ARE AMERICANS “INTUITIVE FEDERALISTS”?

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The division of policy responsibilities across different levels of government is a very complex aspect of American federalism. Given the chronically low levels of political knowledge and misunderstandings of the policy process that exist at the mass level, it is reasonable to assume that there is little in the way of meaningful public opinion on this topic. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have reported that citizens do attribute different policy responsibilities to the national, state, and local governments. What is the source of this variability? We examine this question using data from the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. Our results show that meaningful patterns of attitudes toward intergovernmental policy responsibilities exist even after we take other factors into account. This suggests a surprisingly sophisticated component of American public opinion in which the mass public does seem to appreciate some of the complexities of the modern intergovernmental system.
The division of policy responsibilities across different levels of government is one of the most complex aspects of American federalism. And, given the chronically low levels of political knowledge and misunderstandings of the policy process that exist at the mass level, it is reasonable to assume that there is little in the way of meaningful public opinion on this topic. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have reported that citizens do attribute different policy responsibilities to the national, state, and local governments. What is the source of this variability? In other words, why does the public believe the federal government should handle certain problems while the subnational governments should address other types of concerns?

This study examines the preceding question using data from the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. We find that meaningful patterns of attitudes toward intergovernmental policy responsibilities exist even after we take other factors into account (e.g., ideology, partisanship, and overall affect toward the various levels of government). We argue that this suggests a surprisingly sophisticated component of American public opinion. The mass public does seem to appreciate the complexities of the modern federal system in the United States.

BACKGROUND

A number of scholars have documented the low levels of political knowledge and understanding that exist within the mass public (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, McPhee 1954; Converse 1964; 1970; Neuman 1986; Bennett 1988; Smith 1989; Page and Shapiro 1992; Popkin and Dimock 1999; Price 1999). Many citizens display only the most tenuous grasp of basic facts about American politics (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Knowledge about public affairs is sketchy, at best, and even highly prominent political figures go unrecognized by sizable segments of the population (Althaus 2003). The “conventional wisdom” among mass behavior scholars is that the American electorate is largely disconnected from major elements of the political system. Ferejohn (1990) sums up this perspective by saying that “Nothing strikes the student of public opinion and democracy more forcefully than the paucity of information most people possess about politics” (page 3).

But, perhaps the situation is not so clearcut. Even two of the leading researchers on political knowledge offer the caveat that what Americans understand about the political system is “...more complicated than often assumed” (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996, page 63). For one thing, there is strong evidence that the public’s level of knowledge has been seriously underestimated. Mondak
(2001) shows that many individuals who do not respond to factual questions actually can produce correct answers when encouraged to guess. This may suggest that people may know more than they realize. In a similar vein, Gibson and Caldeira (2009) show that survey questions on factual items are often coded in an excessively rigid way. Hence, many people are scored as incorrect, even though they provide answers that suggest a general familiarity with the subject matter of the question. In summary, the “fault” may lie with the public’s ability to express its knowledge of government and politics, rather than the actual levels of knowledge that people possess.

There is also evidence that citizens understand some of the conceptual foundations of the American political system. For example, previous work has demonstrated a general appreciation for the importance of checks and balances across governmental institutions. Many citizens express an explicit preference for divided government (Jacobson 1990; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Fiorina 1996; Sigelman, Wahlbeck, Buell 1997), a finding that some scholars refer to as “cognitive Madisonianism” (e.g., Ladd 1990; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2004). Similarly, the public seems to take representation and decision-making processes into account when evaluating governmental performance (Weatherford 1992; Gibson and Caldeira 1995; Durr, Gilmour, Wolbrecht 1997). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001) report that how decisions are made is just as important as the substantive content of policy outcomes in determining citizen satisfaction with government. Related to this, Tyler (1990) emphasizes that “procedural justice” is critical in determining public support for the judicial system.

Still another conceptual/procedural area in which public opinion may be surprisingly well-developed is federalism. The division of power across different levels of government is a basic component of the American political system. But, it also introduces vast complexity into the policy-making process. It has been estimated that there are over 89,500 different governmental units in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). This sizable number of decision-making bodies produces a confusing maze of overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions. Even scholarly experts in this field acknowledge the difficulty of grasping the enormity of the American federal system (Arceneaux 2005; 2006; Wlezien and Soroka 2011).

Thus, if there were any political topic that might be expected to lead ordinary citizens to throw up their hands in dismay, it probably would be federalism. But, that just does not seem to be the case. While public opinion surveys do not ask their respondents about “federalism” per
se, a number of researchers have posed questions about the breakdown of policy responsibilities across different levels of government. And, the empirical results frequently indicate that people make systematic and reasonable distinctions about what the national, state, and local governments should be doing (Reeves 1987; Thompson and Elling 1999; Shaw and Reinhart 2001; Schneider and Jacoby 2003; Arceneaux 2005; Konisky 2011; Schneider, Jacoby, Lewis 2011).

Furthermore, federalism beliefs have visible consequences for citizen attitudes toward specific policies. For example, Kam and Mikos (2007) report that opinions about which level of government should be responsible for regulating physician-assisted suicide are related to support for federal legislation in this area, especially when elite debate is framed in terms of federalism issues. Similarly, Schneider (2008) shows that opinions about disaster response policies and practices are closely related to public preferences for greater federal involvement in the ongoing intergovernmental disaster response system.

In the current analysis, we begin with that basic finding that citizens differentiate the responsibilities of the national, state, and local governments across policy areas. But, we go on to ask a question that has been overlooked in the previous literature: Why do people prefer the national or subnational governments to take action in specific policy areas? Are such distinctions just another manifestation of partisan and ideological polarization? Do they reflect affective feelings about different governmental units and public officials? Or do cross-policy differences in preferences for national or state/local action represent a conceptually separate phenomenon?

DATA

Our analysis uses data taken from the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). This is an internet survey administered to a national sample in fall 2006 by Polimetrix, Inc. We focus mainly on a battery of questions that tapped respondents’ preferences regarding specific policy areas. For each of 19 policies, they were asked the following question:

Do you think the national government, the state governments, or the local governments should take the lead in trying to —?

This question was posed for each of the following policies:
Assisting elderly Americans
Protecting the environment
Reducing crime
Providing a good education to everyone
Guaranteeing equal opportunity to members of all racial groups
Reducing unemployment
Regulating immigration
Maintaining public roads, bridges, dams, and the like
Providing financial assistance to the poor
Promoting urban development and revitalization
Protecting the rights of individuals with special needs such as the blind and the disabled
Guaranteeing equal opportunity for women
Controlling the use of illegal drugs
Developing public transportation systems
Controlling illegal firearms
Providing health care for all Americans
Controlling hazardous toxic waste materials
Helping victims of natural disasters, e.g., floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.

From the total 1000 respondents in this component of the CCES, 842 people answered the full battery of government responsibility questions. For the remainder of this study, we focus strictly on the dichotomous distinction between the national government on the one hand, and the combined state and local governments on the other. That is, we combine responses indicating a preference that the state or local governments take the lead on a given policy area into a single category. We believe this dichotomization is appropriate because the major issues of American federalism have centered around the contrast between the national government and subnational jurisdictions (Peterson 1995; Donahue 1999).

**EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

Let us begin by considering variability in the overall degree to which individuals believe the national government should be responsible for addressing policy concerns. Figure 1 contains a histogram for the number of policy areas in which each individual CCES respondent says the
national government should take the lead. The distribution is strongly unimodal, with the highest proportion of people saying that the national government should lead in 10 of the 19 policy areas. The distribution also shows a fair degree of symmetry, although it is noticeably heavier on the left side of the mode. Very few people favor unilateral leadership by either the national or subnational governments. Instead, the predominant tendency is for people to prefer a combination of action at both levels. To be more specific, the histogram indicates that a majority of the CCES respondents wants the national government to take the lead in no fewer than six and no more than 11 policy areas.

This evidence goes against the idea that Americans favor the “closer” subnational units over the “more distant” federal government in Washington, D.C. (Shaw and Reinhart 2001; Kincaid and Cole 2001; 2005). Instead, the results are highly consistent with the principle of differentiated responsibilities across the levels of government. Of course, this is a basic element of federalism. And, it appears that public opinion reflects this very nicely.

The histogram from Figure 1 naturally leads to the question of why some people prefer the national government to take the lead on more policies while others want it to confine its role to a smaller number of substantive areas. Several factors could account for this. In the modern era, the two major American political parties have always take sharply contrasting stands on the role of the national and state/local governments. Therefore, we would expect partisan orientations to affect individual attitudes on national leadership in policy-making. Similarly, the central issue in American ideology involves the scope and role of government in redressing societal problems. And, this is often manifested in disagreements about the national government’s involvement in substantive issues (e.g., Downs 1957; Fiorina, Abrams, Pope 2006; Marrietta 2012). So, ideological self-placements may also affect people’s reactions.

Along with the preceding symbolic political orientations, general feelings about the appropriate roles for each level of government should have an effect. The reasoning here is based upon simple logic: If someone believes the national government should take on more responsibility to solve problems in general, then he or she should also want the national government to take the lead in a larger number of specific policy areas. Prior research shows that this is, in fact, the case (Schneider, Jacoby, Lewis 2011).
The 2006 CCES contains variables that can be used to operationalize the preceding factors. Party identification is measured with the standard seven-point scale, ranging from “strong Democrat” (coded -3) to “strong Republican” (coded 3). Ideological self-placements are based on a five-point scale, ranging from “very liberal” (coded -2) to “very conservative” (coded 2). General feelings about the levels of government were measured with the following three statements: “National government should do more to try and solve pressing problems in American society”; “State governments should take on more responsibility for the problems and issues that arise within their borders”; and, “Local governments should take on more responsibility for the problems and issues that arise within their borders.” The CCES respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement with each of these statements, using a five-point scale, ranging from “strongly agree” (coded -2) to “strongly disagree” (coded 2).

The preceding five variables are used as predictors in a regression in which the dependent variable is the number of policy areas the individual reports the national government should take the lead (i.e., the variable whose distribution is shown in Figure 1). The coefficients are estimated using ordinary least squares, and the results are presented in Table 1. The $R^2$ value is 0.370, indicating that the data fit the model quite well. All of the independent variables are coded so that the zero point corresponds to a neutral position. This is useful because it makes it easier to interpret the intercept. Here, the equation’s constant is 9.107. That value gives the mean number of policies specified by a person who is a nonleaning independent, ideological moderate, who is completely indifferent about the roles of the respective government levels. Thus, a “centrist” individual of this sort wants the national government to take the lead in about half of the policy areas. This, in itself, is fully consistent with the basic federalist principle that the national and subnational governments should play balanced roles in addressing social issues.

Turning to the independent variables, partisanship and general affective feelings have coefficients that are significantly different from zero, in the expected directions. Exactly as hypothesized, stronger Democratic identifications correspond to preferences for the national government to take the lead in a larger number of areas, and vice versa for Republican identifications. And, people who believe the national government should take on more responsibilities in general also want it to address more policy areas. In contrast, people who want the state and local governments to become more active want the national government to take the lead in fewer policy areas. The coefficient
for ideology has the correct sign, but it is not significantly different from zero (in a directional test at the 0.05 level). We suspect that this is due to limited levels of political sophistication and the difficulty that many people have in linking ideological abstractions to specific governmental activities (e.g., Jacoby 1995).

We have just shown that party identification and general feelings about national, state, and local governmental responsibility influence the overall degree to which people want the national government to take the lead in policy-making. But, we are more interested in preferences for government action at the national and subnational levels in specific policy areas. Figure 2 contains a dot plot showing the percentage of CCES respondents who said the federal government should take the lead in each of the 19 policy areas included in the survey instrument. The plotted points represent the percentages, themselves; the horizontal black bars provide 95% confidence intervals. And, the vertical red line is placed at the 50% position as a reference.

Clearly, there is wide variability across policy areas in attributions of responsibility to the national government. At the extremes, only about 8.1% of the respondents say that the national government should take the lead in urban renewal. At the other end, almost 86% say that the national government should take the lead in regulating immigration. In nine of the policy areas, the percentages favoring national leadership are significantly lower than the midpoint (i.e., 50%). In eight other areas, significantly more than half the public prefers that the national government take the lead. In two policy areas, assisting the disabled and controlling illegal firearms, the public is almost evenly divided between the national and subnational governments.

Once we take a person’s general propensity to support or oppose the national government’s role into account, do the same factors that influence that propensity (i.e., partisanship, ideology, and general feelings about governmental responsibility) have any additional impact on preferences for national government leadership in specific policy areas? We address this question by estimating a series of 19 logistic regression equations. In each one, the dependent variable is the log odds that an individual says the national government should take the lead in one of the substantive areas. The independent variables include the same ones that were used in Table 1, plus the total number of policies in which the person says the national government should take the lead. Of course, the latter should always have a strong positive effect on the probability of specifying national leadership in
any particular policy. But, we want to see whether the remaining variables have additional effects once this is taken into account.

Table 2 shows the maximum likelihood coefficient estimates for the full set of 19 policy areas. Of course, this table contains an enormous amount of information, so we will focus only on those elements that are directly relevant to our arguments. Exactly as expected, the variable with the strongest effect, by far, in each equation is the total number of policies in which the person says the national government should take the lead. Beyond this, the most important general feature is that the remaining variables show intermittent, inconsistent, and generally very weak effects. For example, the coefficient for the party identification variable is only significantly different from zero (in the expected direction) in two policy areas—assisting the elderly and assisting the poor. Admittedly, these are two prominent social policies in which the Democratic party traditionally has taken a strong stance in supporting governmental action. So, the significant coefficients are very reasonable. But, it is also important to emphasize that the effects are quite weak; the coefficients barely achieve significance at the 0.05 level. And, we cannot overlook the fact that there are 17 additional policy areas in which partisanship does not show the expected effect.

The results for ideology are similar, but they involve different policy areas. Again, only two of the equations show significant coefficients in the expected direction: Controlling hazardous waste and helping natural disaster victims. Once again, there is a common substantive thread across the two substantive areas, focusing on emergency response activities (Waugh 2000; Sylves 2008). It appears that conservatives support subnational action to deal with such problems while liberals prefer national government leadership. Again, these differences are very reasonable. But, they pale in comparison to the remaining 17 policy areas in which ideology does not show an effect. This is particularly striking precisely because ideology, by definition, should provide a “default position” for just about any social problem or issue that might arise.

Feelings about general governmental responsibility show similarly spotty effects. Beliefs about national responsibility influence feelings about national leadership in three areas: Assisting the elderly, providing education, and providing health care. Beliefs about state responsibility influence opinions about health care; that is, people who want the states to take on more responsibility are less likely to say that the national government should take the lead in health care policy. At the local level, the only significant relationship occurs for protecting the environment. Here, a
general belief that the local governments should take on more responsibilities corresponds to a lower probability of supporting national leadership in environmental protection. Beyond these specific policy areas, affective feelings about the national, state, and local governments’ responsibilities do not correspond to feelings about which level of government should take the lead in specific policy areas.

The results in Table 2 lead to a broad conclusion: On the one hand, partisanship and general feelings determine the overall degree to which people want the national government to be involved in dealing with policy issues. But, once this general tendency is taken into account, they have very little effect on feelings about specific policies. Therefore, the predominance of small and nonsignificant coefficients is telling in itself, because it suggests that people are differentiating among the policy areas without being unduly influenced by their personal political orientations.

In order to provide a succinct summary of our results, we will take one more analytic step, and estimate a model of support for national leadership across all of the separate policy areas. We do this by creating units of analysis for each person’s response to each separate policy. In other words, each survey respondent contributes 19 “observations” to the analysis. The dependent variable is the dichotomous distinction between specifying that the national government should take the lead (coded one) or that the subnational government should take the lead (coded zero). The independent variables consist of dummy variables for 18 of the policy areas. We leave regulation of firearms as the omitted policy area in order to avoid perfect collinearity across the dummies. We also include as an independent variable the total number of policies for which the person says the national government should take the lead. Of course, the “observations” provided by each individual person are not independent of each other. Therefore, we employ robust standard errors, clustered on survey respondents, to evaluate statistical significance. Note that party identification, ideology, and general feelings about the national, state, and local governments are not included in this analysis; preliminary investigation showed that none of these variables have any effect, and the results for the remaining variables are almost completely unchanged.

The maximum likelihood estimates for the logistic equation predicting the probability of national government leadership for any policy are shown in Table 3. Once again, the coefficient for the variable giving the number of policies in which the person specifies national leadership is positive and highly significant; this is simply due to the nature of the data. The more important results
are the coefficients on each of the policy-specific dummy variables. Positive values indicate higher probabilities of specifying national leadership, relative to the reference policy (i.e., regulation of firearms). Negative coefficients mean that the probability of specifying national leadership is lower than with the reference policy. The estimates confirm, yet again, that the public differentiates across policies. Even after taking the general tendency to support national action into account, people remain significantly more likely to support national leadership to help the elderly, protect the environment, guarantee equal opportunity, regulate immigration, protect women’s rights, provide health care, and recover from emergency situations like toxic material accidents and natural disasters. In contrast, people prefer that subnational governments take the lead in fighting crime, providing education, reducing unemployment, maintaining infrastructure, helping the poor, urban revitalization, promoting economic development, and supporting public transportation systems.

Logistic regression coefficients are difficult to interpret by themselves. In order to summarize the empirical differences in the probability of national government leadership across the policy areas we calculate the mean marginal effects for each of the dummy variables. The latter give the average change in the probability of a person saying that the national government should take the lead in the specified policy area, relative to the probability that the national government should take the lead in regulating firearms.\(^5\) And, the mean marginal effect for regulating firearms is zero, by definition (i.e., that is the reference policy area, against which the others are compared).

Figure 3 contains a dotplot showing the mean marginal effects for each of the policy areas. A glance back at Figure 2 shows that the variability in preferences after controlling for overall support for the national government is virtually identical to the differences in the “raw” percentages of support for national leadership in each policy area. In fact, the correlation across the two sets of figures is nearly perfect, at 0.995.

To reiterate our central finding, people definitely differentiate across substantive policy areas in terms of their preference for national or subnational government leadership. These differences hold up, largely unchanged, even when we control for other factors that may have led to their existence. But, how closely do these public preferences for national or subnational action in various substantive areas conform to the realities of American policy-making? In order to address this question, we can compare the mean marginal effects observed in the specific policy areas to the actual level of commitment exerted by the federal government in those policy areas. Federal commitment is
measured by spending: We take the amount of spending by the national government in each policy area, expressed as a percentage of total spending by all levels of government in fiscal year 2006 in that policy area. The relevant spending data are available for nine of the policies.

Figure 4 shows the scatterplot of the national government’s percentage of total spending versus the mean marginal effects for assisting the elderly, environmental protection, reducing crime, providing education, reducing unemployment, assisting the poor, urban economic development, public transportation, and health care. The graph reveals that public opinion is closely related to actual governmental effort in each of the policy areas. There is a strong, and nearly linear, positive relationship between the mean marginal effects for each policy area and the percentage of government spending that is carried out at the national level within the respective areas. The correlation between these two variables is very high, at 0.80. Again, the mean marginal effects are, themselves, closely related to the actual percentages of the CCES respondents who prefer action by the national government within each policy area. So, the evidence in Figure 4 provides further confirmation that the variability in public preferences across policy areas is definitely not random or haphazard. Instead, it aligns closely with actual patterns of governmental commitment to the respective policies.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have examined the degree to which people want different levels of government to become involved with policy issues. Our approach emphasizes variability across substantive policy areas and the distinction between the national and subnational governments. The evidence clearly shows that popular support for national action differs markedly across policy areas. But, the most interesting finding from our analysis is that this cross-policy variability is largely impervious to influence from other political orientations, such as partisanship, ideology, and general feelings about the respective levels of government.

It is the case that Democrats and people who believe the national government should take on more responsibilities while the state and local governments should do less do want the national government to be involved in a larger number of policy areas. And, the opposite is true for Republicans who want a reduced national role while the state and local governments take more responsibility. However, even after taking this general tendency into account, there are significant
differences across policy areas. Public opinion is characterized by a division of labor across the
different levels of government rather than any uniform tendency for people to prefer one level over
the others.

The American public seems to be making fairly detailed and very reasonable distinctions about
intergovernmental functions. How can this be the case, if citizens are generally unsophisticated and
uninformed about most elements of the political world? Apart from our negative evidence (i.e., it
is not partisanship, ideology, or general beliefs), our data do not provide additional information
to address this question directly. But, we think our findings show that people appreciate and
understand the capacities of different governmental levels. Part of this may be something of a
“self-fulfilling prophesy” in that Americans are exposed to the results of divided governmental
responsibilities every day. If the garbage is not collected, they know to blame local officials. And,
if there are problems with a Social Security check, they turn to representatives of the national
government for assistance. In other words, citizens just recognize that state and local governments
are more suitable for providing such things as education systems, infrastructure development, law
enforcement, and the like. And, they see that the national government is in a better position to
guarantee equal rights and protection, promote health care, and protect against problems that
transcend state boundaries like environmental challenges and natural disasters.

Thus, everyday experience helps people to sort out the complexities of the political system,
without any need to consider the abstract principles that established the system in the first place.
Samuel Popkin (1994) identified a perspective that he named “low information rationality” to
describe how voters employed readily-available cues to guide the potentially-difficult process of
electoral decision-making. Stated simply, citizens cope by taking into account what they see around
themselves in everyday life. We believe that this same kind of reasoning extends to an appreciation
of governmental processes. In short, we believe it is accurate to characterize American citizens as
“intuitive federalists.”
NOTES

1. The 2006 CCES is a large collaborative project involving 36 research teams comprised of scholars from 39 universities. Prior to the data collection, a complex procedure was used to draw a representative sample of respondents from a huge panel of potential survey interviewees (Vavreck and Rivers 2008). Matching procedures were then employed to insure that the CCES sample conforms to the demographic profile of the American adult population. The full CCES sample has 38,443 respondents. The data used in the current analysis comprise a randomly-selected subset of size 1,000 from the overall sample. The demographic characteristics of this subset mirror those of the adult sample from the 2006 Current Population Survey (CPS) quite well. Gender, marital status, and employment status match almost perfectly across the two datasets. On education, CCES respondents have slightly more schooling than those from the CPS, but the percentages of college graduates are almost identical across the two samples; differences in educational attainment are slightly larger at lower levels. Similarly, the CCES respondents show slightly higher incomes than the CPS respondents. But, once again, the largest differences appear at the lower end of the income distribution. Racial comparisons are somewhat difficult because the categories differ across the two data sources. But, the percentages of whites are virtually identical in the CCES and CPS samples. It does appear that the CCES undersamples African Americans and Hispanics relative to the CPS.

2. The differences are stated clearly in the national party platforms. For example, the 2008 Republican Platform said that one of the party’s “core principles” was to “Constrain the federal government to its legitimate constitutional functions. Let it empower people, while limiting its reach into their lives” (p. 15). They also refer repeatedly to “(e)mPOWERing the (s)tates” and “returning power to the states” (p. 17). While the Democrats never explicitly say that the national government should have more powers than the subnational units, their 2008 platform does mention the need to put into place “a government led by Barack Obama” (p. 8). The platform also says that “We will provide significant and immediate temporary funding to state and local governments . . . . We will give these governmental entities a partner in the federal government . . . .” (p. 56), thereby clearly emphasizing the leadership position of the national government. The 2008 party platforms are available in Woolley and Peters (2011).

3. Strictly speaking, the model should be estimated with a Poisson or negative binomial regression model, since the dependent variable is a count. With this dataset, however, a linear model approximates the results obtained using these estimation strategies very closely. Therefore, OLS is used for ease of interpretation.

4. We use regulation of firearms as the reference category because, across the 19 policy areas, it has the median level of support for national government leadership.

5. The mean marginal effect for independent variable $X_k$ is the average across all observations of the partial derivative of the dependent probability (here, the probability that the respondent says the national government should take the lead in policy area $k$) with respect to $x_k$. Long (1997, pp. 72-74) shows that the mean marginal effect is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Mean} \frac{\partial \text{Prob}(y = 1|x_i)}{\partial x_k} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \text{Prob}(y = 1|x_i) \left[1 - \text{Prob}(y = 1|x_i)\right] \beta_k$$
REFERENCES


Figure 1: Histogram for the number of policy areas in which individual CCES respondents say the national government should take the lead.
Figure 2: Percentage of CCES respondents saying the national government should take the lead in each policy area.

Note: Solid horizontal bars around plotted points represent 95% confidence intervals. The vertical red dotted line is located at the position representing 50% support for the national government taking the lead.
**Figure 3:** Mean marginal effects of policy areas on probability that respondent says the national government should take the lead.

**Note:** Mean marginal effects are calculated from the logistic regression results presented in Table 3. The mean marginal effect for a policy area shows the average difference in the probability that a person says the national government should take the lead in that policy area, relative to the probability that the national government should take the lead in regulating firearms.
**Figure 4:** Scatterplot showing 2006 federal spending in policy areas (expressed as a percentage of total 2006 government spending) versus the mean marginal effect of policy area on the probability that an individual wants the national government to take the lead.

- **Mean marginal effect of policy area on preference for national government to take the lead**
- **National government spending as percent of total government spending**

**Note:** Mean marginal effects are calculated from the logistic regression results presented in Table 3. The mean marginal effect for a policy area shows the average difference in the probability that a person says the national government should take the lead in that policy area, relative to the probability that the national government should take the lead in regulating firearms.
**Table 1**: Regression equation predicting the number of policy areas in which a person says the national government should take the lead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>OLS Coefficient Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Observed Probability Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party identification</td>
<td>-0.518</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological self-placement</td>
<td>-0.342</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government, more responsibility</td>
<td>-0.904</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State governments, more responsibility</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local governments, more responsibility</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>9.107</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of observations</td>
<td></td>
<td>683</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: For each of the independent variables, the substantively appropriate direction of influence can be predicted. Therefore, the observed probability values are based upon one-sided hypothesis tests.
Table 2: Influences on the probability that an individual will say that the national government should take the lead in a specific policy area. Table entries are maximum likelihood estimates of logistic regression coefficients. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>N policies</th>
<th>National Party identification</th>
<th>Ideological self-placement</th>
<th>National govt., more responsibility</th>
<th>State govt., more responsibility</th>
<th>Local govt., more responsibility</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>Pseudo-R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist the elderly</td>
<td>0.358*</td>
<td>-0.132*</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.217*</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>-0.180</td>
<td>-3.055</td>
<td>0.297</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
<td>(0.420)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the environment</td>
<td>0.309*</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-0.264</td>
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<td>0.299*</td>
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<td>(0.076)</td>
<td>(0.175)</td>
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<td>(0.133)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce crime</td>
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<td>0.213</td>
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<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
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<td>(0.194)</td>
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<td>Provide education</td>
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<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
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<td>(0.156)</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
<td>(0.628)</td>
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<td>Equal opportunity</td>
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<td>-0.007</td>
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<td>Reduce unemployment</td>
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<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-0.090</td>
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<td>0.026</td>
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<td>-0.426</td>
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<td>(0.091)</td>
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<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.485)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain roads, bridges, etc.</td>
<td>0.284*</td>
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<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>-3.828</td>
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<td>(0.085)</td>
<td>(0.175)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
<td>(0.136)</td>
<td>(0.455)</td>
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<td>Assist the poor</td>
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<td>(0.112)</td>
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<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.460)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote urban development</td>
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<td>0.410</td>
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<td>0.209</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>-10.202</td>
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<td>(0.455)</td>
<td>(0.203)</td>
<td>(0.220)</td>
<td>(0.194)</td>
<td>(1.179)</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Note: Table is continued on the following page.
Table 2: Influences on the probability that an individual will say that the national government should take the lead in a specific policy area (Continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>N policies</th>
<th>National Party identification</th>
<th>Ideological self-placement</th>
<th>National govt., more responsibility</th>
<th>State govt., more responsibility</th>
<th>Local govt., more, responsibility</th>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>Pseudo-R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help those with special needs</td>
<td>0.492*</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-4.054</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.117)</td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td>(0.434)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity for women</td>
<td>0.595*</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.088</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>-3.280</td>
<td>0.413</td>
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<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.210)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td>(0.516)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control use of illegal drugs</td>
<td>0.374*</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>-0.196</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>-3.644</td>
<td>0.189</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.072)</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td>(0.117)</td>
<td>(0.397)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>0.360*</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>-4.550</td>
<td>0.174</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.046)</td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.161)</td>
<td>(0.118)</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
<td>(0.512)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>0.321*</td>
<td>-0.140</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>-4.794</td>
<td>0.188</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
<td>(0.153)</td>
<td>(0.504)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control illegal firearms</td>
<td>0.383*</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>-0.128</td>
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<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
<td>-3.472</td>
<td>0.220</td>
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<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>(0.119)</td>
<td>(0.402)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide health care</td>
<td>0.474*</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>-0.268</td>
<td>-0.437*</td>
<td>0.478*</td>
<td>-0.393</td>
<td>-2.077</td>
<td>0.426</td>
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<td>(0.078)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>(0.636)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control hazardous waste materials</td>
<td>0.296*</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>-0.443*</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>-0.131</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>-1.914</td>
<td>0.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.388)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help natural disaster victims</td>
<td>0.248*</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>-0.366*</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>-0.140</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>-1.619</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.040)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.150)</td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.391)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: An asterisk indicates that a coefficient is statistically significant from zero in the hypothesized direction at the 0.05 level. Note that asterisks are not shown for constants, but every one is significant at the 0.05 level in a non-directional test.
Table 3: Logistic regression equation predicting whether federal government should take the lead in a policy area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Maximum Likelihood Coefficient Estimate</th>
<th>Robust Standard Error</th>
<th>Observed Probability Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N of policies in which natl. govt. should lead</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist the elderly</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect the environment</td>
<td>0.994</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce crime</td>
<td>-2.701</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide education</td>
<td>-0.993</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunity</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce unemployment</td>
<td>-0.510</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulate immigration</td>
<td>2.415</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain roads, bridges, etc.</td>
<td>-1.847</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist the poor</td>
<td>-0.462</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote urban development</td>
<td>-3.186</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help those with special needs</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for women</td>
<td>1.179</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control use of illegal drugs</td>
<td>-0.214</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>-1.426</td>
<td>0.154</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>-2.201</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide health care</td>
<td>1.725</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control hazardous waste materials</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help natural disaster victims</td>
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<td>0.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R²</td>
<td>0.344</td>
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</table>

Note: In this logistic regression, there is one observation per policy per survey respondent. Therefore, robust standard errors are used (clustered on individual respondents) in order to take into account the correlated responses within individuals.