

An Ounce of Prevention:

**Experimental Research in Strategic Frame Analysis™ to Identify Effective Issue Frames
for Public Budgeting and Taxation Systems**

A FrameWorks Research Report

Prepared for the FrameWorks Institute

By

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PREFACE

The twinned processes of allocating money and setting tax rates are central to governance. In a nation as complex as the United States, even the most expert can be forgiven for not understanding these processes to their full extent. How much harder is it for ordinary citizens to do the same? And yet, the decisions we collectively make regarding budgets seem deceptively simple; we merely increase or decrease certain spending. The same can be said for taxes—we either raise or lower specific rates. The superficial simplicity masking the terrible complexity makes it difficult for public discourse to meaningfully guide the decisions in a truly democratic fashion. In addition, the horrific deficits facing the nation increase the pressure to find answers. This new discourse is replete with casually tossed figures, often numbering in the trillions of dollars. Numbers this big often defy understanding. How might we best communicate the gist of the problem and relevant facts in a way that overcomes the remoteness and overwhelming intricacies inherent in budget and tax decisions?

The FrameWorks Institute has conducted research over the past two years on how Americans think about the paired topics of budgets and taxes. Specifically, the research aims to discern whether people understand the vital relationship between taxes and the public goods and services that they make possible, as well as the process by which priorities are set for the allocation of public resources to public programs. This research also attempts to discern whether alternative ways of communicating can bridge the gap between expert and lay understandings of budgets and taxes, and which particular values might help ordinary people better understand the challenges that our country faces.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation now supports this ongoing investigation. This report presents findings from our recent national experimental survey that investigated what values are most successful in evoking support for more progressive policy solutions related to budgets and taxes. This experimental study amplifies results from the earlier stages of FrameWorks' research on this topic (which was supported by both Kansas Action for Children and Demos), which used a variety of qualitative methods that included cognitive interviews and peer discourse sessions, to investigate how the public thinks and talks about budgets and taxes.

This report begins with a brief review of framing, and a discussion of the importance of values in issues framing. We then lay out a menu of value frames relevant to the discussion of budgets and taxes, and explore the results of experimental tests designed to ascertain the efficacy of these values in shaping the thinking about budgets and taxes. The end product is an empirically validated assessment of what values can best be used in communications about budgets and taxes to garner support for progressive policies.

ISSUE FRAMING

We borrow the notion of “frames” from the cognitive and social sciences to describe one way people use information to make judgments. These scholars also use the term “framing” to describe the way information can foster understanding. While it is beyond the scope of this report to recap this vast literature, we can recount three widely used definitions of frames and framing (see also, Kinder, 2007; Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001):

“Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters.” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6)

“[f]rames activate knowledge, stimulate stocks of cultural morals and values, and create contexts.” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 47)

“[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.”
(Entman, 1993, p. 52)

Put another way, frames are rhetorical devices that people use to organize information in order to give meaning to the world around them. Our interest in frames is built around the idea that people’s attitudes and opinions can be affected by exposure to a frame or its elements (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Iyengar, 1991).

The conventional belief is that framing effects on public opinion stem from the psychological process known as accessibility (Entman, 1993). That is, contextual cues in the frame activate particular mental representations, which stay “on top of the mental bin” (Domke, Shah & Wackman, 1998), thus becoming more accessible in memory at the time of judgment. In turn, these accessible representations form the basis for subsequent judgments (Wyer & Srull, 1989).

To study framing in an experimental setting entails three steps. First, one must delineate a list of potential frames, given a particular topic. Second, experimental participants must be exposed to the frames; and, third, participants’ reactions must be observed. Testing for framing effects, then, concerns how incoming messages influence judgment. Framing effects lie in the comparison of observations across a series of distinctive frames or relative to a control condition (where reactions to a topic are measured without any exposure).

This study examines values as a fundamental frame cue. Values are the ideals that provide the organizing principles on the basis of which people reach decisions (Rokeach, 1973). For instance, an adherent of equality would probably reach different conclusions on a topic than someone who espoused merit. The key for us is that people are not ideologically consistent

when it comes to specific issues. In contrast to the “rational choice model” that assumes that people always use one predominant value—self-interest—as the lens for their actions, value systems are more dynamic and flexible than one might expect (Converse, 1964). This is why framing is so important. The values contained within frames compete for application to any given situation (for a review see Nelson & Willey, 2003). When a frame that promotes a particular value “wins,” it is because people are able to successfully tap into familiar patterns of higher-level reasoning that guide subsequent responses. Notice the same value does not always win these competitions, either on an individual or societal level, if only because different values attach differently to social issues.

For example, in FrameWorks’ research on Global Warming, the value of Ingenuity increased support for public policy solutions. The same value of Ingenuity, however, tested poorly in our research on rural America. In the latter case, informants concluded that rural Americans were self-sufficient and hence didn’t require programs and policies to support them. Like all important public decisions, we would expect values to play an important role in guiding decisions about budgets and taxes. In this study, we test a range of values that have the potential to motivate reasoning on budgets and taxes. The specific values used in this design are detailed in the next section.

FRAMING VALUES THAT “WIN” ON BUDGETS AND TAXES

To identify values for experimental testing on any issue, FrameWorks uses two primary sources: (1) our prior research on a wide variety of social issues and (2) the qualitative work we conduct on the issue prior to experimental testing. Most often we use these two sources in tandem to generate a list of candidate values to take into testing. This represents how the values tested in the experiments detailed in this report were selected.

More generally, FrameWorks has spent 10 years studying the valence of a wide range of social problems and has conducted frame effects experiments on a diverse group of values. As a result, we have a track record of uncovering cognitive mistakes common in public thinking about social issues and identifying values that mitigate those errors. We make use of this experience in new projects by investigating whether particular values - that we found to be successful at shifting public thinking on other social issues - may be helpful in expanding thinking in the current research. . In addition to testing values that prior research on related issues suggests might be relevant, our early qualitative research in the current project also uncovers potential values frames that may move public thinking in a positive direction. We subject that slate of prospective values to qualitative experimentation in our early work—most notably in our peer discourse sessions - to establish which values hold the most promise in improving the discourse on the issue. A winnowed slate of potential values frames is then submitted to controlled experimentation in a national survey. It is those results that are reported here.

This research generated a set of four candidate values that were then used as the basis of our experimental treatments in this research: Prevention, Common Good, Future, and Crisis.

It is important to note that both the Prevention and Common Good values originated from prior FrameWorks research on other issues. On other issues that we have studied (racial disparities for example), we have found that both of these values helped people to overcome key cognitive mistakes—being fixated on the present time horizon of social problems (a problem that the Prevention value helps address) and the need to remind people of the public goods that are supported by taxation (which Common Good tries to address). The Future value emerged during our qualitative work on budgets and taxes, having been employed quite skillfully by one of the participants of peer discourse sessions. Her ability to change the entire conversation of a diverse group of participants in that session gave us pause to consider this value and test it in other peer discourse sessions. The success of the Future value in those sessions made it useful to test here.

Lastly, the Crisis value is in heavy rotation among policy experts and advocates of progressive budget and tax reforms. That is, it is one of the values to emerge from the field of practice, and we thought it best to test its effects on policy thinking—especially compared to other values that emerged from our research. Based on our prior research on social issues, we hypothesized that Crisis would not elevate public support for policy because the tone of the value invites the public to see the problem as overwhelming and intractable. Thus, we thought it would likely push people to disengage from the issue, ignoring the possible efficacy of proposed solutions. Additionally, we assumed that “crisis fatigue,” or the public oversaturation with this way of thinking about the world, would blunt or undermine frame effects.

In the experiments detailed in this report, we tested both the effects of these values as stand-alone concepts as well as when they were combined with specific information about the system of budgeting and taxation. We did so because recent quantitative experiments on other issues have demonstrated the strongest frame effects when values were combined with a more specific explanation of the broader policy domain in which the value was being deployed. Thus, by testing values alone, as well as values + budget and tax information, we are able to ascertain whether the values alone are sufficient, or whether they are advanced by this added information in the frame. Finally, to demonstrate the power of employing a value in an issue frame as well as to test another way in which policy experts and advocates talk about these issues, we also ran just the policy domain information about budgets and taxes as a value in these experiments as well.

Thus in all, we tested nine frames. Four values frames (Prevention, Common Good, Future and Crisis); four value + budgets and taxes frames (Prevention plus Budgets/Taxes Domain, Common Good plus Budgets/Taxes Domain, Future plus Budgets/Taxes Domain, Crisis plus Budgets/Taxes Domain) and a budgets and taxes frame with no value (Budgets and Taxes Domain). The narrative execution of each frame is detailed in Appendix A.

METHODS

Participants

The 6,700 experimental participants came from an Internet panel maintained by YouGov Polimetrix. The respondents were matched on gender, age, race, education, and party

identification and weighted to correspond to known marginals for the population of registered voters in the United States from the 2006 American Community Survey. Thus in the sample and in the population, the marginals are Age: 18-34: 25.36%, 35-54: 40.21%, 55+: 34.43%; Gender: Male: 46.74%, Female: 53.26%; Race: White/Other: 82.35%, Black: 11.10%, Hispanic: 6.55%; Education: HS or less: 39.24%, Some College: 30.57%, College Graduate: 19.82%, Post-Graduate: 10.37%. Each participant was exposed to an appropriate frame, randomly assigned by condition, and then answered questions used to observe framing effects. Four hundred participants in the control condition had no exposure but answered the same set of questions.

Treatments

The treatments consisted of text-based stimuli to which the subjects in the study were exposed. The stimuli in each treatment consisted of a paragraph that utilized one of the four primary values concepts to assert a strategy policymakers should take with respect to budgeting and taxation for the nation; we refer to these as the Values tests. To more fully test these values and ascertain the efficacy of grounding the value in the policy domain of budgets and taxes, in another four treatments tested we added a second paragraph that articulated the challenge of public budgeting and taxations; we refer to these as the Values + Domain tests. In addition to these treatments, we also tested the policy domain narrative by itself to see if it could elevate policy thinking; we refer to this as the Domain test. An example of a treatment that combines both the initial values paragraph with the budgets and taxes policy domain is as follows:

Prevention Value + Budgets and Taxes Domain

Lately there has been a lot of talk about prevention in our country. Some people believe that our country could do more to prevent problems before they occur. Instead of postponing our response to fiscal problems, for example, some say we should use our resources today to prevent them from becoming worse. When we postpone dealing with these problems, they get bigger and cost more to fix later on. So, according to this view, we would be better off in the long run if we took steps today to prevent the fiscal problems that we know will affect the well being of our nation. Have you heard this explanation of why we should use a preventive approach to making decisions about our nation's resources?

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems?

The format of each treatment was kept essentially parallel, and the number of words in each treatment varied by no more than 10 words across each group of treatments. Finally, the texts of

the treatments were evaluated for their readability and show that the average reading level was about 10th grade.¹ The specific iterations of the treatments can be found in Appendix A.

Dependent Measures

Two sets of questions form the bulk of the data used in the analysis. The first was a battery of 16 attitudinal questions (all exact wordings and weightings presented in Appendix B) that tap respondents' willingness to support a variety of ways to raise revenue. A principal component analysis (PCA) revealed that fourteen questions loaded on a single factor; the two questions that did not load on this principal component—"States should govern with an eye to long-term implications" and "State and business incentives should be held to high public interest standard"—were excluded. PCA is used to "squash" multiple questions into a single measure for analysis. The main advantage of using PCA is that we can look to the one combined measure instead of trying to pay attention to all 14 items. Specifically, this method combines responses to the 14 questions into a single scale that accounts for 42 percent of the variance in respondents' answers to all 14 questions. Statisticians call this the central tendency or principal component of the responses. Appendix B also presents the questions contained in the scale along with the weighting each receives; six questions were reverse coded (have a negative weight) to dispel concerns with response set. The attitude scale has a minimum of -227 and a maximum of 229, where higher numbers indicate a more progressive response. Put another way, someone who gave the most progressive answer to every one of the 14 questions would receive a score of 227, while someone who gave the least progressive response to every question would receive a score of -229. This single measure, then, gives us the ability to observe how well each value inoculates or directs the respondents against making anti-progressive policy choices.

A second measure of policy preference was constructed using the same technique. This measure came from a battery of 23 policy questions (again exact wordings and weights presented in Appendix B) which charted respondents' support of/opposition to specific policies designed to raise money or cut spending. Again, a principal component analysis revealed that 16 questions loaded heavily on a single dimension—the 7 questions that did not load were excluded from further analysis. The PCA combined these 16 questions into a single scale that accounted for 33 percent of the variance in all responses. Table 2 presents the questions contained in the scale along with the weighting each receives. The policy final scale has a minimum of -199 and a maximum of 314, where higher numbers indicate more support for said measures. Thus, someone who was perfectly progressive on all the policy questions would receive a score of 314, while someone who was a perfect anti-progressive would receive a score of -199. This single measure, then, allows us a second way to observe respondents' reactions to the values frames.

¹ Readability statistics are important to evaluate because they measure how easily an adult can read and understand a text. We wanted to ensure that the treatment effects were not biased because of the participants' inability to accurately understand the core concepts in the treatments.

RESULTS

Our research pits four values frames against each other, the control condition (subjects received no framing treatments), and the domain condition (that discussed budgets and taxes without implicating a specific value). Table 1 shows how well these four values, and the budgets and taxes domain moved responses on the attitudinal and policy scales. To read the table, index the frame by the attitudes or policy column to see the average response from that group on that measure. For example, in the control condition responses on the attitude scale averaged -8.5 while on the policy scale they averaged -4.2.

VALUES TESTS (Prevention, Future, Common Good, Crisis) and DOMAIN TEST (Budgets and Taxes)

Table 1. The Effect of Values Frames on Respondents' Attitudes and Policies

Frame	Attitudes	N	Policies	N
(Control)	-8.5	353	-4.2	307
Budgets and taxes	1.5	392	0.2	361
Prevention	3.9*	401	4.1	356
Future	-2.8	396	1.7	354
Common Good	-0.3	408	1.1	370
Crisis	-1.5	393	-1	350

Asterisks represent statistically significant differences from the control condition * $p = .085$

This table makes it clear that one value frame—Prevention—outperformed the others in moving attitudes and policy support toward the more progressive end of the scales. With respect to the attitude scale, the move from -8.5 in the control condition to 3.9 in the Prevention condition is statistically significant at the $p = .085$ level. The size of this effect was 12.4 points on the attitudes scale. In other words, compared to the control group (which received no framing treatments), priming subjects with the value of Prevention increased support on the Attitudes scale (see Appendix B for the) by 12.4 points.

The values of Prevention also moved policy support 8.3 points, compared to the control (from -4.2 for the control to 4.1 for the Prevention treatment). This is the largest in magnitude among the four frames, but it does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This means that the effect of the Prevention frame moved in the same direction on policies as attitudes, but it did not move far enough for statisticians to be able to reliably distinguish the movement from no movement at all.

Adding the budgets and taxes domain information to the values frames generally enhances the treatment effect. As Table 2 shows, the Prevention value—this time accompanied by a paragraph that explained challenges in budget and tax systems (as presented above, on p. 6)—performs the

best in terms of moving responses toward the more progressive end of the scale relative to the control condition. (Note that the control condition is repeated from Table 1.)

VALUES + DOMAIN TESTS

Table 2. The Effect of Values Frames with Budgets and taxes Domain on Respondents' Attitudes and Policies

Frame	Attitudes	N	Policies	N
(Control)	-8.5	353	-4.2	307
Prevention (w/ B & T)	8.5**	395	3.3	358
Future (w/ B & T)	1.2	405	-3.2	366
Common Good (w/ B & T)	-0.4	400	-1.4	359
Crisis (w/ B & T)	-1.1	396	-1	356

Asterisks represent statistically significant differences from the control condition ** $p = .02$. The size of this effect was 17 points on the attitude scale.

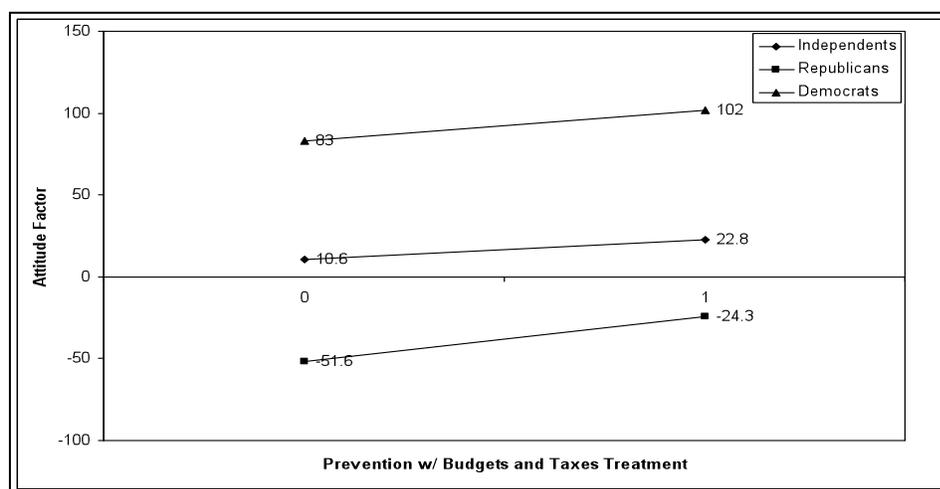
This time the difference in movement along the attitude scale caused by the Prevention + Budgets and Taxes frame is 17 points (from -8.5 to 8.5), and is highly statistically significant at the $p = .02$ level. Here, the corresponding move, from -4.2 to 3.3 on the policy scale is also the largest in magnitude among the four frames, but it does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Again, this means that the effect of the Prevention + Budgets and Taxes Domain frame moved in the same direction on policies as attitudes, but it did not move far enough for statisticians to be able to reliably distinguish the movement from no movement at all.

The behavior of different kinds of people often interests policy advocates. For example, we know Republicans and Democrats generally hold different attitudes, but do they react in different ways to the information they receive? In our case, we are interested in whether a respondent's partisanship changes the impact of the values frames on their attitudes. We can examine this question in light of the finding on the most effective treatment. Put another way, we are looking to see whether Republicans' and Democrats' attitude change paralleled each other or whether we can distinguish the changes for each type of partisan. In the jargon, we are looking for interactive effects, whether a respondent's status as a Republican, Democrat or Independent heightens or diminishes the effect of the treatment.

Figure 1 portrays the outcome of a regression equation that contrasted respondents in the Prevention + Budgets and Taxes Domain frame with those in the control condition, separating them into their partisan categories, so that each line represents a particular group. For example, the bottom line represents the Republicans, who have fairly anti-progressive attitudes, indicated

by their position at the highly negative end of the attitude factor. Further, in the control condition, (the left most points on the chart below), the Republicans register a -51.6, while those who have seen the Prevention with categorization treatment (the right most points on the chart below) register a -24.3. In other words, seeing the treatment caused Republicans to move up roughly 25 points on the attitude scale.

**Figure 1. Predicted Interactive Effects of Treatment and Partisanship:
Prevention + Budgets and Taxes**



Looking at all three groups together, we see the lines are roughly parallel, meaning that the Independents, Republicans and Democrats all reacted in roughly the same way to the treatment. So, while there are some mild interactive effects—in fact, only the Republican-treatment interaction is marginally statistically significant at the $p = .08$ level—by and large, the impact of the treatment was the same no matter what the party attachment of the respondent.

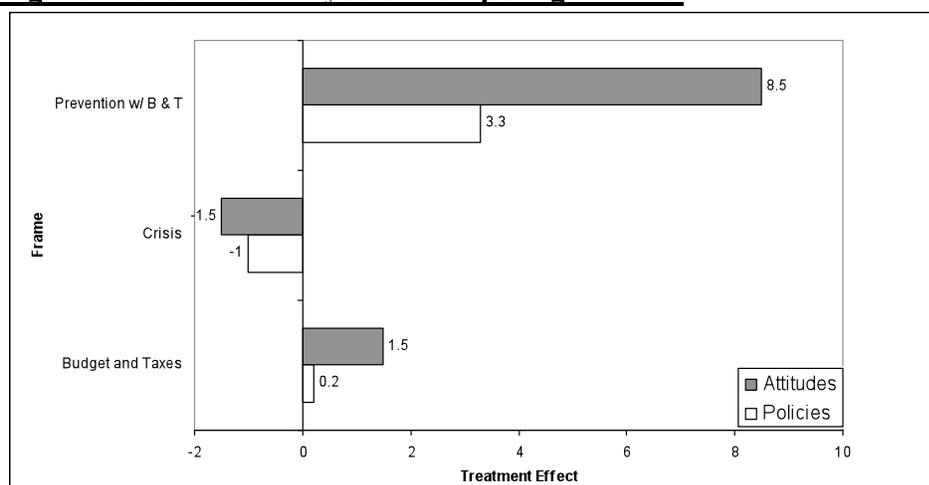
DISCUSSION

This simple experiment clearly shows the efficacy of the Prevention value in changing participants' minds on the issue of budgets and taxes. First, the Prevention value was the only one of the four values tested to achieve statistically significant—effects that can be reliably distinguished from zero—results. None of the other values, including Crisis and the Budgets and Taxes value treatment alone showed any impact on respondents' attitudes. Further, when the Prevention value was accompanied by a discussion of the budgets and taxes issue, the effect of the frame increased. This effect did not depend on the respondent's partisanship. Thus, we can recommend the use of the Prevention value across the board for any advocate seeking more progressive responses wherever budgets and taxes are concerned.

Finally, we can present a best-case scenario for using the Prevention value with a budgets and taxes frame in discussions. Two other frames dominate discourse about budgets and taxes. The first is a discussion of budgets and taxes as such with no direct discussion of a value (this state of

affairs corresponds to the budgets and taxes condition in Table 1.) Second, we often see a discussion of Crisis, which naturally corresponds to the Crisis condition in Table 1. Figure 2 plots the effect of these three conditions on the attitude and policy scales. This chart makes it clear that policy advocates will always do better in moving their audience toward support for more progressive policies and attitudes using the Prevention frame with the additional categorizing information on budgets and taxes than they would do by talking about a crisis or discussing budgets and taxes alone.

Figure 2: Scenario Analysis of Competing Frames.



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About FrameWorks Institute: The FrameWorks Institute is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to advance science-based communications research and practice. The Institute conducts original, multi-method research to identify the communications strategies that will advance public understanding of social problems and improve public support for remedial policies. The Institute's work also includes teaching the nonprofit sector how to apply these science-based communications strategies in their work for social change. The Institute publishes its research and recommendations, as well as toolkits and other products for the nonprofit sector at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

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Appendix A. Exact Wordings of Values and Simplifying Model Stimuli

1. Control Group

2. Budgets and Taxes as Value

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems? *Word Count 114/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 10*

3. Prevention Value

Lately there has been a lot of talk about prevention in our country. Some people believe that our country could do more to prevent problems before they occur. Instead of postponing our response to fiscal problems, for example, some say we should use our resources today to prevent them from becoming worse. When we postpone dealing with these problems, they get bigger and cost more to fix later on. So, according to this view, we would be better off in the long run if we took steps today to prevent the fiscal problems that we know will affect the well being of our nation. Have you heard this explanation of why we should use a preventive approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 122/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 11*

4. Prevention Value plus Budgets and Taxes Domain

Lately there has been a lot of talk about prevention in our country. Some people believe that our country could do more to prevent problems before they occur. Instead of postponing our response to fiscal problems, for example, some say we should use our resources today to prevent them from becoming worse. When we postpone dealing with these problems, they get bigger and cost more to fix later on. So, according to this view, we would be better off in the long run if we took steps today to prevent the fiscal problems that we know will affect the well being of our nation. Have you heard this explanation of why we should use a preventive approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 122/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 11*

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems? *Word Count 114/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 10*

5. Future Value

Lately there has been a lot of talk about our country's future. Some people believe that our country could do more to consider our nation's long-term outlook. Instead of thinking only about our short-term fiscal situation, for example, some say we should use our resources today to take advantage of opportunities that help our long-term fiscal prospects. When we only look at the short-term gains, it is much harder to see the societal investments that could promote our nation's well being over the long term. So, according to this view, we could improve our country's prospects for the future if we looked further out in making fiscal decisions. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should take a long-term approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 128/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 12*

6. Future plus Budgets and Taxes Domain

Lately there has been a lot of talk about our country's future. Some people believe that our country could do more to consider our nation's long-term outlook. Instead of thinking only about our short-term fiscal situation, for example, some say we should use our resources today to take advantage of opportunities that help our long-term fiscal prospects. When we only look at the short-term gains, it is much harder to see the societal investments that could promote our nation's well being over the long-term. So, according to this view, we could improve our country's prospects for the future if we looked further out in making fiscal decisions. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should take a long-term approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 128/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 12*

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems? *Word Count 114/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 10*

7. Common Good

Lately there has been a lot of talk about pursuing the common good of all Americans. Some people believe that our country could do more to achieve goals that work for the greater common interest. Instead of promoting fiscal policies that only work for a few, for example, some say that we should use our resources to develop solutions that benefit our society as a whole. When we make decisions based on the interests of only a few, we may undermine the common good. So, according to this view, we can help our country best if we develop fiscal policies that encourage everyone to pull together so that our society benefits everyone. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should take a common good approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 135/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 13*

8. Common Good plus Budgets and Taxes Domain

Lately there has been a lot of talk about pursuing the common good of all Americans. Some people believe that our country could do more to achieve goals that work for the greater common interest. Instead of promoting fiscal policies that only work for a few, for example, some say that we should use our resources to develop solutions that benefit our society as a whole. When we make decisions based on the interests of only a few, we may undermine the common good. So, according to this view, we can help our country best if we develop fiscal policies that encourage everyone to pull together so that our society benefits everyone. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should take a common good approach to making decisions about our nation's resources? *Word Count 135/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 13*

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems? *Word Count 114/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 10*

9. Crisis

Lately there has been a lot of talk about our country being in a state of crisis. Some people believe that we are on the brink of a crisis that could wipe out our country's quality of life. Instead of waiting to see if the fiscal crisis resolves itself, for example, some say that we must take swift and decisive actions to avoid using up all our resources. When we ignore the enormity of the fiscal problems our country faces, we don't give ourselves the flexibility we need to fix the problems and avoid disaster. So, according to this view, we need to act before it is too late and our fiscal alternatives are cut off. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should make decisions about our nation's resources to avoid crisis? *Word Count 135/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 12*

10. Crisis plus Budgets and Taxes Domain

Lately there has been a lot of talk about our country being in a state of crisis. Some people believe that we are on the brink of a crisis that could wipe out our country's quality of life. Instead of waiting to see if the fiscal crisis resolves itself, for example, some say that we must take swift and decisive actions to avoid using up all our resources. When we ignore the enormity of the fiscal problems our country faces, we don't give ourselves the flexibility we need to fix the problems and avoid disaster. So, according to this view, we need to act before it is too late and our fiscal alternatives are cut off. Have you heard of this explanation of why we should make decisions about our nation's resources to avoid crisis? *Word Count 135/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 12*

New reports show problems in our nation's budget and tax systems. Put simply, projections now show that current patterns in U.S. spending and revenue can't be continued in the long run. Decisions must be made about the goals we want our country to meet and how we raise the money to meet them. According to these reports, there are a number of choices that must be made if the country is to meet this fiscal challenge. Solutions now under consideration include changing budget priorities, changing the tax system or some combination of both. Can you tell us whether you have read or heard of these new reports about challenges to our nation's budget and tax systems? *Word Count 114/Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 10*

Appendix B: Question Wordings and Weights for Attitudinal, Policy, and Attribution of Social Responsibility Batteries

Attitudes (16 agree/disagree questions)

Now, please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: *(response set of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)*

1. Raising taxes on the wealthy and directing those funds to job growth in our states is an effective tool policy leaders could use to address the current state budget crises (.83).
2. A good way to help low- and moderate-income families is to do so directly through state budgets that fund jobs and provide services (.66).
3. States should make the investments required to promote more widely shared prosperity over the long term (.60).
4. Budget cuts during a recession could hurt state economies (.64).
5. During a recession, we should ask those who have done especially well during the good times to contribute more when things get tougher (.80).
6. By failing to invest in education, research and infrastructure, states can undermine worker training and other factors that determine where companies want to do business (.51).
7. States should govern with an eye to the long-term implications of policies, not the current budget cycle (0).
8. Economic development proposals should be measured against the extent to which they safeguard natural resources and generate job opportunities (.54).
9. State and local business incentives (tax breaks, tax shelters, etc.) should be held to a high public interest standard (0).
10. States should reverse the trend of declining wages by increasing state minimum wages (.73).
11. State and local taxes discourage investment, slow economic development, and slow job

growth (-.61).

12. Tax increases will hurt economic growth (-.70).
13. Leaving people with more money in their pockets is the best strategy for economic growth (-.56).
14. Privatizing much of what government does is a good tactic for controlling spending (-.62).
15. Reducing our expenditures on entitlement programs (like Medicare, federal student loans, and Head Start) should be a priority if we want a sustainable budget (-.61).
16. Tax fairness means a flat tax for all – whether you're a secretary or a CEO (-.56).

POLICY (23 FAVOR/OPPOSE QUESTIONS)

Now, we'd like to ask you some questions about policy proposals that have been discussed for our nation. We would like to have your honest opinions about these policy ideas.

To raise the revenue we need at the national level to support public priorities, please indicate if you would favor or oppose a federal budget that included the following:

1. Raising the capital gains tax (the tax placed on profits made from investments or selling real estate) so that it is the same as the tax rate on personal income (.67).
2. Maintaining the federal Estate Tax at a level that excludes from taxation those estates worth up to \$3.5 million for individuals and \$7 million for couples (0).
3. Introducing a national sales tax and using the revenues to finance Social Security and Medicare (.59).
4. Requiring that any changes in public benefits affect low wage workers less than high wage workers (.54).
5. Changing entitlement programs (such as Social Security) so future spending obligations are lower for the next generation of taxpayers (0).
6. Changing Medicare so that it provides better benefits, more choices, and competition to restrain costs (.33).

7. Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to reach more families (.46).
8. Increasing accountability by requiring an annual audit of the long-term fiscal outlook of each governmental agency (.26).
9. Requiring Congress to set legislated sunset dates for most new programs, forcing a re-examination of program costs and benefits (.25).
10. Reducing the federal deficit over time by a reexamination of spending priorities and long-term planning (.31).
11. Reinstating the “Pay As You Go” requirement that legislators must fully pay for all budget increases as they happen, rather than financing them by borrowing (0).

To raise the revenue we need at the state level to support public priorities, please indicate if you would favor or oppose a state budget that included the following:

12. Raising state income tax on households making more than \$500,000 per year (.76).
13. Expanding the sales tax so that it’s based on sales from all goods and services, not only some (.59).
14. Expanding the sales tax to include legal and financial services (.63).
15. Expanding the sales tax to include home and auto repair and maintenance services (.59).
16. Expanding the sales tax to include recreation and entertainment services – such as green fees at a golf course, ski-lift tickets, theatrical and sporting event tickets (.65).
17. Imposing a luxury tax on vehicles costing over \$35,000 that get less than 20 miles per gallon (.73).
18. Imposing a tax on second homes valued at over \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) (.71).
19. Requiring companies to use “combined reporting” on state tax forms to prevent them from hiding profits of subsidiary companies (.50).
20. Placing strict limits on the amount of property tax revenue that municipalities, counties, or school districts can collect (regardless of inflation, population growth or other factors) (0).
21. Requiring that state governments limit spending increases to the rate of inflation plus growth in population and return any excess revenue to taxpayers (0).

22. Capping state and local government spending and requiring voter approval by referendum for spending over those limits (0).
23. Ensuring state tax increases require a majority vote of each House of the Legislature and majority approval of the voters (0).