long-range economic, political, and social change toward the general end of improving the lot of many Sam Hodders; that is, we will suppose that union and party are, in ideological terms, "of the left." Now suppose that over a period of time union and party leadership swing back toward the center or even come to collude with the right, although by one mechanism or another the day-to-day security of Sam's economic position is maintained. If Sam were ideologically inclined he might become disturbed and disillusioned at the forsaking of broader goals. Sensitive to ideological matters, he would behave as the analyst would presume: the changed relationship between his own position and that of the group on an underlying ideological continuum would change the values that the group held for him. He might participate in moves to change the leadership, or he might seek more promising agents further to the left.

Without such frames of reference he has little reason even to be aware that change has occurred. As long as concrete experience within his perceived world goes on as usual, his loyalties will proceed as usual also. To the degree that these loyalties color his interpretation of events, they may even proceed despite some "objective" contradiction in events. Or if the fact of change in goals should actually be brought to Sam's attention, he would lack any independent reference points from which to evaluate the matter. Leadership programs have helped him in the past. If leadership ideas have changed, it is probably for good reason; the people at the top are in a better position to know what
must be done than he is. He will always be able to judge what are, for him, the “results.” Hence under certain circumstances the total flavor of political events may come to depend on the level at which the many “followers” like Sam Hodder have been in the habit of conceptualizing their relevant experience.

Favorable or unfavorable reactions to the political parties or candidates often consist of beliefs that they are agents that will aid or ignore this or that grouping in the population. In some of our protocols these perceptions are connected tightly with other comments more clearly ideological in character. But often it is apparent under probing by the interviewer that the respondent does not fit these notions of group benefit into any broader or more abstract frame of reference. They are, of course, self-sufficient without it: there is nothing logically incomplete in the belief that a leader or party is sensitive to problems unique to a social grouping.

However simple these conceptions of politics may appear, there are many people in the American electorate whose modes of conceptualizing the political world and its social or economic consequences are a good deal less complex still and who appear even more remote from the type of thinking presumed by “ideology.” In a diffuse way “times are good” or “times are bad”—there is war or peace, depression or prosperity. If some pattern can be perceived linking the nature of the times with a particular party in power, this pattern may come to be considered a causal sequence. Once again, however, after such perceptions have been volunteered, further probing usually seems to indicate that most political issue content has thereby been exhausted.

There are many citizens whose issue perceptions are even more impoverished. Some of these people are staunch adherents of one of the political parties, although they freely admit it is simply a matter of family tradition and they personally have no idea what the parties “stand for.” Others ignore the parties despite direct questioning, and focus their political evaluations upon the personal characteristics of the current candidates themselves—their sincerity, their religious beliefs, their family life, their “popularity.” And, finally, there are those who lack the interest or background to differentiate successfully between either the candidates or the parties.

It seems important to estimate the incidence of these various modes of conceptualizing issue controversy in a cross section of the adult population. Unfortunately, there are no simple yardsticks to measure the sophistication of a person’s conceptualization. We cannot quantify the character of a person’s political conceptions even in the loose manner with which we measure the intensity of attitudes. We are
interested in the presence or absence of certain abstractions that have
to do with ideology; but we are also interested in the degree to which
the individual's political world is differentiated and, most important,
in the nature of the degree of "connectedness" between the elements
that are successfully discriminated. In short, we are interested in the
structure of thought that the individual applies to politics; and this
interest forces us to deal in typologies and qualitative differences.

Toward this end we attempted to assign our 1956 respondents to
various "levels" of conceptualization on the basis of their discursive
responses in evaluating the good and bad points of the two parties and
the two candidates, as described in Chapter 4.\(^3\) Despite the inevitable
crudities of the categories employed, these levels seemed to provide a
clear ordering in terms of conceptual sophistication. The expected
ordering turned out to receive striking confirmation in other char-
acteristics of the occupants at successive levels. And the classification
system was sufficiently clear to insure satisfactory inter-rater reliability.\(^4\)

The nature of the categories used has been foreshadowed above. A
fairly flexible view of ideology was taken as a point of departure, and
lower levels involved an increasing remoteness in content and in level
of conceptualization from this "ideal." Each respondent was assigned
to the highest level warranted by any portion of his commentary. Al-
though some finer differentiations were employed in the actual coding
process, we shall focus most of our attention upon four major levels.
The first of these (to be denoted Level A) embraces all respondents
whose evaluations of the candidates and the parties have any sugges-
tion of the abstract conception one would associate with ideology.
We did not wish to be bound to familiar content in assessing this level
of issue conceptualization. However, it rapidly became apparent that
virtually all high-order abstractions used were familiar from current
political commentary. This seems to mean simply that insights as to
basic new ordering dimensions are not likely to be forthcoming in
a restricted sample of the population. Even our most sophisticated
respondents were no more than alert consumers of the refined content
of the political culture. They might express original viewpoints, but
they were totally dependent on the standard abstractions for their

\(^3\) The interviewer is instructed to probe extensively for further content on each
of the eight questions comprising the sequence. This instruction is generally
successful enough that this portion of the interview schedule absorbs on the
average ten to fifteen minutes of time near the beginning of the questionnaire.

\(^4\) Eighty-two per cent of 211 respondents independently classified by different
coders were assigned to the same one of our broad levels. Only 3 per cent were
discrepancies beyond an adjacent level.
basic-conceptual tools. We did encounter one or two respondents who might be suspected of seeking unfamiliar dimensions of high abstraction. These people were included in Level A. Otherwise, persons placed here talked in terms of the liberal-conservative continuum, or one of the narrower domains of abstract content involved in current ideological controversy: trends in the relationship between federal power and local autonomy, the fate of individual incentive under government "dole," and the like.

The second grouping (Level B) was reserved for persons whose issue comment revolved around fairly concrete and short-term group interest, or what we have already described in some detail as "ideology by proxy." In the next category (Level C) were persons engrossed in simplistic associations between the "goodness" and "badness" of the times and the identity of the party in power, or who appeared to have exhausted their view of the situation with mention of some rather isolated and specific issue. The final level (Level D) thereby contains individuals who evaluated the political objects without recourse to issues that might fairly be related to debates over domestic public policy. Excluded as true issue content, for example, were observations concerning mudslinging, charges of graft, comments on the personal attributes of the candidates, or references to their age, health, or past experience. It should also be kept in mind that our concern is with public policy relevant to domestic social and economic problems. Although foreign policy matters may, by some criteria, be intimately related to domestic policy questions, they are not treated in this discussion. Their exclusion rests in part on the previously described absence of relationship between domestic and foreign policy issue concerns among the general public, in part on the absence of any analytic relationship that could be postulated apart from the specific content of particular ideologies, and in part on the need for maximizing simplicity in our explication of this innovation in political analysis.

Although our central focus was upon the abstract concepts implied in the commentary, attention was also paid to the degree of differentiation and the "connectedness" of the ideas in which critical issue perceptions were imbedded. Since variation at this point was wide enough to justify internal distinctions within some of the gross levels, it is important to illustrate how the presence or absence of "normal" connections between ideas is communicated by the protocols. For example, a storekeeper in upstate New York responded in the following manner to questioning about the parties:
I'd like to ask you what you think are the good and bad points about the two parties. Is there anything in particular that you like about the Democratic Party?

I don't know much about the Democratic Party so I cannot answer one way or the other.

Is there anything in particular that you don't like about the Democratic Party?

The only thing I associate the Democratic Party with is that it seems to be the party that is in power during a war.

Is there anything in particular that you like about the Republican Party?

I think that the Republican Party has handled the foreign situation—that is, the cold war—with success, and it is always associated in my mind with peace and prosperity.

Is there anything in particular that you don't like about the Republican Party?

Nothing that I can think of.

Here the simple links in the respondent's mind between party and non-political states (war, peace, prosperity) are extremely clear. In general, we are willing to assume that absence of commentary means absence of linkage that would draw other elements into association with political objects. In some cases, however, the response includes several elements that the individual cannot seem to link in the normal fashion. For example, a woman in Indianapolis, having indicated at the outset that she did not know much about "any of this" and was "not a good one to talk to," upon further questioning as to reactions toward the Democratic Party, responded:

Well, I've heard people—a lot of them say they're more for the working man. And I noticed all big union leaders are for them. But I don't know and don't understand just how they're for the working man. Like I told you, I honestly don't know much.

In this case, the individual has absorbed enough political content to realize that certain links are imputed often between party and a segment of the population, but is unable to bring meaning to the association. Similarly, a farm laborer in California included the following remarks in his response to the party questions:

I don't think it makes much difference to poor people—any of their parties don't do nothin' for us. I got hurt and I still had to go to the Welfare to get my bills paid—the party don't pay you. Poor people don't get nothin' from bein' interested in politics.

Here the ingredients are present for a response fitting Level B: the speaker perceives in thoroughly concrete terms the interests of a group-
ing in the population with which he identifies. But his immediate experience has failed to suggest to him the possible links between political power and the existence or conduct of the welfare agency. However completely these links may be taken for granted among the sophisticated, perceptions of this sort force us to reflect on the subtlety and intangibility of such relationships. For the person whose perceptions are bound to his concrete, day-to-day experience, they are far from self-evident.

We were eager to avoid a number of potential pitfalls in a classification procedure of this order. We did not wish the assignment to be influenced by the partisan implication of the concepts employed. To the degree that the two parties tend to stress different ideological vocabularies, we desired to give each party vocabulary equal recognition. Similarly, the respondent who dislikes a party because it caters to the interests of special groups is employing concepts at the same level as the person who expresses gratitude for this interest, and should therefore receive the same classification. In short, we were not interested in the partisan product of the evaluation process, but rather in the character of the concepts that were playing a role in that process.

Secondly, we did not wish to confuse enthusiasm for quality of conception. A person who felt very strongly about a particular evaluation was not to be rated more highly than a person who used the same concepts for an offhand evaluation. To be sure, we would expect the individual who is intensely interested in politics to have arrived at different organizing concepts than the person who pays little attention to political events. But we need not think that a sense of pleasure or displeasure about a candidate or party that is fuzzy in focus and vague in source is intrinsically weak in its motivational significance for the individual. Particularly if the person lacks the capacity to organize what might seem more “telling” evaluative structures, these vague premonitions can be emotionally consuming. Consider the following interview:

_I'd like to ask you what you think are the good and bad points about the two parties. Is there anything in particular that you like about the Democratic Party?_

No, there's nothing I've got against them. I feel that Eisenhower ought to have a show. He's done a lot in his first four years and he should have a chance at another four years. He's pulled us out of the war and kept us out of war these last four years. I think he's done wonders myself! Of course there's his health but I think he'll pull out of that all right. Give him good thoughts! (Give him good thoughts?) Yes. (Pray for him?) Sure. I liked him when he came in the first time. I like the looks of his face._
Is there anything in particular that you don't like about the Democratic Party?

No, I've got nothing against them, only I believe in giving Eisenhower a show for what he's done. Let him finish one! The only thing I've got against them is they'll just have to start where Eisenhower started from. We aren't going to be any better off.

Is there anything in particular that you like about the Republican Party?

Nothing in particular, no. (Anything in general?) Well, I've always been a Republican, and my husband was, too.

Is there anything in particular that you don't like about the Republican Party?

No!

Now I'd like to ask you about the good and bad points of the two candidates for President. Is there anything in particular about Stevenson that might make you want to vote for him?

No—I have got nothing against him or nothing for him as far as that goes. He might make a good man and all that. But he'll just have to start again and all that. But the way things are in such a mess I think Eisenhower should continue.

Is there anything in particular about Stevenson that might make you want to vote against him?

No, I don't know anything about the man.

Is there anything in particular about Eisenhower that might make you want to vote for him?

Well, I just like him for what he's done. (Anything in particular in mind?) Well, he's pulled us out of the war. I can't just say what other things he's done.

Is there anything in particular about Eisenhower that might make you want to vote against him?

No.

There was no lack of intensity in this Michigan woman's admiration for the Eisenhower Administration. Only one "issue" theme—the termination of the Korean War—can be mustered to illustrate the "wonders" accomplished, yet there is an obvious fervor in the evaluation that might not be matched even where much fuller documentation of good works is available to the individual. It is likely that the traditional Republican partisanship mentioned had predisposed this respondent to evaluate the Republican candidate positively, and perceptions of good works could arise from such a base even though the individual knew little or nothing of what the incumbent had actually done or "stood for." If this woman could not proceed beyond the war issue in supporting her impressions, however, we should not leap to the conclusion that she had never recognized and evaluated other specific positions taken by the Administration. We lack evidence to make a judgment either way.
ISSUE CONCEPTS AND PARTISAN CHANGE

The crucial fact for our purposes is that these specific details, if they were ever apprehended, readily escape her. They have not been captured on any preserving framework of generalized notions concerning what is politically desirable. They have not become lodged as illustrations of a broader direction in which the Administration is heading. They were discrete perceptions without meaning, save as proof of the benevolence of party or candidate; and, otherwise isolated, they have rapidly faded beyond recall. The residue is a real and potent "glow" felt toward the relevant objects, but it is the result of an evaluation process rather remote from that of the "ideologue." Motivation may be high at any level of conceptualization, and we tried to honor this fact in our classification.

Differences in Political Concept-Formation: Illustrations from a Cross-Section Sample

Level A, ideology and near-ideology. We shall consider two categories of respondents distinguished within Level A. The first was reserved for persons whose comments imply the kinds of conception of politics assumed by ideological interpretations of political behavior and political change. We shall refer to these individuals as "ideologues." The second category within Level A includes people who employ concepts of some ideological flavor but who, for one reason or another, do not apply them in a manner that seems to qualify them as "ideologues."

Some people clearly perceived a fundamental liberal-conservative continuum on which various of the political objects might be located and along which these objects might shift relative positions over time. Although we were more interested in the fact of this conception than in the manner in which the individual related himself to it, in most cases such respondents clearly located themselves at one or another point on the continuum and evaluated the parties or factions within parties from this position. These ideologues are not, from a sophisticated point of view, exceptional observers. Their commentary is neither profound, stimulating, nor creative. But they have absorbed some of the ideological abstractions of our day, and are able to put them to use in their political evaluations. In brief, they are the persons who fulfill most clearly the assumptions about political perceptions discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

It should not be inferred that mastery of the terms "liberal" or "conservative" was necessary for inclusion in this upper "ideologue" grouping of Level A. The category was open to respondents who
might deal in rather unorthodox modes of organization, although only a case or two of this variety was recruited.\(^5\) Similarly, some respondents who appeared unaware of the sophisticated terms banked their evaluations of the parties on perceptions that the Democrats "rushed into things too fast" or were willing to "work on problems right when they came up, not hanging back like the Republicans." Comments of this sort, although very rare, cut so directly to the heart of the liberal-conservative distinction that there was no question of their classification in the upper grouping of Level A. These are clearly people whose conceptions are subsumed in the descriptions of the "liberal" or "conservative" temper of the public mind.

The first interview drawn from this upper category within Level A is somewhat unusual in the degree of content pertaining to state politics, but otherwise is quite representative of the responses that received this classification. The respondent is a woman residing in the suburbs of Chicago.

*(Like about Democrats?)* No. *(Is there anything at all you like about the Democratic Party?)* No, nothing at all.

*(Dislike about Democrats?)* From being raised in a notoriously Republican section—a small town downstate—there were things I didn't like. There was family influence that way. *(What in particular was there you didn't like about the Democratic Party?)* Well, the Democratic Party tends to favor socialized medicine—and I'm being influenced in that because I came from a doctor's family.

*(Like about Republicans?)* Well, I think they're more middle-of-the-road—more conservative. *(How do you mean, "conservative"?)* They are not so subject to radical change. *(Is there anything else in particular that you like about the Republican Party?)* Oh, I like their foreign policy—and the segregation business, that's a middle-of-the-road policy. You can't push it too fast. You can instigate things, but you have to let

\(^5\) A Kentucky woman who seemed to be struggling to express an ordering dimension rather distinct from the liberal-conservative continuum is commenting unfavorably about the Democratic Party:

They are being more Europeanized. It's too much a party. The party does it instead of the voters. The party rather than their goal is important.

Or, of the Republicans:

They do not seem to be so much a party. They seem to be working for a common goal for each party—working together as individuals, instead of as a party.

\(^6\) The initial questions having to do with the parties and candidates are the same throughout. From this point on, we shall abbreviate them in this fashion, although further probing that was introduced under each "root" question will continue to be reproduced in full.
them take their course slowly.  

(Is there anything else?) I don't like Mr. Hodge.  

(Is there anything else?) The labor unions telling workers how to vote—they know which side their bread is buttered on so they have to vote the way they are told to!

(Dislike about Republicans?) Mr. Hodge!  

(Is there anything else?) I can't think of anything.  

This respondent operates with a fairly clear sense of the liberal-conservative distinction and uses it to locate both the major parties and the more specific policy positions espoused. The second interview drawn to represent this category is somewhat weaker. The following remarks, transcribed from a woman in a small Ohio city, serve to illustrate the marginal inclusions in this category:

(Like about Democrats?) Well, that depends on what you are thinking of—historically or here lately. I think they are supposed to be more interested in the small businessman and low tariffs.  

(Is there anything in particular that you like about the Democratic Party?) Nothing except it being a more liberal party, and I think of the Republicans as being more conservative and interested in big business.

(Dislike about Democrats?) I think extravagance, primarily.  

(Is there anything else?) Nothing that occurs to me offhand.

(Like about Republicans?) Well, I never thought so. I have been a Republican the last several years because of the personalities involved, I guess.

(Dislike about Republicans?) This again is traditional—just that they give too much support to big business and monopoly concerns.  

(Any other things you don't like about the Republican Party?) No.

In this case the concept of the liberal-conservative continuum appears to be relatively peripheral. The respondent feels that evaluations based on concepts of this order favor the Democratic Party, but by her own account the "personalities" have in recent years loomed larger in her voting decisions. However, these concepts are present, and although not impressively developed, are used in a manner that implies that the respondent is sensitive to changes over time in the location of political objects on the underlying continuum. Hence in order to be lenient, she was assigned a position in the upper category of Level A.

It is striking, then, that responses of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of our cross-section sample warranted inclusion in this top category. Since people placed here are much more likely to take a fuller role in politics than

*In order to preserve space, we shall omit reproduction of responses to the questions regarding the candidates, save where such responses add integrally to our understanding of the manner in which the respondent evaluates politics.
are persons lower on the scale, they bulk somewhat larger in the active electorate. But these ideologues still represent no more than 3½ per cent of our actual voters in 1956. In view of the fact that the partisan division of the national vote for federal office often shifts by as much as five or ten per cent within the biennial or quadrennial period, it is clear that this group alone could account for only a tiny portion of such short-term change, either by switching party or by staying at home.

There is, however, a more substantial group of respondents who have some claim to ideological perception. We have segregated them from the upper layer of ideologues because we are somewhat less confident that they fulfill the assumptions that we are examining. These people displaying "near-ideology" consist of three general types.

The first type is most similar to the full "ideologue." Frequently these people employ the liberal-conservative distinction, but their use of these concepts has little of the dynamic or highly relativistic quality found in the ideologue. "Liberalism" or "conservatism" is a status attribute of a party: there is less sense here of a continuum embracing many shadings of position, with objects shifting inward toward the center or outward toward extremes over time. Others give no explicit recognition to the liberal-conservative distinction, but employ organizing concepts of a sufficiently high order of abstraction to cut some swath through areas of ideological controversy. One interview drawn to exemplify this type of "near-ideology" comes from a man in southern Ohio:

(Like about Democrats?) Yes, I like their platform. (What is that?) They're more inclined to help the working class of people, and that is the majority in our country. And I like the idea of stopping the hydrogen bomb tests. It would make for more friendly feelings toward other countries, and they would be more friendly to us. I think the Democratic Party wants peace as much as the Republican Party.

(Dislike about Democrats?) Yeah, there's a lot of things. One thing is they're too much for federal control of utilities. (Is there anything else you don't like about the Democratic Party?) Well, it seems they don't always run the best men there are for their offices. (For example?) There's several I could mention that don't have the best reputation in the world.

(Like about Republicans?) Well, they play up to individual rights, which is good. That's good—it makes a person feel more independent.

(Dislike about Republicans?) They believe in big industry, utilities, etc. (Anything else you don't like?) They've passed a lot of labor bills I don't approve of.

This respondent does not introduce the liberal-conservative distinction explicitly. His opening comment about Democratic interest in
the working class is of the group-interest type that will form the broad criterion for Level B. But he also includes commentary about the problem of federal control over utilities and the value of individual rights. Both of these observations involve abstractions common to the ideological disputes of our era. The respondent’s own position concerning the role of government toward utilities is left rather unclear: he resents tendencies of the Democrats toward federal control, yet appears to dislike the Republican position as well. Here as elsewhere, however, we restrict our attention to the nature of the concepts employed rather than become involved in judgments of the coherence of ideological positions.

The other interview drawn to represent this group comes from a man in upstate New York.

(Like about Democrats?) Well, I like their liberalism over the years. They certainly have passed beneficial legislation like social security and unemployment insurance, which the average man needs today.

(Dislike about the Democrats?) The Communists linked to Roosevelt and Truman. Corruption. Tax scandals. I don’t like any of those things.

(Like about Republicans?) I also like the conservative element in the Republican Party. (Anything else?) No.

(Dislike about Republicans?) No, not at present.

The subject here may suffer some confusion about the full meaning of “liberal” and “conservative,” since he seems to find both to be pleasing attributes. However, he does pair these characteristics off, and he brings appropriate specifics to one of these terms. Another 2 per cent of our sample was considered to be of this type. These people constituted about 2½ per cent of our 1956 voters. Up to this point, then, we have accounted for about 4½ per cent of the total sample, and for slightly less than 6 per cent of our voters.

A second type of interview considered “near-ideology” included persons who used one or another of the labels common to ideological discussion, but in a context rather bare of supporting perceptions, so that we must take it on faith that the term had the normal connotations for the user. Generally the flavor of the context is not one to cast great doubt on the appropriateness of the meaning, but the lack of supporting material usually indicates that other simpler concepts are equally or more prominent in the individual’s thinking about politics. The New York man quoted previously illustrated his generalized perception of Democratic “liberalness” with specific instances of liberal legislation. Such mustering of appropriate evidence is one of
the characteristics distinguishing the first type of near-ideology from the second. The respondent drawn to exemplify the second type is a man from Texas:

(Like about Democrats?) (After a long delay.) I think the Democrats are more concerned with all the people. (How do you mean?) They put out more liberal legislation for all the people.

(Dislike about Democrats?) They have a sordid history over the past 20 years, though no worse than the Republican Administrations. (How do you mean?) Oh, things like deep freezes and corruption in government.

(Like about Republicans?) No!

(Dislike about Republicans?) Oh, they're more for a moneyed group.

Here the bulk of the content follows the lines of group benefit concepts that are generally classified at a lower level. Nevertheless, the term “liberal” is employed in a context of some reasonable meaning, and it is possible that fuller probing would have developed a more explicit indication of more abstract ideological conceptions.

Lest it seem odd that we approached our interviews with caution when ideological labels appeared with little surrounding evidence that the term was understood, we should point out that in some cases it is clear that the respondent is aware of the term without appearing to understand its normal meaning. For example, a college graduate, when asked what she meant in styling herself as a “liberalist,” replied that she liked both of the parties. In other instances, words with a common political meaning were employed in a more colloquial manner. “Liberal” sometimes meant merely “generous,” as was the case with the farmer who felt the Democrats were liberal with price supports whereas Republicans were “stingier.” Similarly, it became clear that “radical” could mean “outspoken,” when applied to Harry Truman’s method of dressing down his adversaries in campaign speeches. Finally, there were some few cases—less than half of one per cent—in which it seemed obvious that “Communist” and “Socialistic” had little meaning for the respondent beyond the punch of a political “swear-word.” Respondents who used such ideological terms, but in such non-ideological manner, were not included in the second type of “near-ideology” unless further qualifying comment was present.

The second type of near-ideology adds another 33½ per cent of the sample to Level A, and another 5 per cent of our total of 1956 voters. Thus it is the largest group so far considered, although we have only accounted for about 8 per cent of the sample up to this point.

The final type of interview classified as near-ideology within Level A was...
was in one sense the inverse of the preceding type. Persons were classified here who had highly differentiated images relevant to one or another ideological content domain, yet failed to introduce the generalized concepts that are normally used to summarize and order these perceptions in sophisticated debate. Whereas respondents of the preceding type had absorbed labels but had difficulty bringing appropriate specific information to them, individuals here were laden with information but showed no tendency to distill such detail to a higher level of abstraction.

In some of these cases, it was conceivable that the failure to indicate an awareness of more generalized organizing dimensions was accidental. Nevertheless, we find among these people, as well as those of the preceding type, an increasing tendency to depend upon party and group concepts as organizing focuses for issue content, rather than ideological positions. Thus responses of these types are already merging with the concept usages of individuals in Level B.

The interview drawn to represent this final type of near-ideology was contributed by a man in southern California:

(Like about Democrats?) The Democratic Party is more for higher social security. They're more for old age pensions and better working conditions for the working man. They want a higher standard of living for all people, not just a few. The promises that are made by the Democrats are kept if at all possible. The facts are told to the American people.

(Dislike about Democrats?) It seems to me they could handle their campaign better. (How do you mean?) Well, for instance, they could do a little better job of selling to the public. They should try and quiet Truman down so he will not pull a boner as in the Democratic convention. (Do you have any other dislikes for the Democratic Party?) No.

(Like about Republicans?) Not one thing! (In general, is there anything that you like about the Republican Party?) No!

(Dislike about Republicans?) I dislike everything about the Republican Party. (Could you explain what you mean?) I was growing up at the time of the Hoover Administration. What a time I had, too. There was barely enough to eat. I don't think the Republicans wanted that, but they did nothing to stop it. Not until Roosevelt came along and made things start to happen. Now the Republican Party still stands for big business, at the expense of the farmer and the working man. Promises made are not kept—ask the poor farmer, if no one else.

Over the course of these remarks there are points at which summary constructs familiar in ideological discussion would be highly appropriate. However, the recital of specific measures supported by the Democrats is not generalized to such a level of abstraction. Instead,
the "standard of living" is used to sum up the direction of party policy, and this matter is treated as a benefit linked to a group, albeit a large group, within the population. Similarly, a perception of Republican passivity in the face of the Depression is vividly contrasted in the subject's mind with initiatives taken by Roosevelt. Yet this is not seen as a special case of a general posture toward change. Rather, it is left as a concrete vignette, developed once again into a proposition about group interest.

We did not feel that any of the types of response discussed here as "near-ideology" provided satisfactory support for assumptions concerning ideological perceptions. We include them as part of Level A, however, for it is possible that some among them would, in other settings, so amplify their observations as to merit "ideologue" classification.

If the reader has been struck by this generosity of assignment, he should hold this fact in mind as we measure our progress across the electorate. For despite our attempts at generous estimates, we find that with all of the ideologues and near-ideologues of Level A cumulated we have only covered about 12 per cent of all subjects interviewed, and 15 per cent of our 1956 voters. In other words, about 85 per cent of the 1956 electorate brought simpler conceptual tools to bear on their issue concerns.

Level B, group benefits. In the last interviews to be cited from Level A, we noted an increasing tendency to evaluate the political objects in terms of their response to interests of visible groupings in the population. Such perceptions are the dominant themes characterizing Level B, and constitute what we have described earlier as "ideology by proxy."

Such relationships between political object and group can be appreciated at a simple and concrete level. A party or candidate is sympathetic with or hostile to the group. Some perspective into the future is presupposed, inasmuch as the subject expects the orientation of party or candidate toward the group to endure, thereby assuring a continued protection and flow of benefits. But this perspective is foreshortened. As with Sam Hodder, there is little comprehension of "long-range plans for social betterment," or of basic philosophies rooted in postures toward change or abstract conceptions of social and economic structure of causation. The party or candidate is simply endorsed as being "for" a group with which the subject is identified or as being above the selfish demands of groups within the population. Exactly how the candidate or party might see fit to implement or avoid group interests is a moot point, left unrelated to broader ideological concerns. But the party or candidate is "located" in some affective
relationship toward a group or groups, and the individual metes out trust on this basis.

As was the case with Level A, several types might be distinguished within Level B. One major content distinction had to do with the degree to which perceptions of group interest were elaborated. Some respondents tended to perceive politics in terms of a competition of these group interests, with the political parties arraying themselves in favor of one group and in opposition to another. However, many respondents did not develop the discussion of group benefit beyond the context of a single group, nor did they express a feeling that the party or candidate not seen as favorable was actively pursuing a threatening policy, either by ignoring or seeking to harm the group, or by supporting another group seen as a natural antagonist. Individuals who perceived a conflict of group interests in the political arena seemed to give more sophisticated interviews than those whose perceptions were bound up in the sympathy that one of the parties or candidates might be expected to show toward a single group. In terms of numbers, Level B was fairly evenly split between these two types.

In addition to this content distinction, there was a considerable range in the quality of response within both types. For example, some of the people who paired the parties with opposing interest groups could bring little further content to the matter under probing. That the Democrats were for the working man and the Republicans for business often seemed no more than slogans. Frequently the respondent would indicate in so many words that he or she had little personal knowledge about it: this was simply what somebody in the family who knew something about politics had always said. For analytic purposes, these rather shallow versions of the group benefit theme were separated from the normal run of responses of this sort.

People having relatively substantial perceptions of a competition of group interests make up the first category of any size that we have encountered. Fourteen per cent of our sample received this classification. Although the perception of group interest provides a tangible criterion for inclusion at this level, the reader is urged to compare the illustrative interviews drawn randomly from this group with those of the higher level in terms of the more general grasp of politics that is represented. The first illustrative responses come from an Iowa man:

(Like about Democrats?) I don't know of anything. (Is there anything you like about the Democratic Party?) No, I wouldn't say there is.

(Dislike about Democrats?) I don't particularly agree how they have passed out the money and increased the taxes.
(Like about Republicans?) I think they try to run the country without running in debt and keep us out of wars. (Anything else that you like about the Republican Party?) No.

(Dislike about Republicans?) They are more for big business. (Anything else?) No. (What do you mean by "big business"?) Well, the little man gets crowded out. They cater to the big men.

(Now I'd like to ask you about the good and bad points of the two candidates for President. Is there anything in particular about Stevenson that might make you want to vote for him?) No, I don't believe so.

(Is there anything in particular about Stevenson that might make you want to vote against him?) No, not as a man.

(Is there anything in particular about Eisenhower that might make you want to vote for him?) He has been a good leader all of his life. (Anything else?) No.

(Is there anything in particular about Eisenhower that might make you want to vote against him?) The only thing is whether or not his health would permit him to finish his term.

The second illustration of category B-I comes from an Ohio farm woman.

(Like about Democrats?) I think they have always helped the farmers. To tell you the truth, I don't see how any farmer could vote for Mr. Eisenhower. (Is there anything else you like about the Democratic Party?) We have always had good times under their Administration. They are more for the working class of people. Any farmer would be a fool to vote for Eisenhower.

(Dislike about Democrats?) No, I can't say there is.

(Like about Republicans?) No.

(Dislike about Republicans?) About everything. (What are you thinking of?) They promise so much but they don't do anything. (Anything else?) I think the Republicans favor the richer folks. I never did think much of the Republicans for putting into office a military man.

(Like about Stevenson?) I think he is a very smart man. (Is there anything else?) I think he will do what he says, will help the farmer. We will have higher prices. (Anything else?) No.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) No. But I have this against Stevenson, but I wouldn't vote against him. In the Illinois National Guards he had Negroes and Whites together. They ate and slept together. I don't like that. I think Negroes should have their own place. I don't see why they would want to mix.

(Like about Eisenhower?) No.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) Yes. He favors Wall Street. I don't think he is physically able, and he will step aside and that Richard Nixon will be president. (Anything else?) To tell the truth, I never thought he knew enough about politics to be a President. He is a military man. He takes too many vacations and I don't see how he can do the job.
One theme that appears here, the attention to specific “promises,” deserves special comments, for it symbolizes several of the basic differences in modes of thought that we encounter as we move downward through these levels of conceptualization. In the upper ranges, particularly among the full ideologues, references to promises made or broken are almost non-existent. But as we depart from the upper level, references of this sort increase in frequency to the point at which they become almost the center of any attention paid to content with policy implication.

The political “promise,” in the form retained by the respondent, has characteristics that contrast sharply with the sorts of concerns associated with ideology. Promises are campaign pledges to bring about a certain product or state, such as more jobs, peace, or higher farm prices. Promises arise de novo with each campaign; they have minimal roots in either a party tradition or a long-range program. The time perspective they imply is foreshortened in the future as well as the past, for they create expectations of immediate results. Finally, they are formulated in a manner which ignores the many factors, independent of man or party, that are certain in the short term to help or hinder the emergence of the end-state promised. The tendency to focus upon these pledges as the issue core of politics seems to token narrow time perspectives, concrete modes of thought, and a tremendously oversimplified view of causality in social, economic, and political process.

With the interview involving perceptions of conflicting group interest added to those of Level A, we have now accounted for about one quarter of our sample and slightly less than one third of the voters. Another 17 per cent of the respondents talked of benefits accruing to a single group through the aid of a single party. The first interview drawn to illustrate this type comes from a man in Texas:

(Like about Democrats?) Well, I don’t know. I’ve just always before

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8 This is not true within Level D, of course, for subjects were classified here only if there was no reference to the sort of issue material made concrete in the campaign promise.

9 The fact that promises are evaluated and digested in a form as simple if not simpler than that in which they are introduced does not mean that they are accepted at face value. A substantial portion of the people who are oriented to politics in these terms are extremely cynical about the probability of fulfillment of this or that specific pledge. The important point is that as often as not the cynicism reflects less doubt that the candidate will be able to fulfill the promise than doubt that he will take the trouble once in office. Hence the view of causality implied is the same. Once again, we are concerned here with the conceptual tools employed in the evaluation process, rather than the outcome of the evaluation.
been a Democrat. My daddy before me always was. *(Can you name any good things that you like about the party?)* Well, no, I guess not.

*(Dislike about Democrats?)* I don't know of anything.

*(Like about Republicans?)* No.

*(Dislike about Republicans?)* Well, I just don't believe they are for the common people. *(Anything else that you don't like about the Republican Party?)* No, I don't think so.

*(Like about Stevenson?)* No, ma'am.

*(Dislike about Stevenson?)* Well, I wouldn't know hardly how to put that. I just don't hardly think he's the man for President.

*(Like about Eisenhower?)* Well, his past is all. *(Is there anything else that might make you want to vote for him?)* No.

*(Dislike about Eisenhower?)* Nothing but the right man in the Democratic Party.

A woman in South Carolina responds:

*(Like about Democrats?)* They're more interested in small businessmen and farms. *(Can you tell me any more about that?)* No, but I've always heard this.

*(Dislike about Democrats?)* The race problem. *(Its stand on the race problem.)*

*(Like about Republicans?)* No.

*(Dislike about Republicans?)* Race problem.

*(Like about Stevenson?)* No.

*(Dislike about Stevenson?)* He's divorced.

*(Like about Eisenhower?)* I don't know of anything in particular but in general he's a good man.

*(Dislike about Eisenhower?)* His health. *(Respondent is a nurse.)*

These interviews, chosen randomly from among the more capable responses falling in Level B, serve to represent the conflict-of-interest and the single-group interest responses. As we have suggested, some interviews of rather low calibre with group-benefit mentions were separated to form a lower category within Level B. By and large, the quality of responses here is close to what we shall later encounter in Level C, despite the group references. These poorer interviews of Level B, making up another 11 per cent of the sample include responses similar to that of a New York City woman:

*(Like about Democrats?)* Well, my father is a Democrat and I'm one by inheritance sort of. I know nothing about politics but I like the Democratic Party because I know they are more for the poorer people.

*(Dislike about Democrats?)* Nope.
(Like about Republicans?) No, there isn't.

(Dislike about Republicans?) Yes. They are out to help the rich people.

(Like about Stevenson?) I heard him talk on TV, and he is a wonderful talker. I believe what he says and I think he will make a good President. I think he is capable and honest and I like him.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) No.

(Like about Eisenhower?) He is a fine man. A good military man, though, not a good President.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) Yes, he was not a good President because he relied too much on his helpers. They led him. He didn't lead them.

Many of the poorer responses involving the interest of a single group referred to the plight of the farmers in 1956. As one might expect, a fair proportion of these came from farmers themselves. However, some of the people who felt that one of the parties was working in the interest of the farmer were of urban background, such as this wife of a machinist in Louisville, Kentucky:

(Like about Democrats?) That's Stevenson, ain't it? (Yes, that's his party.) No, I don't know anything about Stevenson, but I do like the party. (What is it that you like about the Democratic Party?) There's always been more Democrats running for President than there has been for the other party, and they've got in more. (Is there anything else you like about the Democratic Party?) No.

(Dislike about Democrats?) I don't know anything about the Democratic Party. (Respondent was thinking so awfully hard and getting nowhere at all.) Well, for one thing, they were hard on the farmers. (I explained that we were talking about the Democratic Party and repeated the question.) No, I always liked it until Truman was in. He said he was going to do things for the farmers and he backed out.

(Like about Republicans?) That's Stevenson, ain't it? I get them mixed up. (No, that's Eisenhower's party.) Well, one thing, I heard he lowered taxes. (Is there anything else you like about the Republican Party?) And he's a good man—I hope he gets in this time.

(Dislike about Republicans?) No, I can't think of anything.

(Like about Stevenson?) No, I just don't like Stevenson.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) No, there's no faults. I just don't like him.

(Like about Eisenhower?) I don't know of any.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) No, I don't have anything against Ike.

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10 Generally, it became apparent that the calibre of the farm responses was quite low, even relative to other single-group interest interviews. This matter will receive more extended discussion in our consideration of the political behavior of farmers in Chapter 15.
As we complete our survey of the range of interviews included in Level B, it seems undeniable that we have moved to levels of conceptualization remote from those presumed by ideological interpretations of political behavior. Yet Levels A and B taken together account for little more than half of the total sample, and for only some sixty per cent of the 1956 respondents who voted. 

Level C, the "goodness" and "badness" of the times. The third level coincides closely with the third quartile of our sample. In some ways interviews classified here are most effectively defined in negative terms. On the one hand, these responses do not include perceptions of group interest, and they lack as well any sense of a structure of concepts that might be conceived to border on ideology. On the other hand, these interviews escape classification in Level D by virtue of some reference, however nebulous or fragmentary, to a subject of controversy over public policy.

The issue content of this sort tends to be sparse within each interview and heterogeneous from interview to interview. Nonetheless, it is subject to some characterization. The most prevalent type of response provides the denotation for this level. We have presented samples of simple associations that may be made between the nature of the times—war or peace, recession or prosperity—and the incumbent administration. These responses probably fall closer to what is usually meant by ideology when they deal with prosperity than they do when they deal with war. But even when the substance is economic, the reasoning process underlying seems extremely remote from anything that might be considered ideological. Typically, there is a perception of the economic state of the immediate family, which is an index of the "goodness" or "badness" of the times. The possibility that what happens to some may not happen to others in the same way seems too differentiated a view of society or politics to have much role in the evaluation process. And, of course, once the nature of the times is assessed, the leap to party culpability is simple and direct.

Although the perception of a state of war is less readily based on concrete personal experience and is in fact affecting the total society, the remarks about war are particularly striking in terms of the view of causality implied. Often it appears that war is seen entirely as a matter of party choice or the personal whim of the President. The epitome of such perceptions was supplied by the woman sufficiently angry at Eisenhower to have switched her vote away from him in 1956. He had stopped the war as he had promised he would do, but he didn't do it just as soon as he got in office, and hence lives were needlessly sacrificed.
A second prominent type of response assigned to Level C involved the concrete detail that had issue relevance but appeared to stand as an isolated structure, an island of cognition in a sea of darkness. A prototype is the elderly woman economically dependent on her social security checks, who associates this aid appreciatively with the Democratic Party. Beyond this single policy item, however, she professes to know nothing whatever about politics, and is unable under probing to supply further content. Thus while Level C includes vague generalities about the times, it includes as well these isolated and specific issue perceptions. On occasion, a more informed respondent of this sort might produce a minor shower of specific observations. Thus there might be a rapid cataloguing of items such as Stevenson's promise to halt nuclear bomb testing; a perceived position on school segregation; promises to lower taxes. Whenever such details were internally elaborated, or linked one to another as illustrations of a broader policy posture, the interview was classed as "near-ideology." Only when neither characteristic was present was an interview with more than one issue reference placed in Level C. But such cases of multiple reference are rare in any event; the great bulk of responses in Level C involve a single issue reference which could not be elaborated.

Level C houses the extremes of the global, nebulous mood and the isolated specific perception. It was assumed on a priori grounds that such concept formation represented less sophistication than did perceptions of group interest, which involve minimally a discrimination of a group or groups in the society and group goals for which political power is relevant. Neither the global sense of the "goodness" or "badness" of the times, nor the limitation of cognitions to isolated policy measures seemed to indicate conceptualization of equal breadth or differentiation.

Several characteristics not used as criteria for assignment had great incidence in these Level C interviews. We have already pointed to the focus that emerges here on promises made or broken. There is a vastly increased tendency as well for the respondent to plead great ignorance of anything political. Now and again there is some apparent element of modesty underlying this confession; in the great majority of the cases, however, it is easy to see what the individual means. Although more than two thirds of the people in Level C voted in 1956, there is a pervasive recognition of inadequate information among these respondents.

Furthermore, there seems to be an increasingly moral cast to evaluations at this level. Irritation and concern over matters of graft and campaign "mud-slinging" are given frequent vent. Such observations
are not absent from responses at higher levels; but in Levels C and D they come to form the main thrust of the individual's perceptions with monotonous regularity. As one might expect, the strong partisan often tends to lay charges of mudslinging entirely on the ledger of the opposition. Sometimes indignation is lodged in a definitive statement that the opposing party or candidate has said "things"—often the person cannot specify further under probing—that have been "proved false." But such allegations do not begin to exhaust the references to mudslinging. An impressive proportion of individuals at these lower levels roundly condemn both parties for "running each other down so." These people seem genuinely depressed by any cross-party criticism of policy and platform. When a person has just watched or listened to some of the campaign speeches, these reactions often remain much more salient than the content of the criticism itself.

Let us present some sample interviews from Level C. While we limit ourselves to four illustrations, these illustrations stand for about one quarter of our interviews. Hence responses of this sort outnumber all those of Level A by more than 2 to 1, and they outnumber responses of the top ideological category by a ratio approaching 10 to 1. The first interview drawn is that of a Philadelphia woman:

(Like about Democrats?) This is a very hard ground—a lot of promises were made that weren't kept. (What ones do you mean?) It confuses the public and it confuses me. A person don't know who to vote for. All the same, both parties are guilty in some instances of breaking campaign promises.

(Dislike about Democrats?) No.

(Like about Republicans?) No particular thing as long as they do good for the people.

(Dislike about Republicans?) Just what I said before. (Respondent very vague, difficult to pin down to a particular question.) More should be done for human beings, for the good of the people. Those who take responsibility should worry about all the people of the world. We had bloodshed and we don't want it any more.

(Like about Stevenson?) I think he's a very smart man as far as he's concerned. (Anything else?) I think he's very ambitious.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) No.

(Like about Eisenhower?) The only reason that I would want to vote for him is that he is a former Army man and saw the horrors of war and therefore would want to keep the peace. That's the main concern in the world today.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) No.
The second interview comes from a white woman in North Carolina:

(Like about Democrats?) They's a lot of nice Democrats. They's not too much difference in the parties.

(Dislike about Democrats?) Nothing in particular. Politics is something I don't study on much.

(Like about Republicans?) Seems like they helped a lot to stop the war.

(Dislike about Republicans?) The only thing is they's a lot of Republicans seems like they can be bought over—seems like they say they're Republicans, but they'll vote Democratic for money.

(Like about Stevenson?) I don't know much about the man. Our radio's tore up and I ain't heard any news lately.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) I don't know much about the man. I don't know what to say.

(Like about Eisenhower?) Seems like he's done pretty well this time, but I don't know. We could of had a better President than he is, I guess.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) Well, no. I don't know whether I'll even vote or not. Sometimes I say I don't never intend to vote again.

The third interview comes from a woman in New York City:

(Like about Democrats?) What was in all the papers last week. Stevenson will see to it that they stop testing the bomb and I'm in favor of that. I don't want them to explode any more of those bombs. (Is there anything that you like about the Democratic Party?) I don't know anything about the party, really. I just want them to stop testing the bomb.

(Dislike about Democrats?) I don't know much about the parties. (Is there anything you don't like about the Democratic Party?) No—I don't know much about the whole thing.

(Like about Republicans?) My husband's job is better. (Laughed.) (How do you mean?) Well, his investments in stocks are up. They go up when the Republicans are in. My husband is a furrier and when people get money they buy furs.

(Dislike about Republicans?) No. (Is there anything at all you don't like about the Republican Party?) No—I don't know that much about the parties.

(Like about Stevenson?) As I mentioned before, he's saying stop testing the bomb because it can cause so much damage. My husband says that's such a minor point, but I don't think so.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) Nothing, nothing at all.

(Like about Eisenhower?) No, nothing in particular. (Is there anything at all?) No.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) That he might die and Nixon would be President and I don't care for Nixon. He might not have his four-year term. There's a lot said about the other sickness that he had—not the heart attack.
The final interview comes once again from a woman in Louisville:  

(\textit{Like about Democrats?}) Well, I really don't know enough about politics to speak. I never did have no dealings with it. I thought politics was more for men anyway. (\textit{Well, is there anything you like about the Republican Party?}) I like the good wages my husband makes. (\textit{It is the Republicans who are in now.}) I know, and it's sort of begun to tighten up since the Republicans got in. (\textit{Is there anything else you like about the Democratic Party?}) No.  

(\textit{Dislike about Democrats?}) No, I couldn't think of a thing.  

(\textit{Like about Republicans?}) Well, truthfully, the Republican Party just doesn't interest me at all. (\textit{There isn't anything you like about it?}) No—I just am not particularly interested in either one.  

(\textit{Dislike about Republicans?}) I just don’t know. It's immaterial to me about the Republican Party. I never thought enough about them to get interested in them.  

(\textit{Like about Stevenson?}) Well, I'll tell you, I haven't read enough about either one of the candidates to know anything about them at all. (\textit{Is there anything about Stevenson that might make you want to vote for him?}) None other than that he's a Democrat.  

(\textit{Dislike about Stevenson?}) No.  

(\textit{Like about Eisenhower?}) No.  

(\textit{Dislike about Eisenhower?}) Well, just that he's a Republican.  

\textbf{Level D, absence of issue content.} The remaining quarter of the sample failed to comment upon any issues of political debate in their responses to the unstructured questions. While vote turnout is relatively low within this group, these people still account for 17 per cent of our voters in 1956, and hence by themselves outnumber our ideologues in the active electorate by a 5–1 ratio.  

To the degree that occupants of Level D have perceptions of the parties at all, they are bound up in moralistic themes like mudslinging and chicanery. More often the parties are poorly discriminated, and comment is devoted almost entirely to the personal characteristics of the candidates—their popularity, their sincerity, their religious practice, or home life.  

Although we have encountered occasional bizarre conceptions in the previous interviews, these are more intrusive in Level D responses. Sometimes these oddities betray rather unorthodox conceptions of

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\textsuperscript{11} Since all four interviews drawn to represent Level C turned out to be from women, it is worth noting that whereas women are more numerous at the lower levels than men, these categories are in no sense devoid of men. About 42 per cent of the people in Level C are male, a figure not many percentage points from the sex ratio in the total adult population.
fundamental aspects of American political process. A few respondents, for example, confess to little understanding of what is going on but have a feeling that "it's a critical time, all right." An occasional individual appears to fear that the nation may emerge from the campaign without any president at all. "I don't know much about either of them, but just so long as one of them wins it will be all right."

In other cases there are factual inaccuracies that often have come to loom large in the respondent's thinking. One man was pleased with Eisenhower because he was the first American President who had ever gone to church. Another man appeared deeply angered because he had heard a speech in which Stevenson pronounced that there was no God. A woman who reported that she had become entranced by the Republican convention on television and had watched every minute of it came away without visible issue content but some perplexity at the fact that Nixon had received the vice-presidential nomination. "He's a foreigner, isn't he?" she asked the interviewer.

Initially our interest in the upper ranges of response was such that we planned no differentiation of types within Level D. It became apparent in the classification process that three broad types were emerging clearly. The first group consisted of party-oriented people. These were persons whose only conscious connection to the political process seemed to lie in a potent sense of membership within a party. They tended by and large to pay little attention to the candidates, and their presence in Level D indicates that they were unable to suggest how their party differed in its stands from the opposing party. Frequently, under probing from an interviewer who presumed that such a deep sense of loyalty must be supported by more specific perceptions, the subject would confess that he had never stopped to think of what it was that he liked about the party. Often these party people were simply accepting a family tradition. Often, too, particularly in the South, the subject resorted to religion as a metaphor to explain the attachment. A California woman observed, "most of us are what we were raised, and especially in church and in politics." Likewise, a Texas man commented "I was just raised a Democrat and I guess no matter what I'll always be a Democrat. It's like being born to a religion and just always staying in it."

The second type stood in sharp contrast in its preoccupations. These people had little information about or patience with the parties. The prevailing theme was "parties don't make any difference... It's the man who counts." Once again, the fact of location in Level D signifies that there were no issue implications in the subsequent perceptions of the candidates. These perceptions had to do almost
exclusively with comparisons of looks, sincerity, popularity, religious practice, and family life.

The third type comprises the individuals who were unable to say anything about politics at all, save to explain why they found it difficult to pay any attention to it. This set of respondents was not, however, completely inactive politically, as about one quarter of them, for one reason or another, managed to vote in 1956.

The party or candidate types in Level D are not unique in the sample from the point of view of basic partisan motivations. In numerous interviews at higher levels it seems patent that issue perceptions are no more than garnish for a deep sense of partisanship, and throughout the sample generally, party loyalty exerts a substantial influence on perceptions of more specific events. Similarly, there are individuals at higher levels who disavow interest in parties and claim to attend primarily to the candidates. But at higher levels there are large numbers of respondents who could not be classified clearly in either camp. In Level D, where all else is shorn away, these primitive modes of approach to politics become most clearly differentiated, and seem to be of great analytic significance.

Since Level D comprised one quarter of the sample it was feasible to return to the interviews and subdivide respondents into these types. The distribution that emerged within Level D was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of Level D</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Party Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Candidate Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Political Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified (mixed types)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us turn to samples of these major types. A white man from North Carolina was the first of a pair drawn from the party-oriented individuals in Level D.

(Like about Democrats?) No, Ma'am, not that I know of.
(Dislike about Democrats?) No, Ma'am, but I've always been a Democrat just like my daddy.
(Like about Republicans?) No.
(Dislike about Republicans?) No.
(Like about Stevenson?) No'm.
(Dislike about Stevenson?) No, Ma'am.
(Like about Eisenhower?) Not as I know of.
(Dislike about Eisenhower?) No, Ma'am.
A California woman was drawn from the same category:

(Like about Democrats?) I'm a Democrat. (Is there anything you like about the Democratic Party?) I don't know.

(Dislike about Democrats?) I'm a Democrat, that's all I know. My husband's dead now—he was a Democrat. (Is there anything you don't like about the party?) I don't know.

(Like about Republicans?) I don't know.

(Dislike about Republicans?) I don't know.

(Like about Stevenson?) Stevenson is a good Democrat. (Is there anything else about him that might make you want to vote for him?) No, nothing.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) I don't know. (Is there anything about him that might make you want to vote against him?) No.

(Like about Eisenhower?) I don't know. (Is there anything about Eisenhower that might make you want to vote for him?) I don't know.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) I don't know. (Is there anything about him that might make you want to vote against him?) No.

A woman from the state of Washington provides the first illustration of the candidate-oriented response.

(Like about Democrats?) I vote for who I think is the best man. The last two elections have been mudslinging, and the Democrats are responsible for this. (Is there anything good about the Democratic Party?) They're just as good as the Republicans.

(Dislike about Democrats?) Mudslinging (see above).

(Like about Republicans?) They've just had the best man for the last two elections, that's all I can say.

(Dislike about Republicans?) I don't know that there is right at the present. I couldn't see the Republican Party when Roosevelt was in. Now I can.

(Like about Stevenson?) No.

(Dislike about Stevenson?) I just wouldn't vote, for him, period. (Is there anything about him that makes you want to vote against him?) I just like Eisenhower better.

(Like about Eisenhower?) Everything, as far as I'm concerned.

(Can you mention anything?) No, I don't think so.

(Dislike about Eisenhower?) I wouldn't vote against him at the very present anyway.

A Texas woman serves as a second example:

(Like about Democrats?) No, I don't know anything about political parties. I'm not interested in them at all.
No, nothing.

No, I don't know about the party. I like Ike.

No, nothing I can put my finger on.

Right now I can't think of anything I like well enough to vote for him.

No, I just have my choice and it is not Stevenson. It is Ike.

I just like him, the way things have gone.

That's really all I know.

No.

The final illustration of the candidate type within Level D comes from a Massachusetts man.

I haven't heard too much. I don't get any great likes or dislikes.

I hate the darned backbiting.

No.

No, I don't like him at all.

No, I have no use for Stevenson whatsoever. I had enough of him at the last election. I don't like the cut-throat business—condemn another man and then shake hands with him five minutes later.

As a man I like Eisenhower better. Not particularly for the job of President, but he is not so apt to cut your throat.

No.

The interviews that had virtually nothing to say may be rapidly disposed of. The first illustration drawn came from a woman in California, who was unable to respond to any of the free-answer questions. The interviewer notes:

The respondent explained that she works 11 hours a day (night shift) in a cannery, cares for her large family, and had no time left to read newspapers and keep up with politics. She was only being polite when she consented to the interview.

The second interview from this group came from a Missouri woman:

No—I don't know as there is.

No.
(Like about Republicans?) No, it's the same way I am about the other party.
(Dislike about Republicans?) No. Parties are all about the same to me.
(Like about Stevenson?) No, I don't think so.
(Dislike about Stevenson?) No.
(Like about Eisenhower?) I really don't care which man is best or otherwise. I don't know about either one of the men enough to give an opinion.
(Dislike about Eisenhower?) No.

We have now accounted for our total sample. This profile of an electorate is not calculated to increase our confidence in interpretations of elections that presume widespread ideological concerns in the adult population. To be sure, we have been able to assess only those aspects of political conceptualization that are revealed in conscious verbal materials. It might be argued for example that poorly educated people would have difficulty expressing a sense of apprehension at aggressive leadership of the "left," at a time when no need is felt for aggressive action. Such ineffable sentiment might, for the inarticulate, come to focus on reactions to personal attributes of the candidate. This is a possibility, yet one which we are not inclined to credit highly. If there were strong links between elements of the "deeper self" and reactions to ideological position that do bypass conscious concept for-

TABLE 10-1. Summary of the Distribution of the Total Sample and of 1956 Voters in Levels of Conceptualization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proportion of Total Sample</th>
<th>Proportion of Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Ideology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Ideology</td>
<td>21½%</td>
<td>33½%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Near-ideology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Group Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Perception of conflict</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Shallow group benefit responses</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Nature of the times</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. No issue content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Party orientation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Candidate orientation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. No content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Unclassified</td>
<td>4½</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mation and evaluation, we might have expected a stronger association between our measurement of conservatism and partisan decisions. Many of the people who reacted with dismay to the possibility of change suggested by the scale items undoubtedly failed to think of themselves, at a conscious level, as “conservative,” if for no other reason than the fact the concept is not part of their cognitive tool chest.

But the fact remains that both the structured approach and the analysis of free answers lead to precisely the same conclusions: the concepts important to ideological analysis are useful only for that small segment of the population that is equipped to approach political decisions at a rarefied level.

Correlates of differences in conceptualization. The background factors that permit decision making at this level are the same suggested by earlier analyses with the conservatism measure. First, it has probably become obvious from the sample interviews that the character of an individual’s conceptualization of politics depends heavily upon his education. Table 10-2 summarizes this relationship.

Since we feel that our judgment of levels of conceptualization captures a sophistication about political content dependent in some measure on a more general capacity to cope with the abstract, it is likely that education leads to differences in political concept formation by a number of routes. The education process is one in which individuals are constantly selected for passage to higher levels on the basis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 10-2. Relation of Education to Levels of Conceptualization, 1956</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Near-ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Group Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Normal group response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Shallow group response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Nature of the times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. No issue content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I, II. Party, candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. No content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of existing intellectual capacities. Furthermore, it is the purpose of education to develop these capacities, so that a person who moves to higher levels is likely to employ different modes of thought in evaluating objects than someone of equal initial capacity whose education was abbreviated. And, finally, the education process itself is responsible for the propagation of a good deal of the content that makes for political sophistication. The individual who fails to encounter this content is prey to some of the dire misconceptions that emerge among our respondents. And these misconceptions are hardly trivial in understanding the direction of political behavior. A person who expends energy in concern over whether or not at least one of the presidential candidates will be elected may be in a poor position to pay much attention to a “normal” evaluation of their relative merits.

Education is an obvious and prosaic variable, but we believe that differences in education have fundamental implications for political behavior that have been examined insufficiently. Certainly Table 10-2 may give pause to the investigator who hopes to arrive at a general understanding of the mainsprings of political behavior from research conducted entirely upon college students in social science classes. Hypotheses that seem reasonable to the sophisticated analyst and which are borne out on sophisticated subjects may have no relevance whatsoever for nine tenths of the population forming the mainstream of an electorate.

Yet education is not the sole source of differences in conceptualization. There are important motivational components as well. Generally, motivation to attend to political stimuli and to participate in the political process increases steadily with increasing education. Thus political sophistication is higher among the better-educated of Table 10-2 in part because they are more highly motivated to “keep up with politics.” Yet the factor of involvement is a potent determinant of level of conceptualization in its own right, independent of differences in education. In Table 10-3 we may compare the different levels of conceptualization which appear within categories of involvement and education.

Sufficient involvement in politics may act as a fair surrogate for education in providing more efficient modes of organizing political perceptions. Few people whose formal education is limited to a grade school level reach Level A, and none of them is classified in the top rank of ideologues. But a small group, distinguished by an involvement more extreme than that registered by any college or high school group, manages to attain classification in the categories styled as “near-ideology.” We presume that it is only through such intense interest
| Level of Conceptualization | Grade School | | | High School | | | College | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                            | Involvement | | | Involvement | | | Involvement | |
|                            | Low | Medium | High | Low | Medium | High | Low | Medium | High |
| A. Ideology                | 0%  | 3%     | 16%  | 4%  | 9%     | 16%  | 20% | 30%     | 35% |
| B. I. Normal group response| 19 | 28     | 36   | 24 | 37     | 42   | 22  | 28      | 30  |
| II. Shallow group response | 11 | 15     | 12   | 13 | 13     | 11   | 13  | 7       | 6   |
| C. Nature of times         | 25 | 35     | 22   | 24 | 24     | 21   | 25  | 18      | 21  |
| D. No issue content        | 45 | 19     | 14   | 35 | 17     | 10   | 20  | 17      | 8   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>245</th>
<th>180</th>
<th>116</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[a\] The Involvement index is based on responses to questions concerning the respondent’s interest in following the campaign and concern about its outcome.
in political events that the background is accumulated which permits classification at this level.

Yet we cannot be sure that the flow of causality runs always from involvement in politics through increased attentiveness to more sophisticated modes of evaluating political objects. It makes a good deal of sense to suppose that causality flows the other way as well. Some of the people encountered in our sample interviews indicate that they find politics downright confusing, and they are very numerous at the lower ranges. These people lack the conceptual tools that aid in making order out of chaos. The political parties provide one organizing dimension that seems accessible to persons of very impoverished political understanding. We have analyzed in great detail the pervasive role that party cues play in political evaluations of issues as well as candidates. Yet when debate over public policy rages, the individual who feels an issue should be resolved on its own merits, as well as the individual who fails to pick up party cues on the matter, is lost without some further organizing dimensions of the sort supplied conveniently by ideology or by perceptions of group implications. And it is clear that when much of politics is perceived as policy debate, inability to make sense out of the controversy must certainly dampen interest, just as low interest reduces the probability that politics will be observed enough to become comprehensible.

We feel that the problem goes a good deal beyond limitations of time and information, or even motivation, in themselves. For in our society freedom of time and access to information of a political nature have increased to an astonishing degree over the past century. And if we presume that a spark of motivation is broadly distributed in the electorate in the form of a perceived “ideal” mode of political evaluation based on a calculus of policy implications, then there must be further practical limitations on the citizen to produce the picture of the electorate presented here. We suggest that once below the higher deciles of the population, there are major barriers to understanding that disrupt the processing of even that information about public policy to which the person attends. To some degree these barriers are the product of an inadequate backlog of information. In some measure too they reflect the incapacity to handle abstractions that permit the individual to maintain an ordered view of remote events.

A fair number of our subjects even in the lower ranges are interested enough in political events to watch some portion of the nominating conventions or a campaign speech or two. Yet for a striking proportion of these people the primary fruit of such attention seems to be a reaction to the “nice way” the candidate speaks or looks, his apparent
sincerity, etc. If we may assume that these are still people who value a policy criterion in political choice, then we find them in a situation where neither access to the valued information nor motivation to absorb it appears to be lacking. Yet it is information of another character that becomes absorbed in a form that remains available for later evaluations.

If we were able to analyze all content relevant to the political campaign that is dispensed through all mass media, it is likely that issue materials, in one form or another, would predominate. Certainly items like a candidate’s divorce or religious practice, although sure to draw journalistic comment, would in the current era form but a tiny portion of the total volume of information concerning a presidential race. Yet in the lower ranges of conceptualization particularly, these small kernels relevant to personal life are seized upon, whereas the great bulk of the information dispensed concerning issue positions blows away like chaff. If people at this level were generally uninformed because they paid no attention to political communications, minor facets of personal life, less dominant in the news, would be the more likely to pass unnoticed. Yet this is not the case, and it is clear that somewhere in the process of communication and assimilation potent mechanisms of selection are active.

To be sure there are many citizens who, like Sam Hodder, read little and depend largely upon conversation for political information. It is not only plausible but likely that the selection process has already intervened before political information reaches these people. But the fact remains that at some prior point, selection of this order has occurred. From the total flow of information received from the mass media certain facts about the candidate have “stuck,” whereas other facts, although in some sense more highly valued and certainly more heavily stressed at the source, have not.

These differences undoubtedly arise from variation in the richness of meaning that individuals bring to these different types of information. A fact like divorce is, for most people, a concrete and familiar part of social experience. It can have full meaning for the person who knows nothing whatever of politics. It is likely to be met in the consciousness with ready-made evaluations enjoying a clarity that far surpasses any bases of judgment available for the subtleties of politics, which are encountered sporadically and then only in a remote and peripheral way. Where matters of public policy are concerned, limitations upon the understanding of information that is actually attended must be added to these posed by problems of sheer access to current information.
The evaluation process is, therefore, narrowly circumscribed by limits of existing information, understanding, and the wherewithal in time and energy to increase either. It is undeniably important to improve our knowledge of the dynamics of evaluation, in cases where we may assume that certain raw materials are given. Yet it seems of equal importance to understand the consequences of initial differences in these raw materials, whether they involve cognitive capacity or background of political lore.

Our typology reflects at least two dimensions of difference between political actors. First, it depends on the appearance of certain types of content, which the individual is not likely to master unless he pays continuing attention to the flow of political developments over a period of time. Secondly, whatever the depth of a person’s political involvement, there are rather basic limitations on cognitive capacities which are likely to make certain of the most sophisticated types of content remain inaccessible to the poorly endowed observer.

We presume that any cognitive limitations affecting the modes of political thinking would have a rather constant effect over time, although a rising level of education might permit a slow upgrading in the level of conceptualization. To the degree that certain types of content are at stake, however, we would expect the motivation to absorb it to vary according to the situation. As a result, we can imagine circumstances in which there would probably be some modification in the proportions of the citizenry classified within each level.

In a major depression, for example, we would expect some flow of individuals from Level D to Level C. The perception that times are bad and that there might be hope for improvement if the political leadership were changed does not seem to be a tremendously taxing notion. This is not to say that even here there are no cognitive limitations. The farm laborer whose interview we introduced might continue to have difficulty comprehending the devious route from vote to the securing of economic interest.\(^\text{12}\) And we know that this is not an isolated case: groupings of people of low education living in dire economic straits have been unable, even under careful coaching from interested elites, to perceive politics as a possible path to amelioration.\(^\text{13}\) Nonetheless, we presume that some proportion of people classified in Level D are placed there not because they are unable to comprehend these possibilities, but because the times do

\(^{12}\) See pages 223-225.

not focus their attention on the relevant political phenomena.

Similar observations might be drawn about the possibility of traffic between other levels, although we suspect that cognitive limitations come to play an increasing role as we analyze possible shifting of personnel up through the hierarchy of levels proposed. We have tried to leave the substance of ideology that merits classification in Level A sufficiently undefined that it is hard to imagine eras in which the predominant content of political debate would fail to qualify. Hence we do not feel that Level A might become seriously depopulated because extant political controversy is not in some sense "of the proper sort." But there are periods in which the heat of partisan debate slackens and becomes almost perfunctory, and the positions of the parties become relatively indistinct on basic issues. In times such as these, even the person sensitive to a range of political philosophies may not feel this knowledge to be helpful in an evaluation of current politics, and hence may fail to receive proper assignment in a level of conceptualization.

In general, then, we would expect some shifts over time in the distribution of the electorate across levels, particularly in the lower ranges and in periods of crisis. However, we would never expect this change to be of sweeping magnitude, and there is still less reason to believe that the picture of the voting public presented previously was captured at an abnormal moment. In any event, the possibility of individual movement from level to level should not obscure the fact that there must be some constancy of meaning to any partisan change undertaken by individuals who conceptualize their issue concerns in a similar manner.

Differences in Conceptualization and the Interpretation of Partisan Change

We have surveyed conceptual modes used in the American electorate in order to check assumptions that are frequently implicit in interpretations of partisan change. These accounts presume that a significant portion of the voters contributing to partisan change are responding to the current location of political objects on some "left-right" continuum. We have been unable to find evidence that any substantial portion of the electorate formulates its issue concerns in such a manner. This fact in itself raises some severe questions as to the adequacy of the assumptions. Yet there are two other aspects of the problem that demand examination as well.
First, it may be that the size of the ideologue contingent is less critical than the role that this contingent plays in time of partisan change. If propensity to partisan change were exceptionally high among the upper levels, it might still be argued that discussions of change in ideological terms are appropriate. If, however, there were greater partisan fluidity at lower levels, such interpretations would become of marginal value indeed.

Second, we know that at times partisan change involves larger portions of the population than the contingent of ideologues could conceivably account for. Furthermore, these shifts in party fortunes often follow ideological expectations very well. What issue meaning may safely be attributed to such changes? The significance of shifts in party resides ultimately in the character of events that precipitate the response. To analyze these events for the several levels will cast light upon the question of propensity for partisan change that may characterize each level. Therefore, we shall approach this problem first.

The nature of partisan change at various levels. Our data give reason to believe that we should maintain the distinction between "ideologues" and "near-ideologues" in discussing the character of partisan change within Level A. In Chapter 4 we introduced a method for determining the internal consistency of the six partisan attitudes. A structure of partisan attitudes is deemed perfectly consistent if all of the political objects discussed are evaluated favorably for the same party. Such a structure is inconsistent if, for example, the individual likes certain aspects of one party but prefers the candidate of the other. We noted that in general such partisan consistency increases with political involvement. Since involvement varies markedly across levels of conceptualization, we would expect consistency to increase as we progress from lower to higher levels in our typology. By and large, this is the pattern. Perfect consistency is least frequent in Level D (94 per cent more observed cases than expected by chance) and highest in Level A (250 per cent). If, however, we separate the near-ideologues from the ideologues, we find the maximum is attained at the near-ideology level (290 per cent), whereas the frequency of perfect consistency among ideologues (141 per cent) falls well below the "average" figure for the total sample.

This characteristic of the full ideologue group fits well with some of the criteria for assignment to the category. Many people qualified for classification here because they were adept in locating political objects at various relative positions on some underlying continuum

14 See Chapter 4, page 81.
relevant to ideology. Often the person would differentiate either or both parties into liberal or conservative wings. A party wing that the individual felt was more remote from his own position was subject to negative comment, even though the wing might be a part of his own party. Similarly, other objects associated with the preferred party were criticized if they failed to meet ideological expectations.

Evaluations of this sort are, from a partisan point of view, rather "gray." They stand in sharp contrast to the black and white partisanship of people considered to hold "near-ideology." These latter subjects are more likely than any others to see all things connected with their preferred party as good, whereas objects associated with the opposing party are disapproved. The content of the evaluations is sophisticated, but the party itself seems a prime focus for the assessment of political leaders and policies. By contrast, the focus for political evaluations in the highest category is the respondent's own ideological position. Just as Archimedes asked for "a place to stand" outside the world in order to lift it, the full ideologue has found a place to stand outside the spheres of direct party influence. He has an independent point of reference that can only be imperfectly approached by the ideologically heterogeneous American parties.

In what instances change would occur for the full ideologue, as well as the meaning that might be attributed to it, is undoubtedly well covered in the literature, for these are the people who best fit widespread assumptions about "political man." They are most sensitive to changes in the broad ideological cast of party policies, and are sensitive as well to the more haphazard changes that arise as factions of differing political beliefs vie for party control. As party policy is seen to drift toward or away from the individual's own position, his reactions to the party may change accordingly.

Persons of near-ideology are less likely to be sensitive to these nuances. For many of them, party loyalty may have primacy over any issue positions that they have espoused. The alert observer committed to a party may simply take on the more sophisticated rationales propagated by the party in its defense. Hence he emerges with a set of political evaluations that consistently favor the objects associated with his party. Where such a pattern is operative, the individual might well follow the party through a dramatic ideological realignment, although such realignments are so rare in American politics as to pose little more than an academic question.

In the earlier discussion of Sam Hodder we contrasted behavior governed by ideology with that which might be expected under conditions of political change among people of Level B, whose evaluations
depend on links established between groupings in the population and the political parties. We need not repeat that discussion here. There is a good deal more to be said about the character of political change when an external reference point, the non-political group, functions to mediate between the individual member and the world of politics. This added element, however, carries us into complex considerations of the social context of political evaluation, a matter to which Chapter 12 will be devoted.

Although the conceptions of politics grouped together within Level C are too heterogeneous to permit adequate discussion, the core group at this level—people who form simple associations between the nature of the times and the party in power—are particularly interesting to consider in terms of partisan change. To the extent that people falling in Level C evaluate the current political situation free of distortion from existing party bias, their reactions are likely to be of two sorts. If they perceive that times have been hard, as symbolized primarily by economic dislocation or war, they will react in a spirit of "throwing the rascals out." If they perceive that times have been relatively good, the tendency will be to adopt a "don't rock the boat" attitude.

This repertory of responses can lead to aggregate behavior, which (again under certain circumstances) may appear to be impelled by ideology. In the early years of the Great Depression it would have been hard for the staunchest Republican to perceive that things were going well. Only a belief that a political party could not be held responsible for an economic collapse of this magnitude would remain as a defense for partisanship. Yet it is a sophisticated understanding that sees lines of causality fade from sight in a welter of complex events like the economic collapse after 1929. Such understanding is not generally accessible to people who conceptualize politics in the modes representing Level C. Hence we can imagine a strong wave of Democratic support emerging in 1932 from persons operating at this level, who wished to "throw the rascals out." Such a tide, coming in the

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15 It is important to keep in mind that we are focusing here upon such change in partisanship as does occur in the electorate. It is readily demonstrable that perceptions of the nature of the times are substantially affected by pre-existing party allegiances. Mishaps during the administration of national affairs by one's own party are more readily written off as accidents not traceable to party guidance, whereas mishaps under a regime of the opposing party tend to be viewed as examples of its incompetence or malevolence. Thus party loyalty exerts a tremendous force toward political stability over time throughout all of our levels. Nonetheless, partisan change does occur. It is our purpose here to come to grips with the policy meaning that partisan change may be considered to have when and to the degree that it occurs.
face of economic disaster, lent itself to interpretation as a shift to the left.

It is important to recognize how inappropriate this description may be for contributors to the tide from Level C. If perceptions do not pass beyond the attitude of throwing the rascals out, we are still left at a point rather remote from ideology. The “rascals” phrase is deliberately chosen, for it makes minimal assumptions as to the sophistication of the actor. Times are bad. Whatever else an administration may do, the individual expects it to maintain the nation on an even keel in domestic economics and foreign affairs. If difficulties of this sort accumulate, he will protest. There is no need to presume that he sees any specific way in which the administration has courted the current ills, or that he has a sense of what might have been done differently, or even that he knows what the opposition intends to do, save for its predictable promises that ills will be remedied. The salient fact is that the party in power has failed in its most basic obligations, and deserves to be turned out. Protest can be bitter without a breath of program behind it.

We can easily imagine situations, then, in which the political responses of people in Level C would confound ideological expectations. Let us suppose that the nation were to encounter a major depression during the administration of “the party of the left.” The reactions of ideologically minded voters might be hard to predict without knowledge of the way in which such an event would affect the policies of both major parties. But we may suppose that the ideologue would locate the difficulty primarily as a flaw in the economic system and would “shift to the left” in the sense of demanding new approaches on the part of government to remedy matters and prevent their recurrence. Provided the two-party structure remained intact, however, we would predict unequivocally that the response at Level C would be a strong shift to the right. Of course, such a description of the change would be misleading, for it rings in the familiar ideological assumptions. But people at this level would be poised to “throw the rascals out,” and would do so, short of a third party, by shifting support to the opposition, whatever its political philosophy.

The striking fact is that in such a case, although people of Level A would be moving to the left, the predominant effect would be the “shift to the right,” simply because voters at Level C far outnumber citizens who appear in Level A. Thus, over the electorate as a whole, the “ideological” expectations would be directly controverted. It is in such a circumstance that it becomes important to know that “protest” responses at this level have little to do with ideology.
Voters of Level C act, then, as a rather crude and insensitive thermostat geared to the goodness and badness of the times. They fail to perceive ideological niceties, and it may require bad times of some extremity before sufficient numbers among them shift in the same partisan direction at the same time to have much striking effect on the evolution of party history. Furthermore, they are not notably discriminating in the type of events for which they may hold the party in power responsible.

Nonetheless, they contribute to a potent if gross reward-punishment system that party leadership must respect. In fact, to the degree that much ideological debate has to do with the most certain means toward a vague end state called the general weal, it is precisely this general weal that citizens of Level C pass upon from election to election. They could not be expected to understand and evaluate alternative means on any “rational” grounds. But they do judge the product, as it appears at the moment, and hence serve as some control mechanism. The pressure remains upon the political leader to work from that ideology which he sees as most likely to promote the general weal, or at least one which will guide the nation at a safe distance from catastrophe.

We presume that the seeming insulation of people in Level D from any issue concern in 1956 is subject to variation over time. Hence it is difficult to predict behavior within this grouping as it might emerge at such pressure points for political change as a major depression. It is probably fruitless to speculate concerning partisan change in the case of the extremely party-oriented individuals of this level. Some other persons here would probably remain psychologically aloof from the political process under any circumstance. In conditions of severe economic dislocation, the behavior of some of the candidate-oriented occupants would undoubtedly merge with that expected of Level C. To the degree that still others remained bound to evaluations based on perceptions of the personal attributes of the candidates prediction is impossible, save for the obvious prediction that the significance of partisan choice would bear little resemblance to ideological description.

Differences in propensity for partisan change. The preceding discussion provides clues about what we might expect of various types that we have isolated in terms of fluidity of partisan preference. For example, the contrast in partisan consistency of attitude between ideologue and near-ideologue would suggest that the ideologue would show greater propensity for partisan change. The near-ideologue, inasmuch as he may build a tightly-knit attitude structure on the basis
of party rationales, lacks the independent platform in a self-sustaining ideology that would make him a freer critic of party policies.

At the opposite extreme of the typology we have encountered another small segment of the population that we would expect to stand like a rock against the tides of political change. The party-oriented citizens of Level D have, on the one hand, a profound commitment to one of the political parties. And on the other, they are distinctively well insulated against the assaults of new political information that might bear the impetus to partisan change. No partisanship is, in the limiting case, immutable; but individuals whose contact with politics is of this order seem to hold what is closest to an impregnable position.

Beyond these observations we may feel that there is little theoretical reason to predict continually higher rates of change within any of the conceptual levels. Our past discussion has implied that different types of events would precipitate change within different levels. War might evoke more change within Level C than among ideologues, who would be less likely to hold the party in power responsible in a simplistic fashion. On the other hand, a shift in control of a party from a conservative to a liberal wing might disturb the partisanship of the ideologues although passing unnoticed among persons of Level C. Assuming that these two types of events may occur independently, we are forced to conclude that high rates of change could characterize first one level and then another according to the situation.

Nevertheless, with situation "controlled," systematic differences in potential for partisan change might remain from level to level, owing to third factors. That is, we know that people assigned to various levels differ sharply on background characteristics such as education and political involvement. Low involvement or education might also predispose the individual to take his party allegiance lightly. Thus potential for partisan change would differ by conceptual level, although this fact would be difficult to deduce from conceptual level directly.\textsuperscript{16}

We may therefore consider it an empirical matter as to whether partisan change has appeared more frequent within some levels of the typology. Since we cannot control the broad political situation, and since our data have reference only to the Eisenhower period, we must remember that positive findings may be bound to peculiarities of this period. However, enough ideological interpretation has been directed

\footnote{In a causal sense, the association between level of conceptualization and partisan stability would be "spurious," that is, owing to a common third factor. However, our purposes would be served simply by establishing the fact of association: the causal question is not crucial here.}
at voting trends in this period to make even this excursion well worth our effort; and it is entirely possible that our findings have more general significance.

One approach to the question hinges on differences in strength of party identification within the several levels. Where such loyalties are intense we would expect less partisan fluidity over time than where they are weak. The mild relationship between political involvement and strength of identification suggests that party allegiance should be stronger at higher levels of conceptualization. This does turn out to be the observed pattern. Although full ideologues appear free to criticize their party, they show a degree of commitment to party as high or higher than near-ideologues or people in other levels. Generally, we find a very slight but monotonic decline in strength of party identification as we progress downward through the strata of our typology. Differences are sharp only at one point, however. People in Level D are much less strongly identified with a party than are members of higher levels. This is true even though Level D includes some traditional party-oriented people who, when isolated, show extremely strong party allegiance. With this group extracted from Level D, of course, the remainder becomes accordingly more distinctive.

The conclusion that in the Eisenhower period partisan change was most visible at the lower levels is equally supported by another quite different approach. To the degree that party identification reflects an abiding loyalty to a party and a tradition of past electoral support for it, individuals who are drawn to a partisan choice contrary to their current party allegiance would appear more susceptible to short-term change than individuals who remain within party lines. Since an insignificant handful of Republican identifiers voted for Stevenson in 1956, we focus attention here upon the substantial numbers of Democratic partisans who cast ballots for Eisenhower in 1956. We do indeed find higher rates of defection from party identification at lower levels of conceptualization (Table 10-4).

That susceptibility to partisan change of this sort is increasingly likely at the lower levels of conceptualization is not surprising in the light of data outlined in Chapter 5 concerning non-voter preferences. We noted that non-voters have shown extreme instability in their partisan choice for President since 1948, and that among non-voters, those who were relatively interested were least susceptible to forces toward partisan change. Table 10-4 suggests that the non-voters phenomenon is merely an extreme case of a pattern which marks the total electorate.
The turnover between these findings is highlighted when we recognize that turnout rates decline at the lower levels of conceptualization. This fact would of course be readily deducible from the restricted education and indifference to politics of persons classified here. Among the ideologues of Level A, 94 per cent voted in 1956.

**TABLE 10-4. Relation of Defection of Democrats in 1956 to Levels of Conceptualization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic Identification in:</th>
<th>1956 Presidential Vote</th>
<th>1956 Vote and Non-voters' Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level A: Ideology</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level B: I. Normal group</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Shallow group</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level C: Nature of times</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level D: No issue content</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The turnout rate was 78 per cent in Level B, and 69 per cent in Level C. Only 56 per cent of citizens located in Level D voted. When we survey the increasing vote defections from stable party attachments at lower levels in Table 10-4, then, it seems rather clear that these behaviors are of the same cloth as the marked instability of preference among non-voters. It appears that quite generally in this period, people who paid little attention to politics were contributing very disproportionately to partisan change. To be sure, the effects visible in the national vote totals were muted by the fact that people paying little attention to politics were also less likely to vote. But the proportion of the population that we have classified in these lower categories is large; and despite low turnout rates, people within Levels C and D still made up 40 per cent of the active 1956 electorate.

We cannot be entirely sure that the potential for partisan change is generally greater among persons whose interest in political process is slightest, reasonable hypothesis though this seems to be, since the observed effects may be a function of the immediate political period. But they do cast provocative light upon the many prominent interpretations of political change in the 1950's, which picture an electorate seeking respite from continued "leftist" pressure toward social and political change. The latter portion of the discussion has led to con-
clusions that complement the description of the electorate presented earlier in the chapter. People who appear to fit the assumptions underlying the "left-right" accounts are few enough that they could not physically have accounted for any substantial portion of the resurgence of the Republican Party at the presidential level in 1952 and 1956. Furthermore, the data suggest that these people were proportionally much less likely to have contributed to this partisan change than were people for whom the assumptions are a poor match indeed. It is hard not to conclude, then, that these accounts, popular though they have been, are thoroughly overdrawn.