The value balance model of political evaluations

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The value balance model posits two relatively independent value orientations, security and harmony, to explain individual differences in adaptation to adversarial left-right political institutions. Combining high and low scores on security and harmony produces four groups, described as security oriented, harmony oriented, dualists and moral relativists. Using data from student samples and a general population sample, this paper finds support for the consistency and strength of left-right policy preferences among the security- and harmony-oriented. In contrast, moral relativists and dualists adopt a mix of left and right views, supporting a compassionate and just society, but being wary of those unwilling to play by society's rules. Although moral relativists and dualists did not differ overall in their attitude positions, they engaged with the political process differently. Moral relativists were more wary of overarching principles, less willing to prioritize political values, spent less time thinking about their location on a left-right continuum and were more likely to support self-interest voting.

Since the classic work by Adorno and his colleagues (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950) on the authoritarian personality, psychologists have tended to accept the nexus between personality disposition and political expression. The psychology of conservatism follows this tradition and, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Eysenck, 1975; Kerlinger, 1984), posits liberalism as a form of expression that is the antithesis of conservatism (Wilson, 1973). At one extreme are conservatives who oppose change, unless it offers increased security and strengthens traditional institutions. At the other extreme are liberals who favour change, unless it reinstates practices of the past that conflict with recognized social progress. Values, attitudes and beliefs are assumed to cohere around these poles (Feather, 1979), finding expression in political institutions through the politics of the right and left.

This paper questions an assumption embedded in this work: that the values of individuals necessarily have a one-to-one correspondence with the qualities that are required of them if they are to engage in the political process in Western democratic societies. Specifically, the paper advances an argument of tension between the way in which individuals are socialized to think the world should be and the way in which they must behave within political institutions. The central thesis of the paper is that

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liberal and conservative goals, when articulated as values or ideals of a society, are not necessarily perceived by individuals as incompatible. Within democratic political institutions, however, where major parties tend to represent the left or the right, individuals must trade off liberal and conservative values to engage fully with the political process. The challenge for individuals is to reconcile political aspirations with realities while preserving cognitive consistency between these two components of the belief system. This paper proposes a value balance model of political evaluation to demonstrate how the translation of social values into political positions is easier for some than others.

**Defining values**

Values are defined as prescriptive beliefs about end-states of existence (e.g. peace) and modes of conduct (e.g. justice) that transcend specific objects and situations and that are held to be personally and socially preferable to opposite end-states of existence (e.g. war) and modes of conduct (e.g. injustice) (Rokeach, 1973). Rokeach's definition captures the traditional view of values as principles or ideals about what ought to happen in a society (Kluckhohn, 1951; Smith, 1963; Williams, 1968), regardless of context and situation (Scott, 1965).

A long standing literature recognizes interdependencies among social values in Western societies. Scott (1960) identified two groups of policy goals, one called international cooperation (comprising measures of humanitarianism and pacifism), the other international competitiveness (comprising measures of nationalism and power). Lipset (1963) identified achievement and equality as the two core values underlying American society. Katz & Hass (1988) concurred, elaborating on this model with the dimensions of 'individualism, with its emphasis on personal freedom, self-reliance, devotion to work and achievement; and communalism, which embraces egalitarian and humanitarian precepts' (p. 894). In a similar vein, Rokeach (1973) proposed that the values underlying political ideology could be summarized in terms of two values, equality and freedom. In recent years, Inglehart's (1971, 1977) concepts of materialism and post-materialism have been identified as relatively independent dimensions (Bean & Papadakis, 1994; Flanagan, 1987; Van Deth, 1983), the first representing order, stability, economic and military strength, the second representing ideas, brotherhood and greater citizen involvement.

Two-dimensional models of this kind also have theoretical support through the work of Fromm (1949), Weber (1946) and Hogan (1973). All three differentiated between an ethic that internalized external authorities and their rules and an ethic that embodied personal integrity, harmony within and with the external world and the realization of human potential. All three saw both ethics residing in a well-socialized human being.

Many of the themes identified in these characterizations of the social values domain are drawn together by the security–harmony model (Braithwaite, 1994, 1997). Security and harmony dimensions have been identified as underlying 14 value scales that constitute the Goal, Mode and Social Values Inventories (Braithwaite, 1979, 1982, 1994, 1997; Braithwaite & Law, 1985). The security value dimension provides order, legitimates competition for resources, and places constraints on the way in which the competitive struggle is played out in society. The harmony dimension
orient action towards cooperation, peaceful coexistence and productivity for the collectivity. The present study conceives of social values as part of these supraordinate value orientations (Braithwaite, 1982, 1994).

**Defining political evaluations**

Political evaluations, as used in the present study, overlap with Rokeach's (1973) conceptualization of attitude and its belief components. Whereas a value is a specific prescriptive belief that transgresses objects and situations, an attitude is 'a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner' (Rokeach, 1968, p. 112). Unlike values, attitudes are focused belief packages that describe, evaluate and advocate actions in relation to attitude objects.

The attitude object in this study is the package of policies advocated by conservative parties and progressive parties prior to a federal election. The beliefs associated with these electoral issues are expected to cohere around a single conservatism-liberalism dimension: support for conservative policies and positions is likely to accompany rejection of progressive ones.

Expectations of a single liberal-conservative dimension does not deny a credible literature that identifies the complexity of attitudes associated with political ideologies (Kelley, 1988), nor the evidence for more specific factors underlying higher order dimensions of liberalism-conservatism (Comrey & Newmeyer, 1965; Wilson, 1973). But neither this literature, nor the concerted efforts by Eysenck (1954, 1975) and Kerlinger (1967, 1984) to promote liberalism and conservatism as independent dimensions, have been able to dismantle the dominant discourse of radicalism versus conservatism, liberalism versus conservatism, or progressivism versus traditionalism. Within the political institutions of Western democracies, left and right comparisons of social issues, political candidates, parties and supporters take the form of polar opposites (Finlay, Simon, & Wilson, 1974; Harding, Phillips & Fogarty, 1986; Inglehart, 1990; Rokeach, 1973).

**Linking values and attitudes**

Values are widely regarded as principles that guide the formation of attitudes and actions (Ball-Rokeach & Loges, 1994; Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Smith, 1963; Williams, 1968). Compared with attitudes, values are regarded as more central, deeply considered, strongly held, stable, limited in number and connected with many other beliefs (Ball-Rokeach & Loges, 1994; Feldman, 1988; Inglehart, 1977; Rokeach, 1973). Assuming a need for attitude-value consistency in the belief system (Rokeach, 1968), values, therefore, are likely to dominate and mould attitudes, rather than vice versa.

This theoretical framework has proven particularly attractive to those interested in understanding political behaviour (Kinder & Sears, 1985), and has sparked interest in the use of value schemata in political decision making (Conover & Feldman, 1984; Fiske, 1986; Jacoby, 1991; Lau & Sears, 1986; Tetlock, 1986), and in principle-based models of voting behaviour (Rose & McAllister, 1986).
The approach is not without critics, however. Denver & Hands (1990) have argued strongly against notions that deep-seated and persistent principles shape political evaluations, favouring a model in which choice is a function of evaluations of specific issues in specific contexts. Others point to the plausibility of reversing the direction of causality assumed within the traditional perspective, emphasizing the role that values can play after the event: values function as socially acceptable cliches that justify past actions (Kristiansen & Zanna, 1994; Scott, 1965).

The present study assumes the need for cognitive consistency between social values and political evaluations, but does not assume any one causal connection. Indeed, the value balance model described below accommodates different kinds of value–attitude–belief linkages.

**Left and right: Compatible values but incompatible attitudes**

The assumption of cognitive consistency between values, attitudes and beliefs poses a dilemma, given what is known about the structure of social values and of conservative–liberal attitudes. How can a two-dimensional security–harmony value model be reconciled with a one-dimensional conservative–liberal attitude continuum (Schwartz, 1994)?

The theoretical defence for the proposition that left and right values can be compatible while left and right attitudes are inversely related lies in the distinction between the constructs of value and attitude. Values transcend specific objects and situations, belonging to the world of ideals where compromises and trade-offs do not have to be made. They are guiding principles, not bound by the contingencies of the specific situation and, as such, not conflictual. Scott (1965) demonstrated empirically the importance of ‘non-negotiability’ to the concept of values. He found that values were regarded by most people as ‘ultimate ends’, as ‘absolutely good under all circumstances’ and as the ‘universal “ought” towards which all people should strive’ (p. 15). Of particular relevance to the present paper is value absoluteness. Scott demonstrated that most of his sample did believe that their values should be operative in all or almost all circumstances: moral relativists, while present in the sample, were a minority. Believing that one’s values are absolute explains the observed reluctance of people to trade off their values (Jervis, 1986). Absoluteness means that values are more likely to coexist than to conflict in the cognitive world of the individual.

In contrast to the world of ideals is the world of action. Attitudes represent predispositions to respond to particular objects in particular situations. They involve summing up a set of beliefs relevant to the situation and the object. Multiple values can be implicated in this process, coming into conflict in a way which is unnecessary in the world of ideals. Conflict between two values arises when both are seen to be relevant to a specific issue, and situational constraints force individuals to make comparisons, finally choosing one over the other (trade-off). Political evaluations of election issues are likely to be greatly influenced by such constraints, whereas political ideals transcend them.
The value balance model

The value balance model explains how security and harmony values are implicated in evaluations of political issues. Consistency and strength in left-right attitudes are most likely to be observed when the security and harmony value orientations are in a state of imbalance, that is, commitment to one orientation outweighs commitment to the other. Where security dominates harmony, individuals are expected to be security oriented. Where harmony dominates security, a harmony orientation should be evident. The value orientations of both these groups, the security- and harmony-oriented, can be expected to accommodate readily adversarial left-right political institutions. The security oriented are most likely to consistently and strongly endorse conservative positions. Liberal attitudes, on the other hand, are most likely to be consistently and strongly endorsed by the harmony-oriented. Stated more formally, the value balance model hypothesizes that when both security and harmony are relevant to the attitude object, attitude positions, in terms of both consistency and strength, are predicted by the difference between commitment to the security and harmony value orientations.¹

Where individuals hold equal allegiance to security and harmony values, attitude scores, on aggregate, should fall in the middle of the liberalism-conservatism continuum. The value balance model provides an opportunity to gain insight into what it means to occupy this middle ground. When individuals are categorized as high and low scorers on security and harmony and these scores are considered conjointly, two types of value balance emerge. Those with very strong commitments to both harmony and security can be described as dualists and contrasted with those who have weaker commitments to both orientations, moral relativists.²

Tetlock's (1986, 1989) value pluralism model provides a useful base for developing hypotheses as to how one might distinguish moral relativists from dualists. Tetlock (1986, 1989) distinguished two types of ideologies, those that are monistic, attaching high priority to only one value or set of highly consistent values, and those that are pluralistic, attaching high priority to values that often conflict when policy choices are made. According to Tetlock, advocates of pluralistic ideologies tend to occupy the middle ground on conservativism-liberalism scales and use more integratively complex styles of reasoning to resolve policy dilemmas. Most significantly, from the perspective of this paper, the effort diverted to the task increases with the importance individuals attach to the conflicting values.

Tetlock's (1986, 1989) work suggests that dualists and moral relativists are likely to differ in the degree to which they are motivated to engage in the complex reasoning required to solve the value balance dilemma. Differences in motivation

¹ Similar models have been proposed by Bradburn (1969) to predict overall life satisfaction from independent measures of positive affect and negative affect and by Bem (1974) to predict androgyny from independent measures of masculinity and femininity.

² In this context, weak value commitment means that individuals do not consider the value either very important or above all else in importance; it is very rare for individuals to fail to attach at least some importance to each of the values in the Social Values Inventory (Braithwaite, 1994). As such, the term moral relativist is used somewhat differently to the way in which Scott (1965) used the term. Scott described moral relativists as adopting a consequentialist stand on values, regarding value importance as dependent on context. The two conceptualizations are hypothesized as being related, a hypothesis tested in Study 2.
should have consequences for the policy positions taken and for style of engagement with the political process. Dualists might be expected to adopt attitudes that are consistent with their high regard for both security and harmony. Moral relativists, on the other hand, need not show a pattern of consistency. If moral relativists are not strongly motivated to resolve the value balance dilemma, they may sideline values in their decision making, assessing each issue on its merits. This approach is in accord with the issue-specific voting model supported by Denver & Hands (1990). Alternatively, moral relativists might be disinterested in the political process, perhaps even giving unsure responses to minimize demands on their time and effort. Such a stance is reflected in the work of Converse (1964) who argued that an absence of coherence among political beliefs, attitudes and values in the general population is widespread.

This paper presents three studies which test the usefulness of the value balance model for understanding the role of values in political decision making. The first study, based on a student sample, tests the proposition that security and harmony are both necessary to predict placement on the right–left attitude continuum, and that the degree of value imbalance predicts both the overall strength and the consistency of right–left evaluations. Study 1 also explores differences between moral relativists and dualists in their stance on political issues.

The second study tests for differences between moral relativists and dualists in terms of the context-sensitive hypothesis. The central idea, derived from the work of Scott (1965), is that moral relativists are generally sceptical about overarching principles to guide their behaviour: they prefer judging each situation on its merits.

The third study explores differences between dualists and moral relativists in terms of engagement with the political process using a random sample drawn from the general population.

**STUDY 1**

In order to test the proposition that both security and harmony values contribute to the prediction of political evaluations, two hypotheses were generated, one relating to strength and direction of attitude, the other relating to consistency of attitude: 

1. the relative strength of commitments to the security and harmony value dimensions is a better predictor of strength and direction of attitude on a right–left continuum than either security or harmony used individually. 
2. The relative strength of commitments to the security and harmony value dimensions is a better predictor of the consistency of adopting right–left attitudes than either security or harmony used individually.

The assertion that security and harmony operate as two independent dimensions demands that those who consider values very important or of the utmost importance as guiding principles in life (dualists) be distinguished from those who either do not endorse the value or give it only perfunctory endorsement (moral relativists). Schwartz (1994) has adopted the view that differences between consistently low and high scorers on value rating scales are not of substantive interest, reflecting response bias that should be controlled by centring each person's responses around his/her mean value rating. Whether those who consistently give high ratings display a stronger commitment to acting on their values or whether they are responding to
irrelevant aspects of the task is a question that remains unresolved at this point. The present study proceeds from the position that response bias has only a small role to play in the way individuals respond to the Social Values Inventory\(^3\) and that differences between moral relativists and dualists are substantive.

One possibility is that moral relativists are less society oriented than dualists in relation to their value priorities. They may be more concerned about what is happening within the ambit of their influence than in what is happening beyond. Another possibility emerges from Scott's (1965) account of moral relativists as value consequentialists rather than absolutists. Moral relativists may not simply downplay society-oriented values: they may give consistently lower ratings to values of all kinds, personal and social, because they place higher importance on contextual information.

Study 1 addresses the first question of whether differences in ratings reflect greater commitment to social values by dualists than moral relativists. If dualists rate their social values more highly than moral relativists because they are more society oriented, differences should emerge in a ranking exercise that forces comparisons between personal and social values. Rokeach (1973) has argued that people vary reliably in the priorities they place on society-centred and self-centred values with the Value Survey. The terminal values of the Value Survey require individuals to compare five society-centred goals (a world at peace, equality, freedom, national security, a world of beauty) with 13 self-centred goals. The rankings of moral relativists and dualists on the society-centred goals, therefore, might be expected to differ as follows: (c) dualists should assign higher rankings on the Rokeach Value Survey to the society-centred goals than moral relativists.

The remaining two hypotheses examined in Study 1 concern the political positions taken on election issues by dualists and moral relativists. Based on Tetlock's (1986) finding that value importance increases the effort expended in resolving value dilemmas, the following were tested: (d) moral relativists are more likely to avoid taking positions on electoral issues than dualists. (e) Dualists are more likely than moral relativists to adopt positions on electoral issues that are consistent with furthering the societal goals of harmony and security.

Operationalizing security and harmony values and electoral attitudes

The security value orientation is represented by the social values scale, national strength and order, the harmony value orientation by international harmony and equality (Braithwaite, 1994, 1997). Previous work has identified these scales as the major contributors to the security and harmony value orientations. National strength and order encompasses national economic development, national security, the rule of law and national greatness. International harmony and equality brings together a world of peace, a world of beauty, human dignity, a good life for others, international cooperation, preserving the natural environment, social progress, rule by the people, greater economic equality and equal opportunity for all. The scales are part of the

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\(^3\) Some response bias has been detected with the Social Values Inventory (Braithwaite, 1994). National strength and order is slightly affected by acquiescence, and international harmony and equality by social desirability. Neither response bias, however, affects relationships between the scales or with liberalism–conservatism (Braithwaite, 1994, 1997).
Social Values Inventory, developed as an expanded form of the Rokeach Value Survey through interviews with a random sample of the general population (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1977; Braithwaite, 1979, 1982).

Both social value scales have been related to political attitudes, intentions and behaviour. National strength and order correlates with conservative attitudes and voting practices, international harmony and equality correlates with liberal attitudes and practices (Braithwaite, 1982, 1994, 1997; Heaven, 1990, 1991; Thannhauser & Caird, 1990). Correlations between national strength and order and international harmony and equality range from zero in student populations to .4 in the general population (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997; Braithwaite, 1994).4

The value balance model assumes that social issues tag both left and right values. In order to ensure that both value orientations were being tagged, five social issues were chosen that divided political parties of the left and right during the Australian federal election that preceded data collection: redistribution of wealth to the poor, reduction of crime, exporting uranium, discrimination against women in the paid workforce, and special benefits for Australian aborigines. The conservative parties (Liberal-National Coalition) perceived government welfare and support for aborigines as undeserving handouts, favoured stricter penalties and deterrence strategies to control crime, favoured mining uranium, and did not see sex discrimination in the workplace as a problem for women. The progressive parties (Australian Labor Party, Australian Democrats) were committed to the redistribution of wealth, to support for aborigines, to educational and preventive solutions to crime control, to restriction of licenses for uranium mining, and to anti-sex-discrimination legislation (McAllister & Mughan, 1987; McAllister & Warhurst, 1988). The saliency of these issues in the election campaign justified the assumption that Australians had had sufficient opportunity to organize the information they had received about these issues into attitudes and to consider value–attitude relationships if they so wished.

Method

Participants and procedure

One hundred and ninety-seven undergraduate students completed a questionnaire designed to measure values, social and political attitudes and behaviours. They were allowed to complete the questionnaire in their own time. Participation was voluntary. Women comprised 47 per cent of the sample.

Measures

Social Values Inventory. The inventory comprises 18 goals for society. Respondents are asked to consider the importance of each goal as a principle that they would use to make judgments about national policies and about world and community events and, at times, to guide their own actions (e.g. when joining certain organizations or voting in elections). Respondents rated each social goal on a seven-point asymmetrical scale (1 = I reject this, 2 = I am inclined to reject this, 3 = I neither reject nor accept this, 4 = I am inclined to accept this, 5 = I accept this as important, 6 = I accept this as very important, 7 = I accept this as of the greatest importance). Fourteen of these goals constitute the national strength and

4 Correlational differences across populations are not surprising. Social-demographic variables are related to the harmony and security scales and to the four value types that result when these dimensions are considered conjointly (Braithwaite, 1994; Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997).
**Value balance model**

Order scale (α = .85, M = 4.37, SD = 1.11) and the international harmony and equality scale (α = .78, M = 5.50, SD = 0.80) (see items listed in Appendix 1). In each case, ratings were summed and divided by the number of items in the scale. The correlation between the value scales was .05.

**Strength and direction of right-left attitudes.** In order to assess strength and direction of attitude on the right-left continuum levels of agreement or disagreement were measured and summed across the five social issues mentioned above: (a) income redistribution, (b) crime deterrence, (c) uranium mining, (d) aboriginal welfare benefits and (e) job opportunities for women. All measures had proven themselves reliable and valid indicators of political positions in the 1987 Australian Election Survey (McAllister & Mugham, 1987).

Attitude to income redistribution was measured using four items: (a) high income tax makes people less willing to work hard (reverse scored); (b) income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people; (c) too many people these days rely on governmental handouts (reverse scored); and (d) more money should be spent reducing poverty. Each response was given on a five-point scale using the categories of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), not sure (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). Attitude to income redistribution was obtained through summing responses and dividing by the number of items in the scale (α = .63, M = 3.10, SD = 0.77).

Attitude to crime deterrence was measured using three items: (a) the police should be given more power; (b) bring back the death penalty; and (c) people who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. Responses were made on a five-point scale of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), not sure (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). Scores were summed and divided by the number of items in the scale (α = .72, M = 2.80, SD = 0.96).

Evaluations of uranium mining, benefits for aborigines and jobs for women were assessed using single-item measures. Respondents were asked: (a) whether uranium should be mined and sold on the world market (choice of 8 per cent), mined with restricted sale (choice of 42 per cent), mined without sale outside Australia (choice of 8 per cent) or left in the ground (choice of 42 per cent) (scored 1 to 4, respectively); (b) whether Australian aborigines should be given special benefits by the government (137 per cent said no, 39 per cent said depends, and 24 per cent said yes) (scored 1 to 3, respectively); and (c) whether women’s job opportunities were worse than those of men with similar education and experience (37 per cent replied no difference or women are better off, 54 per cent considered women worse off and 9 per cent much worse off) (scored 1 to 3 respectively).

A composite scale, representing strength and direction of right-left attitudes was obtained by summing over all five social issues (M = 0.06, SD = 3.50). Attitude scores on each issue were first standardized, thereby ensuring that no one issue dominated the others. Scores were rescored so that a more progressive social outlook was assigned a higher value. The alpha reliability coefficient for the composite scale was .74 with the component attitudes intercorrelating between .26 and .55. A principal component analysis of the five attitudes produced a single factor solution which accounted for 49 per cent of the variance in the item set.

**Consistency of right-left attitudes.** Consistency of right-left responding was based on the above electoral issue questions and was represented by the number of times respondents adopted a left position on the questions minus the number of times a right position was adopted. Eight items were used covering income redistribution, crime deterrence and aboriginal benefits. The other two questions were excluded because they did not have an uncertain category and, therefore, did not give respondents the option of avoiding a for or against position. Consistency responses ranged from +8 (consistently adopting left positions) to −8 (consistently adopting right positions) (M = 0.68, SD = 3.84).

**Value ranks.** Respondents rank ordered the terminal values of the Rokeach Value Survey (Form E) from the most important (1) to the least important (18).

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3 This survey is conducted by Australian political scientists prior to each federal election. The questions have a tradition of use and have been fine tuned for the Australian population. In this study it was important to have attitude measures that were clearly worded, unambiguous and validated in the Australian population in terms of left-right political preferences (see McAllister & Warhurst, 1988 and Kelley & Bean, 1988).
Results

Hypotheses 1 and 2

*National strength and order* and *international harmony and equality* were used to predict (*a*) strength and direction of response on the composite right–left attitude scale and (*b*) the consistency with which right or left positions were adopted on individual items of the attitude scale.

Ordinary least squares regression analysis was used to examine these hypotheses. A stepwise procedure provided the most stringent test for the hypothesis that both security and harmony were necessary to predict right–left evaluation and that one value scale does not make the other redundant. Support for the hypothesis requires both security and harmony to contribute net of each other to the variance explained in the outcome variable. Furthermore, the β coefficients in the final regression equation should be approximately equal in strength, but opposite in sign, meaning that the difference between scores on security and harmony predicted outcome better than either scale individually.

Strength and direction of attitude, represented by scores on the right–left attitude scale, were first correlated with the value scales, using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients (see Table 1). *National strength and order* was negatively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value scales</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National strength and order</td>
<td>-.45***</td>
<td>-.45***</td>
<td>-.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International harmony and equality</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.47***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.42***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (d.f.)</td>
<td>46.11  (1,180)</td>
<td>64.89 (2,179)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (d.f.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.80 (1,178)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Significant at the .001 level.

Table 1. Regressing extremeness of right–left attitudes on *national strength and order* and *international harmony and equality* using a stepwise procedure

correlated with right–left scores, while *international harmony and equality* correlated positively with them. When strength and direction of right–left attitude was regressed on *national strength and order* and *international harmony and equality*, *national strength and order* contributed a significant 20 per cent of the variance on Step 1 and *international harmony and equality* contributed a further significant 22 per cent on Step 2 (see Table 1). Consistent with the value balance hypothesis, the beta coefficients for the two value scales were significant, approximately equal and opposite in sign. *International harmony and equality* brought about movement to the left on the right–left continuum, while *national strength and order* brought about movement to the right.
The Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between the value scales and consistency of right–left responding were significant as expected, with consistency in adopting left positions associated with high scores on international harmony and equality, and consistency in adopting right positions associated with high scores on national strength and order (see Table 2). When right–left consistency scores were regressed on the value scales, national strength and order was entered on Step 1, accounting for a significant 19 per cent of the variance, and international harmony and equality was entered on Step 2, contributing a further 14 per cent of variance (see Table 2). The \( \beta \) coefficients for the two value scales were significant, approximately equal and opposite in sign (see Table 2). International harmony and equality contributed to an increase in consistency of the left, while national strength and order was associated with a decrease.

These data support the value balance hypothesis by showing that both national strength and order and international harmony and equality contribute to the strength and the consistency of responses on a right–left attitude dimension. The fact that the \( \beta \) coefficients in each regression equation are of approximately equal strength, but opposite sign, supports the value balance thesis that the difference between security and harmony values best predicts right–left attitudes to electoral issues.

**Hypothesis 3**

The distributions of scores on national strength and order and international harmony and equality were divided at the median (4.5 and 5.6, respectively) to form four groups: those with high scores on international harmony and equality and national strength and order (dualists), those with low scores on both scales (moral relativists), those with high scores on national strength and order and low scores on international harmony and equality (security oriented), and those with high scores on international harmony and equality and low scores on national strength and order (harmony oriented). Dividing the distributions at the median sectioned off those who used the upper two categories of very
important and of the utmost importance with some consistency. Because values enjoy high social acceptance (Braithwaite, 1994), most of the sample attached at least some importance to the values in question. For this reason, the median provided a more stringent cut-off for dualists than would be obtained if distributions were less skewed.

Rokeach Value Survey rankings for the society-centred goals of freedom, a world at peace, equality, a world of beauty and national security were used to test hypothesis 3: that dualists would be more likely than moral relativists to prioritize society-centred values over personal values. For each value, median ranks were calculated for moral relativists and dualists. Using the median test, significant differences were found for three of the five values (see Table 3). Moral relativists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom (independence, free choice)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A world at peace (free of war and conflict)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security (protection from attack)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level; ** significant at the .01 level.

assigned significantly less importance to a world at peace, equality and national security than dualists. No differences were found for freedom or a world of beauty. It is of note that neither group assigned particularly high rankings to the society-centred values. The highest ranking value for both groups was freedom with a median rank of 6.

These data only partially support the argument that dualists place greater relative importance on society-centred values than moral relativists. The next study explores the issue further by asking whether dualists are more committed to values in general, not just to social values. In the meantime, it is noteworthy that significant differences emerged on those society-centred values that have consistently differentiated political groups in democratic societies (Billig & Cochrane, 1979; Braithwaite, 1994; Cochrane, Billig & Hogg, 1979; Rokeach, 1973). Following this argument, one

* Analyses were replicated using a lower cut-off on each value scale of 4 without observing any notable changes in the pattern of results.
might have expected differences on a world of beauty, since it has been associated with leftist affiliations. At face value, however, a world of beauty is not a politicized value. From these data, one can conclude that dualists gave a significantly higher priority to politicized values than moral relativists.

**Hypothesis 4**

The security-oriented, harmony-oriented dualists and moral relativists were compared in terms of the mean number of times the unsure category was used in response to the electoral issue questions (see Table 4). Of the 10 items, 7 included an

**Table 4.** Means (SDs) and F statistics produced by one-way ANOVAs comparing four groups (the security-oriented, moral relativists, dualists and harmony-oriented) on the number of ‘unsure’ responses and right–left attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Security (N = 37)</th>
<th>Relativist (N = 60)</th>
<th>Dualist (N = 41)</th>
<th>Harmony (N = 44)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. unsure</td>
<td>1.43 (1.17)</td>
<td>1.82 (1.40)</td>
<td>1.80 (1.15)</td>
<td>1.72 (1.58)</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right–left attitude</td>
<td>−2.88 (2.61)</td>
<td>.14 (3.39)</td>
<td>.05 (2.47)</td>
<td>2.44 (3.32)</td>
<td>20.58** **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Significant at the .001 level.

‘unsure’ response category. A one-way analysis of variance on mean scores presented in Table 4 showed no significant differences across groups. All groups, regardless of their value orientations, were equally likely to adopt a position on these issues and use of the unsure category was rare. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not confirmed.

For comparative purposes, mean scores on the right–left attitude scale are also included in Table 4. One-way analysis of variance produced a significant F statistic. Scheffé’s tests between pairs of means failed to differentiate dualists and moral relativists at the aggregate attitudinal level as expected, although both groups differed significantly from the harmony oriented and the security oriented. Dualists and moral relativists were located together in the middle of the right–left continuum.

**Hypothesis 5**

Hypothesis 5 postulates coherence in the attitudes expressed by dualists, a coherence reflected in concern for security as well as harmony in the community. In order to examine this question, responses were collapsed into two categories, the percentage who agreed with each of the 10 electoral issue questions, and others. This breakdown was compared for the four groups of moral relativists, dualists, the harmony-oriented and the security-oriented.
Attention first focused on the moral relativists and dualists because dualists were expected to strive for coherence in their values and attitudes more actively than moral relativists. Preliminary analyses using chi-square tests of independence showed no significant differences between moral relativists and dualists on 9 of the 10 questions. The exception involved the attitude statement, ‘People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences’ (\(\chi^2(2) = 7.66, p < .02\)). While only a minority of moral relativists accepted this position (39 per cent), the majority of dualists (65 per cent) endorsed the statement. With the exception of this item, moral relativists and dualists had comparable levels of agreement and so were collapsed into a ‘balanced’ group, so labelled in Table 5.

### Table 5. Percentage of the security-oriented, balanced and harmony-oriented who supported the 10 electoral issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social issue</th>
<th>Percentage of group(^a)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>(\chi^2(2))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. High income tax makes people less willing to work hard</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>13.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Too many people these days rely on government handouts</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16.56***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. More money should be spent reducing poverty</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9.84**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The police should be given more power</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.27***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bring back the death penalty</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39/65*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.64***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Australia should not export uranium</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>14.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No special benefits should be given to aborigines</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.42***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Women have fewer job opportunities than men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16.03***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level; ** significant at the .01 level; *** significant at the .001 level.

\(^a\) Data have been collapsed into two categories representing agreement with each stated position versus other.

\(^b\) Percentage in agreement for the low-commitment and high-commitment groups respectively. The corresponding chi-square statistic is based on an analysis of the four groups (d.f. = 3).

The majority view of the balanced group was compared to modal security-oriented and harmony-oriented views to find out if balance meant holding an inconsistent mix of left and right positions or if some coherence in these positions could be inferred. Chi-square tests of independence showed that endorsement rates for specific issues...
varied significantly across the security, harmony and balanced value groups (see Table 5). The majority of the harmony group considered the fight against poverty to be important, supported income redistribution, regarded women’s employment opportunities as worse than men’s, had sympathy for aborigines and resisted the export of uranium, police power, the death penalty and heavier sentences.

The majority of the security group agreed that more money should be spent to reduce poverty, but they were also likely to think that increasing tax would make people work less hard, that too many were relying on government handouts, and that no special benefits should be given to aborigines. The security group considered harsher penalties for law violation as being in order, with almost half favouring the death penalty and greater police power. Relatively little support was found in this group for the view that women had fewer job opportunities, for restricting uranium exports or for wealth redistribution toward the poor.

As expected, the balanced value group was characterized by less consensus than either the harmony or security groups. Nevertheless, as a group they responded in a way that was consistent with their equal commitment to security and harmony. The majority of the balanced value group believed that more money should be spent on poverty and that job opportunities were worse for women than men. They distanced themselves from policies advocating no special benefits for aborigines, police power, and the death penalty. The issues which divided the group were uranium exports, income redistribution to the poor, the effect of high income tax on incentives, and reliance on government handouts. On the issue of stiffer penalties for law violation, dualists were in favour, moral relativists against. Overall, the profile of the balanced group showed support for a compassionate social programme, but they were not prepared to let others take advantage of them. Humanistic concerns were tempered with wariness of unfair play and free riding and with a desire to keep the competitive edge.

Summary of Study 1

The data supported hypotheses 1 and 2, demonstrating that both national strength and order and international harmony and equality were important in their own right as predictors of the strength and consistency of response on the right–left attitude continuum. Of particular interest, given these findings, was the distinction between moral relativists (low scores on both dimensions) and dualists (high scorers on both dimensions). Hypothesis 3, which predicted that dualists would be more society centred than moral relativists, was not supported, although dualists prioritized politicized society-centred values in their personal value hierarchy more than did moral relativists. Hypothesis 4, restating the moral relativist’s tendency to avoid taking a political position, was not supported. Moral relativists adopted positions on electoral issues that did not differ markedly from dualists. Dualists, as predicted in hypothesis 5, adopted a mix of left and right positions that were consistent with showing concern for others and cooperative relations (harmony values) as well as concern for not being taken advantage of by those seeking a competitive advantage (security values). One difference that did emerge between moral relativists and
dualists concerned stiffer penalties for those who break the law. The majority of moral relativists opposed this policy, whereas the majority of dualists supported it.

Study 1 only partially met its objectives for differentiating moral relativists and dualists. Studies 2 and 3 explore these differences further in terms of the ways in which moral relativists and dualists view values as principles in political decision making.

STUDY 2

Central to the value balance model is the assumption that differences in the value ratings of dualists and moral relativists reflect substantive differences in value commitment. To explore this issue further, Study 2 tests the proposition that dualists are more comfortable in committing to overarching rules and principles than moral relativists.

The idea that moral relativists may be either unwilling or unable to generalize judgments of what is right or wrong follows logically from Scott’s (1965) definition of a moral relativist. In studying the values of college students in fraternities and sororities, Scott found some who consistently failed to support the absoluteness of values or the belief that the value should be operative in all or almost all circumstances. They favoured the response category, ‘depends on the situation’, on the Personal Value Scales. Although Scott’s work was based on moral ideals of a personal kind, one would expect relativism to transfer to social values. Thus, the following hypothesis was derived and tested: (a) moral relativists should make greater use than dualists of the response category ‘depends on the situation’ in the Personal Value Scales.

Method

Participants and procedure

The database comprised 465 university students at the University of Queensland (Braithwaite, 1982, 1994; Braithwaite & Law, 1985), who volunteered to complete a battery of tests anonymously over a three-week period in 1977. The questionnaires were presented to respondents in six different random orders. The battery included Scott’s (1965) Personal Value Scales and the Social Values Inventory. These two instruments were completed one to two weeks apart.

Measures

Scott’s Personal Value Scales. Each of 12 moral ideals (creativity, independence, intellectualism, academic achievement, social skills, loyalty, status, physical development, honesty, self-control, kindness, religiousness) was measured through 20 statements of belief or attitude rated on a 3-point scale: ‘always dislike’, ‘depends on the situation’ and ‘always admire’. The total number of times that respondents used ‘depends on the situation’ across all 240 items was used as the index of moral relativism.

The Social Values Inventory. Social values were measured as in Study 1 with responses being aggregated to form an international harmony and equality scale (α = .86, M = 5.74, SD = .76) and a national strength and order scale (α = .82, M = 4.76, SD = 1.12). A positive correlation was found between international harmony and equality and national strength and order (r = .23, p < .01). Following previous practice, the median of each scale was used to divide the sample into four groups (the security-oriented, the harmony-oriented, dualists and moral relativists). The positive correlation between the scales resulted in the groups being of unequal size.
Results

Relativism scores for the four groups are given in Table 6. A one-way analysis of variance indicated a significant effect overall, with the Scheffé test identifying significant differences between two of the four groups. Moral relativists had significantly higher relativism scores than dualists, indicating that relativists, as predicted, were more likely to respond to moral ideals with ‘depends on the situation’.

Table 6. Means (SDs) and F statistics produced by a one-way ANOVA comparing four groups (the security-oriented, moral relativists, dualists and harmony-oriented) on the index of moral relativism (number of ‘depends’ responses) from Scott’s Personal Value Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Security (N = 86)</th>
<th>Relativist (N = 143)</th>
<th>Dualist (N = 132)</th>
<th>Harmony (N = 101)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of ‘depends on the situation’ responses</td>
<td>108.53 (29.37)</td>
<td>117.78 (32.93)</td>
<td>103.22 (26.98)</td>
<td>113.61 (29.64)</td>
<td>5.86***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Significant at the .001 level.

STUDY 3

Moral relativists were just as likely to hold views on electoral issues as dualists. Yet they appear to be more context sensitive than dualists and less likely to prioritize politicized values over personal values. These findings suggest that moral relativists and dualists differ in the way in which they engage with and perceive the political process. Moral relativists may focus more on their own interests and spend less time identifying with political causes and political groups.

To examine differences between moral relativists and dualists further, data were taken from a recent national survey, Attitudes Towards Forest Management and Other Issues (Blamey, 1995a). The survey incorporated the Social Values Inventory, questions on self-interest and voting, and questions on identification with the left–right continuum.

Moral relativists were expected to differ from dualists by being more supportive of self-interest voting. Voting in others’ interests is likely to prove difficult for moral relativists without allegiance to broad social goals that they believe will benefit everyone.

1 Unequal groups and unequal variances raise concerns about the robustness of a one-way analysis of variance. A test for equality of variances, however, failed to reach statistical significance at the .05 level, providing no evidence for claiming that the observed differences in variances were anything other than random fluctuations. As an additional precaution, a Kruskal Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used to test the means for statistical differences. This analysis confirmed the findings using the parametric test.
In terms of identification with the left–right continuum, dualists and moral relativists share the middle ground (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997). They were expected to differ, however, in the amount of time they spent thinking about their left–right location. A tendency to prioritize politicized values, together with acceptance of overarching principles, should result in dualists being more highly motivated to spend time thinking about their location on the left–right continuum than moral relativists.

Method

Participants and procedure

The National Forest Attitudes Survey (Blamey, 1995a) was mailed to a random sample of 3500 adults on electoral rolls in Australia with a reply-paid envelope. Completed questionnaires were returned by 1680, giving a response rate of 48 per cent.

The sample comprised 49 per cent men and 51 per cent women ranging in age from 16 to 93 years (M = 53.48, SD = 16.60). Overall, sample statistics on age, income and sex compared favourably with population parameters (Blamey, 1995b). The sample was biased, however, towards those with more education.

Measures

Social Values Inventory. The instrument was administered as it had been previously with minor updating of some item descriptions and the deletion of one item (see Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997). The scales of *international harmony and equality* (α = .85, M = 5.61, SD = 0.87) and *national strength and order* (α = .79, M = 5.14, SD = 1.09) remained the same. The correlation between the scales was .44.

Self-interest voting. Having a self-interested orientation to voting was measured according to what the individual thought one should do and, finally, according to what one did. Blamey (1995a) asked the following three questions in succession: ‘Should people vote in their own interests or in the interest of society as a whole?’, followed by ‘How do you think people usually vote?’ and, finally, ‘How do you usually vote?’ The response options in all three cases were own best interest (1), best interest of society (2) and a combination of the two (3). The first and last questions are relevant to this paper.

Time on left–right position. Blamey (1995a) asked: ‘In politics, people talk about the “left” and the “right”. Where would you place your views on this left–right scale?’ Respondents were required to circle a number from 1 (left) to 10 (right). The next question was: ‘Is this something that you think about much?’ Respondents circled yes (2) or no (1).

Results

Responses to whether one should vote in one’s own interests, society’s interests or both, were cross-tabulated against the median split value groups (security-oriented, harmony-oriented, moral relativist or dualist). The percentages of each value group supporting self-interest voting or society-interest voting are given in Table 7. The chi-square tests of independence were significant when all four value groups were compared (the column headed SRDH and when dualists and moral relativists were compared (the column headed RD). Moral relativists were similar to the security-oriented in being more likely to say they voted in their self-interest and that they should vote this way. Dualists were similar to the harmony-oriented in being more likely to say they voted in society’s interest and should vote that way. It is of note,
Table 7. Percentage of the security-oriented, relativist, dualist and harmony-oriented who endorsed self- or society-interest voting in relation to how they voted and how other people should vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Security (N = 259)</th>
<th>Relativist (N = 493)</th>
<th>Dualist (N = 544)</th>
<th>Harmony (N = 263)</th>
<th>$\chi^2(6)$</th>
<th>$\chi^2(2)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How should people vote?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.69***</td>
<td>8.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you usually vote?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.04***</td>
<td>9.56**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05 level; ** significant at the .001 level.

however, that in every group the majority preferred to combine self and society’s interests.

In order to test the hypothesis that identification with the left–right continuum was less important to moral relativists than dualists, time spent thinking about left–right location was cross-tabulated against value group (security-oriented, harmony-oriented, moral relativist or dualist). Moral relativists spent significantly less time thinking about their position on the left–right continuum than any other group: 15 per cent thought about it, compared with 23 per cent of dualists, 27 per cent of the security oriented and 26 per cent of the harmony oriented ($\chi^2(3) = 21.16$, $p < .001$).

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The value balance model of political evaluation is based on two value dimensions, national strength and order and international harmony and equality (Braithwaite, 1982, 1994). The model purports that the values that individuals hold for their society are often not aligned with the constraints that political institutions in democratic societies place on political decision making. Individuals must develop strategies for mapping a two-dimensional security–harmony value structure onto a single left–right political continuum. Such strategies are unlikely to be uniform across the population: they will depend on the fit between the individual’s values and the constraints of political institutions.

Central to the value balance model is the assumption that values are, in the abstract, incommensurable: it is only in particular contexts that values are assessed for their compatibility, and if necessary traded off. Where a state of value imbalance exists (that is, for the security-oriented and the harmony-oriented), engagement with political institutions in Western democracies is a straightforward matter. Through
support for hypotheses 1 and 2, this paper has shown that the security-oriented more consistently and strongly endorse conservative policies, while the harmony-oriented more consistently and strongly favour liberal policies. Other work has shown that security translates into support for parties of the right, while harmony translates into support for parties of the left (Braithwaite, 1994, 1997; Heaven, 1991).

For those with value balance, engagement with political institutions is far more complex. The dominant left–right attitude model of political expression identifies those with value balance as ‘middle-of-the-roaders’, a group often caricatured in democracies as the silent majority. The value balance model separates middle-of-the-roaders with balanced values and low commitment (moral relativists) from those with balanced values and high commitment (dualists). This paper presents findings from the first stage of a research programme that seeks to distinguish moral relativists and dualists in terms of their different styles of engagement with the political process.

One hypothesized basis for differentiating dualists and moral relativists was that the former would be more likely to adopt political positions than the latter. This was not the case. Moral relativists and dualists expressed similar opinions, sometimes favouring the left, sometimes the right, giving them an aggregate score that placed them in the middle of the left–right attitude continuum. An analysis of the attitudes expressed by the majority of the balanced group showed them to be willing to express support for policies that reduced the suffering of others, addressed discrimination and showed compassion. At the same time, they were not prepared to undermine initiative and society’s reward systems. Their attitudes reflected equal concern for humanitarianism and security through order and status. The pattern is consistent with Boulding’s (1962) analysis of the way in which societies compromise between the goals of looking after the basic needs of all through providing ‘a social minimum’, and encouraging merit based rewards ‘above this social minimum’ (p. 83).

It is of note, however, that the attitudinal similarity of dualists and moral relativists reported in this paper does not generalize to other beliefs. In work published elsewhere on environmental attitudes, moral relativists were found to stand apart from other groups in consistently rejecting suggestions that nature should be preserved at all costs (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1996). There is need to unravel further the meaning of the difference in value commitment between the relativist and dualist groups. Further insights might be gained by restricting the scope of the moral relativist group. In the present research, the category included all those who did not commit strongly to the value in question. The likelihood of distinguishing dualists and relativists might be increased in the future if a more homogeneous category of moral relativist is developed. In the meantime, the present research provides four leads for differentiating the political engagement of relativists and dualists: moral relativists are more consequentialist in their outlook, rank politicized values less highly as guiding principles in their life, are less preoccupied with left–right identification and are more in tune with self-interest voting.

Ultimately, this research is directed towards explaining how different decision-making processes may be used by moral relativists, dualists, the security-oriented and the harmony-oriented in political evaluation. All groups appear to subscribe to ‘a
social minimum’ of some kind, but the findings of this paper suggest that there are
good reasons for expecting differences in the parameters that each group takes into
account in making that decision.

A number of theoretical approaches offer hypotheses about how decision making
may vary across groups. Tetlock’s (1986, 1989) value pluralism model, which
considers the way in which individuals trade off particular values in given political
contexts, may hold the key to understanding how dualists arrive at their opinions.
Without the broad cognitive schemata of the security- and harmony-oriented to
guide decision making, dualists may be forced to be particularistic in the values they
use to arrive at their positions.

Other components of the belief system should also be considered as part of the
supplementary cognitive material that dualists might need for political evaluations.
A range of situational beliefs and attitudes (e.g. likelihood of success in achieving a
good, personal efficacy, expectations of others) have been shown to interact with
values to shape decisions and evaluations (Feather, 1990, 1995).

For moral relativists, the role played by values may be quite different. Values may
be implicated as part of the justification rather than decision-making process.
Relativists may be more comfortable deciding on a position on the basis of specific
information, and thereafter justifying their decision in terms of the more general
socially sanctioned values.

In advancing the argument that different groups of individuals face different
challenges in attaining value attitude consistency in the domain of political
evaluations, explanations from a range of seemingly competing theoretical
approaches may need to coexist. Group identifications (Jacoby, 1991; Kinder &
Sears, 1985; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1987) may come into play, particularly in cases of
strong value conflict; so too might self-interest. In the context of voting in national
elections, it would be naïve to underestimate the influence that comes about through
significant others. It would also be naïve to dismiss personal well-being in the
decision-making equation. This paper does not point to one theoretical approach as
having analytical superiority over another, but suggests that they may all have
something to offer depending upon whether we are talking about the security-
oriented, the harmony-oriented, dualists or moral relativists.

To illustrate this argument, Sears, Lau, Tyler & Allen (1980) published an
important paper comparing symbolic attitudes and self-interest as determinants of
policy preferences. They concluded that self-interest had little effect. The value
balance model suggests that their results may have been different if they had divided
their group according to security–harmony value commitments. One would expect
self-interest to have most effect on policy preferences among the low-value
commitment group, moral relativists. When all four groups are considered together,
it is not surprising that the cohesion in the responses of the opposing groups, the
security- and harmony-oriented, dominate the pattern of results.

The findings of this paper are both bounded and far reaching. They are bounded
in the sense that the value balance model is based on theoretical notions of belief
consistency and psych-logic (Abelson, 1983) when the population is familiar with
both the arguments of the left (harmony-oriented) and the arguments of the right
(security-oriented). When the issues have not been debated publicly by the main
protagonists, uncertainty rules as to which key values have been primed prior to decision making (Katz & Hass, 1988). If only one value and its accompanying value orientation are being primed, the value balance model loses its relevance. An adversarial political system that primes both the security- and harmony-value orientations is crucial to the operation of the value balance model.

At the same time, the model has far-reaching implications for social psychologists interested in attitudes and values, and for political psychologists interested in the way in which individuals develop their policy preferences and priorities. This study differentiates attitudes from values and challenges the widespread assumption that left and right values mirror left and right attitudes. The findings reported here support the notion that left and right values are relatively independent of each other, and not polar opposites as conservative–liberal attitudes tend to be. Values, as conceived by Kluckhohn (1951), Scott (1965) and Smith (1963), are not likely to translate directly into attitudes to objects and situations. They are learned rules of behaviour that transcend context. As such, their application to context will often be problematic for the individual, with effort required to build consistency between free-floating values and context constrained attitudes. This paper warns against an approach to value–attitude research in the future that unquestioningly assumes that the attitude and value domains mirror each other in their internal relationships.

At a more specific level, the findings of this paper bear upon Tetlock’s (1986) argument that middle-of-the-roaders are more cognitively complex than extremists. The data presented here suggest a tension between the social values that many individuals hold and the way in which political institutions expect individuals to articulate these values. Adversarial political systems pit ‘right’ values against ‘left’ values. These data show that many people hold both security values (most commonly espoused by the right) and harmony values (most commonly espoused by the left). Larger cross-national databases such as those of Inglehart (1977, 1990) confirm this picture of perceived value compatibility. Engagement with the political system as it is institutionalized in Western democracies means that those with value balance must find a mode of adaptation. It is necessary, therefore, to address the following question in the Tetlock-driven debate over who is more cognitively complex. Is cognitive complexity in political decision making a stable personality attribute or is it no more than a mode of adaptation used by individuals whose own way of thinking about social issues is incompatible with the political institutions with which they must engage?

Whatever the answer to this question, recognizing left and right values as independent phenomena rather than as polar opposites offers a new perspective on the psychology of those who occupy the middle ground of the political spectrum. Silence and attitudinal swings may be responses to a political system that assumes citizens are locked into value polarity, when value balancing is the way of thinking that has greatest appeal.

Acknowledgements

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Value balance model

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References


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Appendix 1

International harmony and equality

A good life for others (improving the welfare of all people in need)
Rule by the people (involvement by all citizens in making decisions that affect their community)
International cooperation (having all nations working together to help each other)
Social progress and social reform (readiness to change our way of life for the better)
A world at peace (being free from war and conflict)
A world of beauty (having the beauty of nature and the arts: music, literature, art, etc.)
Human dignity (allowing each individual to be treated as someone of worth)
Equal opportunity for all (giving everyone an equal chance in life)
Greater economic equality (lessening the gap between the rich and the poor)
Preserving the natural environment (preventing the destruction of nature’s beauty and resources)

National strength and order

National greatness (being a united, strong, independent and powerful nation)
National economic development (having greater economic progress and prosperity for the nation)
The rule of law (punishing the guilty and protecting the innocent)
National security (protection of your nation from enemies)