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Pocketbook in Private? How Observability Causes Individuals to Behave Sociotropically in Political Economy

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Pocketbook in Private? How Observability Causes Individuals to Behave Sociotropically in Political Economy

by

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A thesis submitted to the
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standard of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline
Pripusich, James Michael (Ph.D., Political Science)

Pocketbook in Private?
How Observability Causes Individuals to Behave Sociotropically in Political Economy

Thesis directed by Dr. Joseph Jupille, Chair

Abstract

Why do individuals engage in political economy egocentrically at some times and sociotropically at others? I claim that human beings will be more likely to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that are in their own self-interest when in private, and those that are in the interests of others when in public. A survey of the research in mass political economy shows a major divide over whether individuals are selfish actors or hold strong motivations to benefit the collective. While there is merit to both of these approaches, neither is a panacea. Furthermore, I demonstrate that conflicting findings in existing research need not be concerning. These broad divisions in this literature mirror those within our brains. Natural selection has endowed our minds with strong capacities to behave both egocentrically and sociotropically. The real challenge becomes explaining what causes each of these parts of us to become active. This project is about how observability changes political behavior in predictable ways. Using data from multiple surveys across 23 countries, I am able to demonstrate the importance of social context across a diverse set of outcomes in political economy. First, while retrospective assessments of national economic conditions exert a strong and significant effect on candidate selection in public, they largely fail to do so in private. In the absence of others, individuals are more likely to reward and punish candidates based on their personal financial situation. Second, while individuals egocentrically update their attitudes of welfare policies when in private, they largely fail to do so in the added presence of an interviewer. Finally, in a unique online experiment of political donating behavior, I show that publishing respondent decisions in newspapers and on social media increases the propensity for individuals to benefit the country at costs to themselves. These findings hold major implications for how we participate in politics and the broader democratic process.
Dedication

To Lauren –

Thanks for making everything easy, fun, and meaningful.
Acknowledgements

I must begin by thanking Lauren Tauchman for the simple fact that I would have never become interested in politics if not for a misguided attempt to impress her. I cannot be sure that I would have even gone to college had it not been a necessary step in continuing our relationship. Next, I need to acknowledge a few of the outstanding faculty at Bradley University. Mark Gobeyn, Bill Hall, Emily Gill, Charles Dannehl, and Jason Zaborowski stoked a passion for learning about the world that I still hold to this day and hope to pass on to others. I thank my advisor, Joe Jupille, for his relentless excitement for the big questions of the field and the small details in my work. I would not be the writer or teacher I am today without his influence.

Similarly, other members of the political science faculty have all had extensive effects on my academic experience. I thank Jennifer Fitzgerald for her persistent encouragement and example of how being a successful researcher need not sacrifice excellence in the classroom. Similarly, Andy Baker has consistently provided the archetype for everything that I would want to be as an academic and White Sox fan. Sarah Wilson Sokhey’s *Comparative Political Economy* seminar was my introduction to graduate level course work and helped form my interest and approach toward many of the ideas within this document. I am grateful for all of their help and guidance over the years in addition to serving on this committee. Finally, I would like to thank Leaf Van Boven for his flexibility in serving on my committee and for the genuine interest and feedback he expressed toward this project.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 To be Taxed, or to Pay Taxes: Is that the Question?

In the fall of 2017 the Republican Party was working to pass a bill that would bring the most significant update to the tax code in over a generation. In signing an open letter to Congress, over 400 of the country’s wealthiest individuals made headlines by stating their public opposition to the proposed legislation. What problem did these high earning Americans have with the bill? It would not tax them enough.

“We call on Congress to raise our taxes to bring in additional much-needed revenue and to restore investments to vital services. Doing so will help create jobs, strengthen the middle class, and ensure America’s economic success. Under no circumstance should tax reform lose revenue, especially to provide tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations.”

Responsible Wealth Project, November 12, 2017

The act of signing this petition is a prototypical example of sociotropic behavior. We act sociotropically in politics to the extent that our attitudes and actions benefit others, the collective, or the nation at large. What makes this letter newsworthy is that the signers are explicitly working against their own self-interest. I will refer to opinions and behaviors that result in an increase of an individual’s material wellbeing as egocentric. Sociotropic and egocentric behaviors are not mutually exclusive, but they can come into conflict like they do here. These members of the oft-maligned 1% were asking the government to take money out of their own pockets for the good of the country.

Not everyone was impressed with the actions of these so-called “patriotic millionaires.” After all, if they really were so concerned with “vital” state services, no bill was going to stop
them from funding these programs themselves. Indeed, the Bureau of Fiscal Service accepts donations from Americans who want to fund the government and reduce public debt. The year this letter was signed saw Americans donate a total of $2,611,428 for these purposes (US Treasury). Let us put that into perspective. The signers of the above letter would have spent well over $40,000,000 on legal representation if they each retained a single tax attorney at the median annual salary (Pay Scale 2018). In all likelihood, while these “patriotic millionaires” were publicly asking for the government to take more out of their paychecks, they were privately spending millions of dollars to make sure this didn’t happen.

It is easy to delight in this seeming hypocrisy. How can George Soros sign this letter the same year that he made sure to move $18 billion into tax-free shelters (Moore 2017)? Warren Buffett frequently demands the government tax him at a higher rate while creatively finding loopholes to reduce his actual contribution by the billions (Frankel 2017). How can we make sense of this behavior? Perhaps these billionaires really are patriots who realize that their own tax dollars are just a small fraction of what is needed to fund the government. It is possible that they understand how problems with public goods and collective action require the state to compel contributions in order to maintain a functioning society. Or, maybe, they’re just hypocrites. If it is the latter, they are in good company.

1.2 The Argument In Brief

In many ways, the main argument of this dissertation is a simple one. I claim that human beings will be more likely to engage in politics egocentrically when in private, and sociotropically when in public. A survey of the research in mass political economy shows a major divide over whether individuals are motivated by their own interests, or those of their country. While both can matter, neither approach is a panacea. Furthermore, I demonstrate that
conflicting findings in existing research need not be concerning. These broad divisions in this literature mirror those within our brains. Natural selection has endowed our minds with strong capacities to behave both egocentrically and sociotropically. The real challenge becomes explaining what causes each of these parts of us to become active. This project is about how observability changes our political behavior.

You and I are probably a lot more like these “patriotic millionaires” than we would like to admit or even realize. While there may be important differences within individuals that help explain how we approach politics, our attitudes and actions are often driven by context. In all likelihood, the signers of the Responsible Wealth Project’s letter have deep-seated, commendable motivations to help the American economy and their fellow citizens. However, they also have an equal, and in this case opposite, drive to acquire as many resources as possible. As Warren Buffett articulated, “I will not pay a dime more of individual taxes than I owe, and I won’t pay a dime more of corporate taxes than we owe” (Lopez 2014). Is Mr. Buffett selfish? Perhaps. But $37 billion in charitable donations suggest otherwise (BBC 2006). I will demonstrate that the average person is a walking contradiction of conflicting instincts, motivations, and goals. We cannot help but bring all of these to politics.

We regularly recognize and express distaste with the self-serving behavior of others while sincerely believing our own actions, even when they are identical, to be totally justifiable (Pronin et al 2002). Many will simply perceive the patriotic millionaires’ display as veiled self-interest. While this letter risks a higher tax bill, the reputational benefits, publicity, and future gains could far outweigh any costs. This logic of repeated interactions and reciprocal altruism forms the foundation of evolutionary explanations of prosocial behavior (Trivers 1971). By this
reasoning, a person who acts sociotropically in public and egocentrically in private could profit greatly. However, this is only part of the story.

Even the subtlest cues of observability can drive prosocial actions and curb selfish behavior. Putting a picture of a pair of eyes on donation buckets in grocery stores increases charitable contributions by 50% (Powell et al 2012). The same intervention causes people to act less selfishly in competitive economic games (Haley & Fessler 2005). There is nothing rational or calculating about forgoing self-interest for others in these cases. Some scholars go as far as to claim that human beings have not evolved to be selfish in the first place, but rather to share, be fair, and reciprocate (Bowles and Gintis 2000). I will conclude that it is more likely that both self and other-interested behaviors can increase fitness.

If we want to understand how individuals evaluate policies and choose candidates we need to recognize that our brains were built incrementally, and that they are not unitary processing machines. As such, we respond to different stimuli with separate parts, or modules, of our minds (Fodor 1983). These modules can often have incompatible goals and can cause inconsistent or incoherent behavior. When this happens in our own minds we can provide a *post hoc* justification for our actions. We are much less likely to extend this luxury to others like the patriotic millionaires. As Robert Kurzban quips in the title of his 2012 book, modularity explains *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite*.

The realization that the mind is complex and that the causes of behavior are complicated is nothing new or all that helpful. However, understanding modularity and domain specificity allows us to explain systematic variation in human behavior by the contexts in which we find ourselves. Social contexts are critical to understanding what parts of our brains drive our actions. Place a single human in a room. Slowly fill it with smoke and observe their basic survival
instincts as they quickly evacuate. Add a couple additional humans to this scenario, and we will literally risk our own fiery deaths to avoid looking silly and over-reactive (Nillsson and Johansson 2009). The potential for these dynamics to influence mass political economy is too great to ignore.

As we go through our daily lives we are constantly making decisions that bring material benefits, or inflict costs, on others and ourselves. Sometimes, what is best for society is also the best for us. These decisions should be easier. Other times, behaving in ways that are good for society would require personal effort, expense, or even harm. These decisions might be harder. Sometimes, we consider one of these consequences but not the other. Oftentimes, we don’t actually think about these, or any, consequences at all. Yet, we are still constantly acting in ways, and articulating preferences, that have distributional consequences for both our own wellbeing and that of society. Understanding how these preferences are converted into outcomes is a central task of political science.

I hope to contribute to this broader exercise by answering a smaller, but still significant, research question: Why do we engage politics sociotropically sometimes and egocentrically at others? More specifically and tangibly, I am interested in exploring the following kinds of questions within mass political economy. Why is it that your neighbor might vote for Donald Trump in 2020 because she thinks he brings high employment and economic stability to the country, while your cousin supports a challenger because he lost his job under Republican leadership? Why might a cancer diagnosis make some people change their minds about government responsibility for healthcare, but not others? How do some people decide to financially support political causes that increase national competitiveness in the global economy
even if it raises their own taxes? Why might others sacrifice the country’s best interests for a bigger tax refund?

I argue that one explanation can help answer all of these questions. Observability causes us to be more sociotropic and less egocentric in political economy. While we are more likely to engage politics in ways that bring benefits to others in public, we have a greater propensity to do so for our own pocketbooks in private.

1.3 Chapter Outline

The next chapter demonstrates that research in a diverse set of outcomes including candidate selection, attitudes toward the welfare state, European integration, trade, immigration, and monetary policy, all share a common divide. While egocentric theories, often derived through rational choice frameworks, formed the original foundations for how to explain attitudes and behavior in political economy, this is no longer the case. Instead, self-interest has been heavily criticized and, to a large extent, replaced by a sociotropic paradigm. As Kumlin notes in *The Personal and the Political*, “judging from research, citizens in modern mass democracies are better described as sociotropic animals, than as egocentric ones” (2004, 105). Here I highlight the motivation for this project. How can we incorporate the, at times, contradictory sociotropic and egocentric motivations of political economy into a single framework?

After demonstrating a series of theoretical issues and empirical strengths with both egocentric and sociotropic theory, I come to the following conclusions. First, human beings participate in politics in both sociotropic and egocentric ways. Second, the current literature in mass political economy either ignores this reality or lacks a systematic understanding of how and why we engage in either of these behaviors. Answering this question provides insight over a wide range of outcomes given how many literatures employ these theoretical approaches.
Understanding the drivers of these behaviors has major implications for electoral outcomes and the broader policy-making process.

Chapter 3 provides my main theoretical explanation of how observability can increase the likelihood of sociotropic attitudes and behaviors and decrease egocentric ones. I begin by establishing clear definitions and bounds of each of these terms. Second, this chapter presents the evolutionary drivers behind self and other-regarding behavior. Third, I argue that the modular model of the mind can help account for these, at times, competing instincts. I synthesize the most significant critiques of egocentric and sociotropic theory from the previous chapter and demonstrate that modularity explains how individuals can be self-interested in politics without the assumption of rationality. I also show that modularity lends itself to contextual explanations of human behavior. As such, I provide evidence of how observability can influence humanity in predictable ways along these lines. Finally, I show how applicable these broad patterns in evolutionary psychology are to political economy and close by formally stating the testable implications of my theory.

The fourth chapter provides the first empirical test of this theory on retrospective economic voting behavior. When voters believe economic situations have improved, they are more likely to support incumbents. When they believe economic situations have deteriorated, they have a higher probability of selecting challengers. We can do this based on our own personal situation or that of our country. Results from three separate surveys across 23 countries demonstrate that sociotropic economic voting behavior is strong when individuals participate in face-to-face interviews, but is nearly nonexistent when responses are collected in more private modes. Additionally, the 2012 wave of the American National Election Study allows me to discriminate between individuals who engage in this behavior in exclusively egocentric or
sociotropic manners. Consistent with my theory, those who respond to this survey online are significantly more likely to use their own financial situation to reward and punish incumbents while ignoring the state of the national economy. The presence of an interviewer leads respondents to do the opposite.

While Chapter 4 establishes the generalizable nature of how observability can cause sociotropic, and inhibit egocentric, behavior across a wide range of countries and people, Chapter 5 focuses on the internal validity of this relationship. Here I explore how individual attitudes toward the welfare state change over time. I employ data from the German Socio-Economic Panel to show that egocentric attitudes about social policy are more prevalent in private than public. I demonstrate that increased risk between survey waves is associated with an egocentric updating of welfare attitudes. Respondents whose changing life scenarios result in greater potential benefits from job provision, unemployment compensation, healthcare, and care for the elderly increase the amount of responsibility they believe the state should take for the relevant policy. However, these self-interested updates only occur in private. The added presence of an interviewer renders egocentrism an ineffective predictor of welfare state attitudes.

In Chapter 6, I test the extended implications of observability in a unique, online survey experiment. Here I ask respondents to make a series of political donation decisions. They are led to believe that their decisions have real consequences for how funds are distributed. In each case, I use information about the respondents, obtained in a pre-treatment questionnaire, to give them scenarios that pit their own economic interest against that of the country. Half of the respondents are randomly assigned to a treatment that informs them that the groups they support will publish their name online and in a newspaper advertisement. Respondents in the treatment group are significantly more likely to donate funds to sociotropic causes. While respondents considered a
few policy areas including immigration, welfare, and trade, the treatment is most effective in the area of tax policy.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes these results, discusses the broader implications of my findings, and presents avenues for future research. Observability consistently causes people to behave more sociotropically and less egocentrically in political economy. Whether we compare people across many countries or examine changes within individuals over time, we appear more likely to be motivated by our own interests when in private and those of others when in public. This is the case for a wide range of outcomes from candidate and policy evaluations, to how we choose to financially support political action groups. Given that the actual act of voting takes place in private, past research may have seriously overestimated the propensity for sociotropic behavior and wrongly discounted self-interested motivations in politics. However, this does not necessarily undermine the importance of prosocial motivations. There is still much to learn about how long the effects of observability remain active in addition to the bounds of what constitutes a social context.
Chapter II: The Common Divide of Mass Political Economy

2.1 What Kind of Animals are We?

“The logic … is this: Humans and baboons evolved by natural selection … anything that has evolved by natural selection should be selfish. Therefore we must expect that when we go and look at the behavior of baboons, humans, and all other living creatures, we will find it to be selfish.”


“Why do so many of us still cling to this grossly unflattering view of the human species as a selfish animal? Why do we persist even in the face of so much evidence to the contrary? Why do we assume the worst about humankind?”


“Judging from research, citizens in modern mass democracies are better described as *sociotropic animals*, than as egocentric ones.”


As a field, political behavior is generally dismissive of the influence of self-interest. In their seminal review of the topic, Sears and Funk note, “The conclusion is quite clear: self-interest ordinarily does not have much effect upon the ordinary citizen’s sociopolitical attitudes” (1990, 76). Others in the field have gone as far as to label self-interest, “empirically implausible” (Bowles and Gintis 2000), a “zombie theory” (Hainmueller and Hopkins” (2013), or an outright “myth” (Miller and Ratner 1996, Caplan 2011).

While once foundational to a broad set of topics in political economy, the ineffectiveness of egocentric (self-interest) theories has led many in the field to argue that humans approach
politics sociotropically. This is to claim that the interests of others, or the collective, motivate individuals’ attitudes and behavior. Voters behave sociotropically when they use national economic conditions to inform their approach to policies and candidates (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). The state of the literature is epitomized by the above Kumlin quote, or summarized by Miler and Ratner, “we now know that people often care more about their group’s collective outcomes than their personal outcomes” (1996, 25). As I will argue below, a diverse set of literatures (economic voting, donation behavior, European integration, the welfare state, trade, immigration, and monetary policy) follow a similar pattern. Sociotropism has supplanted egocentrism as the paradigm in explaining attitudes and behavior in political economy.

Overall, the criticism of egocentric theory in political economy has brought a positive and necessary improvement to the field. The dismissal of both rational choice theory as a panacea and the “Homo Economicus” understanding of human behavior was long overdue (Green and Shapiro 1996). However, the field risks a potentially harmful overcorrection. Often implicitly, at time explicitly, work in mass political economy claims that humans, by nature, are sociotropic and not egocentric. This sentiment can be seen in Lewin’s work, claiming, “the electoral behavior of American voters can best be characterized as “sociotropic.” They do not vote in the first place according to their pocketbooks but rather for the alternative they believe to be best for the country as a whole” (1991, 45). This is just as unproductive as claiming humanity is egocentric and not sociotropic. In reality, we are both.

Human beings engage politics in both sociotropic and egocentric ways. I argue that we need to move away from asking, “is humanity sociotropic or egocentric?” in zero-sum terms, and toward explaining, “why do individuals engage politics sociotropically or egocentrically?” probabilistically. Some individuals choose candidates based on the performance of their nation’s
economy over the last 12 months. Why do some engage in this sociotropic behavior while others do not? Some people want the state to take responsibility for welfare programs that benefit their pocketbook. Why do some individuals hold these egocentric attitudes while others do not? If human nature is both sociotropic and egocentric, why do our behaviors manifest themselves sociotropically sometimes, and egocentrically at others? It is important to note here that sociotropic attitudes and behavior need not be mutually exclusive from egocentric behavior, but they can include an individual placing the interests of the collective above their own.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I will argue that a broad range of literatures in mass political economy share the common thread of sociotropic explanations supplanting egocentric foundations. I conclude that a survey of the research demonstrates support for the presence of both sociotropic and egocentric attitudes and behaviors in politics. Here I establish the main research questions of the project: Why do some individuals approach political economy egocentrically/sociotropically while others do not? Second, I will argue for the importance of understanding the causes of egocentric and sociotropic attitudes and behavior. Specifically, I explain that understanding how and when individuals behave sociotropically or egocentrically has major implications for election results and the policy-making process in democracies. Finally, I conclude by claiming that my specific explanation of these behaviors (observability causes [inhibits] sociotropic [egocentric] behavior – presented in detail in the next chapter) has widespread implications for the way we study politics and evaluate past research.

2.2 The Common Thread of Mass Political Economy: A Sociotropic Paradigm?

In this section I will present the pattern that has emerged within the broader literature of mass political economy literature. While the politics of trade, immigration, welfare, monetary policy, and economic voting have diverse underpinnings and implications, academic work in
understanding individual attitudes follows a very similar trajectory. All of these literatures have a foundation in rational choice inspired, egocentric theories. It is important to note that rational choice need not assume self-interest or vice versa, but these approaches are often grouped together. Additionally, in every case (to differing degrees) this foundation has been challenged by sociotropic critiques. I argue that individuals behave both sociotropically and egocentrically across these areas. As such, we can gain insights into a broad spectrum of mass political economy if we can explain the causes of sociotropic and egocentric attitudes and behavior at large.

Rather than an exhaustive catalog of the potential drivers of these evaluations, this section motivates the project by noting the similarities in these literatures and establishing the viability of both egocentric and sociotropic evaluations of policies and candidates. While identifying a single causal story is industry standard, the development of these literatures has become a zero-sum game in a debate about human nature. This risks inhibiting our understanding of how people actually participate in politics. In order to progress, we need to explain what contexts or individual variation causes individuals to behave sociotropically sometimes and egocentrically at others.

2.3 Egocentric Foundations

Egocentric or self-interest theories assume that we can explain attitudes and behavior by the material benefits individuals reap from alternatives. A recent review described the core element of self-interest as “the motivation to maximize material resources, promote one's health and to minimize material harm and avoid harm to one's health” (Kim 2014, 100). The founding explanations of political economy often assume these kind of motivations within a rational choice framework. In order to explain comparative political phenomenon one must simply
identify what actors are present, what these actors desire, and potentially, what power they have to pursue these desires.

Gourevitch’s *Politics in Hard Times* (1986), applies this basic premise to understanding trade policy. While there is a role for political maneuvering and coalition building, political actors are largely defined by their inferred policy preference based entirely on their role as a producer. Farmers want policies and candidates that improve the material condition of farmers. These theories often remove power from the equation by assuming the largest groups in society, or alternatively the median voter, will achieve their desired policies. Moore’s classic *Social Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship* (1966) applies a similar logic to regime choice, and Hibbs (1977) with party preferences.

The economic voting literature can be traced back to the origins in egocentric theory. Downs (1957) argued citizens chose between parties or candidates rationally by comparing prospective performance to their ideal preferences. The resulting median voter theorem has fostered many empirical predictions on the role of income and class on vote choice and macro outcomes in elections (Hellwig 2001, Achterberg 2006). I will detail the subsequent critiques of this approach and the development of the modern economic voting literature below.

The foundation of egocentric theory is embodied in classic economic models of interest formation. For example, Rogowski (1987) argues political cleavages are the product of coalitions of various factor-based interests (capital, labor, land owners) via the Stolper-Samuelson theorem (or Heckscher-Ohlin model). These theories suggest societal actors move in predictable ways and attempt to maximize their influence by allying with factors of similar interest. Land owners have distinct preferences from labor based on self-interest.
Similarly, Hiscox (2001) supports this explanation of societal cleavages but additionally contends that the presence of factor mobility allows for group or industry cleavages to emerge. This second possibility falls in line with the Ricardo-Viner model of interest formation. Shifting to monetary policy, Frieden (1991, 2002) argues that in the current world of mobile capital, preferences on monetary policy will be divided by industry as well, with import competing producers desiring flexible exchange rates and export oriented producers wanting fixed exchange rates.

While the proponents of these rational choice applications have demonstrated qualitative and quantitative support across countries, these theories have additional implications at the individual level. Whether explicitly stated or implicitly assumed, this work expects individuals to evaluate economic policies in their own self-interest. Combining insights on Frieden’s theory of monetary preferences and the traditional trade models, Gabel (1999, and Palmer 1995) argues that increased liberalization of European integration and the benefits of the single currency should results in higher skilled individuals having more positive attitudes toward these policies than their lower skilled counterparts. These hypotheses are supported with a series of cross national, European samples. Scheve and Slaughter (2001a) test this proposition on trade in the American context. Exploring both the Stolper-Samuelson and Ricardo-Viner models of interest formation, the authors only find support for the former. They demonstrate that low skilled individuals in the context of a country with abundant human capital (like the US) to be more likely to oppose free trade.

In a similar argument, the authors (2001b) apply the same inference of the Stolper-Samuelson model toward immigration policy attitudes and find that low skilled Americans, again in their own economic interest, tend to oppose liberal immigration policy. This basic argument
has received cross-national support (Mayda 2006). Alternatively, attitudes about the potential fiscal burden of immigration, or how much new citizens would increase taxation, also provide theoretical and empirical support for egocentric attitudes toward immigration policy (Facchini and Mayda 2009). This latter piece suggests that not only do individuals evaluate policies as producers, but also as tax payers. Nonetheless, both theories are consistent with self-interested behavior.

Attitudes toward the welfare state share clear egocentric theoretical foundations. While Esping-Andersen’s classic *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* argued for moving past the basic efficiency oriented understanding of welfare policy, he acknowledges that the presence of a large and powerful labor movement is one of the key determinants of the size and shape of the welfare state (1990). On a more fundamental level, individuals who are most likely to benefit from welfare programs appear to hold the most positive evaluations of these policies (Hasenfeld and Rafferty 1989, Cook 1992). Additionally, asset theories of welfare state preferences argue that individuals who have taken the risk to invest in specific skills will have more favorable evaluations of welfare policies than those who have more general skillsets (Iverson and Soskice 2001, Iverson 2005). Indeed, much of the broader literature has identified important micro and micro outcomes based on the distinction between the self-interests of low skilled and high skilled labor (Rudra 2002). The fifth chapter of this dissertation will explore attitudes toward the welfare state in greater depth.

2.4 Issues with Egocentric Theory and the Sociotropic Paradigm

Downs’ (1957) economic theory of politics was soundly rejected by Converse et al (1962), who claimed that the vast majority of citizens were less calculating and noted that many even failed to hold meaningful beliefs. The modern understanding of economic voting emerged
out of this debate. Key (1966) came to the defense of voters and suggested that the electorate need not be Downsian calculators to be reasonably rational and responsible. Rather, voters merely need to assess the overall performance of governments and support incumbents when satisfied. Butler and Stokes (1969) took this idea out of the American context and argued that British vote choice was often a reflection of voters’ retrospective assessment of economic conditions. The authors claimed that the ubiquity of this behavior followed from a strong economy being the ultimate valence issue.

While retrospective economic voting could consider either personal or national economic performance, the literature has focused on the predictive effectiveness of the latter. First presented by Kinder and Kiewiet (1981), sociotropic economic voting appears to be more stable to model specification and have larger effect sizes than its egocentric counterpart (Gronke 1989; Alvarez and Nagler 1995; Clarke et al. 2004). Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier go as far to describe the preeminence of national economic concerns over personal ones to be one of, if not the most, principal findings of the economic voting literature (2007). Indeed, in their foundational exploration of the institutional variation of economic voting practices, Duch and Stevenson (2008) focus exclusively on sociotropic evaluations.

Given the prominence of producer oriented preferences defining self-interest, many of the empirical findings of egocentrism rely on education being an effective measurement of skill. While likely correlated with skill in the job market, education simultaneously captures a whole host of other phenomena including openness to new cultures and acceptance of the benefits of neoliberalism (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). Rather than thinking as a skilled producer, survey respondents in Scheve and Slaugter’s (2001a) work were actually employing pro-liberalization knowledge and biases they attained from taking Economics 101.
With egocentric theories being called into question, critics joined a chorus of scholars suggesting that group, or sociotropic, concerns were the main drivers of the evaluations of these policies (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). Individuals often appear to evaluate trade policy not by what is best for their own pocketbooks, but what they believe to be best for the country’s economy at large (Mansfield and Mutz 2009). Survey experiments reveal that Americans largely fail to reward or punish politicians’ trade policy positions in egocentric manners (Guisinger 2009). In the absence of egocentric motivations, consequences of changes to the national unemployment rate loom large in determining individual attitudes toward globalization (Davidson et al 2012).

The egocentric literature in monetary policy preferences has faced a similar sociotropic challenge. Kaltenthaler and Anderson (2001) argue that “collective utilitarian concerns” drive support for adopting the euro. The authors claim that publics seem to account for the general state of the economy (in terms of unemployment) when assessing a change in monetary policy. Similarly, Hobolt and Leblond (2009) note consumer confidence as a driver of attitudes toward the euro. Here it seems that individuals are driven by a desire for a strong currency for their country, rather than a cost-benefit analysis at a personal level. By examining fluctuations of economic performance, Kam and Nam (2008) apply these arguments toward evaluations of welfare state policy. The authors argue that attitudes toward social spending are generally more favorable when economic times are hard (beyond changes in personal situation), suggesting that individuals consider what is best for the greater populace when forming these opinions.

Additionally, while examining referendums on the currency in Denmark and Sweden, Jupille and Leblang (2007) find that community concerns have a larger effect than pocket book calculations. Similar to the previously mentioned critiques of using education as a proxy for skill,
De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) suggest that the correlation between favorable attitudes toward integration policy like the euro and education is likely a product of openness to others and ideas rather than utility maximization. In examining monetary policy preferences in Eastern Europe, Allam and Goerres concur, suggesting, “the complexity of monetary policy makes it impossible to see individual attitudes toward the euro as being only related to personal economic situation” (2011, 1420). In the absence of egocentrism, Allman and Goerres claim aggregate national economic performance to be a significant predictor of positive attitudes toward adopting the euro.

Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007, 2010) again take issue with the inference of factor models and apply their finding in trade to immigration. The authors suggest it is not labor market competition, but rather a set of spurious findings drive these relationships in past work. Measurements that have attempted to account for skill are picking up other important causes related to ethnocentrism and out-group anxiety. Most importantly, the authors find no evidence for Americans having self-interested motivations when evaluating immigrants of varying skill levels. Rather than concerns over competition for jobs, it appears that individuals simply want the highest skilled immigrants due to sociotropic concerns of what best benefits the country (2010).

Egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state and social services have also been supplanted by sociotropic concerns. Mughan (2007) makes a comparison to the economic voting literature and finds that while individual concerns over job loss demonstrate little effect on support for unemployment protections, anxiety toward the economy at large appears to be a more promising explanation. Alternatively, Bowles and Gintis (2000) and Kolm and Ythier (2006)
have demonstrated that welfare state attitudes are driven by sociotropic concerns of reciprocity and the wellbeing of others.

Finally, the poor performance of egocentric theory in immigration is met with a series of sociotropic arguments. Examining surveys of Canadians over time, Wilkes et al (2008) find that support for restrictive immigration policy rises as the economy slows. In examining the UK, McLaren and Johnson (2007) find little support for self-interest shaping evaluations of immigration policy, but do find concerns on the effects on the country’s economy to be significant. The pattern is clear. Mass political economy has experienced a paradigm shift away from egocentric to sociotropic explanations of attitudes and behavior.

Nonetheless, there remain some theoretically interesting and empirically robust egocentric findings in political economy. Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006) convincingly show that the “gender gap” in welfare state attitudes is driven by self-interested attitudes amongst women across institutional environments. Margalit (2013) shows how attitudes toward unemployment compensation change with personal employment scenarios during the “Great Recession.” Weeden and Kurzban (2014) show self-interest to be pervasive in American politics, just not in the narrow concept of income or employment opportunities. Similarly, Baker (2003) moves beyond the focus on producer-based preferences to demonstrate how self-interested policy preferences in Latin America can be oriented around consumption. The mixed empirical record of egocentrism suggests we may be self-interested at some times, but not others.

2.5 The Best Path Forward

Sociotropic explanations of mass political economy have largely supplanted egocentric explanations of attitudes and behavior in a wide range of areas. There are two potential paths forward. The first is to dismiss self-interest theories as ineffective and move forward without
them. The second is to understand that neither egocentric nor sociotropic theories are panaceas and to move toward explaining how, when, and why individuals engage political economy in self-interested and/or other-interested manners. I will argue that the latter represents the better strategy.

The decline of the egocentric paradigm in mass political economy was marked by a series of systematic critiques of self-interest and rational choice in the 1990s (Sear and Funk 1990, Green and Shapiro 1996). In Beyond Self-Interest, Mansbridge noted, “empirical research in political science today thus has some earmarks of a crisis … anomalies the reigning theory cannot explain have, under challenge, become worrying enough to demand a new explanatory model” (1990, 3). The critiques presented in this work cannot be ignored. Perhaps the most important argument made by these authors is that the egocentric paradigm ignored how diverse and complex individual attitudes and behaviors can be. Human beings are not cold rational calculators and can be driven by a wide spectrum of emotions, values, and concerns (Rabin 1998).

However, a closer examination of the sociotropic paradigm shows that it is subject to its own set of concerns and may not be separable from its egocentric counterpart. In response to the initial work by Green and Shapiro (1996), Friedman (1996) compiled a series of defenses of rational choice and egocentrism’s theoretical and empirical record. In this volume, Chong argues that the main alternatives to self-interest, including sociotropic theory, remained underspecified and unclear. Indeed, even the establishment of the concept of sociotropism (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981) cautions that the actual mechanism behind these attitudes and behavior are mix of altruism, fairness, and self-interest. As Funk summarizes, “the explanation for sociotropic voting is not altogether clear” (2000, 39). Lockerbie concurs, describing the
theoretical foundation of sociotropic political attitudes as “puzzling,” and arguing “several potential explanations have been considered and all of them have left us wanting” (2006, 202).

More recent research has argued that the sociotropic attitudes and behavior can actually be “an indirect route” to maximizing self-interest. Kiewiet and Lewis-Beck (2011) argue that this explains some of the success of sociotropic economic voting. Additionally, Fordham and Kleinberg (2012) argue that the recent success of sociotropic theories in the trade literature is actually difficult to distinguish from classic egocentric theories. Replicating the findings of Mansfield and Mutz (2009), the authors demonstrate that individuals form their views of what policy is best for the country in egocentric ways. This line of argument is supported by Weeden and Kurzban (2014) who claim that various ideological and value based theories of mass behavior are actually be based on findings of veiled self-interest.

While the causal process is complicated, attitudes and behaviors can be identified as sociotropic and/or egocentric. Either an action brings material benefits to an individual, or it does not. Either a person supports a candidate that they believe has benefited the country’s economy, or they do not. Increasingly, the literature has come around to recognizing that humans behave both sociotropically and egocentrically. In evaluating attitudes toward social policies, Funk concludes, “results suggest that citizens incorporate both self and societal interest considerations when evaluating public policy proposals” (2000, 37). While reviewing the mass political economy Lockerbie argues, “Most certainly, it appears that people are taking both egocentric and sociotropic evaluations into account when making political decisions” (2006, 202). Given that individuals behave both egocentrically and sociotropically, my question is to ask, “why?” and “under what conditions?” Lockerbie concludes his analysis by claiming he “strongly suggest(s) we look into this neglected question (202).
Kiewiet and Lewis-Beck (2011) echo this sentiment when reviewing the economic voting literature. The authors claim, “the fact of the matter is that virtually all people value their own welfare as well as the welfare of their friends, neighbors, co-workers, and fellow citizens. The idea that a person might be purely egoistic is troubling to contemplate. That a person might be interested solely in the public or national interest is equally absurd”(315). The authors conclude that the way individuals exhibit these attitudes and behaviors may be heavily dependent on context. They also suggest that examining situations in which the individual and public interest conflict may be a productive strategy to expose relevant mechanisms. I pursue this approach in later chapters when I empirically examine economic voting and political donating behavior.

Understanding what causes egocentric and sociotropic behavior in political economy is often called for, but rarely, if ever, systemically explored. In her initial critique of self-interest, Mansbridge asked for political science to address this question empirically, noting, “Just as, after three centuries of evolution, normative democratic theory and the empirical study of democratic practice are now at a point where each can accommodate both conflict and common interest, so too both these enterprises should have approached the point where they can begin to give both self-interest and the concern for the common good a significant role in political action” (1990, 22). Since so many disparate literatures in mass political economy share both sociotropic and egocentric findings, there is much to learn by explaining the causes and conditions of these behaviors.

There are a few important exceptions to the field’s ignorance of this question. Most of this work focuses on explaining when and why egocentric attitudes are activated. While largely dismissive of self-interest, Sears and Funk (1990) do note that we should expect egocentric attitudes and behavior to be more likely when individuals are sufficiently informed and when
distributional consequences are explicit and politicized. Chong et al’s seminal “When Self-Interest Matters” (2001) echoes this sentiment noting that egocentric attitudes are more likely to emerge when the stakes are sufficiently high. Both sets of authors point to tax policy as the best-case scenario for self-interest. Additionally, recent work has shown through experimental testing that information about the distributional consequences of policies increases the probability of egocentric attitudes toward monetary policy (Bearce and Tuxhorn 2017) and trade policy (Rho and Tomz 2017). Before arguing how observability can increase the likelihood of sociotropic behavior and decrease the likelihood of egocentric behavior I will briefly express the importance of answering this research question.

2.6 Why Explaining Sociotropic and Egocentric Attitudes and Behavior Matters

While the previous section detailed how explaining why individuals behave sociotropically and egocentrically has implications for a wide range of attitudes and outcomes, some may still have reservations on the salience of this exercise. Here I will briefly defend the merit of this question. Explaining the drivers of these attitudes and behaviors is critical to understanding how democracy works and holds important implications for how we study politics at the individual level.

In many ways, accountability is the essence of democracy. Democratic governments are unique to the extent that they are accountable to their citizens through free and fair elections. Schumpeter’s minimalist definition describes democracy as “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote” (1942, 269). Adam Przeworski is even pithier, defining democracy as “a system in which parties lose elections” (1991, 10). While the
institutional technology of democracy can be distilled down to a few words, it has had vast effects on human wellbeing and policy outcomes.

Democratic citizens find themselves wealthier (Persson & Tabellini 2006), healthier (Kudamatsu 2012), more secure (Harding & Wantchekon 2010), and less exposed to hunger (Sen 1999), than their authoritarian counterparts. Baum and Lake (2003) argue that the size of the welfare state, in terms of service provision in health care and education, is higher with the presence of electoral accountability of democracy. In reference to trade, Milner and Kubota (2005) have argued that governments of democratized states can no longer support policies of strategic protectionism and must liberalize in order to cater to the median voter. Combining these two literatures in the tradition of the “compensation hypothesis,” Adsera and Boix (2002) note that autocrats need not cater to voters with larger welfare states if they do decide to liberalize. Using the logic of the median voter, Bearce and Hallerberg (2011) suggest that democracies must pursue flexible exchange rates in order to actively provide politically desirable monetary policy. The common theoretical thread across this literature argues that the accountability present in democracies drives improvements in quality of life and causes policy to reflect the will of the people. However, for democracy to work in this way, voters must reward and punish incumbents based on performance.

In order to understand when, how, and why voters hold governments responsible, we must be able to explain variation in attitudes toward policies and candidates. Indeed, there is a wealth of research that demonstrates how public attitudes toward policy can shape policy outcomes (Page and Shapiro 1983, Brooks and Manza 2008). Explaining why individuals approach opinion formation in egocentric or sociotropic manners will go a long way to making better predictions about how we can expect attitudes to influence policy. When theories explain
macroeconomic and political strategies based on individual producer preferences they are simply assuming self-interest (Setephen 2014). When we think individuals are more likely to behave egocentrically we can expect economic pluralism to do a better job of explaining these outcomes. Alternatively, if sociotropic behavior is probable we should see macroeconomic indicators and messaging to drive variation. Understanding when and how opinion drives policy outcomes is essential to explaining outcomes in democracy.

Why should we focus on economic polices specifically? First and foremost is the often-mentioned relationship between economic evaluations and political competition. The left/right dimension in measures such as the “Comparative Manifesto Project” heavily relies on economic policy positions. Economic policy positions help us make sense of political competition across states. Embodied by James Carville’s famous “it’s the economy, stupid,” the salience of political economy is supported empirically at the individual level. The second wave of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) confirms this contention. When asked what issues are most important to them, a large plurality (45.9%) of voters in 40 elections between 2001 and 2006 answered with “economic performance and management.” While “social policy” comes in at second with 16.1%, these economic concerns dwarf other policy arenas with “foreign policy, defense, terrorism” garnering only 9.7% of respondents (Singer, 2010). As such, individual evaluations of these polices have the capacity to shape electoral outcomes.

We consistently observe real economic performance driving electoral results (Kayser & Peress 2012). When the economy is bad, incumbents are more likely to lose. Public opinion responds to real economic conditions. Individual evaluations of growth, inflation, and unemployment track with real changes in these indicators (Nadeau & Lewis-Beck 2001; Sanders 2000; Bélanger & Lewis-Beck 2004). Nadeau et al (2013) demonstrate the causal chain from
real changes in the economy, to changes in evaluations, to updating in vote preferences. If we can explain when and why these sociotropic evaluations occur, we will have more leverage in explaining electoral outcomes.

Finally, in some cases, citizens are given the opportunity to directly select economic policies through referendum. This is the case with a wide range of economic polices in Switzerland, the adoption of the euro in Sweden and Denmark, and 2016’s Brexit referendum. Explaining the drivers of sociotropic and egocentric attitudes could help us gain traction over how individuals make these decisions. For example, who was convinced by the oft mentioned leave campaign’s claim that leaving the EU would amount to £350 million in savings for the national health service and why (Telegraph 2018)?

Finally, my specific answer to the research question presented in this chapter has important implications for how we study politics. As I will detail in the next chapter, I claim that observability causes individuals to be more likely to behave sociotropically and less likely to behave egocentrically. One of the main implications of this theory is that we are more likely to express sociotropic attitudes in the presence of others than we would be in private. Given the reality that a large portion of quality surveys in the social sciences are administered with an interviewer present, we may be encouraging sociotropic responses and discouraging the expression of egocentric attitudes.

The observability of our political attitudes and behaviors is highly variable. While we protest in crowds, show support for causes on social media, and proudly display “I voted” stickers, we also donate to action groups, change our minds, and select candidates in the privacy of our homes and voting booths. The kinds of survey modes we employ may have unintended effects on political attitudes and behaviors. To the extent that we have collected data in a social
context we may be systematically overestimating sociotropic attitudes and underestimating egocentric ones. The next chapter presents the logic of my theory and a robust empirical record that shows consistent effects of observability in related fields and outcomes.
Chapter III: Why Observability Causes Sociotropic, and Inhibits Egocentric, Political Behavior

3.1 Act Like Somebody’s Watching

“Whenever you are to do a thing, though it can never be known but to yourself, ask yourself how you would act were all the world looking at you, and act accordingly.”

Thomas Jefferson, August 19, 1785

The above quote needs no explanation. Translate this quote appropriately and the lesson is clear to an overwhelming majority of humanity across the world and throughout history. Why is it so apparent that being observed causes better behavior? In this section I will argue that this dynamic is hardwired into us. Specifically, there are two main evolutionary pathways by which observability can cause humans to behave more prosocially and less selfishly. The first claims that being in public increases reputational costs and benefits that reward other-oriented attitudes and behavior (Trivers 1971). Veiled self-interested behavior of this nature can be defined as “weak reciprocity.” The second approach argues that social contexts can activate a “strong reciprocity” that causes prosocial action even without the possibility of personal benefits, reputational or otherwise (Gintis 2000). Weak reciprocity often includes an assumption of rational calculus within individuals while strong reciprocity denies this mechanism. I argue that both approaches help explain how observability drives prosocial actions and inhibits egocentric ones.

Just as the literature of mass political economy is divided between egocentric and sociotropic causes, so are our brains. Humans have strong instincts to act both in their own self-
interest and in the interests of others. I argue that public or private contexts can provide traction in explaining systematic patterns in when and why these motivations are activated. Gaining a more systematic understanding of the causes of these broad motivations allows us to better understand the wide range of outcomes presented in the previous chapter. Here I present the theoretical foundations of why observability causes individuals to be more likely to behave sociotropically, and less likely to behave egocentrically, in political economy.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I establish egocentric actions as those that bring an individual material benefits. Sociotropic actions are those that bring material benefits to others and/or the collective. I take care to distinguish sociotropism from altruism. Second, I detail the main existing theoretical explanations for what causes these broad behaviors and focus on debates in evolutionary psychology. Here I present a strong empirical record for weak reciprocity. Reputation management and strategies to obtain future gains can explain the evolutionary foundations of sociotropic behavior. However, I argue that we cannot ignore evidence of strong reciprocity. Other-oriented behavior can be adaptive in the absence of, or even in spite of, incentives for personal gain. An effective theory needs to include both of these mechanisms. Third, I describe how the modular model of the mind helps explain how our brains are not evolved to be unitary systems, but rather is an amalgamation of distinct and often-conflicting systems and motivations. As such, our political attitudes and behaviors are going to be largely context dependent. Specifically, public settings will cause humans to behave more sociotropically and less egocentrically in political economy. My argument is built on the following conclusions:

A. Natural selection has endowed humanity with both selfish and other-oriented instincts or motivations.
B. Humans have evolved, and continue to find ourselves, in scenarios in which private selfishness and public prosocial actions provide the greatest material benefits. Political economy is rife with these situations.

C. While the evolutionary drivers of these behaviors can appear to be a matter of rational calculus, they need not be in practice.

D. Even extremely subtle cues of observability can activate other-oriented and/or deactivate selfish drivers of behavior. This indicates a process beyond calculation.

I close by applying these conclusions to provide an answer to the research question posed in the previous chapter. I argue that sociotropic attitudes and behavior in political economy are indeed prosocial. While egocentric attitudes and behavior are not necessarily bad for others, they can be. More importantly, selfishness is often observed as being antisocial. I conclude by specifying how and why we should expect these mechanisms to drive outcomes in mass political economy and present the testable implications of this theory.

3.2 What does it mean to Behave Egocentrically and Sociotropically?

I would like to establish exactly what comprises egocentric and sociotropic behaviors before explaining their causes. When I use the term “egocentrism” I am referring to actions and attitudes that result in individuals improving their own material wellbeing. To behave egocentrically is, “to maximize material resources, promote one’s health and to minimize material harm and avoid harm to one’s health” (Kim 2013, 100). At times, other literatures refer to this behavior as “egoism” (Krebs 1991). However, egoism often implies some kind of intent, or internal motivation of selfishness (Batson and Powell 2003). This does not have to be present for an individual to act in an egocentric manner.

Alternatively, I define “sociotropism” as actions and attitudes that benefit the collective or, at minimum, others beyond an individual’s family. The concept can be traced back to the inclusion of societal “commitment” into our understanding of the motivations of human behavior (Sen 1977). In politics, attitudes and behavior are sociotropic if they “involve at least some
reference to the interests of others than the voter, or let us say more realistically, the voter and his immediate family taken as a political, economic, and social unit” (Meehl 1977, 15). Sociotropic behavior and attitudes may be motivated by some kind of altruism, but the concept is nonetheless distinct. At minimum, sociotropism in politics can be conceived as actions and attitudes that benefit society beyond pure self-interest (Markus 1988, 138). This is an important point. Sociotropic actions can also be egocentric. Often times, when individuals act sociotropically they are additionally improving their own wellbeing and vice versa. These are not mutually exclusive behaviors. However, behaving sociotropically does rule out the possibility of an individual behaving exclusively selfishly. See the figure below in summary.

Understanding egocentric and sociotropic attitudes and behavior may not tell us anything about the “pure” motives of an individual. The question of whether purely self or other-oriented thoughts, acts, or motives exist is for another time and/or discipline. Given humanity’s propensity for self-deception, not to mention the deception of others, this question may be intractable (Kurzban 2012). Nonetheless, we can explain what causes individuals to behave in sociotropic or egocentric manners (Markus 1988). Another way to describe the distinction
between these behaviors is to note that the former is explicitly “prosocial.” Prosocial behavior is simply that which brings benefits to others (Batson and Powell 2003). See the previous chapter for specific examples of sociotropic and egocentric behaviors and attitudes in political economy. The next section explores why individuals engage in these two types of behavior.

3.3 What Causes Egocentric and Sociotropic Behavior?

While a diverse set of explanations has been used to explain sociotropic behavior, the causes of egocentric behavior are often thought to be more straightforward. As in the specific case of the mass political economy literature detailed in the previous chapter, self-interested behavior is seen as the foundational motivation behind behavior at large (Kim 2013). After briefly detailing the most common explanations for sociotropic behavior I will explore how evolutionary psychology has explained these behaviors often deemed “puzzling” at first blush (Lockerbie 2006). I conclude that there are good reasons to believe that the pressures of natural selection have endowed humanity to behave both sociotropically and egocentrically. As such, I claim that the modular model of the mind is adept at explaining the, at times, conflicting pressure to be both self and other-interested. The divided nature of our cognitive system points to a contextual approach, specifically the observability of behavior, as being a productive way to move forward.

Research in political science has often explained sociotropic behavior as the product of other-oriented individual motivations. In an attempt to explain the post-materialist values of environmentalism, modernization theory has described sociotropic attitudes are “genuinely other concerned” (Inglehart 1981, Rohrschneider 1988, 141). Others highlight a deep desire for fairness and group identity concerns as the motivation for sociotropic economic voting and trade attitudes (Mutz and Mondak 1997, Davidson and Nelson 2006). A broad canvass of the literature
comes to the following conclusion. The theoretical explanations for sociotropism often assume some kind of pure altruism, or leave the mechanisms behind these behaviors vague and underspecified (Liesch and Bechtel 2017).

Alternatively, much of evolutionary psychology has explained prosocial behavior as self-interested. Summarized by Williams, “all that natural selection permits are forms of quasi-altruism that are actually self-interest, more or less enlightened or disguised forms of selfishness.” (240). While fairness appears to be an important component of sociotropism, it is often endogenous to self-interest. “Liberal” or “egalitarian” views of what is fair can be driven by distributional outcomes. Individuals who win in distributional games are more likely to express values focusing on equality of opportunity while those who lose are more likely to espouse equality of result (Tokumaru 2016). Alternatively, much has been made of the “warm glow” feeling of prosocial behavior and many claim altruistic actions bring hedonistic emotional benefits to individuals (Andreoni 1990, Kim 2013). Even the proximate emotional drivers of other-oriented behavior have been demonstrated to increase delayed materialist gains (Frank 1988). The claim of much of this work is that individuals may pursue sociotropic actions in order to reap long-term material benefits from short-term sacrifice.

### 3.4 Reciprocity and Reputation Management in Theory

The most common version of this theory focuses on reputation management and the chance for reciprocity (Trivers 1971). Social scientists will be familiar with the logic of cooperative behavior emerging in repeated iterations of prisoner’s dilemma games resulting in mutually beneficial cooperation (Rapoport and Dale 1967, Axelrod and Hamilton 1981, Axelrod 1984). Repeated interactions create incentives to forgo short-term, egocentric gains in order to maintain a reputation as someone who cooperates in order to reap future benefits. Clear signals
of prosocial reputations can lead to success in the mating market and provided critical advantages amongst hunter-gathers (Miller 2011, Smith et al 2005).

Language adds an interesting wrinkle to this behavior. Humans need not rely on personal interactions, but can learn each other’s reputation for selfishness or cooperation through the grapevine (Pinker 2012). The maintenance of cooperation through the third-party publication of reputations also speaks to the core of the institutional emergence and effectiveness literature (Milgrom and North 1989). To the extent that establishing a reputation of reciprocity, or other-regarding actions, is the cause of sociotropic behavior, we should expect individuals to engage in these actions at a greater rate in public than in private.

If humans gain survival benefits from signaling to others through sociotropic behavior (Batson and Powell 2003, Bénabou and Tirole 2005), then an audience is imperative. Reputation cannot be improved or deteriorated if there is no one to observe prosocial or selfish behavior. Defections cannot be punished if they happen in private or are anonymous. At the very least, the presence of another human should activate reputational concerns and increase the likelihood of prosocial behavior. The implications of this argument have been borne out in the experimental work of behavioral economics.

3.5 Weak Reciprocity and Reputation Management in the Lab and the Field

The behavioral revolution in economics has upended many classic understandings of human attitudes and actions (Thaler 2015). Some of the most significant findings in this arena have emerged from experimental manipulations of public goods division tasks and dictator games. Since the first example of the divide the dollar, dictator game (Kahneman et al 1986), behavioral work has found people to be largely more prosocial than originally expected. This variation of the ultimatum game places the decision of how to divide a sum of money between
two participants exclusively in the hands of a single player, the “dictator.” The standard conclusion of this work has been a sound rejection of the cold, calculating *Homo Economicus* and an increased focus on alternative motivations like fairness and inequality aversion (Henrich et al 2004). Given that dictators rarely keep the entire sum to themselves, maybe humans are not as self-interested as previously thought (Benkler 2011). However, the self-interested management of reputation could equally drive these findings.

An increasing amount of experimental work finds observability to consistently increase the probability of various prosocial behaviors. Contributions in public good games are significantly larger when participants communicate face-to-face rather than via computer (Ostrom 2000). Similarly, making participants publicly declare their actions results in higher levels of prosocial behavior in economic games (Rege and Telle 2004). Even the reciprocal cooperation observed in repeated iterations of the prisoner’s dilemma have long been demonstrated to decrease in more private and anonymous scenarios (Fox and Guyer 1978). Outside of the lab, field experiments demonstrate how reputational management concerns cause coethnics to behave more prosocially in public goods games. Increased possibility of identification and future interactions drive sociotropic, and inhibit egocentric behaviors (Habyarimana et al 2007). These kinds of findings are consistent with the veiled or delayed self-interest of weak reciprocity.

Given that sociotropism and egocentrism are not mutually exclusive, it is important to note that observability not only increases other-oriented behavior, but also distinctly curbs self-interest. Simpson and Willer (2008) establish heterogeneity in baseline self-interest of populations. Social value inventories show that some people have latent self-interested preferences (egoists) while others have other-interested preferences (prosocials). While these two
sets of individuals engage in distinct behavior in private games, they are indistinguishable in public settings. While prosocials are largely consistent across contexts, observability causes egoists to decrease selfish behavior in order to appear as prosocials to others. Similarly, Tokumaru (2016) finds that respondents avoid revealing selfish behavior across a wide range of experimental games. While this behavior is strategically beneficial, Tokumaru offers a mechanism of shame avoidance in explanation (2016, 29). Nonetheless, a strong pattern emerges of individuals hiding or disguising their own self-interest while readily recognizing it is as undesirable in others (Pronin et al 2002, Weeden and Kurzban 2014).

The effects of observability on prosocial behavior translate well to the divide the dollar ultimatum or “dictator” game. Studies generally find a majority of participants behaving fairly, or even generously, in baseline games. However, this behavior is heavily dependent on context. Players who participate in private and anonymous contexts offer fair outcomes at about half the rate as those who do so in transparent scenarios (Dana et al 2007). Similarly, when given the option to take the entirety of the sum without the second player knowing of the first player’s actions, (effectively increasing the privacy of the behavior), 40% of initially fair participants will renege on their offers and act more selfishly (Dana et al 2006). Given the option of privacy and anonymity, individuals are more likely to behave egocentrically. These results point toward reputational concerns causing behavior beyond some kind of internalized desire for fairness.

Gerber et al (2008) explore the potential effect of observability on voter turnout. The act of voting has long been identified as a core example of prosocial behavior. While various mailers intended to activate civic duty are successful at increasing turnout, the largest effect comes from observability. Individuals who received mailers publicizing their turnout behavior, along with that of their neighbors, demonstrated a massive, 8 percentage-point treatment effect (2008, 38).
In comparison, turnout-increasing policies that ease registration or allow mail-in ballots have been found to increase turnout by only 2-3 percent (Knack 2001).

In many ways, the results from the Gerber et al field experiments represent the broader state of the literature on prosocial behavior. Sociotropic behaviors can be seen as having distinct internal and external drivers (Ariely et al 2009). The effectiveness of mailers that publish voters’ turnout behavior suggests a strong external mechanism, and is consistent with the reputation management approach of weak reciprocity. Just being informed that your turnout is a matter of public record increases the probability of voting by 4%. It is not just civic duty, but the possibility of being viewed as shirking on this responsibility that motivates the largest effects. Once it is clear that your neighbors, those who you have the greatest chance of interacting with in the future, know your behavior, this effect doubles. This mechanism of social pressure suggests a species that is reluctant to help others.

However, mailers that appeal exclusively to the intrinsic importance of civic duty, without the observability treatment, still have a significant, but modest, 1.8% effect on turnout. I will now turn to theories that focus on explaining how evolution could drive sociotropic attitudes and behaviors beyond, or in spite of, self-interested concerns of reputation or future gains. In doing so, I will argue that public scenarios can change human behavior in ways beyond changes to incentives and delayed self-interest maximization.

3.6 A Social Species? Evidence for Strong Reciprocity

While much of prosocial behavior can be explained by the veiled self-interest described in the previous section, these theories fail to exclude the possibility of distinct, unselfish causes of these actions. A growing number of scholars in the “strong reciprocity” literature point to distinct adaptive benefits of sociotropism beyond egocentrism (Bowles and Gintis 2000). Selfish
genes need not make selfish people (Dawkins 1976). As Pinker summarizes, “sometimes the most selfish thing a gene can do is wire unselfish motives into a human brain — heartfelt, unstinting, deep-in-the-marrow unselfishness” (2006, 146). This section explores the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of these claims.

Gintis (2000) describes the prosocial behavior of the previous section as “weak reciprocity” (15). He argues that the sociotropic actions detailed in the previous section should depend on contexts of observability and the high potential for future interactions. However, there is a strong empirical record of prosocial actions even in the absence of personal benefits (Liesch and Bechtel 2017). Gintis defines “strong reciprocity” as the propensity for humans to, “behave prosocially and punish antisocial behavior, at a cost to themselves, even when the probability of future interactions is extremely low, or zero” (2000, 15). Analytical models and computer simulation demonstrate that strong reciprocity has the ability to outperform self-interested strategies in competitive environments and can be an evolutionary stable outcome (Gintis et al 2003). Additional ethnographic and experimental analysis reach the same conclusion (Fehr and Henrich 2003).

**Figure 3.2**

The extremely subtle effects of observability cues causing (inhibiting) prosocial (egocentric) behavior provide evidence in the favor of strong reciprocity. How does the above image of the cartoon eyes make you feel? Randomly assigning individuals to computers
featuring stylized cartoon eyes (like the ones above) significantly reduces selfish behavior in dictator games (Haley and Fessler 2005). Alternatively, noise-canceling headphones are demonstrated to increase selfish actions. Respondents who have a control background and headphones are 33% more likely to withhold funds from others than those who have been exposed to the image of the eyes. This kind of finding is inconsistent with the rational actor model of human behavior. The cartoon eyes and noise canceling headphones do not, in any way, change the incentive structure for participants, yet they significantly change respondent behavior.

Subtle cues of observability have been equally effective in the field. Attaching an image of eyes to “honesty boxes” in university coffee rooms cause academics to pay three times as much as those exposed to a control image (Bateson et al 2006). Similarly, the addition of eyes to charity receptacles in grocery stores has been found to increase donations by 50% (Powell et al 2012). Online, Facebook posts have significantly higher amounts of prosocial content when users are exposed to advertisements for Visine (Spottswood and Hancock 2013). Unless the power of dryness/redness compels us to be prosocial, it is again the display of eyes that drive other-oriented actions.

The effects of these subtle cues extend to explaining voter turnout. Potential voters need not see turnout records of their neighborhood, but only need to be primed with the idea that these will eventually become public in a newspaper, to be more likely to turnout (Panagopoulos 2010). Blending the core insight from two previously mentioned pieces of research, Panagopoulos (2014) finds that simply placing a pair of eyes on a “get out the vote” mailer (seen below) increases turnout significantly more than an identical mailer with patriotic imagery.
Overall, it appears that evolution can explain prosocial behavior through multiple pathways. While much of this could be explained by self-interested (or weak) reciprocity, it is also clear that humans engage in other-benefiting behavior in the absence of these incentives (strong reciprocity). Later, I will argue that we can expect both of these to be active in causing observability to increase (decrease) sociotropic (egocentric) behavior in political economy. First, I must address an important question operating in the background of this discussion. How can natural selection endow humans with what are, at times, the contradictory motivations of benefiting oneself and benefiting others? Next, I present the “modular model of the mind” and argue that this approach is the best way to explain the diverse processes and outcomes of human attitudes and behaviors.

3.7 On Modular Minds and Homer Simpson

The human mind is not a calculating machine of self-interest. Nor is it a utopian device made to maximize the wellbeing of others. Our brains are constantly producing an unfathomable amount of outcomes, some of which are manifested as attitudes or behaviors. These outcomes are usually made without our conscious attention, are often contradictory or hypocritical, and are heavily dependent on context. Broadly, this is encapsulated by Fodor’s “modularity of the mind” (1983). Supporters of modularity claim that the mind is comprised of a series of specialized parts
rather than a unitary system. After briefly presenting the concept, I will argue that modularity is a
great way to gain traction on why observability causes individuals to behave more
sociotropically and less egocentrically.

Fodor’s original presentation of modularity argued that cognitive systems should be,
“domain specific, innately specified, hardwired, autonomous, and not assembled” (1983, 37). In
many ways, the modular model of the mind represents a rejection of the idea that there is an
internal arbiter (the self) that makes final decisions based on various input or stimuli (Kurzban
and Aktipis 2006). We are not riding around in our heads pulling levers, or pushing buttons, that
ultimately cause of decisions. Kurzban (2012) employs the quintessential example of Homer
Simpson’s internal monologue to demonstrate this point.

**Figure 3.4**

![Image of Homer Simpson](image)

Before taking a test to obtain his GED, Homer announces, “All right, Brain, you don’t
like me, and I don’t like you. But let’s just do this, and I can get back to killing you with beer.”
His brain responds, “It’s a deal!” (Lapidus 1993). Kurzban’s response notes, “if there’s one part
of the brain communicating with another part of the brain, that’s fine, but it’s not OK to say that
“you tell your brain” something, because whatever “you” might be, it is some part – and only
some part – of the brain. It’s not all of it; it can’t be. And whatever sets of modules you think are “you,” they’re just that, modules” (2012, 71). The Simpsons is full of wonderful examples of this behavior. In one instance Homer’s mind convinces him of the benefits of reverse psychology by dismissing the strategy as useless. In another, Homer demands that his brain explain how a twenty-dollar bill could possibly be better than peanut lost under the couch.¹ Surprisingly, these Homer stories have even more utility in explaining the modularity of the mind.

Homer often holds two seemingly contradictory views in his head. How can he, and his brain as it were, want a beer so badly while simultaneously acknowledging its disastrous health effects? One part of his mind is motivated by the self-preservation of his health, while another is driven by the delicious taste of beer (and the corresponding flood of dopamine). Modularity does a nice job of explaining how humans are routinely torn by these various motives and are perfectly fine with holding an unending set of hypocritical motivations (Kurzban 2012). Why drive to the gym in order to walk on a treadmill? Why eat, drink, and smoke things we readily recognize as damaging to our survival? How is it that those with the lowest self-esteem can hold the strongest senses of superiority, or that the most depressed individuals often express extremely positive thoughts (Pelham 1993)? Why do we ignore or justify our own moral transgressions and selfish behavior while simultaneously condemning the same actions in others (Pronin et al 2002)? We do these things because we evolved that way, bit-by-bit in response to stimulus, not by a scheme to be a unitary, rational, or even consistent system.

One way proponents of modularity demonstrate how we can hold two contradictory thoughts or beliefs at once is through optical tricks, or illusions. Optical illusions are “particularly good adaptations” that are “hardwired into our brains” (Bach and Polochek 2006, 26). This suggests that there are survival benefits for both quick visual comprehension of our

¹ “Money can be exchanged for goods and services. Twenty dollars can buy many peanuts” (McGrath 1993).
surroundings, and storing the information behind the illusion. Two frequent examples (employed by Fodor 1985 and Kurzban 2012) are the Müller–Lyer line and Adelson’s (2000) checked square illusion seen below. You can know, factually, that the top and bottom lines (on the left) are the same length. Yet, even with this information you can still see them and simultaneously believe them to be different. No matter how many times I see Adelson’s shading illusion I find it hard to stop myself from folding the page or awkwardly making a lattice with my fingers be convinced that the “A” and “B” really are the identical shade and color. “Maybe this one is different,” I think to myself. “Maybe they are taking advantage of the fact that I’ve checked in the past and have actually altered the image to make different shades in A and B. I mean, just look at them!” This is, of course, not the case. We have to accept, as unnerving as it can be, that our minds can hold two completely conflicting observations, thoughts, or beliefs at once.

**Figure 3.5: The Müller-Lyer Lines and Adelson’s Illusion**

I have engaged in this discussion of the modular mind because it is a great way to reconcile the (seemingly) contradictory claim that natural selection could produce a species that is both self and other-regarding. Modularity means that our brains have competing subsystems that have evolved for specific tasks. Some of these parts could produce egocentric behaviors.
while others produce sociotropic ones. Additionally, modularity is especially conducive to contextual explanations of human behavior.

Observability can activate certain modules over others. Social contexts can cause humans to forgo even the most basic survival instincts. Teenage boys and young men regularly engage in high-risk and even death-defying behavior at higher rates than other segments of society. Risky behavior of this nature varies by context and has evolved to improve social status, the chance of being recognized, and ultimately, success in the mating market (Ellis et al. 2012). Additionally, humans seem to be innately prepared to recognize and avoid harm by fire. Babies have larger physiological responses to sounds of crackling fire than those of screeching tires (Erlich et al. 2013). However, experiments have repeatedly demonstrated that we are less likely to evacuate a room filling with smoke when others are around. Nillsson and Johansson (2009) find the distance from other audience members to be a significant predictor of time to evacuation under a series of fire alarms and announcements. This points to a sad reality often highlighted by firefighting professionals. People regularly die in fires because they were more concerned with maintaining appearances and “looking cool” than their own safety.

If our minds are made of competing parts, desires, and motivations, then the question becomes: why are certain modules activated at some times and not others? Haley and Fessler (2005) argue that the large effects of their cartoon eyes in the dictator game demonstrate support for modularity. These authors conclude that piece by claiming their results, amongst others, show that it is no longer a matter of if humans are driven by social concerns, but when this is the case. While there is plenty of well justified criticism of Fodor’s original argument, the idea that the mind is made up of component parts capable of contextual activation is uncontroversial (Prinz 2006). A focus on the effects of context can be good way to bridge the implications of
modularity across neuroscience and social science (Palecek 2017). In the next section I argue why we should expect observability to activate modules that cause us to act sociotropically and deactivate those that lead us to behave egocentrically.

3.8 Sociotropic in Public, Pocketbook in Private

In this section, I synthesize the information and conclusions established thus far and argue the main theoretical claim of this project. The same mechanisms that drive (inhibit) prosocial (selfish) behavior in economic games and donating behavior cause us to engage politics sociotropically (egocentrically). Modularity has important implications for how we make political decisions. Our political attitudes and behavior are not the product of consistent ideological, moral, or consequential reasoning, at least not as much as we would like to believe or readily admit. Rather, our evaluation of candidates and policies is the outcome of an unconscious internal struggle of competing, and often contradictory, modules of our minds. Whether through strong or weak reciprocity, it is clear that humans have both self and other-interested modules or instincts. It follows that parts of our brains that maximize self-interest in political economy should be favored in private and those that maximize others’ interests gain an advantage in public.

Politics is often described as the process of determining who gets what, and how (Lasswell 1950). Everything that the state does has overarching and distributional consequences for society and its members. One candidate’s tenure can bring a robust period of economic growth while another’s can plunge a country into recession. Alternatively, some policies might have negligible effects on macroeconomic indicators, but massive implications for distributional outcomes, bringing gains to some segments of society and levying the costs on others. How can we make sense of all of this? What is a primate species like us to do?
As it turns out, most of us pay little or no mind. Apathy is endemic and there is good reason to believe that those of us who do participate lack meaningful beliefs or reasons for doing so (Converse 1962). Many of us are beholden to partisan allegiances and appear to care about nothing more than our own team coming out on top (Djupe 2000). Nonetheless, we cannot escape the distributional consequences of politics. This is true regardless of our level of political engagement or what we present as our motivations for our attitudes and behaviors. Every political action and opinion has implications for our own wellbeing in addition to the wellbeing of others. It need not matter that we are usually blissfully ignorant or grossly misinformed about the actual ramifications of these actions.

We do not need to be aware of the personal or social consequences of our words or deeds for them to shape our actions. We would not be here if our ancestors were not adept at finding ways to maximize their material wellbeing in complicated scenarios. We have to be careful not to take this too far. The thought that selection could directly explain why you might prefer a different federal interest rate than me is farcical. However, it does explain that parts of our minds are constantly working to try to facilitate an egocentric outcome when we engage in this or any arena of policy. Modularity helps us reconcile why rational choice theories can do so well at predicting behaviors, while simultaneously being so incredibly wrong about what is going on in people’s heads: we can be self-interested and utterly irrational.

Egocentric attitudes and behaviors in political economy (and the rest of human activity) are reflexive. In reviewing situations when egocentric concerns come into conflict with other motivations in the lab and field, Moore and Lowenstein conclude, “self-interest is automatic, viscerally compelling, and often unconscious” (2004, 189). Any rational calculus and/or deliberation is likely to be retrospective and aimed at justifying our initial, reflexive behavior.
(2004, 194). All else equal, there is good reason to expect people to approach political economy egocentrically.

However, as we have seen in this chapter, there are multiple reasons to expect observability to activate a seemingly similar intuition to behave prosocially. As such, I can formally state the main hypotheses of this project:

Hₜ: Individuals will be more likely to engage political economy in sociotropic ways in public than in private

Hₑ: Individuals will be more likely to engage political economy in egocentric ways in private than in public

While having two hypotheses may seem redundant, this is not the case. As established, these behaviors are not mutually exclusive. Observability could cause someone to behave more sociotropically while maintaining a consistent level of self-interest and vice versa. However, we might expect the effects of observability to be especially strong when our self-interest and that of others comes into conflict. I will explore a couple of these scenarios in the proceeding chapters.

These hypotheses are consistent with both weak and strong conceptions of reciprocity. Both approaches share the same empirical prediction. The presence of others could engage parts of our brains adept at addressing strategic concerns of reputation or simply activate other modules that are deeply prosocial. It is incredibly difficult to distinguish between these mechanisms. All I can do to address this is to explore different types of observability. The following two empirical tests examine the effects of having an interviewer present during a survey while the last empirical chapter focuses on the consequences of having political donation decisions published for others to see. While I will discuss the implications for the strong/weak reciprocity debate, this analysis can only be suggestive.
We can draw parallels between the mechanisms most frequently associated with strong and weak reciprocity and dual processing theory (Brewer 1988). Often, proponents of strong reciprocity describe prosocial actions as uncontrollable behaviors that evade self-awareness. This is consistent with the concept of “automatic processing” (Barth 1982). We can contrast this first system with a more deliberate, analytical cognitive process. Kahneman refers to these processes as “System 1” and “System 2” respectively (2011). Bear and Brand (2016) connect these to reciprocity by arguing that System 1 explains repeated cooperation in the prisoner’s dilemma while System 2 allows players to maximize self-interest with strategic defections. While the dual processing model has demonstrated a wide range of utility in explaining political decision-making and behavior (Redlawsk 2006), this approach risks oversimplification.

Evans (2012) identifies a series of fallacies present in applications of dual processing theory. For the purposes of my argument, I will focus on one issue. While the purveyors of these theories are appropriately measured in their claims, many often apply this approach as if there were exclusively two processes in cognition. As Evans notes, “It is quite impossible that there are just two systems in the brain/mind responsible for all the kinds of processing described as Type 1 and 2. Hence recent theorising has attributed dual processing to distinct minds with differing evolutionary histories, each of which has multiple systems” (2012, 23). We should not assume strong reciprocity belongs to the domain of System 1, and weak reciprocity to System 2. These systems are overlapping and the product of many conflicting subsystems. Nonetheless, it may be productive to think of the most explicit, or ideal, cases of strong reciprocity operating in System 1 and the most distinct mechanisms of weak reciprocity residing in System 2.

Finally, I want to reiterate a previous point about the broader implications of this theory. Staunch proponents (or opponents for that matter) of self-interest might be inclined to take the
wrong lesson from my theory. Suggesting that individuals behave more egocentrically in private is not equivalent to claiming that egocentrism speaks to revealed human nature at a greater level than sociotropism. Public contexts are just as legitimate in the human experience. Again, this project is not about explaining the true or pure motives of our species. It’s about explaining why we engage in certain behaviors, and not others, in political economy. I now conclude by demonstrating how this theory can help make sense of the conflicting results of the previous chapter and provide a heading for the empirical tests to come.

3.9 The Lack of Support for Egocentrism and Testable Implications of Observability

The less than perfect empirical record of egocentrism, described in the previous chapter, is the product of a few dynamics. First, while many parts of our brains can be working toward egocentric ends, they can often produce outcomes that are simply wrong. We can be mistaken, tricked, deceived, about the consequences of policies and reveal preferences and actions that are not egocentric, even if parts of us believe them to be. See the Marxist notion false consciousness for a classic explanation of this nature (Newman et al 2015).

Second, we could be approaching politics in a totally self-interested way, but prioritizing egocentric goals beyond those captured by the classic economic indictors the field is accustomed to. Perhaps we are motivated less by employment opportunities, and more by the price of the goods we consume (Baker 2003)? Weeden and Kurzban’s *Hidden Agenda of the Political Mind* does a nice job of showing how the common, purely economic, conception of self-interest is unnecessarily limited. For example, the authors argue that demographic traits of individuals, like alcohol consumption and number of sexual partners, lead to distinct, strategic policy preferences. They group Americans into latent groups that have self-interested policy preferences on abortion, same-sex marriage, and religious freedom that maximize opportunities on the dating and
marriage market. In short, there is nothing to “the matter with Kansas” if the conservative social policies of the Republican Party lead to more desirable potential mates for its core constancy (2014, 157).

While misunderstanding and nontraditional conceptions of self-interest explain some of the lack of support for egocentrism in political economy, I suggest a third mechanism. The survey data that comprises the main empirical findings of the previous section has been unknowingly manipulating the public and private contexts of respondents. The majority of high quality survey data in the social sciences have employed face-to-face interviews (Lavrakas 2008), or at a minimum, have some kind of interviewer present during the data collection process. This is for good reason. Having a person around increases response rates, item completion, and lowers the cognitive burden of respondents (Bowling 2005). However, as I have argued in this chapter, having another person present also has the potential to activate sociotropic processes in our minds and deactivate egocentric ones.

Survey modes that employ face-to-face interviews have been recognized to increase social desirability bias. If respondents are required to disclose sensitive information to interviewers they may be more likely to misrepresent themselves in ways that highlight desirable behavior and discount or deceive interviewers about stigmatized behavior and attitudes (Aquilino and LoSciuto 1989, 1990). While effects of survey mode on this behavior are small, respondents who participate in online surveys, are less likely to exhibit social desirability bias when discussing voter turnout (Heerwegh, D. 2009, Holbrook & Krosnick 2010).

However, it is important to note that social desirability does not necessarily mean bad data. We should have doubts about the quality of survey data if we are using an individual’s response as a variable that represents an objective trait of a person. Questions like “how often do
you floss” and “do you use illegal drugs” are likely to give us inaccurate data. Social desirability would harm our ability to make inferences if we want to use these responses as predictors or outcomes. However, political attitudes are not objective facts within our heads. As I have argued in this chapter, how we engage politics, or express our opinions, is the product of conflicting internal motives and largely subject to context. As such, while social desirability might pick up some short-term deceptive attitudes in politics (we could call this bias), it also drives actual, real-world behaviors (see the above discussions of donating behavior and voter turnout).

While it is clear that we have strong motivations to behave socially desirable well beyond surveys, variance in how we collect data has important implications for my theory of observability. The presence of an interviewer should cause individuals to behave more sociotropically and less likely to behave egocentrically. Alternatively, privacy should bring the opposite effects. While we should see this pattern emerge in survey results, observability’s effects will also shape real-world attitudes and behaviors.

The next chapter tests observability’s effect on economic voting behavior. These results show that the presence of an interviewer drives sociotropic, while suppressing egocentric, economic voting behavior. This is the case even when respondents enter responses on computers or tablets but are nonetheless in the presence of an interviewer. Next, I explore egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state in chapter five. I demonstrate that German respondents consistently update their attitudes toward specific social policies in egocentric ways when in private, but fail to do so in the presence of an interviewer. Finally, chapter six shows, through an online experiment, that individuals are more (less) likely to donate to sociotropic (egocentric) political causes when they are informed that their support will be published online and in a newspaper. All of this will be consistent with the main theoretical claim of this chapter.
Chapter IV: My Country Before Myself? Observability as the Cause of Sociotropic Economic Voting

**Abstract:** What causes individuals to engage politics in sociotropic or egocentric ways? I present a theory of observability and argue that when individuals find themselves in public situations they will be more likely to behave sociotropically. I test this theory’s implication for retrospective economic voting by leveraging surveys that contain variation in interview modes. Results from three separate international surveys across 23 countries demonstrate that sociotropic economic voting behavior is strong when individuals participate in face-to-face interviews, but is nearly nonexistent when responses are collected in more private modes. Here respondents are much more likely to express attitudes consistent with egocentric economic voting behavior. Given the actual act of voting takes place in private, past research may have seriously overestimated the propensity for sociotropic behavior in this context and wrongly discounted self-interested motivations.
4.1 Introduction

How do citizens decide for whom to vote? Research demonstrates that retrospective economic concerns have a consistently significant effect on the vote choice of citizens across the world. When voters believe economic situations have improved, they are more likely to support incumbents. When they believe economic situations have deteriorated, they have a higher probability of selecting challengers. In this milieu, the economic voting literature has largely concluded that evaluations of national conditions (sociotropic economic voting) have a larger effect on vote intention than personal economic assessments (egocentric economic voting).

However, this conclusion ignores mounting evidence of the importance of public and private contexts. As I will argue in this chapter, the observability frequently present in survey data collection can cause individuals to be more likely to behave sociotropically. In the absence of these forces, egocentric considerations should be more likely to influence political decisions. Given the actual act of voting is a private behavior, past literature may be seriously overestimating sociotropic effects and discounting the role of self-interest in driving various political attitudes and behaviors.

This paper proceeds in the following manner. First, I will review existing literature on economic voting and highlight the need for accounting for variation in individual context. Second, I will argue that variance in economic voting behavior can be explained in part by the observability of an individual’s responses and actions. Specifically, I claim that when citizens articulate attitudes about the economy and vote choice in public, this social context increases the likelihood of responses and behavior consistent with sociotropic economic voting.

Finally, I will test these hypotheses using three distinct surveys across 23 countries. I am able to leverage variation of data collection mechanisms to compare the relatively private
contexts of internet and phone surveys to a more public scenario in which respondents are influenced by the watchful eyes of another person, face-to-face interviews. The following analysis offers the first test of my theory presented in the previous chapter. Results are largely as predicted. Individuals surveyed in a public context are much more likely to exhibit sociotropic economic voting attitudes. Sociotropic responses of this nature are almost completely a product of face-to-face interviews. Alternatively, when expressing attitudes in private, egocentric economic concerns exhibit a much larger effect on vote intention.

4.2 Who Votes Economically? How?

Over the past 50 years, economic voting has established one of the most successful empirical records within the discipline. Initially emerging from research in American politics (Fiorina 1981), the theory has been the focus of well over 400 books and articles in counting (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2007). The correlation between retrospective economic assessments and vote intention has been demonstrated in Europe’s oldest democracies (Pacek 1994; Chappell & Veiga 2000; Tucker 2001) and post-Soviet polities (Duch 2001; Mishler & Willerton 2003). The practice even extends to the world’s newest democracies and least developed countries (Remmer 1991; Pacek and Radcliff 1995; Wilkin, et al 1997). Even the most spirited critics of economic voting argue that retrospective assessments of leaders are limited to the last year of their performance rather than the entirety of an incumbent’s term (Achen and Bartels 2017). Yet for all of this aggregate work, we know surprising little about when or how individuals engage in this behavior.

Perhaps the most established finding within the economic voting literature is that sociotropic evaluations of national economic performance have a larger influence on vote choice than egocentric, or personal, economic evaluations. First presented by Kinder and Kiewiet
sociotropic economic voting appears to be more stable to model specification and has larger effect sizes than its egocentric counterpart (Gronke 1989; Alvarez and Nagler 1995; Clarke et al. 2004). Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier go as far to describe the preeminence of national economic concerns to be one of a few principle findings of the economic voting literature (2007).

While sociotropic behavior receives greater support across various literatures, egocentric economic voting is not without its own empirical evidence. Additionally, as identified by the original proponents of this behavior, sociotropic concerns are not mutually exclusive from pocketbook voting (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). Existing work has found more politically sophisticated (Gomez & Wilson 2006), and educated (Godbout & Bélanger 2007) respondents to be more likely to engage in egocentric economic voting. The most significant and frequent critique of sociotropic economic voting emerges from the partisanship literature. While partisans are found to engage in economic voting at higher rates (Dettrey & Palmer 2013), many have suggested the empirical evidence for economic voting behavior suffers from endogeneity problems. Partisans are likely to engage in motivated reasoning and base their assessments of the national economy on their party allegiances (Cambell et al 1960; Conover 1986). As such, findings in support of sociotropic economic voting behavior may be inflated by partisan identities driving both economic assessments and vote choice (Wilcox & Wlezien 1996; Anderson et al. 2004; Johnston et al. 2005).

Beyond this work, the literature provides little focus on individual heterogeneity in this behavior. This is especially frustrating given that, as temporal data demonstrate, the propensity for both sociotropic and egocentric economic voting varies significantly over time (Carey & Lebo 2006), and during electoral cycles (Lebo & Box-Steppensmeier 2008). While individual variation in economic voting has largely been overlooked in the literature, a consensus has
emerged with regards to heterogeneous institutional environments. The “clarity of responsibility hypothesis” suggests that economic voting will be more prevalent in countries where the electorate can identify the specific political actors that shape the state of the economy (Powell & Whitten 1993). Institutional variation including: coalition governments, the number of parties in the executive, and dual executives have all been found to reduce the practice of economic voting (Lewis-Beck 1986; Anderson 2000; Duch & Stevenson 2008). Similarly, economic shocks (Duch & Stevenson 2008), globalization (Hellwig 2001), and European integration (Lobo & Lewis-Beck 2012), all have been shown to decrease the probability of economic voting behavior.

Yet even within stable institutional environments, economic assessments, and their effect on vote intention, vary over time. Lebo and Box Steffensmeir (2008) find that, not only do aggregate assessments of the US economy change during an electoral cycle, but also that their correlation with vote choice is additionally variable. Similarly, by running over 70 regressions across two electoral cycles, Carey and Lebo (2006) demonstrate that both sociotropic and egocentric economic assessments have consistently positive, but varying, sized effects on British vote intention. While economic voting behavior is critical to democratic accountability, the discipline knows surprising little about when or how individuals engage in this behavior.

Too often research on behavior in political economy deals in absolutes – either citizens are cold calculators or they are void of the ability to assess how political alternatives affect them personally. This pattern manifests itself, outside of a few notable exceptions, in the economic voting literature. Research describes the voting public as sociotropic or egocentric in nature. In reality, these are simply behaviors that voters can, and do, exhibit variably. As Lebo and Box Steffensmeir summarize, studies in economic voting, “share an “all or nothing” perspective on the question and the use of methodology that allows, at best, a ranking of alternatives. With few
exceptions, researchers do not allow for the possibility that the relative efficacy of these dimensions (sociotropic and egocentric voting) may not be constant” (2008, 296). We should move past debates of whether voters are innately self or other-oriented and toward an explanation of why some voters more likely to engage in sociotropic/egocentric economic voting than others?

4.3 Observability and Economic Voting

I expect citizens in public or observable scenarios to be more likely to exhibit sociotropic behavior while those in private or unobservable scenarios to be more likely to exhibit egocentric behavior. In order to establish this theoretical relationship I will first demonstrate that sociotropic economic voting is an example of publically desirable, or “prosocial” behavior, and that egocentric economic voting (especially when in conflict with sociotropic assessments) is not. This section applies the theoretical approach presented in Chapter 3 to a specific set of attitudes and behavior related to the reward and punishment of incumbent economic performance.

The first premise that needs to be established within this theory is the claim that sociotropic economic voting is a prosocial behavior. Behavior is prosocial if an individual’s actions work to benefit others (Batson & Powell 2003). Note that prosocial behavior need not be motivated by altruism. Meier adds, “prosocial behavior is a way to signal to others that one is "good" ” (2, 2006). The act of voting itself has long been thought to be a socially appropriate behavior (Riker & Ordeshook 1968), and is regularly used in empirical work as an example of prosocial action alongside actions like volunteering or donating to charity (Bénabou & Tirole 2005). Indeed, turning out is an important act of institutional maintenance for any strong democracy (Knack 1992, Lijphart 1997).
However, I contend that beyond simply casting a ballot, specific kinds of voting behavior benefit society more than others. This sentiment is described in Brennan’s 2012 book, *Voting Ethically*. He notes, “our votes can make people’s lives better or worse. I argue that we have moral obligations concerning how we should vote. Not just any vote is morally acceptable” (4, 2012). In presenting the concept of sociotropism, Meehl noted that a hypothetical supporter of the “Flat Earth Vegetarian Party” might be engaging in a sociotropic act (voting) while simultaneously choosing a candidate that is anything but beneficial for society (1977). Obviously, choosing a candidate or party in complete ignorance, or at random, *is not* desirable, but identifying what *is* prosocial can be more difficult. Demographic, ideological, and value-based differences can make an identification of prosocial political performance and choice vary across individuals and blocks of the electorate.

Of all kinds of potential voting strategies, sociotropic economic voting best meets the qualifications of prosocial behavior. The idea of “throwing the bums out” has long been a part of the political zeitgeist. By rewarding and punishing policymakers based on performance, electorates benefit government efficacy and the public good (Ranney & Kendall 1954; Mayhew 1974). This suggests citizens not only have a responsibility to vote, but to also select candidates and parties that do right by society. While there are many metrics beyond the strength of the national economy to judge government performance, this appears to be the most universally desired outcome (Butler & Stokes 1969).

Returning to Brennan, voters must be “justified in believing that the candidate or policy they support is likely to promote the common good, or otherwise they ought not vote at all” (2012, 13). My argument is that a citizen who assesses national economic conditions as getting better (worse) under incumbent governments is acting prosocially when they vote, or articulate a
vote intention, for (against) these governments. The egocentric counterpart of this behavior is not necessarily prosocial, and may even be socially discouraged. This is especially true if voters are motivated by personal considerations in contradiction or ignorance of national economic realities. As discussed in the previous chapters, there is compelling evidence that when participating in politics, individuals often rationalize or mask self-serving behavior and frequently view these actions as thoughtless or greedy in others (Pronin et al 2002, Weeden and Kurzban 2014). When we consider candidates or step into the voting booth, various parts of our minds are likely trying to increase both our own wellbeing in addition to that of others and the nation at large. Sometimes, individuals believe incumbents have brought different economic consequences for the country and themselves. The internal conflict here between sociotropic and egocentric economic voting motivations is simply one example of the contradictory nature of the modular mind.

Building toward the main theoretical claim of this section, I argue that citizens are more likely to exhibit sociotropic behavior when they believe their actions to be public rather than private. Public or observable contexts are more likely to activate the modules of our minds that are adapted for prosocial behavior. Humans are not the cold rationalizers of classic economic models. However, we are also not universally motivated by concerns of fairness and equity. In reality, our propensity for prosocial action is surprisingly variable, and to a large extent, a product of context. While some individuals may try to strategically present sociotropic attitudes and actions in public while being self-interested in private, this need not be a conscious action. As I detailed in the previous chapter, both strong and weak conceptions of reciprocity point toward consistent and predictable differences in how humans behave in public and private.
While voting has long been considered prosocial behavior, I have argued that it is not only turning out, but also *how* one votes that constitutes prosocial behavior. Voters have a responsibility to society to reward incumbents who improve national economic conditions and punish those who deteriorate them. As we have seen across a wide range of prosocial acts, people are more likely to engage in these behaviors when their actions are more transparent, public, and observable. Given the large amount of variance in how and when individuals partake in the behavior of economic voting, I claim that these insights can help answer the research question of this section. *Why are some voters more likely to engage in sociotropic/egocentric economic voting than others?* Given the profound effects of observability on prosocial, political and economic behavior, I posit the following hypothesis:

*H1: Voters in public will be more likely to engage in sociotropic economic voting behavior than those in private.*

Alternatively, the insights of the previous chapter have also suggested that privacy increases our propensity to act selfishly. While we can easily define these kinds of actions in economic games as prioritizing personal, monetary gain over that of others, the application to politics is less clear. Even if turning out to vote is widely viewed as prosocial behavior, it is not readily apparent that abstaining is equally viewed as cynical. While the action of engaging in sociotropic economic voting provides a benefit to the country regardless of motivations or intentions, an egocentric economic vote is not necessarily detrimental for society. This is especially true when an individual’s perceptions of the national economy and their own personal economic situation are the same. Nonetheless, we could expect an exclusively egocentric vote intention (one that is detrimental to, or ignorant of, national conditions) to be frowned upon, as this explicitly self-serving behavior is socially undesirable (Tokumaru 2016).
The other side of my observability theory suggests that, in public, we behave less self-interested than we otherwise would have. Note that this is not to say that we are exclusively motivated by self-interest in our private actions, but rather that the baseline probability for such behavior is higher here than it is in public scenarios. Chapter 3 presents the distinct mechanisms of how public contexts can curb egocentric behavior in greater detail. Again, this theory should help explain the variation in egocentric economic voting. In private, our brains are more likely to tap into modules adapted to increase our own material wellbeing. As such I present H2:

\[ H2: \text{Voters in private conditions will be more likely to engage in egocentric economic voting than those who are in public.} \]

These hypotheses have the potential to help explain the large amounts of variation observed in economic voting behavior and inform our understanding of public and private political actions. The next section sets out to test these hypotheses from three distinct pools of data across 23 countries.

4.4 Testing the Effects of Social Context on Economic Voting

In this section, I introduce a series of empirical tests of the theory presented in the previous section. In order to effectively test the hypotheses as stated, existing survey data need to have three specific characteristics: first, a question(s) asking respondents for retrospective, economic assessments, second, a question(s) asking respondents about their intended vote choice, or some kind of assessment of incumbent government performance, and third, variance in the observability of the respondent. The last characteristic is the most challenging to find as the vast majority of high-quality survey data are collected exclusively in the single mode of face-to-face interviews. Indeed, much of the economic voting literature has been built on the face-to-face samples of the Eurobarometer and, before 2012, the ANES.
As such, I focus my analysis on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), European Election Survey (EES), and 2012 wave of the American National Election Study (ANES) as three specific surveys that meet these criteria. This practice allows me to compare face-to-face interviewees to those more private survey experiences. Unfortunately, the CSES and EES can only be used to test $H1$, as they ask respondents to make sociotropic, but not egocentric, economic assessments. The 2012 wave of the ANES will allow for an effective test of both $H1$ and $H2$ as questions account for national and personal assessments of economic conditions. Nonetheless, these surveys provide the opportunity to test my theory in three unique data sources across 23 countries. This section proceeds by describing the data, variable construction, and empirical tests from each of these subsequent surveys.

4.5 Observability and Sociotropic Voting in the CSES

The CSES Module 4 offers the first opportunity to test the theory and hypotheses of this paper. After briefly describing the data themselves, I will present the construction of key dependent, independent, and control variables. Next, I will discuss a series of regression models designed to test the first hypothesis of the previous section. The analysis will demonstrate results consistent with the argument of the previous section. Citizens are much more likely to engage in sociotropic economic voting when they are subject to the observability of a face-to-face interview. The substantive significance of this behavior within this sample is substantial. While the classic finding of the economic voting literature (assessments of national economic conditions exhibit large effects on the approval of incumbents) is clearly demonstrated amongst face-to-face respondents, this relationship disappears for individuals in more private contexts.

The CSES’ fourth module collects data from 17 regionally diverse countries between 2011 and 2016. However, question availability limits the sample of analysis to 14 states. See
Table A1.1 in the appendix for a list of the participating countries and years of data collection. Minimums of 1,000 respondents per country were recruited through various methods of random sampling. While the administrators expressed a preference for face-to-face interviews as a means of data collection, the project employed various methods including: telephone, internet, and self-completed, mail-in response. While the argument could be made that each of these methods comes with a certain level of, or falls on a continuum of, exposure to observability, I opt for using a dichotomous measure in the analysis below.

Given the theory’s focus on observability, and the past findings of the strong effects resulting from the simple presence of watching eyes (Haley & Fessler 2005; Panagopoulos 2014), the tests below will focus on comparisons of respondents who were interviewed face-to-face to all others. Ansolabehere and Schaffner (2014) demonstrate that internet and telephone survey data contain negligible differences in terms of relevant political variables. I code the variable “face-to-face” with a value of ‘1’ if the respondent’s responses were collected through face-to-face interview and a value of ‘0’ if responses were obtained in any other, unobserved, manner. This creates a nearly perfect balance across the sample analyzed below with 49% of respondents obtaining values of ‘1’ and 51% receiving a value of ‘0’.

I contend that this is a valid construct of observability. It has long been established that face-to-face interviews are much more likely than alternatives to trigger social mechanisms (Kiesler & Sproull 1986). The presence of an interviewer, in your place of residence no less, represents a significant loss of privacy and (perceived) anonymity when compared to the alternative of a phone conversation or internet response. This loss of privacy and anonymity should bring an activation of the prosocial parts of our minds. A face-to-face interview places respondents in a context that triggers the main mechanism for both weak and strong reciprocity.
According to the former, the presence of another human should activate concerns for benefits from future interactions. According the latter, this same presence activates deep-seated concerns for others. Either mechanism suggests that the public context is likely to bring a move toward sociotropism and away from egocentrism.

While a measurement of vote intention is the ideal dependent variable for the study of economic voting, many studies use approval of, or attitudes toward, incumbent leaders and parties when this is unavailable (Dorussen & Taylor 2003). The CSES asks respondents about past voting behavior, but fails to ask about future intentions. As such, I use attitudes toward incumbent leaders and parties to create the dependent variable of the models below. The two questions read as the following:

1. “What do you think of the presidential candidates/party leaders? After I read the name of a presidential candidate/party leader, please rate them on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that candidate and 10 means that you strongly like that candidate.”

2. “I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party.”

From the first question, I create the variable “Incumbent Leader”, which has scores of 0-10, with higher values representing more positive attitudes toward the sitting chief executive. From the second question I create the variable “Incumbent Party”, which has scores of 0-10, with higher values representing more positive attitudes toward the sitting, incumbent party. In the case of coalition governments I use attitudes toward the party with the largest share of seats in the lower house. Both variables are reasonably evenly distributed around a mean of 5.2 and 5.5 respectively. These variables offer a valid construct to test the main mechanism present in the economic voting literature (Duch and Stevenson 2008). If voters are engaging in the process of sociotropic economic voting, their perceptions of the national economy should shape attitudes.
toward incumbent leaders and parties. In order to account for these assessments I use the standard question of this literature, which in the CSES, reads:

“Would you say that over the past twelve months, the state of the economy in [COUNTRY] has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse? Would you say much better/worse or somewhat better/worse?”

From these questions I create the variable “Sociotropic Assessment” which has values from ‘-2’ representing an answer of “much worse” to ‘2’ representing “much better”. The current paradigm within the economic voting literature would expect a simple positive relationship between sociotropic economic assessments and the incumbent leader/party variable. In order to test H1 from the previous section, I propose an interactive relationship. Specifically, I expect the positive relationship between sociotropic assessment and attitudes toward incumbents will be stronger for face-to-face respondents than for unobserved respondents.

In order to account for confounds I will also include a series of controls common to comparative models of vote choice and incumbent approval. First, I control for a series of demographic variables including: gender, education, income, and urban/rural status. I also include a smaller set of politically relevant variables accounting for incumbent party identification, left to right ideology, and employment status. Finally, since country level variation is viewed simply as nuisance (at this stage in the project), I opt for country-level fixed effects in lieu of a random effects, multilevel model. In the models below, I present the results for testing the interaction between sociotropic assessments and face-to-face interviewing on attitudes toward both incumbent leaders (Models 1 and 2) and parties (Models 3 and 4). Models 1 and 3 first present a baseline with the component parts of the main interaction (effectively replicating a standard sociotropic economic voting model) while Models 2 and 4 add the interaction necessary to test H1.
As can be seen in the baseline models (1 and 3), the paradigmatic finding of the economic voting literature is replicated in the fourth wave of the CSES. Positive, retrospective assessments of the economy are associated with more positive attitudes toward incumbent leaders and parties.

**Table 4.1: Attitudes Toward Incumbents in the CSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incumbent Leader</th>
<th>Incumbent Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>-0.566*</td>
<td>-0.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociotropic Assessment</td>
<td>0.124**</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-to-F x SA</td>
<td>0.263**</td>
<td>0.248**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.078**</td>
<td>-0.078**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.133*</td>
<td>0.132*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Party ID</td>
<td>2.395**</td>
<td>2.365**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Ideology</td>
<td>0.316**</td>
<td>0.313**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>-0.438**</td>
<td>-0.427**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.429**</td>
<td>2.460**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.116)</td>
<td>(0.116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>18895</td>
<td>18895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01  
*Country fixed effects included in all models*

The baseline models show a significant and negative effect of observability embodied in the face-to-face variable. Respondents who take the survey by face-to-face interview have
significantly less positive attitudes toward incumbents than those who take the survey via more private modes. However, in order to effectively evaluate \( H1 \), we need to examine the models that add in the interaction between sociotropic assessments and observable, face-to-face interviews.

The interactive models (2 and 4) both support \( H1 \) in terms of signs and significance of relevant coefficients. Most importantly, the interaction coefficients themselves are positive and statistically significant at the .01 level. This suggests, as \( H1 \) posits, that there is a stronger, positive relationship between sociotropic assessments and incumbent support when individuals are exposed to the social pressure present in face-to-face interviews. Since the component terms of the interaction have substantively meaningful zero values, we can interpret these coefficients. For both dependent variables, the inclusion of the interaction term causes the Face-to-Face coefficient to lose significance. This informs us that, amongst respondents who assess their country’s economy to be “about the same” over the past year, the observability of a face-to-face interview does not affect attitudes toward incumbents.

![Figure 4.1: Predictive Margins from Model 2 (95% CIs)](image)
More substantively interesting, the coefficients for the Sociotropic Assessment variable also become insignificant in the interactive models. This suggests that the standard finding of sociotropic economic voting ceases to exist when individuals are in private scenarios. All of these findings can be effectively summarized Figures 4.1 and 4.2, which display the predicted values of incumbent support from the interactive models.

As can be seen in the figures above, H1 is clearly supported. Respondents evaluate incumbents very differently in the presence of a face-to-face interview. Essentially, Figures 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate that, within the CSES sample, sociotropic economic voting is a behavior that is largely a product of the social context of face-to-face interviews. For unobserved respondents, retrospective assessments of the national economy have no effect on how individuals evaluate incumbent candidates or parties. Consistent with the theoretical argument of the previous section, citizens subject to the social context of face-to-face interviews are much more likely to use national economic conditions to inform their evaluations of incumbents than
they would have in unobserved scenarios. The next section moves to corroborate this finding within the EES.

4.6 Observability and Sociotropic Voting in the EES

The EES 2009 “Voter Study” offers a great opportunity to corroborate the CSES findings presented above. After briefly describing the data themselves, I will again present the construction of key dependent, independent, and control variables. Next, I will discuss a series of regression models designed to provide a corroborating test of H1. Analysis will demonstrate results consistent with the argument of this paper and the CSES findings. Citizens are more likely to engage in sociotropic economic voting when they are subject to the social context of observability.

While the EES collects respondents from all European Union member-states, I will focus my analysis on smaller sample of nine states. All data were collected in June of 2009. While the majority of the countries participating in the sample have respondents take the EES survey exclusively through phone interviews, nine countries also employ face-to-face interviews. Given the necessity of this variance to test H1, I limit my sample to: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Within and across these countries, 70% of respondents took the survey over the phone, while 30% participated in face-to-face interviews. PIREDEU, the administrators of the survey, took special precautions to ensure the survey experience across modes was as similar as possible. As with the CSES data, I create and code the variable “face-to-face” with a value of ‘1’ if the respondent’s responses were collected through face-to-face interview and a value of ‘0’ if responses were obtained over the phone.

In this section, I will use probability of incumbent vote intention as the dependent variable. The EES asks respondents to assign a probability to the likelihood they would vote for
a series of political parties presented in a randomized order. For each country, I select the question asking about the incumbent party based on the party of the chief executive and the largest share of votes in the lower house of the legislature (which are equivalent in all cases). The question is asked in the following manner in the EES:

_We have a number of parties in COUNTRY, each of which would like to get your vote. How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please specify your views on a scale where 0 means “not at all probable” and 10 means “very probable”._

From the responses from this question I create the variable “incumbent vote probability” or IVP. The variable ranges from 0 to 10 with a mean of 3.2 and lacks a normal distribution (see appendix A2 for a histogram). This is largely driven by a large number of respondents (45%) choosing the ‘0’ option indicating they are “not at all” likely to support the incumbent party in an election. I employ a couple of strategies to address this issue in the data. First, the models below will use a logged version of IVP to normalize the distribution. Second, I present a truncated sample that only examines the relationship of H1 for respondents who reported some probability of voting for the incumbent party.

Again, in order to test H1, I need to explore the interactive relationship between the observability of the respondent and their assessment of national economic conditions on IVP. This amounts to an effective test of sociotropic economic voting behavior. I create the second component term of the interaction from the EES’ following question:

_“What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in COUNTRY is [READ OUT] - a lot better 2 - a little better 3 stayed the same 4 - a little worse or 5 - a lot worse”_

From the results of this question a recreate the “sociotropic assessment” variable, identical to that of the previous analysis. I reverse the coding so that again higher values are equated to a better, retrospective assessment (2 = a lot better, -2 = a lot worse).

---

2 Results of the logged IVP are nonetheless, substantively similar to those of the original IVP variable
As in the CSES models, I will also include a series of controls common to comparative models of vote choice and incumbent approval. Again, I control for a series of demographic variables including: gender, education, standard of living, and urban/rural status. I also include a smaller set of politically relevant variables accounting for incumbent party identification, left to right ideology, and employment status. The EES also allows for the theoretically relevant control of exclusive national identity. This has been demonstrated to drive outcomes in political behavior in an EU context (Hooghe & Marks 2004). We may expect these individuals to prioritize national strength or gain. Finally, again I opt for country-level fixed effects in lieu of a random effects, multilevel model.

In the models below, I present the results for testing the interaction between sociotropic assessments and face-to-face interviewing on the respondent’s probability of voting for incumbent parties. The first set of models (5 and 6) are tested within the entire logged sample of incumbent vote probability, while the second set (Models 7 and 8) present a truncated sample, dropping respondents who have no intention of voting for the incumbent party. Like the previous analysis, Models 5 and 7 first present a baseline with the component parts of the main interaction (effectively replicating a standard sociotropic economic voting model) while Models 6 and 8 add the interaction necessary to test H1.

As can be seen in Table 4.2, H1 is supported within the EES sample. The classic finding of the economic voting literature is again replicated, this time in the 2009 wave of the EES. Models 5 and 7 demonstrate that positive, retrospective assessments of the economy are associated with higher probabilities of an incumbent vote. However, in order to effectively evaluate H1, we need to examine the models that add in the interaction between sociotropic assessments and observable, face-to-face interviews.
Table 4.2: Self-Described Probability of Voting for Incumbent Party in the EES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full IVP Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th>Excluding “Not at all Probable” Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>Model 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.124**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociotropic Assessment</td>
<td>0.131**</td>
<td>0.095**</td>
<td>0.071**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-to-F x SA</td>
<td>0.059**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.052*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.029**</td>
<td>-0.030**</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard of Living</td>
<td>0.039**</td>
<td>0.038**</td>
<td>0.023*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.044*</td>
<td>0.044*</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incumbent Party ID</td>
<td>1.059**</td>
<td>1.061**</td>
<td>0.711**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Ideology</td>
<td>-0.009*</td>
<td>-0.009*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0.083*</td>
<td>0.083*</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive National ID</td>
<td>0.288**</td>
<td>0.287**</td>
<td>0.177**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.526**</td>
<td>0.497**</td>
<td>1.336**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6673</td>
<td>6673</td>
<td>3793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Country fixed effects included in all models

As shown in Models 6 and 8, the interaction between face-to-face interviews and sociotropic assessments of the national economy is positive and significant for both the full and truncated sample. This suggests that sociotropic economic voting behavior is stronger amongst face-to-face interviewees. Unlike findings from the CSES sample, we still observe sociotropic assessments having a smaller, but still significant, effect amongst for private respondents. Again,
to fully understand the interactive relationship between the social context of face-to-face interviews and sociotropic economic assessments we need to see the predicted margins of Models 6 and 8 below. As can be seen in Figures 4.3 and 4.4, *H1* is supported in the 9 state, EES sample. In both the full and truncated sample we observe sociotropic economic assessments influencing incumbent support to a greater extent amongst face-to-face respondents.

**Figure 4.3: Predictive Margins from Model 6 (95% CIs)**

**Figure 4.4: Predictive Margins from Model 8 (95% CIs)**
In Figure 4.4, which excludes respondents who have absolutely no intention of voting for the incumbent party, the relationship looks almost identical to Figure 4.2 from the CSES. All specifications from both surveys demonstrate consistent support for $H1$. In the presence of the social pressure of face-to-face scenarios, individuals are much more likely to engage in sociotropic economic voting than they would have been in more private situations. While the above analysis from the CSES and EES demonstrates strong support for $H1$, these surveys fail to ask the questions related to the personal economic assessments necessary to test $H2$. The next section will explore both of these proposed relationships within a survey that allows for an effective test: the 2012 wave of the ANES.

4.7 Privacy and Egocentric Voting in the ANES

This section will largely proceed as the previous two, with a few notable additions. The 2012 wave of the ANES not only offers a great chance to corroborate the previously established support for the relationship between observability and sociotropic behavior, but for the first time, allows for an effective test of the second hypothesis. $H2$ contends that voters in private conditions will be more likely to engage in egocentric economic voting than those who are exposed to social context.

After briefly describing the ANES data, I will again present the construction of key dependent, independent, and control variables. Next, I will apply a series of empirical tests of $H1$ and $H2$. While an initial test will fail to corroborate the findings of the previous two sections, I will demonstrate that this is largely due to the newly introduced multicollinearity between sociotropic and egocentric economic assessments. Next, I will present a series of additional dependent variables that capture variance in economic voting behavior. This provides for a more effective, discriminating test of the theoretical discussion of this dissertation. These new
dependent variables allow for a test to explain why certain individuals engage in sociotropic economic voting, while others do so egocentrically. Results are consistent with the previously stated hypotheses. When Americans are observed, they are more likely to engage in exclusively sociotropic economic voting. When in private, they are more likely to vote egocentrically.

The ANES collected the data of this section from its pre-election study in September of 2012. For the first time in its history, the study supplemented face-to-face interviews with internet responses. Data collection proceeded with separate nationally representative, random samples for each mode. In total, the data contain 65% internet and 35% face-to-face respondents. Outside of the different mode of interview, the survey experience for respondents is identical. As with the CSES and EES data, I create and code the variable “face-to-face” with a value of ‘1’ if the respondent’s responses were collected through face-to-face interview and a value of ‘0’ if responses were obtained over the internet.

The dependent variable of this section is presidential vote intention. The dichotomous variable “incumbent vote intention” or IVI, is coded with a value of ‘1’ if respondents selects an answer of “Barack Obama”, the incumbent candidate, and a value of ‘0’ if the respondent selects any other candidate. The question is only asked to respondents who express some intention to vote in the following election and is asked in the following way:

*Who do you think you will vote for? 1. [Barack Obama] 2. [Mitt Romney] 3. Other Candidate*

The variable IVI has 4,532 responses with 58% of respondents intending to vote for the incumbent and 42% intending to select and alternative candidate. Again, in order to test $H1$, and now $H2$, I need to explore the interactive relationship between the observability of the respondent and their assessment of national and personal economic conditions on IVI. This
amounts to an effective test of sociotropic and egocentric economic voting behavior. To account for sociotropic economic assessments I use the following ANES question:

*Now thinking about the economy in the country as a whole, would you say that over the past year the nation's economy has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse? [Much better or somewhat better? / Much worse or somewhat worse?]*

I recreate the “sociotropic assessment” variable, identical to that of the previous analyses. I reverse the coding so that higher values are equated to a better, retrospective assessment (2 = a lot better, -2 = a lot worse). Unlike the previous studies analyzed in this section, the ANES has a companion question for personal or egocentric economic assessments. This allows me to assess the previously untested second hypothesis. The question in the ANES reads:

*We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that [you/you and your family living here] are better off or worse off than you were a year ago? [Much better or somewhat better? / Much worse or somewhat worse?]*

From this, I create the variable “egocentric assessment”, that mirrors the sociotropic assessment coding. Again higher values are equated to a better, retrospective assessment, this time of the respondent’s personal economic situation. As one would expect, the two economic assessment variables are highly correlated (\(r=.42\)). While a third of respondents hold identical national and personal economic assessments, there is still a large amount of unique variation. Table 4.3 presents the spread of the response across these two variables. The darker shades represent higher cell population.

<p>| Table 4.3: The Correlation Between Sociotropic and Egocentric Economic Assessments |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egocentric Assessment</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociotropic Assessment</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>2,233</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>1,876</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>5,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,816</td>
<td>2,233</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>1,876</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>5,816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The presence of both of the economic assessment variables along with a variable of incumbent vote intention allows for a more ideal test. Specifically, I can create three additional dependent variables that are more appropriate for the research question at hand than the previous interactive approach. The first of these variables, “sociotropic voter” is a dichotomous measure of whether or not the respondent engages in sociotropic economic voting behavior. It is coded with a value of ‘1’ if a respondent meets a series of conditions: the respondent has a positive retrospective evaluation of national economic conditions and intends to vote for the incumbent OR the respondent has a negative retrospective evaluation and intends to vote for an alternative candidate. All other combinations receive a ‘0’ as these respondents are not engaging in sociotropic economic voting behavior. Second, I also create the variable, “egocentric voter” which uses an identical coding process, but for personal economic evaluations.

The construction the sociotropic and egocentric voter variables allow for a more theoretically appropriate test of the direct relationship (not interactive) between social context and these specific voting behaviors. However, this does not necessarily address the multicollinearity problem previously alluded to. Sociotropic and egocentric voting are not mutually exclusive behaviors. Consistent with the general economic voting literature, a vast majority of the ANES respondents (79%) engage in some kind of economic voting behavior. However, 42% of the entire sample engages in both sociotropic and egocentric economic voting.

All of these previously constructed dependent variables fail to account for one of the central questions of this broader project – what drives sociotropic or egocentric behavior when these actions are in conflict? In order to effectively speak to this question, I need to focus on individuals who are exclusively engaging in either sociotropic or egocentric economic voting behavior. As such, I create the variable “Sociotropic to Egocentric”, which takes on three
potential values. This variable is coded with a value of ‘1’ if respondents are engaging in egocentric, but not sociotropic economic voting (22% of the entire sample). Similarly, if the opposite is true, and a respondent is engaging in sociotropic, but not egocentric economic voting the variable is coded with a value of ‘-1’ (14% of the entire sample). All other respondents are coded as ‘0’. This effectively makes a three-point ordinal scale of economic voting behavior from ‘-1’ the most sociotropic to ‘1’ the most egocentric. This variable answers the previously mentioned call for an exploration of conflicting egocentric and sociotropic political behavior in Chapter 2 (Kiewiet and Lewis-Beck 2012). Additionally, as I discussed in the previous chapters, we should expect scenarios in which self and national-interests are at odds to be the best cases to explore the distinct causes of sociotropic and egocentric attitudes and behavior.

In order to test $H1$ and $H2$ in the ANES data I will present five logistic regressions below. Models 10 and 11 attempt to recreate the central analysis within the CSES and EES by first presenting a baseline model with “incumbent vote intention” as the dependent variable and then adding in the interaction between face-to-face and assessments of the economy. The next set of models will explain why some respondents are sociotropic voters (Model 12) and alternatively, why some respondents are egocentric voters (Model 13). Finally, Model 14 will examine the ordinal scale of sociotropic to egocentric behavior through an ordered logistic model.

As in the previous analyses, I address potential confounds with a series of controls including: income, education, gender, age, and incumbent party identification. Potentially unique to the American case and available in the data, I also control for strength of partisan identity. In many ways, this is more theoretically appropriate in Models 12-13. Additionally, I control for non-white racial identity. When assessing sociotropic and egocentric voting behaviors in Models 12 and 13, I control for the alternative (egocentric or sociotropic) voting behavior. Finally, at the
In the context of the American National Election Study (ANES), I include survey weights for the combined internet and face-to-face sample in all analysis.

**Table 4.4: Logistic Regressions from the ANES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incumbent Vote Intention</th>
<th>Sociotropic Voter</th>
<th>Egocentric Voter</th>
<th>Socio-to-Egocentric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 10</td>
<td>Model 11</td>
<td>Model 12</td>
<td>Model 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>0.391**</td>
<td>0.376*</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.641**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.149)</td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociotropic Assessment</td>
<td>1.226**</td>
<td>1.284**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egocentric Assessment</td>
<td>0.174**</td>
<td>0.147*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FtoF X Socio-Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FtoF X Ego-Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.090*</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.054**</td>
<td>-0.054**</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.448**</td>
<td>0.448**</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White Identity</td>
<td>1.077**</td>
<td>1.077**</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
<td>0.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Party ID</td>
<td>4.154**</td>
<td>4.165**</td>
<td>-0.256*</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.221)</td>
<td>(0.109)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party ID</td>
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<td>-0.789**</td>
<td>0.201**</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.327</td>
<td>-0.319</td>
<td>0.614**</td>
<td>0.476**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.262)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
<td>(0.168)</td>
<td>(0.176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egocentric Voter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.218**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociotropic Voter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.216**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.609*</td>
<td>0.599*</td>
<td>-1.455**</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.268)</td>
<td>(0.270)</td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4108</td>
<td>4108</td>
<td>4108</td>
<td>4108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.05,  ** p<0.01
I will now begin the task of unpacking the results presented in Table 4.4. Model 10, the baseline model of incumbent vote intention, demonstrates that both sociotropic and egocentric economic voting behaviors are present in run-up to America’s 2012 presidential election. Additionally, face-to-face respondents were more likely to express a vote intention for President Obama than their online counterparts. Model 11 fails to support the central hypotheses of this section. In the interactive model of incumbent vote intention we can see that both interactions fail to attain statistical significance. However, as previously mentioned, the large amount of overlap between personal and national economic assessments introduces bias that increases the likelihood of a type II error (false negative).

Moving to Models 12 and 13, we see mixed results for theory of this section. Unlike in the CSES and EES samples, it appears that the social context present in face-to-face interviews fails to increase the probability of engaging in sociotropic economic voting behavior. This could be, again, due to the high correlation of national and personal economic assessments - being an egocentric voter is a strong and substantively significant predictor of sociotropic voting behavior.

However, Model 13 demonstrates clear support for $H2$. As indicated by the negative and significant coefficient on the face-to-face variable, respondents are much less likely to engage in egocentric economic voting behavior when subjected to the social pressure of a face-to-face interview. As seen in Figure 4.4, online respondents had a 67% probability of expressing an egocentric economic vote choice, while face-to-face respondents were substantially less likely to engage in this behavior. In the presence of another person, this is essentially reduced to a coin flip, with face-to-face respondents holding a 52% probability of displaying egocentric behavior.
Finally, Model 14 provides the best test of the theory of this chapter. The dependent variable “sociotropic to egocentric” accounts for all of the relevant variance in economic voting behavior with a three-point scale from exclusively sociotropic to exclusively egocentric. Given the structure of this variable, I employ an ordered logit estimator. As can be seen in the negative and significant coefficient for the face-to-face variable, respondents in observable conditions are significantly less likely to engage in egocentric behavior than respondents in private. Figure 4.5 demonstrates the probabilities of exhibiting exclusively sociotropic and exclusively egocentric behavior by interview mode. The middle category is omitted for ease of interpretation (there is no significant difference across face-to-face and interview respondents for this category).
Figure 4.5 provides strong support for both $H1$ and $H2$. When examined together, the observability of face-to-face interviews has the theorized effect on the probability of engaging in sociotropic and egocentric behavior. Face-to-face respondents are 5 percentage points more likely exhibit exclusively sociotropic voting behavior than those who participate in the online version of the survey. Alternatively, observable respondents are 6 percentage points less likely to exhibit exclusively egocentric voting behavior than those who responded in private. Another useful comparison in Figure 4.5 is to observe the behavior of internet respondents in isolation. While these individuals have a 12.6% probability of engaging in exclusively sociotropic economic voting, they exhibit a much larger 22.1% probability of expressing an exclusively egocentric vote intention. Not only do the results from Model 14 show support for the posited hypotheses of this section, but they also challenge the widespread conclusion of sociotropic dominance in economic voting. When individuals are insulated from a social context, they are more likely to engage in uniquely egocentric economic voting behavior.
4.8 Brief Discussion: The Generalizable Effects of Observability

All together, the results from the above analysis show strong support for the effects of observability on egocentric and sociotropic economic voting behavior. When subjected to a face-to-face interview, individuals are much more likely to engage in sociotropic economic voting. This behavior is rare, and at times nonexistent, in more private scenarios. This pattern manifests in three unique surveys across 23 countries. When data allow for a comparison of sociotropic and egocentric economic assessments, the latter demonstrate stronger effects on vote choice when respondents are in private. This raises significant questions about the current paradigm of the economic voting literature.

Given the actual act of voting takes place in private, past research may have seriously overestimated the propensity for sociotropic behavior in this context and wrongly discounted self-interested motivations. Nonetheless, the influence of social contexts can be extremely subtle and enduring. It may be possible to increase the propensity of sociotropic economic voting through various interventions that increase observability surrounding the act of voting. Rich political discussion, dense social networks, and specific media appeals could potentially carry the effects of social pressure from the public sphere into the privacy of a voting booth. Future research can assess the strength, endurance, and bounds to these effects on voting behavior.

The results of this chapter hold clearer implications for my dissertation project. The theory of Chapter 3 is robustly supported. My analysis demonstrates the importance of understanding social context when evaluating egocentric and sociotropic attitudes and behavior. Respondents in the ANES were much more likely to express self-interested vote intentions in private than they were in public. I have also shown that face-to-face interviewers significantly increased the influence of sociotropic economic assessments on incumbent evaluations across 22
countries in the CSES and EES. The masses seem to behave much like the patriotic millionaires from the first chapter. We evaluate incumbents and express vote intentions that would benefit society at large when others are around, but are more likely to do so in our own best interest when in private.

Economic voting makes for an appropriate first empirical test of my theory for a few reasons. First, previous research has shown support for both sociotropic and egocentric behavior in this area, with the former holding a more robust empirical record. Second, economic voting is a fundamental aspect of the political process in any democratic country. As such, my contribution can help explain a wide range of political attitudes and behaviors around the world. More broadly, the strengths of this chapter’s analysis lie in external validity or generalizability. While there may be some concerns in the selection effects of interview mode in this chapter, the following empirical analyses focuses on causal identification of observability’s effects.

I have demonstrated that observability has consistent and far-reaching effects of increasing sociotropic behavior. Ignoring social context will lead to different conclusions about mass political economy. On the smaller scale of an American sample, I was able to show that egocentric behavior is much more likely to be expressed in private. The next chapter hopes to complement these strengths by continuing the exploration of the contextual drivers of egocentrism. Chapter 5 shows the internal validity of my theory by demonstrating how Germans update their attitudes toward the welfare state in self-interested ways when in private, but largely fail to do so in public. Here, I leverage a largely experimental change in interview mode, within individuals over time, to demonstrate how observability curbs egocentric attitudes in political economy.
Chapter V: Does this Opinion Make Me Look Selfish? How Observability Suppresses Egocentric Attitudes Toward the Welfare State

Abstract: Why do some individuals want the state to take greater responsibility for welfare than others? Past research has presented mixed results for the causal power of self-interest in shaping attitudes toward social policy. I apply my theory of observability and argue that the inconsistent influence of egocentrism can be explained by variation in public and private contexts. I employ cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis with data from the German Socio-Economic Panel to demonstrate that egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state are more prevalent in private than public. These data provide a unique opportunity to evaluate these opinions within individuals, over time. I demonstrate that increased risk between survey waves is associated with an egocentric updating of welfare attitudes. Respondents whose changing life scenarios increase the likelihood of benefiting from job provision, unemployment compensation, healthcare, and care for the elderly increase the amount of responsibility they believe the state should take for the relevant policy. However, these self-interested updates only occur in private. The added presence of an interviewer renders egocentrism an ineffective predictor of welfare state attitudes.
5.1 Introduction: Good News, Bad News, the State, and You

Imagine learning some bad news. Your doctor informs you that you are in failing health at a recent checkup. Would this change the way you think about healthcare? Would you be more likely to think that the government should be responsible for providing care for those in need? What if you were hit with a large, unforeseen expense in your life and found yourself living paycheck to paycheck? Would you be more likely to want the state to take responsibility for the unemployed or creating better jobs?

Alternatively, imagine hearing some good news. The performance of an investment has made it so you no longer have to worry about your financial security in old age. Might you be less likely to want the state, and your tax dollars, to be responsible for the elderly? If you answered yes to any of these questions, how likely would you be to tell a stranger your thought process? What would you think of someone who only supported social policies from which they benefited?

The above hypotheticals illustrate the logic behind the main argument of this chapter. While opinions toward the welfare state have diverse origins, times of need and abundance can cause us to update how much we support specific social programs in self-interested ways. While this contention has been tested before, a mixed empirical record fails to produce a consensus. I apply my theory of observability to argue that egocentric attitudes about state responsibility for jobs, unemployment, healthcare, and care for the elderly should be more readily articulated in private than in public.

This chapter proceeds in the following way. First, I will argue why my theory articulated in Chapter 3 can rectify inconsistencies in the welfare state literature. Second, I will claim that the persistent endogeneity critique of this work requires a longitudinal approach to effectively
identify causal changes in attitudes toward social policy. Third, I will describe the data I will employ from the 1997 and 2002 waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) and explain why this source is appropriate to test my theory in both cross-sectional (separate analysis in each wave) and longitudinal (analysis of the change between waves) models. Finally, I will present results that demonstrate robust support for my theory. Respondents are consistently more likely to demonstrate egocentric opinions of the welfare state in private than they are in public. Furthermore, exposure to various risks does not cause respondents to change their attitudes toward social policy at large, but only to specific areas from which they benefit. Examining changes to exposure to economic risk and survey mode within respondents (over time) only increases the strength of this relationship.

5.2 Egocentric Attitudes Toward the Welfare State

One of the most persistent critiques leveled against egocentric theories of political behavior is that human beings simply lack the capacity to understand how politics influences their lives in meaningful ways. However, the welfare state and specific social policies present clear and identifiable distributional consequences that should allow self-interest to explain some variation in attitudes. Nonetheless, the empirical record in this area is, again, frustratingly muddled. In this section I will first describe the mixed record of egocentric theories of attitudes toward the welfare state. Second, I will argue why my theory of observability is especially apt to rectify inconsistencies in these findings. Specifically, I contend that individuals should be less likely to articulate egocentric attitudes toward relevant social policies when in observable contexts. Finally, I will claim that the persistent endogeneity critique of this literature requires a longitudinal approach to effectively identify causal changes in attitudes toward the welfare state.
Like most literatures in political economy, explanations of attitudes and behavior toward the welfare state have foundations in materialist and self-interested theory. Originating from a Marxist framework of class behavior, the Meltzer-Richard (1981) model of redistribution began to clarify expectations of individual attitudes toward the welfare state. This work divided citizens into the donor (those who fund social programs through tax dollars) and transfer (those who receive benefits from social programs) classes (Alber 1995). The logic of this literature is simple. Lower income individuals, older individuals, etc. rely on the services of the welfare state and will thus be more likely to support welfare policies, or to see the provision of social services as the responsibility of the state (Edlund 1999). Alternatively, those who do not rely on these services will be less likely to support them or want their tax dollars going to fund these programs (Gelissen 2002).

However, for every finding of employment status, skills, risk of layoff, or other self-interest variables driving welfare state attitudes (Alesina and La Ferrara 2005, Jaeger 2006, Iversen and Soskice 2001, Rehm 2011), there seem to be others rebutting these results (Lynch and Myrskyla 2009, Mughan 2007, Taylor-Gooby 2001). Problems with measurement, spuriousness, and a simple lack of explanatory power due to low stakes or apathy toward policy outcomes have led many to dismiss egocentric theories of welfare state attitudes (Sears & Funk 1990, 1991, Fong 2001). The state of this literature is well summarized in a recent review, “in terms of the empirical performance of material approaches, conventional wisdom has it that the record is – at best – mixed. In fact, the proposition that self-interest meaningfully shapes attitudes is explicitly rejected by prominent contributions, some have even refuted it as a myth” (Rehm 2016, 16). In this respect, the welfare state literature is representative of the broader literature in mass political economy discussed in Chapter 2.
5.3 Observability and Welfare Policy

I claim that the variation in observability across diverse survey collection modes can help explain the mixed findings of egocentric welfare policy attitudes. Specifically, I expect self-interest to be active when individuals are articulating attitudes about social policy in private and to explain less variation in support for the welfare state when we interact with other human beings. This is a consistent implication of the central theory of my dissertation articulated in Chapter 3. In addition to driving variation in sociotropic and egocentric economic voting behavior, observability and social contexts should diminish the likelihood of using self-interest to determine attitudes to specific welfare policies.

Findings in evolutionary psychology help explain why self-interested attitudes toward the welfare state should be prevalent in private and rare in public. As I previously established, the decreasing stock of egocentric explanations in mass political economy has been met with a matching increase in support of sociotropic theory (Kumlin 2004). While sociotropic behavior need not be altruistic, the concept of altruism is an important motivation for understanding departures from egocentric behavior and attitudes. Evolutionary biologists and psychologists have long noted reciprocal altruism as an important cause of human behavior (Trivers 1971, Axelrod 1981). Rewards and punishments need not be the only cause of altruistic actions in humans and other animals, but a strong empirical record demonstrates social context to drive a large amount of other-regarding behavior (Hauser et al. 2009).

Humans are less likely to pursue selfish gains in the presence of others. In examining the effects of communication on distributional games Andreoni and Rao note, “communication appears to be a powerful social cue in eliciting unselfish behavior … selfishness typically predominates and the human capacity for altruism is activated through social cues” (2011, 519).
Indeed, there is a rich literature in neuropsychology and neuroeconomics noting the activation of brain regions related to empathic concerns in social contexts (De Vignemont, & Singer 2006, Moll et al, 2002). While the presence of others causing us to act more empathetically and altruistically might not necessarily cause a subsequent decrease in egocentric behavior, there are additional reasons to expect this to be the case.

A combination of a stigma around selfishness and the prospect of social sanctioning will cause individuals in public to be less likely than individuals in private to articulate egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state. The stigma around self-interested behavior is well established by Weeden and Kurzban (2014), who note the propensity of humans to obscure their own egocentric behavior and attitudes. Goren et al. articulate a potential bias in existing survey research claiming, “put simply, given the sociotropic nature of political issues, values that prioritize socially focused goals should be expressed more readily through policy opinions than egocentric values that prioritize self-advancement and self-gratification” (2016, 983). The authors echo a previously articulated sentiment that the expression of self-interest is likely to be heavily influenced by context (Rehm 2016).

Additionally, the distributional nature of welfare policies presents a dynamic for an ingrained fear of social sanctioning associated with reciprocal altruism (Trivers 1971, Frank 1987). If I articulate a desire for the state to take responsibility for a social program that benefits myself in the presence of others, I may worry that they will think less of me. They may not stand to benefit from this program and thus have to fund my gains with their tax dollars. As such, I might be less likely to articulate this egocentric attitude in the presence of others than I would in private. Again, these concerns need not manifest them in conscious thought in order to shape human behavior.
While this discussion of the mechanism behind observability often sounds agentic and strategic, it does not need to be. As I argued in detail within Chapter 3, there is good reason to understand the human mind as being made up of multiple adaptive parts or modules (Fodor 1985). Some of these self-interested parts of our minds will hone in on the material benefits we can gain from social policy. Alternative, other-oriented parts of our minds will consider the broader consequences for society. These could activate concern for those worse off, or unease for taking more than our own fair share from society.

Along these lines, Bowles and Gintis (2000) have argued that humans are actually a “Homo Reciprocan” species. As I have previously argued, and demonstrated with evidence from existing research, we humans regularly increase sociotropic behavior, and decrease egocentric ones, in public even in the absence of strategic incentives. Proponents of weak reciprocity contend that norm enforcement and delayed personal benefit are not enough to explain the effects of observability or human behavior at large. As with my previous discussions, both of these mechanisms may be present and active in this specific case. This allows me to formally state the baseline hypothesis of this chapter. I will articulate a series of specific implications for individual policy attitudes from this hypothesis below.

\[ H_{\text{baseline}}: \text{Individuals in public contexts will be less likely to express egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state than those in private.} \]

In order to effectively test this hypothesis I must overcome the methodological issues most previous work in this literature has suffered at the hands of cross-sectional data. Adding to the confusion of the contradictory findings above is the complicated relationship egocentric variables often have with concepts like partisanship and ideology. Many have argued that economic characteristics and evaluations do not hold causal power in explaining attitudes and behavior but are rather the product of partisan biases (Anderson et al. 2004, Evans & Pickup
The partisanship challenge to self-interest is simply a small example of the larger issue with this literature.

Given the simultaneity of survey questions, any causal relationship that is not grounded in unchanging demographic characteristics is subject to the endogeneity critique. When we predict attitudes with other attitudes we have little recourse to identify the directionality of the relationship, let alone causality. We can always doubt the direction of the causal arrow or influence of unmeasured heterogeneity driving correlation in cross sectional survey data. As such, we must evaluate changes over time in longitudinal/panel data to enhance causal identification of these kinds of relationships. Jaeger (2006) has made this specific point in regards toward welfare state attitudes, noting the introduction of panel data and assessing change within respondents yields higher quality analysis. I will now move to presentation of my research design, data, and methods.

5.4 SOEP Data

This section will describe my strategy for testing the main hypothesis of the previous section. First, I will describe the data I will employ from the 1997 and 2002 waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), and explain why this source is appropriate. Second, I will detail a set of dependent variables that represent respondent attitudes toward various aspects of the welfare state including: jobs provision, healthcare, unemployment compensation, and care for the elderly. Here I will also present a set of independent variables that capture self-interest related to each of these specific aspects of the welfare state. Third, I will present the methodology of how I will test my theory in both cross-sectional (separate analysis in each wave) and longitudinal (analysis of the change between waves) manners. Finally, I will articulate
a discriminating test that will increase confidence in the mechanism I have articulated and
decrease worries about spuriousness or unobserved artifacts in the SOEP data.

The data come from the 1997 and 2002 waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel
(SOEP). The SOEP is a representative longitudinal study of German households, administered
by the German Institute for Economic Research, DIW Berlin. Germany provides a great case for
testing attitudes toward the welfare state. In the foundational *Three Worlds of Welfare
Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen identifies Germany as the “ideal-typical” representative of the
“conservative” welfare regime common in continental Europe (1990, 222). Flanked by the US
and Sweden as ideal representatives of the liberal and socialist regimes respectively, evaluating
attitudes in the German case allows us not only to make inferences about corporatist welfare
regimes, but to also make more general inferences about the other worlds of welfare capitalism.

These data have a set of necessary characteristics. First, both waves contain a limited, but
appropriate, set of questions related to relevant outcome and explanatory variables including:
state responsibility for jobs, healthcare, the elderly, and unemployed, party support and strength,
and respondent’s health, financial situation and other applicable variables. Second, the waves
employ a series of unique observable and private survey modes. Most importantly for the
purposes of testing my theory, the SOEP experimented with introducing new survey modes and
switching respondents across existing modes between the 1997 and 2002 waves (Schräpler et al.
2006). This provides an ideal scenario for testing the effects of observability. Table 1 presents
the interview modes employed by the SOEP. I coded respondents’ wave interview mode as
“public” if they took the SOEP with an interviewer present and “private” if there was never a
SOEP interviewer involved in that wave’s collection.
Table 5.1: Survey Instrument Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Instrument</th>
<th>Coded As</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>Dropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Interview</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Questionnaire with Interviewer</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Questionnaire without Interviewer</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral and Written Interview</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written By Mail</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The breakdown of public/private interview method by number of respondents who appear in both waves can be found below in Table 2. Both instruments of Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) and Written Questionnaire with Interviewer are coded as public. In these modes the SOEP representative conducts a face-to-face interview with the respondent and records their responses using a computer or pen and paper (Schräpler et al. 2006).

Table 5.2: Interview Mode By Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>3711</td>
<td>3904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5371</td>
<td>5242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,146</td>
<td>9,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above data I can create a change variable to account for respondents that move from one survey mode to another. The variable “Δ public” contains values of -1 (10.5% of respondents which move from public to private survey modes across the waves), 0 (79.6% of respondents who stay in the same survey mode), and 1 (9.9% of respondents who move from private to public). This variable will be critically important for the longitudinal analysis below.

5.5 Dependent Variables: State Responsibility for Various Social Policies

Next, I develop a series of dependent variables from the following question about state responsibility for social services. “At present a multitude of social services are provided not only by the state but also by private free-market enterprises, organizations, associations, or private citizens. What is your opinion on this? Who should be responsible for the following areas: A. job
creation measures, B. financial security in case of unemployment, C. care and help for the sick, D. care and help for the aged, and E. caring for school children. Respondents are given five choices which I code from values of 1=only private forces, 2=mostly private forces, 3= state and private forces, 4=mostly the state, 5=only the state. From this I develop the following dependent variables for both the 1997 and 2002 waves:

“state jobs responsibility”, “state unemployment responsibility”, “state health care responsibility”, “state elderly responsibility”, “state school responsibility”

State responsibility for social policy is regularly used to assess attitudes toward the welfare state (Wendt et al. 2009, Jaeger 2006, Hacker 2004, Andress and Heien 2001). Roosma et al. (2014) have done rigorous analysis to demonstrate that this question captures a unique attitude toward the welfare state that is independent of an assessment of effectiveness. According to this analysis, these dependent variables account for how much respondents believe the state should provide social services, rather than a measure of how they think the government is performing while providing welfare programs. This result is important to test my theory of observability on egocentric attitudes, which should have implications for the former, but not necessarily the latter.

Additionally, given that all of these variables appear in both waves I am able to generate a change score variable for each of these. The values now run from -4 to 4 with positive values representing an increase in the amount of responsibility the state should have over these issues, negative values representing a decrease, and 0 representing no change. From this I create the following dependent variables for the longitudinal analysis:

“Δ state jobs responsibility”, “Δ state unemployment responsibility”, “Δ state health care responsibility”, “Δ state elderly responsibility”, “Δ state school responsibility”
5.6 Egocentric Variables and Interactive Hypotheses

Next, I identify a series of independent variables that allow for an assessment of self-interested attitudes toward the welfare state. Eventually, I will interact these with survey mode and expect stronger relationships in private contexts. The literature across various social policies identifies exposure to risk as the best indicator for testing egocentric theories of welfare attitudes (Rehm 2016, Jaeger 2006, Hacker 2004). My task here is to identify variables that capture which respondents would be most likely to benefit from specific aspects of the welfare state. As individuals are more exposed to specific risks in their lives, I expect them to desire the state to take more responsibility for relevant social programs. Alternatively, as respondents’ scenarios improve in specific areas, they will be less likely to want the state to take responsibility for relevant social policy, as they are less likely to see these benefits. These baseline egocentric expectations are first presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Expected Sign</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security if Unemployed</td>
<td>$\rightarrow$</td>
<td>State Jobs Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Worries</td>
<td>$+$</td>
<td>State Jobs Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security if Unemployed</td>
<td>$\rightarrow$</td>
<td>State Unemployment Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Worries</td>
<td>$+$</td>
<td>State Unemployment Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security in Old Age</td>
<td>$\rightarrow$</td>
<td>State Elderly Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Health Status</td>
<td>$+$</td>
<td>State Healthcare Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I start by identifying variables that would account for respondents who are more exposed to labor market risks and thus more likely to have an egocentric desire for the state to provide
employment and compensate those who lose their jobs. Below, I create the “financial security if unemployed” and “financial worries” as two variables that should each activate self-interested attitudes toward both “state jobs responsibility”, “state unemployment responsibility.”

These two variables allow for me to test specific versions of the baseline hypothesis of this chapter specified below. First, I create the variable “financial security when unemployed” from the SOEP question, “how financially secure are you in the following scenarios: when unemployed?” “Financial security when unemployed” is coded to have values of 1=bad, 2=poor, 3=satisfactory, 4=good, 5= very good.

Next, “financial worries” is derived from the following question in the SOEP. “What about the following areas: Do they worry you? Your own financial situation.” I code this variable with values of 1= not worried, 2=slightly worried, and 3=very worried. This variable has been employed by Hacker et al. (2013) to demonstrate egocentric attitudes toward the welfare state during the Great Recession. Below, I present hypotheses that essentially take the self-interested expectations from previous work (Hacker et al. 2013, Rehm 2011, Gelissen 2002), and interact them with survey mode. I expect egocentrism to be more active in private than public.

\(H_1: \) Individuals who express high amounts of financial security at the prospect of being unemployed will be less likely to want the state to take responsibility for the unemployed and providing jobs than those who express low amounts. This relationship will be stronger for private survey respondents than public survey respondents.

\(H_2: \) Individuals who are worried about their financial situations will be more likely to want the state to take responsibility for the unemployed and providing jobs than those who are not. This relationship will be stronger for private survey respondents than public survey respondents.

Next, since the questions that I use to create these variables are present in both the 1997 and 2002 waves of the SOEP, I can generate change score variables to allow for a better test of the causal effects of self-interest. I take the 1997 responses for “financial worries” and subtract them from respondents 2002 responses. This creates the variable “\( \Delta \) financial worries” with
values from -2 to 2. Like the previous change variables, positive values represent an increase in financial worries, negative values represent a decrease, and 0 accounts for no change. Similarly, I create “Δ financial security when unemployed” by the same process. Here the variable runs from -4 to 4 with positive (negative) representing increased (decreased) financial security over time, and 0 representing no change.

Now I can test how increasing “Δ financial worries” over time are associated with changing attitudes toward state responsibility for jobs and the unemployed. Additionally, I can corroborate this finding to see if decreasing “Δ financial security when unemployed” works in the same way. This approach, similar to that of Jaeger (2006), is able to provide better causal identification than the previous cross-sectional models and accounts for any constant and unmeasured heterogeneity. I can interact these variables with “Δ public” to test the baseline hypothesis of this chapter and respond to concerns related to spuriousness and endogeneity in survey mode selection. These are formally stated below:

\[ H_{1} \Delta: \text{As individuals' financial security at the prospect of being unemployed increases over time, they will be more likely to decrease the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for the unemployed and the provision of jobs. This relationship will be strongest for survey respondents who move from public to private survey modes.} \]

\[ H_{2} \Delta: \text{As individuals’ financial worries increase over time, they will be more likely to increase the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for the unemployed and the provision of jobs. This relationship will be strongest for survey respondents who move from public to private survey modes.} \]

Next, I create a variable that will account for egocentric attitudes toward state responsibility for the elderly. Like the previous variable “financial security when unemployed,” I now create “financial security in old age.” This is derived from the SOEP question, “how financially secure are you in the following scenarios: Old Age?” “Financial security when
unemployed” is coded to have values of 1=bad, 2=poor, 3=satisfactory, 4=good, 5= very good. I posit a specific hypothesis for this variable below.

\[ H_3: \text{Individuals who express high amounts of financial security at the prospect of old age will be less likely to want the state to take responsibility for the elderly than those who express low amounts. This relationship will be stronger for private survey respondents than public survey respondents.} \]

Moving on, I generate “Δ financial security in old age” by subtracting 1997 from 2002 responses. This variable runs from -4 to 4 with positive (negative) representing increased (decreased) financial security over time, and 0 representing no change.

\[ H_{3d}: \text{As individuals’ financial security at the prospect of old age increases over time, they will be more likely to decrease the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for the elderly. This relationship will be strongest for survey respondents who move from public to private survey modes.} \]

Finally, I can move to creating a variable to test egocentric attitudes toward healthcare. The SOEP asks the following question: “How would you describe your health at present” from which I create the variable “poor health status” with values of 1=very good, 2=good, 3=satisfactory, 4=poor, and 5=very poor. Baseline egocentric theories would expect individuals with poorer health to want the state to take greater responsibility for healthcare (Wendt et al. 2009, Hacker 2004). I expect this relationship to be stronger amongst private respondents compared to public respondents.

\[ H_4: \text{Individuals in poor health will be more likely to want the state to take responsibility for healthcare than those in good health. This relationship will be stronger for private survey respondents than public survey respondents.} \]

As with previous variables, I am able to account for changes in health between waves. The variable “Δ deteriorating health status” subtracts a respondent’s 1997 health status from their 2002 status with possible values from -4 to 4 with positive (negative) representing
deteriorating (improving) health over time, and 0 representing no change. From this I formally state the following hypothesis.

\( H_4 \): As individuals’ health deteriorates over time, they will be more likely to increase the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for the healthcare. This relationship will be strongest for survey respondents who move from public to private survey modes.

While the SOEP offers quality data for the creation of the above variables, controlling for politically relevant confounds is more difficult. I am able to control for age (derived from birth year), gender (derived from a question asking for the respondent’s sex), and whether or not the respondent feels close to a political party in the governing coalition. The latter is created from a question asking, “Many people in Germany are inclined to a certain political party, although from time to time they vote for another political party. What about you: Are you inclined--generally speaking--to a particular party?” I am also able to create the change variable “\( \Delta \) close to governing party.” Change variables for age and gender are unnecessary as these remain constant across waves in the SOEP sample and, as with all other constant heterogeneity, are controlled for by examining the difference across waves.

5.7 Methodology: Cross-sectional and Change Score, Panel Models

The next two sections will detail results that largely support the above hypotheses. I will employ two empirical strategies. First, I will test the cross-sectional hypotheses in both the 1997 and 2002 waves of the SOEP by estimating ordinary least squares regression models. Next, I will repeat this analysis using change score models. This approach increases causal identification by measuring the change in all dependent and independent variables between waves rather than the levels of individual attitudes or characteristics. While there may be many unobserved causes of an individual’s baseline support of the welfare state, I am able to hold many of these constant by analyzing the changes in these attitudes over time. Similarly, omitted variables could bias results
if there are unobserved and systematic causes of exposure to risk in all types of analysis, these concerns are mitigated in change models.

Simulation analysis demonstrates that change score models are superior to lag alternatives in two-wave panel data structures (Johnson 2005). Change score models are also demonstrated to produce more reliable results when assessing the effects of transition for individuals and within households (Johnson and Wu 2002). While potentially less efficient, these fixed effects models are almost always preferable to alternatives due to the lack of bias and control for unmeasured confounds (Allison 2009). Indeed, the most common justification for alternative strategies is a lack of relevant data or survey irregularity at multiple time points (Perry 2017). As summarized by Schleifer and Chaves, “Discarding the between-person variation has the hugely attractive feature of allowing each individual to act as a statistical control for himself or herself, thereby effectively controlling for all time-invariant correlates, including those that are unobserved” (2017, 135). Luckily, the SOEP provides identical question wording across waves and provides a rare opportunity to employ this method.

\[
State \, Responsibility \, for \, Jobs = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Financial Worries}(FW) + \beta_2 \text{Public} + \beta_3 FW \times Public + \varepsilon
\]

Examining the sign and significance of the interaction term and its components provides us some useful information. Specifically, the coefficient for the egocentric risk variable, financial worries, tells us if there is a significant predictor of state responsibility amongst respondents in private contexts (a value of 0 for the dichotomous public variable). However, we must plot predicted values to accurately assess the relevant hypothesis. In this case, the interactive relationship should look like the figure below.
Not all the egocentric risk variables are expected to have positive relationships with their relevant state responsibility dependent variables. See Table 5.3 above for a summary of predictions. The next section tests, and presents results from these predictions in both the 1997 and 2002 waves of the SOEP.

5.8 Cross-Sectional Results

In this section I will present and discuss the cross-sectional tests of the hypotheses presented above. For ease of interpretation I have organized both the cross-sectional and change score models in the same tables but will discuss the substantive interpretation of the latter in the next section. I will start with the models predicting state responsibility for jobs and unemployment, which can be found in the table below.
### Table 5.4: Regression Results for Hypotheses 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Jobs Responsibility</th>
<th>State Jobs Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1 1997</td>
<td>Model 2 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security when unemployed</td>
<td>-0.060* (0.016)</td>
<td>-0.085* (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>0.132* (0.056)</td>
<td>-0.085 (0.062)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSWU X public</td>
<td>-0.020 (0.021)</td>
<td>0.034 (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial worries X Public</td>
<td>-0.039 (0.029)</td>
<td>-0.105* (0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.001 (0.001)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.151* (0.021)</td>
<td>0.159* (0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to governing party</td>
<td>-0.193* (0.032)</td>
<td>-0.125* (0.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.310* (0.063)</td>
<td>3.463* (0.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.024 0.019</td>
<td>0.003 0.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6436 6167 4933</td>
<td>8993 8974 8451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can interpret the coefficients of the egocentric risk variables as the relationship they have with how much responsibility the state should take for jobs. In all of the cross-sectional models these variables are signed in the correct direction and significant. From this we can conclude that, amongst private respondents, those who report high levels of financial security at the prospect of unemployment want the state to take less responsibility for job creation than those who report low levels of financial security. Alternatively, private respondents who are very worried about their finances want the state to take more responsibility for job creation than private respondents who are not worried. As can be seen in the figure below, the interactive nature of the hypotheses receives mixed support.
The figure above demonstrates mixed support for $H_1$. All four lines of predicted values again demonstrate that self-interest is active. However, within the 1997 wave, the relationship for private respondents is no stronger than that for public respondents. The results from the 2002 wave do support $H_1$. While not drastically different, the slope of this egocentric relationship is higher amongst private respondents. The results for self-interested attitudes toward job provision from financially worried respondents are more promising.
The above figure shows results consistent with H$_2$. This is especially true for the 2002 wave of the SOEP. Respondents who are very worried about their own financial situation want the state to take significantly more responsibility for jobs when they are in private. Amongst respondents who are not worried about their finances, private respondents desire the state to take less responsibility than public respondents. Next, we can observe the implications of these hypotheses on attitudes toward care for the unemployed. These models are identical to the structure presented above, and can be found in the table below.

**Table 5.5: Regression Results for Hypotheses 3 and 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Unemployment Responsibility</th>
<th>State Unemployment Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 7 1997</td>
<td>Model 8 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security when unemployed</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>0.118*</td>
<td>0.167*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSWU X Public</td>
<td>-0.051*</td>
<td>-0.067*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial worries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial worries X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.002*</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.063*</td>
<td>0.051*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to governing party</td>
<td>-0.125*</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.834*</td>
<td>3.910*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R$^2$</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6432</td>
<td>6163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can again interpret the coefficients of the egocentric risk variables as representing the predictive capacity amongst private respondents. These variables are signed in the correct
direction and significant for the of the four unemployment responsibility models. Turning to the visual representation of these relationship we see that while $H_1$ fails to be supported there is support for $H_2$ in the 2002 wave of the SOEP. The figure below presents the interactive predicted values of state responsibility for the unemployed between survey mode and financial security. These results not only fail to support $H_1$, but are actually significant in the opposite direction. Here, it appears that self-interested attitudes are more prevalent in the public survey modes. As I will demonstrate in the next section, these relationships conform to expectations once individual heterogeneity is controlled for in change models.

**Figure 5.4: Financial Security if Unemployed & State Responsibility for the Unemployed**

Next, we can observe the lack of a distinguishable difference between public and private respondents in the 1997 wave of the SOEP, but support for $H_2$ amongst respondents in 2002. The predicted values of the latter model reveal that worries about personal financial situations increase the responsibility respondents believe the state should take for the unemployed for both public and private respondents. However, this relationship is slightly stronger amongst private respondents.
Table 5.6: Regression Results for Hypotheses 5 and 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Elderly Responsibility</th>
<th>State Healthcare Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 13 1997</td>
<td>Model 14 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security when elderly</td>
<td>-0.047* (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.050* (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>0.018 (0.044)</td>
<td>-0.016 (0.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSWE X public</td>
<td>0.021 (0.016)</td>
<td>0.023 (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health</td>
<td>0.002* (0.001)</td>
<td>0.002* (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.016)</td>
<td>-0.021 (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to governing party</td>
<td>-0.115* (0.023)</td>
<td>-0.016 (0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.284* (0.045)</td>
<td>3.373* (0.045)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>8960</td>
<td>8974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now we can move to testing the egocentric relationships toward state responsibility for healthcare and the elderly. Self-interest would expect those who express financial security in old age to want the state to take less responsibility for care of the elderly and those in poor health to want the state to take greater responsibility for healthcare. I again expect these relationships to be stronger amongst private respondents. The results from these cross-sectional tests can be found in the Table 5.6 above.

As can be seen from the component terms, private respondents demonstrate self-interested attitudes toward state responsibility for the elderly and healthcare across both waves of the SOEP. Turning to visual interpretation of predicted values, we find support for H₃ and H₄ for both waves. The figure below presents the interactive relationships for predicting how much responsibility respondents believe the state should take for the elderly.

**Figure 5.6: Financial Security in Old age & State Responsibility for the Elderly**

The relationships in both waves are very similar. Respondents who describe their financial security in old age as “very poor” (values of 1) collectively desire the state to take the highest amounts of responsibility for the elderly across survey mode. However, we can see a self-interested decrease in this desire amongst private respondents as they are more financially
secure in old age. Private respondents who report “very good” (values of 5) financial security in old age want the state to take significantly lower amounts of responsibility for the elderly. The figure below demonstrates similar results for self-interested attitudes toward healthcare.

Figure 5.7: Health Problems & State Responsibility for Healthcare

Again, respondents who stand to benefit most, those in the poorest health, desire the state to take the highest levels of responsibility for healthcare, regardless of survey mode. However, we see a stronger self-interested relationship amongst private respondents when comparing those in the best health. Private respondents in the best health desire the state to take significantly less responsibility for healthcare than public respondents. The results for healthcare and elderly welfare show that respondents who stand to benefit the least from these programs want the state to take the least responsibility for these policy areas. This is especially true amongst respondents who articulated these attitudes in private. The table below summarizes the results from all of the cross-sectional analysis.
Table 5.7: Support for Hypotheses (Stronger Relationship in Private than in Public)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security if Unemployed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>State Jobs Responsibility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Worries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>State Jobs Responsibility</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security if Unemployed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>State Unemployment Responsibility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Worries</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>State Unemployment Responsibility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Security in Old Age</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>State Elderly Responsibility</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Health Status</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>State Healthcare Responsibility</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this section, I tested six unique expectations of my theory in two waves of the SOEP. Eight of these twelve cross-sectional tests supported my hypotheses. Self-interested attitudes toward the welfare state are prevalent amongst Germans. These egocentric opinions are often, but not universally, more likely to be articulated in private than they are in public. While these results are promising, they are subject to a series of methodological critiques. Analysis of cross-sectional survey data can be subject to omitted variable bias, selection issues, and simultaneity. As articulated above, examining change scores of variables can address or mitigate these concerns (Schleifer and Chaves 2017, Johnson 2005). The next section presents the results from a series of change models.

5.9 Change Model Results

Why do some people want the state to take greater responsibility for various social programs than others? Many of the answers to this question are constant over time and may not easily measured in a survey. By focusing on the change individuals have in these attitudes over time, we are able to hold all of this unchanging, individual heterogeneity constant (Allison 2009). Intuitively, this offers a better test of the theory than the previous section. In this analysis we can see if changing exposure to risk is met with updated attitudes toward the welfare state.
For example, if a respondent’s health deteriorates between 1997 and 2002, do they increase the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for healthcare? For my purposes, are they more likely to do this when they move to private survey contexts than when they move to public? The supporting results below offer an effective response to concerns about immeasurable bias in survey mode selection.

The models discussed in this section can be found next to their cross-sectional corollaries above represented by the delta sign ($\Delta$). As with the interpretation of the cross-sectional models, we can glean some information from the sign and significance of the interaction and component terms. However, the best summary of information again comes from a visualization of predicted values from these models. The first of which, describing the relationship between $\Delta$ public and $\Delta$ financial security when unemployed can be seen below.

**Figure 5.8: Predicted Values from Model 3 (95% CIs)**

The figure above conforms to the expectations of $H_{1A}$ and is precisely illustrative of this chapter’s story. First, examine the solid line, which represents respondents who have changed
from a public to private survey mode. We see strong egocentric behavior under this condition of increased privacy. Private respondents who report much worse financial security at the prospect of being unemployed are predicted to significantly increase the amount of responsibility they think the state should take for job creation between waves. Additionally, private respondents whose financial situation drastically improves between 1997 and 2002 believe the state should take less significantly responsibility for job creation. The min to max change of this variable yields a .71 decrease in the dependent variable. While this seems substantively small, it is nearly a standard deviation (1.04) decrease in support for the state responsibility for job creation.

Next, examine the dashed line representing respondents who moved from private to public survey modes. I expect this increased observability to decrease egocentric behavior, and indeed, there is no self-interested relationship amongst these respondents. The predicted values amongst respondents in this condition yield a flat line at zero. This suggests respondents subject to increased observability do not update their attitudes toward the state responsibility for jobs regardless of changes to their financial security. Those who have drastically decreased financial security behave the same as those who have drastically improved security in the presence of an interviewer. Both of these respondents fail to update their attitudes toward the welfare state in self-interested ways.

All of this points toward robust support for $H_{1\Delta}$ and the baseline expectations of this chapter: People update their attitudes toward the welfare state in self-interested ways in private, but fail to do so in public. Next, we can evaluate $H_{2\Delta}$ to see if changes in worries about personal finances between waves cause individuals to update their attitudes toward job creation.
The figure above presents predicted values from model 6. The relationships illustrated show clear and robust support for $H_2\Delta$. Respondents who change to private survey modes again demonstrate egocentric updating in their attitudes toward the welfare state. Private respondent who are much more (less) worried about their personal financial situations over time increase (decrease) the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for job provision. No such relationship exists amongst respondents in more public contexts. The introduction of an interviewer causes respondents to fail to change their views about the welfare state in the presence of new costs or benefits. Next, I corroborate these findings by testing these variables’ effects on changes to state responsibility for the unemployed.
As the above figures demonstrate, both $H_1\Delta$ and $H_2\Delta$ are supported in models 9 and 12. The highest and lowest levels of both change scores are significantly distinct from zero amongst respondents who have moved to more private survey contexts. This is not the case amongst those who have moved to a public interview. Essentially, these figures show that those who are more (less) subject to the risk of unemployment between waves increase (decrease) the amount of responsibility they think the state should take for caring for the unemployed. Again, this relationship exists in private, but not public contexts. Finally, we can evaluate if and how Germans update their attitudes toward care for the elderly and healthcare given a change in need for these services.

**Figure 5.12: Predicted Values from Model 15 (95% CIs)**
While the relationships between egocentric risk and support for state responsibility for care for the elderly and healthcare might not be as clean as the previous tests, $H_{3\Delta}$ and $H_{4\Delta}$ are both supported. We can observe a significant change from min to max amongst private respondents in both figures, and again, no change amongst public respondents. As private respondents report increasing (decreasing) financial stability in old age they decrease (increase) the amount of responsibility they think state should have for care of the elderly. Similarly, private respondents who find themselves in deteriorating (improving) health between 1997 and 2002 want the states to take more (less) responsibility for healthcare. Adding the presence of an interviewer eliminates this self-interested behavior.

While the hypotheses of this chapter garnered support in eight of the twelve cross-sectional tests, they bat a perfect 1,000 in change score models. These six models, which by all accounts should provide a better test of the theory (Schleifer and Chaves 2017, Johnson 2005), provide consistent support for the hypotheses of this chapter. Respondents update their attitudes
toward the state providing jobs, healthcare, care for the unemployed and elderly in egocentric ways when moving to private contexts. In every case, these egocentric attitudes fail to be articulated when the presence of an interviewer is added to the survey experience. The next section performs a series of robustness tests to increase confidence that I have identified the correct mechanism behind these relationships.

5.10 Artifact of the Data? Testing for Placebo Findings in the Change Models

In this chapter I have demonstrated that moving from public to private survey contexts facilitates self-interested attitudes toward the welfare state. Alternatively, moving from a private to public context eliminates egocentric opinions in the SOEP. All of this is consistent with my theoretical expectations for the relationship between observability and egocentric attitudes and behavior.

While the use of panel data allowed me to overcome critiques related to causal identification in cross-sectional data of my previous chapter, this structure brings its own potential problems. Specifically, we could worry that the change in survey mode simply alters the SOEP respondents’ propensity to desire state responsibility for a whole host of issues. If this were the case, the results presented above may be more a consequence of an artifact in the data and less the work of the theoretical mechanism as articulated. One way to test this proposition is to compare the relationship between survey mode change and relevant welfare state attitudes to non-relevant welfare state attitudes. If a change to a more private survey mode activates broad changes in opinions toward the welfare state (both self-interested and non-self-interested attitudes), then we should have less confidence in my theoretical mechanism.

While deteriorating health should increase a respondent’s likelihood to want the state to take more responsibility of healthcare, it should not change their likelihood to want the state to take more responsibility for the elderly or primary school provision. Similarly, if a respondent
expresses decreased financial security when contemplating job loss, they should want the state to take greater responsibility for the unemployed, but not the elderly or school children. If we see differences between increased public and private survey respondents for the relevant welfare policies, and no differences for the irrelevant welfare policies, we can have more confidence in the observability driving the presence or lack of egocentric attitudes, and not bringing broad changes to social policy opinions in general. If moving from public to private modes results in similar changes for irrelevant (or less relevant) welfare policies, then it is more likely that these relationships result from a quirk in the data or an alternative mechanism. I test these propositions below.

The first figure below presents the predicted values for the change in a respondent’s attitude of how much responsibility the state should take for the unemployed. As discussed in the previous section, the figures show that those who are more (less) subject to the risk of unemployment between waves increase (decrease) the amount of responsibility they think the state should take for caring for the unemployed. This egocentric relationship exists in private, but not public contexts.
Now I will present the substantive effects of identical models switching out the dependent variable of state responsibility for the unemployed with care for the elderly and provision of primary school. If the observability mechanism is driving the (de)activation of self-interest we should see the difference between more public and private respondents narrow or disappear. The two graphs below show that this is indeed the case.

Notice that for both state responsibility for the elderly and primary school there are no interesting relationships or differences. This provides evidence that the relationships articulated above can be attributed to the mechanisms of observability on egocentric attitudes rather than some unexplained artifact in the data. The combination of significance above and lack thereof below raises confidence in my causal story and decreases doubts of spurious correlation or unexplained biases of survey mode.
Now I will repeat this approach for the findings related to healthcare. The first graph of the set below presents the predicted values for the change in a respondent’s attitude of how much responsibility the state should take for health care across the waves. As previously discussed, we
see a positive and significant relationship between for deteriorating health and increases in responsibility respondents want the state to take for healthcare amongst respondents who move to private survey modes. No such relationship exists amongst the respondents who move to public survey contexts.

Next, I present the substantive effects of identical models switching out the dependent variable of state responsibility to provide health with care for the elderly and provision of primary school. Again, if the observability mechanism is driving the (de)activation of self-interest we should see the difference between more public and private respondents narrow or disappear. The two graphs below show that this is indeed the case.
Finally, I make this comparison one last time for $\Delta$ in financial stability in old age. Again we should see a clear difference between respondents moving to public and private survey modes in the first figure and no discernable difference for the latter two. Like the above analysis, this is indeed the case. Changes in financial security in old age causes private respondents to update
their attitudes toward the relevant welfare area (care for the elderly), but not the less relevant area of primary school. While we do see some possible self-interested behavior in attitudes toward care for the unemployed, there is not a different relationship between public and private.
All together, the above analysis serves as evidence of the observability theory of egocentric attitudes and behavior. Changing to more private survey contexts activates the self-interest toward relevant welfare policies. As these respondents have deteriorating health, they want the state to take more responsibility for healthcare. As these respondents report greater financial insecurity at the prospect of losing their job, they want the state to take more responsibility for the unemployed. These relationships are not found when respondents move to more public survey modes supporting my argument around the stigma of articulating egocentric attitudes. Additionally, changes to personal health and financial security do not result in respondents updating their attitudes toward other aspects of the welfare state. Similarly, changes to financial security in old age do not shape updates toward state responsibility for primary school. In total, these discriminating tests improve confidence in my articulated mechanism and refute alternative explanations and concerns of spurious correlation.
5.11 Conclusion: The Internal Validity of Observability

Do individuals update their attitudes toward the welfare state in egocentric ways? The answer depends on context. If another individual is present in the survey process, then the answer appears to be no. However, if an individual takes the survey in a private context, then self-interest is an effective predictor of welfare state attitudes. This chapter leveraged the change in survey context, individual scenarios, and welfare state attitudes over time to improve the causal identification of this relationship. Observability decreases egocentric updating in how much responsibility the state should take for various aspects of the welfare state.

In many ways, these findings are complimentary of those of the previous chapter. There I demonstrated that face-to-face interview modes increase sociotropic economic voting behavior across three surveys and 23 countries. Unfortunately, outside of the ANES I was unable to test if observability decreased egocentric economic voting. While the last chapter established how observability can increase sociotropic behavior, this chapter demonstrated that it can also decrease egocentric attitudes. The presence of an interviewer influences both sociotropic and egocentric attitudes in ways consistent with my theory. Additionally, while the previous chapter had strengths in external validity, demonstrating a similar pattern across a wide range of individuals, states, and surveys, this chapter has a comparative advantage in internal validity. Literally taking analysis within people over time gives us greater confidence in the causal effects of observability.

The next chapter hopes to continue to improve causal identification by experimentally manipulating observability. While the change models do well to hold unobserved heterogeneity constant, there still may be some concerns that this analysis is nonetheless subject to the “predicting attitudes with attitudes” problem of survey research (Fordham and Kleinberg 2012).
However, a critique of reverse causality endogeneity in this chapter would need to identify a theoretical reason behind the activation of attitudes toward state responsibility causing a change in how individuals describe their finances in private, but not in public. Nonetheless, the next chapter will test experimentally manipulated observability on political donating behavior to address these concerns.
Chapter VI: Who has to Know? An Experiment Demonstrating how Observability Increases Sociotropic, and Decreases Egocentric, Political Donations

Abstract: Why do some individuals donate money to political action groups that benefit themselves economically at the cost of the country overall? Why might others do the opposite? I argue that observability increases sociotropic, and decreases egocentric, political donations. I conduct a unique online survey experiment that asks respondents to make a series of donation decisions. In each case, I use information about the respondents to give them scenarios that pit their own economic interest against that of the country. Half of the respondents are randomly assigned to a treatment that informs them that the groups they support will publish their name online and in a newspaper advertisement. Respondents in the treatment group are more likely to donate funds to sociotropic causes and less likely to support egocentric ones. This treatment of observability is most effective amongst millennials and respondents with heterogeneous social networks. While respondents considered a few policy areas including immigration, welfare, and trade, the treatment is most effective in the area of tax policy.
6.1 Introduction: The Conflict of Interests

How do individuals engage in politics when their own interests come into direct conflict with that of their country? Why do some individuals support political action groups that benefit themselves economically at costs to the country overall? Why might others do the opposite? I argue that these behaviors can be explained by observability and social context. Specifically, I explore the effects of the publication of individuals’ names as a driver (suppressor) of sociotropic (egocentric) donating behavior. Even if individuals make a decision in private, a record of their behavior should decrease the probability of selfish actions and increase the likelihood of donations to groups that benefit the nation at large. Here I test the implications of my theory by experimentally manipulating the observability of political donating behavior.

By employing an online survey experiment, I am able to present respondents with various scenarios in which they are informed a certain policy change would bring them tangible harms (benefits), based on an earlier questionnaire, which are balanced by benefits (harms) to the country at large. All respondents are then asked to divide a $100 donation across two political action groups, one working for the policy and one working against. Respondents are led to believe that their decisions actually inform how a larger set of funds is distributed. Half of respondents are randomly assigned to see an additional treatment message informing them that a decision in favor of one action group will result in their name being published by the group in its newspaper advertisements, website, Facebook, and twitter pages, effectively making their decision more observable and subject to social pressure. I expect the probability of egocentric (sociotropic) donation decisions to be lower (higher) when exposed to this treatment.

This chapter builds on the main empirical findings of the previous two in a couple of important ways. The first empirical chapter demonstrates that sociotropic economic voting is
driven by the presence of an interviewer across 23 countries. Additionally, respondents from the 2012 wave of the ANES were more likely to engage in egocentric economic voting when in private. The second chapter extends my theory to welfare state attitudes in Germany and showed that individuals consistently update their opinions toward social policies in egocentric ways in private, but largely fail to do so when in the added presence of an interviewer. Here, I have complete control over the administration of the observability treatment and can insure random assignment to increase causal identification. Additionally, by leading respondents to believe that their donation decisions will affect the actual distribution of funds, I can argue that observability not only shapes the way we form attitudes, but also has the potential to shape consequential political behavior.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I will establish how previous work in donation behavior provides for an effective arena to test the effects of observability on sociotropic and egocentric behavior. Second, I will detail the design of my online experiment. Here I will focus on a unique element that allows me to use personal information to pit national concerns against respondents’ self-interest as they consider donating to various political action groups. Additionally, I will argue that the publication of these donation decisions will facilitate (suppress) sociotropic (egocentric) behavior. Finally, I will present results that support my theoretical expectations. The treatment of publicizing donation decisions significantly lowers the probability of being an egocentric donor. Younger respondents and those who have heterogeneous social networks are most significantly influenced by this treatment of social pressure. Further analysis highlights how this relationship emerges most substantively when individuals consider tax policy and is selectively present, or absent, in the arenas of immigration, welfare, and trade policy.
6.2 Donation Behavior and Observability

This section will present the state of the literature on donation behavior and observability. I will first establish that individual political donation behavior is a fruitful, but largely ignored, research agenda. Second, I describe how patterns in this, and the related study of charitable donation, research show that increased observability drives prosocial behavior. Finally, I conclude with the following claim. While broad conclusions can be made about observability (privacy) causing sociotropic (egocentric) donation behavior, previous research ignores the distributional and often conflictual nature of politics. While the literature informs us of how social pressure, or the lack thereof, can move individuals in sociotropic or egocentric directions, we know little about how people make decisions when confronted with conflicting self and other-interested concerns.

The study of the causes and consequences of political donations is dominated by a focus on the activities of political action groups, corporations, and other organizations while individuals are largely ignored (Heerwig 2016). Nonetheless, there is important variation within and across how people donate to political causes. Francia (2003) breaks down donors into three categories. “Investors” seek material gain, “ideologues” champion causes, and “intimates” enjoy the relationships they foster with candidates and the donor community.

More recent work distinguishes between ideology as the main driver for first time donors while access to candidates and other elites brings individuals back for repeated contributions (Heerwig 2016). While research on the influence of observability on political donating behavior has been limited, existing analysis establishes a broad chilling effect. When faced with the need to publically disclose their behavior, individuals will donate less or completely abstain from contributing to political causes (Raja 2014). This self-censoring behavior is especially prevalent
amongst ideological moderates and those with politically diverse networks (Hayes et al 2006). The realties of social media and the increasing importance of an online presence increases the observability and permanence of these actions. Alternatively, Margetts et al (2011) suggest social contexts can encourage various types of political participation if a critical mass is met and individuals feel observed as one of many participants.

While relatively little is known about the drivers of political contributions, we can make inferences from existing work explaining behavior related to charitable donations. As with many other prosocial behaviors, public settings and a reduction of anonymity increase charitable donations (Simpson and Willer 2015). When there is a possibility of reputational benefits, in the lab or in the field, humans tend to present generous behavior and hide selfish actions (Tokumaru 2016). Simpson and Willer (2008) find that, while there may be baseline behavioral differences between egoistic and altruistic individuals, these become indistinguishable when moving from private to public scenarios. The influence of social context can be as subtle as adding a picture of eyes to donation bins at the supermarket, which increase donations threefold (Powell et al 2012).

Additionally, there is evidence that egocentric and sociotropic appeals for charitable donations have different effects based on context. Egocentric appeals for charity, like highlighting the benefits of résumé building, increase donations when individuals are assured their responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. Alternatively, sociotropic appeals, like highlighting the benefits to the community and those in need, become more effective when contributors are held publically accountable for their decisions (White and Peloza 2009). In a similar study, other-oriented appeals of this nature were especially effective amongst millennials (Paulin et al 2014). These findings are consistent with the main empirical results of this dissertation. We can expect sociotropic attitudes and behavior to be more prevalent in public, and
egocentric ones to be more likely in private. However, most of this work ignores the distributional, and potentially conflictual, nature of politics.

While this literature does well to demonstrate how various interventions of increasing observability can increase sociotropic donating behavior, it ignores many potential costs and consequences of these actions. Political decision-making is often much more complicated than these lab and field studies can account for. Observability treatments in previous experiments regularly give strong incentives to behave prosocially without adding any costs. It often is easy to make the sociotropic choice.

Alternatively, a respondent who sees a self-interested prompt in private only faces the possibility of benefits for taking an egocentric action. Here, it is easy to act egocentrically. In effect, these attitudes and behaviors are isolated, one-off decisions. Many times it is hard to distinguish the theoretical mechanism behind the treatment from simple priming effects. Selecting candidates, evaluating policies, or making donations to political causes produces complex distributional consequences. What may benefit you personally may cost the nation at large. What is best for the country may harm your bottom line. We must understand how observability shapes decisions not only when they are easy, but also when they are hard.

Despite a general consensus in political behavior that demonstrates sociotropic considerations to be better predictors than self-interest (see previous discussion), recent work has established that providing individuals with information about policies and their consequences increases egocentric attitudes toward monetary and trade policy (Bearce and Tuxhorn 2017, Rho and Tomz 2017). However, these findings may be inflated to the extent that there is a “norm of self-interest” in the West (Miller 1999). Giving respondents information about policy consequences may cause them to respond in self-interested ways not because they want to
maximize their own wellbeing, but rather because they want to avoid norm violation. This should not be a cause for concern for my analysis. If anything, this dynamic should be more present in public than in private, and thus adherence to this norm would decrease the chance of finding relationships consistent with my theory.

Additionally, it can be difficult to disentangle the influence of sociotropic and egocentric appeals within information often provided to respondents. Chong et al (2001) demonstrate that individuals form egocentric attitudes about polices when asked to consider personal costs. However, the authors additionally note that sociotropic primes can push behavior in the opposite direction. This previous work cannot speak to how these primes interact. As such, I hope to explore respondent behavior when this information is explicitly conflictual.

White et al (2014) present the closest exploration of this scenario with an experiment of donating behavior of black undergraduates during the 2012 presidential election. The authors provided students with funds to donate to either the Romney or Obama presidential campaigns. Next, they encouraged a conflict between group and self-interest with a series of treatments. First, a financial rebate of 10% for funds donated to the Romney campaign was offered to a percentage of respondents. Second, some respondents were informed that their name and donation decision would appear in the college newspaper. The authors argue that black students would feel strong social pressure to support Obama. Third, a selection of respondents made their donation decision in the presence of a stranger. Analysis of the experiment demonstrates that the first treatment increases Romney donations while the latter two increase Obama donations with similar effect sizes.

The study by White and colleagues shows how observability can be used to stimulate social concerns and reduce egocentric behavior. However, there are a few dynamics that lead me
to question the generalizability of these findings for the purposes of my research question. First, the authors focus on dynamics of defection and free-riding within the black community that is unlikely to be present, or as salient, in the broader population. Second, the egocentric benefit to respondents is an immediate cash payout. This makes it more difficult to assess how self-interest might affect behavior in the real world. How and when do we place our own interests above the group when the effects of our decisions go through the uncertainty of the political process?

While the drivers of individual political donation behavior have been largely understudied, examining related literatures shows this to be a ripe area to test my theory of observability. While previous work has established that manipulations in self-interested appeals and publicity can move individual behavior in an egocentric or sociotropic direction, we know little about decisions made in the presence of conflicting messages. People are likely to come across contradictory appeals in the world of politics. As such, we need to evaluate the effects of social contexts when individuals might have to sacrifice their own self-interest to behave prosocially. From this discussion, and in line with the central theory of this project, I can posit the main hypothesis of this chapter below:

**H1: When confronted with conflicting sociotropic and egocentric information, publicizing decisions will result in individuals being more (less) likely to donate to groups working to toward sociotropic (egocentric) policy gains.**

The next section will detail an experimental design to test this hypothesis.

### 6.3 Experimental Design: Observability and the Conflict of Interests

In order to test my theory of observability driving (suppressing) sociotropic (egocentric) behavior, I created an original online survey experiment. Respondents, recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, first answer a series of demographic and opinion questions in a pre-
treatment questionnaire. Second, they read a series of vignettes about the costs and benefits of four policies related to immigration, a social program, trade, and tax reform. In each case, I pipe in personal information from the pre-treatment questionnaire to present respondents with vignettes that pit their own self-interest against that of the country. After reading each vignette they are asked to divide $100 across two political action groups, one of which is working for the policy and the other against. Each policy is both explicitly beneficial for the country and explicitly harmful for the respondent, or vice versa. Half of the respondents receive an additional treatment text in the instructions (and again each time they are presented with a donation decision) informing them that if they give more funds to one of the groups, that this group will publish their name in newspaper ads, on their website, and social media pages as a supporter. I will detail the respondent experience and design choices below.

The four questions from the pre-treatment questionnaire that are relevant for the vignettes are the following. 1. What is your age? Respondents are given 8 choices of age ranges, the lowest being “18-24”, the highest being “85 or older”. 2. Which of following best describes your sector/condition of employment? Respondents are given a choice of the 19 sectors from the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) with two additional options of “retirement” and “unemployment”. 3. Which of the following best describes your current (or if changing, near future) living situation? Respondents are given the choices of “rent” or “own”. Finally, 4. Please finish this sentence. Personally, I would be most harmed by a large increase in the cost of: food, child care, healthcare, housing, education, or utilities. The responses from these questions will be used to ensure a self-interested cost or benefit in the policy vignettes below.

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The pre-treatment questionnaire concludes as respondents answer a series of additional questions including partisanship, populism, gender, and the ten-item personality measure (TIPI) of the Big Five personality questions (Gosling et al 2003). Next, respondent are shown a set of instructions. Half of respondents are randomly assigned to see the additional treatment text highlighted in grey below.

**Instructions:** The presenters of this survey would like to encourage citizen participation in policymaking. We are donating a pool of money to various political action groups and would like the input of citizens like you!

On the next screen you will be asked to read a short bit of information about a policy. Once you have read this, you will be asked to divide $100 across two groups, one of which is working in support of that policy, the other is working against it. You decide how to divide this donation based on your opinions toward the policy.

The presenters of the survey are collaborating with these political action groups. In exchange for our participation they have asked that your name be published in newspaper ads, their website, Facebook, and Twitter pages, if and when you divide the $100 in their favor.

Divide across the two groups however you see fit based on your opinion of the policy. See an example below.

Policy: Example #1

Here you will see some information about a policy. Policy Example #1 has costs and benefits.

Please divide $100 between the two groups below. Enter two numbers that add up to 100.

| Political Action Group A (For Policy Example #1) | 75 |
| Political Action Group B (Against Policy Example #1) | 25 |

The treatment is designed to increase observability by publicizing respondents’ donation behavior in line with previous research (White and Peloza 2009). While the treatment highlights offline and online publication of respondents’ decisions, I have placed an emphasis on the latter. There is a rich research agenda that demonstrates how messaging and interactions on social media can lead to real world political behavior (Gil De Zúñiga et al 2012, Bond et al 2012,
Indeed, Treem and Leonardi (2012) and Kwon et al (2014) have both argued that the visibility and data permanence of behaviors documented on social media make them especially productive and conducive for interpersonal influence and the observability of opinions.

While there may be some concern that the focus on online activity may influence younger respondents, who use social media more and are more emotionally invested (Hayes et al 2015), this is simply an empirical question to be explored in the next section. Indeed, there is good reason for younger respondents to be more subject to social contexts in general. They suffer greater reputation costs and are more swayed by norms than their elders (Pasupathi 1999, Murrary and Meatland 2015).

After reading the instructions respondents advance to the four vignettes and donation decisions. Respondents are either in the treatment or control track. If a respondent saw the treatment message in the instructions the will be reminded of this above every donation decision, again highlighted in grey below. If a respondent did not see the treatment message in the instructions they will never see it until the debrief upon conclusion of the experiment. Future research could examine within respondent changes to the treatment, but I avoided this avenue in favor of simplicity with this initial design.

The first vignette for immigration policy is presented below. The policy is entitled the “Reformed Visa Program.” I constructed this vignette to let respondents know they were evaluating an immigration policy without giving a clear signal if the policy was for more restrictive or open immigration. However, the vignette does explicitly inform respondents of negative sociotropic consequences (harm to local and federal budgets and the country’s economy) and positive egocentric consequences (financial benefits for owners/renters
[whichever the respondent selected from the pre-treatment questionnaire] in the respondent’s state). The respondent is presented with two political action groups labeled as being either for or against the policy. Respondents in the treatment group are reminded of the publication of their donation decision and given the option of choosing a 50/50 split to remain anonymous.

**Policy: Reformed Visa Program**

Supporters of the Reformed Visa Program point to tangible improvements for many Americans. Specifically, the program would bring financial benefits for those who **Rent/Own** housing in many areas of the country including AK, **Respondent’s State**, and WY. However, opponents worry the Reformed Visa Program hurts local and federal budgets and could have negative consequences for the country’s economy.

Please divide $100 between the two groups below. Enter two numbers that add up to 100.

The political action group that you choose to give a larger sum would like to publish your name in newspaper ads, their website, Facebook, and Twitter pages. If you choose to divide the sum 50/50, neither group will publish your name.

**Immigration Reform Now**
(For the Reformed Visa Program) ☐

**Visa USA**
(Against the Reformed Visa Program) ☐

The second vignette revolves around welfare policy, entitled generically as “Social Program Reform.” Again, the vignette is written to avoid ideological priors (by avoiding the term welfare or the type of reform) and to explicitly place egocentric benefits against sociotropic costs. The egocentric information is piped in from the pre-treatment question about costs that concern the respondent. Every respondent sees the vignette inform her that this policy renders the cost she was most concerned about (healthcare, education, etc.) become more affordable. However, the policy also brings a significant reduction in investment in the American economy.
Next, the respondent views a vignette about trade policy. Here, unlike the other policy areas, I chose an actual trade agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). I made this decision to see if there were any discernible effects of presenting respondents with a named existing policy when compared to the vague titles of the other policies. Here, I create a tension between egocentric and sociotropic concerns by pitting job growth in the economy at large against wage cuts and financial uncertainty in the respondent’s sector of employment. See the vignette below.
Policy: TTIP

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a high-standard trade and investment agreement being negotiated between the United States and the European Union. Economists suggest that the TTIP is expected to increase job growth in the United States’ economy, but may also result in wage cuts and financial uncertainty for those in logistics and {Respondent’s Sector of Employment}.

Please divide $100 between the two groups below. Enter two numbers that add up to 100.

The political action group that you choose to give a larger sum would like to publish your name in newspaper ads, their website, Facebook, and Twitter pages. If you choose to divide the sum 50/50, neither group will publish your name.

TTIP International
(For TTIP) □

Stop TTIP
(Against TTIP) □

The fourth and final vignette focuses on tax policy. Here respondents receive a sociotropic appeal informing them the policy will make the US more stable and competitive in the global economy and an egocentric appeal saying it will cost individuals in their age bracket come tax season. The full vignette can be found below. Additionally, Table 6.1 summarizes the sociotropic and egocentric appeals for each policy area along with noting if donations for or against these policies amount to an egocentric or sociotropic decision.
**Table 6.1: Summary of Vignettes, Appeals, and Donation Decisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy: Update to the Tax Code</th>
<th>Sociotropic Appeal</th>
<th>Egocentric Appeal</th>
<th>Donations for are:</th>
<th>Donations Against are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa Program</td>
<td>Hurts local and federal budgets and could have negative consequences for the country’s economy</td>
<td>Brings financial benefits for those who rent/own housing in many areas including respondent’s state</td>
<td>Egocentric</td>
<td>Sociotropic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy</td>
<td>Decreases investment in the American economy</td>
<td>Makes cost important to respondent affordable</td>
<td>Egocentric</td>
<td>Sociotropic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>Increases job growth in US economy</td>
<td>Results in wage cuts and financial uncertainty in respondent’s sector</td>
<td>Sociotropic</td>
<td>Egocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update to the Tax Code</td>
<td>Makes US economy more stable and competitive in the global economy</td>
<td>Will cost those in respondent’s age group come tax season</td>
<td>Sociotropic</td>
<td>Egocentric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, the respondents answer a short set of questions including turnout intention, general vote intention, closeness to party of vote intention, homogeneity of social network and Facebook and twitter use. Respondents conclude their experience with a debriefing informing them of the purposes of the study, the deception presented in the design, and are offered resources for learning about these kinds of policies and their effects. At the request of the International Review Board, I offered respondents a chance to have their data deleted and excluded from the study upon reading this debriefing information. The next section will present the results from the experiment.

6.4 Analysis of the Direct Effects of Observability

I will now present the analysis and results from the experiment. I recruited respondents on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk on February 12th 2018. After accounting for attrition, incomplete and/or failed attempts, and requests for data deletion, I am left with a sample of 473 respondents. After briefly presenting descriptive statistics of donating behavior across the policies, I will present analysis that demonstrates support for my theory. First I examine the treatment’s effect on the binary outcome of donating more dollars to egocentric than sociotropic causes. Next, I will test the treatment’s effect on continuous decisions to see if social context influences the strength of egocentric donations. Results here are signed correctly and significant at the .10 level. However, examining heterogeneous treatment effects show that the observability treatment is strongly significant amongst younger respondents and those with diverse social networks. Finally, I will explore the treatment’s effects on a policy-by-policy basis and discuss potential reasons for why observability is causing a significant and substantive reduction (increase) in egocentric (sociotropic) donations when respondents evaluate tax policy, but is inconsistent across other policy areas.
Table 6.2: Total Sample Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egocentric Donation Dollars</th>
<th>Sociotropic Donation Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa Program</td>
<td>60.23</td>
<td>39.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Program</td>
<td>63.93</td>
<td>36.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>55.10</td>
<td>44.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Code</td>
<td>58.49</td>
<td>41.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dollars</td>
<td>237.75</td>
<td>162.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above presents the descriptive statistics for respondent donating behavior across the four policy areas. There are a few initial conclusions we can draw from these data. First, note that respondents donated more dollars to the egocentric action group for every policy and on average, donated 75 more dollars (out of 400 total) to egocentric causes than sociotropic causes. This is the case regardless of if the political action group is for or against the policy, or presented first or second in the donation options. It is important to not draw too much from these initial statistics. All of this data is generated under static conditions and we cannot be sure if the distribution across egocentric and sociotropic groups is due to the appeals, the policies, or some unknown factor. However, these do establish important baselines and important variation of sociotropic and egocentric behavior. The average respondent in the experiment gives 60% of their funds to egocentric causes and 40% to sociotropic causes.

We can start by exploring total egocentric donating behavior on a binary basis. 65% of respondents donated more total dollars to egocentric causes than sociotropic causes. The simplest test of my theory is to see if the treatment reduces the probability of being an egocentric donor (dividing more of the available 400 dollars to egocentric political action groups). Given the dichotomous nature of this outcome I can test this in a bivariate logistic regression. The results from this model, found in appendix A1, demonstrate a negative and significant relationship (p=.016) between the publication treatment and being an egocentric donor. As can be seen in the figure below, those who were informed their donation decisions will be published are more than
10% less likely to make egocentric donating decisions than those in the control group. The figure includes 95% confidence intervals.

Next, we can break down what is driving this relationship by comparing the average donation behavior of respondents in the treatment and control groups in total dollars. This can be found in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa Program</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>60.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Program</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>64.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>56.59</td>
<td>53.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Code</td>
<td>61.65</td>
<td>55.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dollars</td>
<td>242.51</td>
<td>232.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ Egocentric &gt;$ Sociotropic</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above summarizes egocentric donation dollars across the treatment and control groups. I will proceed by focusing on egocentric donations. Given that respondents are presented
with a zero-sum donation decision between egocentric and sociotropic causes, analysis of sociotropic donations is simply the inverse of egocentric donations. Initial observation of these means offers mixed support for the main hypothesis of this chapter. We expect egocentric donations to be higher in the control group as the treatment exposes respondents to a social context by publicizing their decision. We can see that respondents donate indistinguishable amounts toward egocentric causes in the first two policies. While respondent behavior conforms to expectations, analysis of variance indicates that this is only statistically significant when respondents are considering tax policy \[ F(1, 472) = (4.44) p=(.036) \]. Focusing on respondent totals shows the average respondent in the treatment group donated 10 fewer dollars to egocentric causes than those in the control group. This conforms to theoretical expectations and is close to traditional standards of significance \[ F(1, 472) = (2.59) p=.108 \].

The fact that the treatment fails to meet the classic .05 bar of statistical significance in the continuous case could be the result of a couple of dynamics. First, the fact that the treatment does significantly predict egocentric donating behavior as a binary outcomes could suggest that the giving respondents a continuous donating option simply inserted noise into the measurement of egocentric and sociotropic behavior. After all, the research question of this project is why do some individuals behave egocentrically/sociotropically, and not an exploration of the level or strength of egocentric/sociotropic behavior. It very well may be that respondents lack meaningful attitudes in hedging egocentric or sociotropic behavior. Alternatively, the treatment may be causing certain kinds of individuals to increase sociotropic donating behavior, but not others. The next section explores where we could expect this treatment to have its most significant heterogeneous effects.
6.5 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Total Egocentric Dollars

While the direct effect of the treatment on total egocentric dollars is weak at best, we can test this effect on a few of theoretically relevant subpopulations. First, we can see if, consistent with previously discussed research, younger respondents are more susceptible to social contexts from the treatment (Murray and Meatland 2015), due to the increased need for reputation management compared to older respondents (Pasupathi 1999). Additionally, Paulin et al (2014) have demonstrated sociotropic appeals to be most respondent amongst those aged 18-35 (millenials). From this, I can posit the following hypothesis:

H2: The treatment’s suppressing effect on egocentric donations will be stronger amongst millennial respondents.

Next, due to the focus on the internet as a means to induce observability, we might expect the treatment to be shape donation decisions at a greater rate for social media users. This is consistent with the previous research by Kwon et al (2014) that shows how Facebook and similar websites are especially conducive for enhancing interpersonal influence. From this I can test a third hypothesis:

H3: The treatment’s suppressing effect on egocentric donations will be stronger amongst respondents who use social media.

The last heterogeneous treatment effect of interest has to do with a respondent’s social network. The treatment is designed to make respondents consider the social consequences of pursuing self-interest at the cost to a broader group. While we would expect the publication of donation decisions to cause respondents to worry about what others would think of them, certain people might not be subjected to this concern. If an individual sees an egocentric decision as not only benefiting themselves, but also those in their social network, then they would be unmoved to feel social pressure to make a sociotropic donation decision. However, if one associates with
many different individuals, there is a higher likelihood that someone in their social network, who may observe the respondent’s selfish decision, is harmed by the policy. Indeed, Krämer and Haferkamp (2011) note that diverse audiences on social media can create difficulties in reputation management as pleasing one segment of your network can upset another. As such, I expect:

**H4: The treatment’s suppressing effect on egocentric donations will be stronger amongst respondents who have heterogeneous social networks.**

In order to test H2, I create a dichotomous variable “millennial” taking on values of 1 for individuals aged 18-34 and values of 0 for respondents aged 35 and above. This divides the sample almost perfectly in half with 51.5% of respondents belonging to the millennial generation. We can first test this hypothesis with a split sample ANOVA. Amongst, millennials, we see a significant difference between the treatment and control groups: \[F(1, 242) = (6.48) \quad p=(.012)\]. On average, millennials in the control group donate $247.83. The observability treatment reduces this by over $20 to $227.13. However, when we preform this same analysis on respondents 35 and older we see no significant difference: \[F(1, 228) = (.05) \quad p=(.831)\].

I additionally test this interactive prediction in an ordinary least squared (OLS) regression with a dependent variable of total egocentric dollars. While this analysis is not substantively different from the ANOVA approach, I can easily report predicted values with 95% confidence intervals. As can be seen in the figure below, H2 is supported. While the treatment has no effect amongst respondents above the age of 35, substantial treatment effect amongst millennials.
Next, we can test the H3, which expects the treatment to have larger effects on social media users. Not only is this theoretically relevant in itself, but it also helps us understand if the results amongst millennials are driven by higher social media use. I create the variable “social media use” which takes on values of 0 if the respondent uses neither Facebook nor twitter, 1 if the respondent uses Facebook or twitter, and 2 if the respondent uses both Facebook and twitter. I move straight to presenting OLS regression results here, as there are no significant ANOVA results regardless of how I treat social media use (dichotomously, continuously, or specifically by the use of Facebook or twitter). As such, H3 is not supported. The figure below presents the heterogeneous treatment results across the three levels of social media use. It may be the case that the reputational costs of the treatment exist regardless of an individual’s social media behavior. The existence of a record of egocentric or sociotropic donating behavior need not depended on the respondent themselves having access to social media.
Next, we can test H4, the final interactive hypothesis. This expects that the treatment should have greater effects amongst individuals with heterogeneous social networks. In order to test this I create the variable “Homogenous Network.” Respondents who agreed with the statement: “People in my social network are a lot like me” take on values of 1 (50.4% of respondents) and respondents who disagreed with the claim took on values of 0 (49.6% of respondents). An ANOVA demonstrates that there is no substantive or statistically difference between treatment and control groups amongst individuals who report having homogenous social networks: \[ F(1, 237) = (0.00) \; p=\text{(.984)}. \] However, when we examine the treatment’s effect on those with heterogeneous social networks, we see strong support for H4. When respondents describe their social network as “not being a lot like them,” the treatment decreases total egocentric dollars from $243.23 to $223.92: \[ F(1, 233) = (4.50) \; p=\text{(.035)}. \] Again, I can run an interactive OLS model to obtain predicted values. These can be seen in the figure below.
The above analysis shows that the treatment has no effect on individuals who describe those in their social network as “a lot like them.” Indeed the treatment and control means of this population are within 20 cents of each other. However, this is to be expected. The experiment is designed to put individuals in a scenario where respondents worry selfish actions might be socially sanctioned. However, if a respondent who acts selfishly is also bringing benefits to the rest of their social network, they need not worry that their actions be publicized. There is less of an incentive to behave sociotropically when being observed. However, when individuals have social networks that are made up of individuals who are different than them, publication of donation decisions significantly reduces (increases) egocentric (sociotropic) donations. These individuals face the social pressure of observability because people in their lives are likely to pay the costs of their self-interested donating behavior. The next section will turn to breaking down treatment effects on a policy-by-policy basis.

6.6 Policy-by-Policy Analysis

While the previous sections established the treatment’s effect on total donating behavior, here I explore how respondents behave in each individual policy area. Results show strong direct
effects when respondents are considering tax policy, heterogeneous effects based on what information was piped in when considering immigration, and no effects when considering welfare and trade policy. After establishing these broad patterns, I will explore the construction of the vignettes, the strength and observability of the egocentric appeals, and partisan biases as explanations for the null results within the welfare and trade policy areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ANOVA Results</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa Program</td>
<td>[F(1, 472) = (0.02) p=(.889)]</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>60.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Program</td>
<td>[F(1, 472) = (0.00) p=(.950)]</td>
<td>63.84</td>
<td>64.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>[F(1, 472) = (1.04) p=(.309)]</td>
<td>56.59</td>
<td>53.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Code</td>
<td>[F(1, 472) = (4.44) p=(.036)]</td>
<td>61.65</td>
<td>55.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>243</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above breaks down the ANOVA results for how respondents donated toward egocentric political action groups across the four policies. We can see that there is a significant difference between the treatment and control when respondents are considering an update to the tax code, but no significant difference in the other three cases. The table below presents the mean dollars donated to the egocentric action group across respondents assigned to the treatment and control. The treatment reduces (increases) the average egocentric (sociotropic) donation by $6.50.
As previously discussed, we can also explore the binary outcomes of making an egocentric vs. a sociotropic donation decision. We again see support for the main hypothesis of this chapter here as a logistic regression shows the treatment to have a significant negative effect \( (p = .003) \) on being an egocentric donor on tax policy. The predicted probabilities from this model can be found in the figure below. As can be seen, the treatment reduces the probability of making an egocentric donation decision on tax policy by 14%, from 56% in the control to 42% in the treatment group. In this bivariate context, the treatment improves the amount of correctly classified cases by 6.1%.
Why do we see such strong results when respondents consider tax policy and null results for immigration, welfare, and trade? The first thing we need to explore are the vignettes themselves. Perhaps something about the costs and benefits in the tax policy vignette triggered the social context mechanism. The tax policy vignette pipes in the respondent’s age in order to appeal to self-interest. We can compare this to the other vignettes, which include renter/owner status, a cost of living worry, and sector of employment. Of these characteristics, age is the most visible or identifiable. As such, respondents might face the greatest amount of social consequences for selling out others for their own benefit. While a similar claim could be made about sector of employment, the NAICS classifications may simply be too broad to activate these concerns around observability. Friends and family might not associate me as someone in “information” or “scientific and technical services” as easily as they can tell my age within 5 years.
Additionally, tax policy provides the ideal case for the identification of costs and benefits. In order for social context to reduce egocentric behavior in line with weak reciprocity, respondents would have to assume some kind of common knowledge of the distributional consequences of their actions. Past research has demonstrated that self-interest is most likely to become activated in this way when policies have explicit distributional consequences (Citrin and Green 1990, Sears & Funk 1991). Chong et al 2001, have argued that the best examples of clear egocentric attitudes and behaviors have come in the domain of tax policy.

While it is possible that the piped egocentric information in the vignettes simply did not place respondents in a condition to be concerned about observability, it may be that some characteristics where more salient than others. For example, exploratory analysis of the immigration vignette demonstrates that the treatment was effective for renters, but not owners. We can examine this by running a logistic regression to predict which respondents made an egocentric donation decision on immigration (the Visa Program). This analysis shows that, amongst renters, the treatment significantly decreases the probability from 62% to 44% of being an egocentric donor. However, the treatment brings no significantly different donation behavior amongst owners. Adding to the complexity, it appears that within the control group, owners are less likely to be egocentric than renters. Taken together, these findings may indicate that the stakes of the policy are higher for renters when compared to the comparatively stable situation of home ownership (Chong et al 2001).
Performing similar analysis on the trade and welfare policy decisions yield no significant heterogeneous treatment effects. That is to say the treatment fails to bring significant differences in donating behavior across specific cost worries or sectors of employment.

Finally, it may be the case that partisan biases or priors are strong enough to render the treatment’s effects insignificant in the areas of welfare and trade policy. Indeed, there are significant correlations between partisanship and donation decisions across the various policies, except for the update to the tax code. I can create the variable “Democrat scale” with responses from two questions in the pre-treatment questionnaire. The first asks, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a: Democrat, Republican, Neither.” The second asks “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party” Democrat, Republican, Neither? The variable takes on the following values: -2 (Republican), -1 (leans Republican) 0 (independent) 1(leans Democrat) and 2 (Democrat). The table below presents the sign and significance for bivariate OLS regressions between each policy’s egocentric dollar total and the democrat scale. Full regression results can be found in appendix A3.
Table 6.5: Relationship Between Partisanship and Egocentric Dollars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient for “Democrat Scale”</th>
<th>Egocentric Donations are For or Against the Policy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa Program</td>
<td>2.69*</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Program</td>
<td>5.12*</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>-2.21*</td>
<td>Against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Code</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>Against</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p value <.05

As the above table demonstrates, partisanship has a significant effect on egocentric dollars for three of the four policy areas. This indicates that despite the vague titles and agnostic description of what the policies actually do, democrats donated more in favor of the Visa Program and Social Program policies. The fact that both vignettes contain the word “reform” could activate a heuristic against (for) the status quo amongst Democrats (Republicans). Next, the TTIP could send a signal to Republicans (Democrats) to support (oppose) a policy of free trade, breaking down donations on traditional party lines.

Nonetheless, the lack of a significant relationship between partisanship and tax donations is perplexing. Perhaps this is a scenario best explained by Chong and coauthor’s (2001) approach. The authors claim that individuals shift between evaluating politics based ideological values and self-interest. They summarize their findings by noting, “people with a smaller stake in an issue are less likely to behave on the basis of self-interest and more likely to be influenced by their values and symbolic predispositions” (2001, 541). Indeed, even Sears and Funk (1990) who argue that self-interest has a negligible effect on how individuals engage politics claim the stakes and clarity of tax policy does activate egocentric attitudes and behaviors. Perhaps the tax policy vignette and piped individual information about age was the only scenario in which respondents felt the stakes were high enough to move beyond partisan heuristics.
6.7 Conclusion: Weak Reciprocity and the Conflict of Interests

This chapter set out to test my theory of observability on political donating behavior. Analysis demonstrated that in aggregate, and specifically when respondents evaluate tax policy, publicizing decisions increases sociotropic donations and decreases egocentric donations. These findings compliment the previous empirical chapters of this project in a few of important ways. First, this placed respondents in a scenario where egocentric considerations came into explicit conflict with sociotropic concerns. We saw that, even though a majority of donations went to egocentric causes, observability can reduce this behavior significantly.

Additionally, observability appears to be especially effective at driving sociotropic behavior for millennials and respondents with heterogeneous social networks. Finally, the nature of this treatment demonstrates that the effects of observability go beyond simply having another person in our presence when we report attitudes. Just being informed that our actions are on public record for others to see can increase (reduce) sociotropic (egocentric) behavior.

The results of this chapter also raise many new questions. While the heterogeneous effects for millennials and respondents with diverse social networks point toward a mechanism of reputation management, there is still much to be learned about what internal processes drive individuals to behave sociotropically. These interactive effects are most consistent with the “weak reciprocity” explanation of prosocial behavior. These respondents simply have more to lose from poor reputations (Pasupathi 1999). Internalized sociotropic values may also be activated amongst individuals when thinking about the publication of their actions, but the implications are less clear. Future research must find discriminating tests between this and alternative mechanisms.
Finally, the inability of the treatment to shape donating behavior in welfare and trade policy should not be overlooked. The positive results for taxation and immigration amongst renters both point to support for the approach of Chong et al (2001), which claims that self-interest concerns may become active when individuals face sufficiently high stakes. Any future iterations of this experiment or related work will be sure to explore the effects of observability in these contexts. The next chapter concludes by exploring the implications of these findings and laying out an agenda for future research.
Chapter VII: Conclusion

7.1 Taking Stock

This project started with a short story about a group of millionaires who seemed to be taking two contradictory actions in response to the Republican tax bill. Publically, they were engaging in sociotropic activism by asking the government to raise their taxes for the good of the country. Privately, they were taking a series of egocentric measures to make sure that this did not happen. In the preceding pages I have demonstrated that this vignette is characteristic of broader patterns of attitudes and behaviors in political economy. Observability increases the likelihood of sociotropic attitudes and behavior, and decreases the probability of egocentric ones.

I have argued for the importance of recognizing that humans have evolved to pursue the interests of others in addition to their own. Observability provides leverage in explaining when and why these motivations are likely to manifest themselves in our political attitudes and behavior. Chapter 4 provided the first empirical tests and support for my main theoretical claim. Observability is associated with a significant increase in sociotropic economic voting behavior. When in the presence of an interviewer, national economic perceptions exert a consistently significant effect on attitudes toward incumbent parties and candidate selection. However, the influence of these sociotropic considerations is largely absent when individuals respond to the CSES and EES in private. The 2012 wave of the ANES allows me to discriminate between exclusively sociotropic and egocentric economic voting behavior. Here, analysis reveals that personal economic considerations exert significantly stronger effects on candidate preferences.
when respondents are in private. When it comes to economic voting, people are more likely to consider the state of their country’s economy in public and their own pocketbooks in private.

Chapter 5 explored the implications of observability on welfare state attitudes. As I argued in Chapter 3, observability should decrease the probability of egocentric attitudes and behavior in addition to increasing sociotropic ones. With data from the SOEP, I was able to analyze Germans’ attitudes to various social policies over time. The results mirror those of the previous chapter. Respondents egocentrically update their attitudes toward welfare policies consistently in private but largely fail to do so when in the presence of an interviewer. Increased risk of unemployment or deteriorations in health corresponds with respondents increasing the amount of responsibility they want the state to take for these outcomes, but only when interviewers are removed from the data collection process.

Finally, Chapter 6 tested the influence of observability with an online survey experiment. Respondents were asked to help inform the distribution of funds across a series of political action groups lobbying for specific policy outcomes. Using data from a pre-treatment questionnaire, I presented participants with vignettes that pit their own self-interest against that of their country. I randomly assigned half the respondents to see an additional treatment message that informs them their support for these various groups will be published online and in a newspaper advertisement. Respondents who received this message were significantly more likely to make sociotropic donation decisions at the cost of benefiting themselves. Further analysis demonstrated that the strongest effects of this treatment were concentrated in donation decisions about tax policy.

The previous chapter’s strong findings in the realm of tax policy offer a nice bookend to this dissertation’s opening story. The participants in my experiment ended up behaving a lot like the signers of the Responsible Wealth Project’s letter to Congress. When in private, respondents
were more likely to make an egocentric tax policy donation decision. These individuals chose to benefit themselves at a cost to the stability and competitiveness of the US economy. However, simply telling participants that their decisions would be made public caused a significant change in this behavior. Respondents in the treatment group were more likely to make a sociotropic donation decision. These participants chose to benefit the country even if it meant them paying more taxes. As can be seen in the previous analysis, this is just one of many instances of this kind of behavior.

At the risk of banality, it is worth remembering that explaining political attitudes and behavior is complicated. Understanding why individuals behave sociotropically or egocentrically is just one piece of a broader puzzle. I am not claiming that these motivations are always operational in our actions. However, the explanation and evidence I have offered suggests a systematic pattern of observability driving variation in self and other-interested behavior across a wide range of outcomes in political economy. Given that egocentric and sociotropic attitudes and behavior are ubiquitous in politics, I hope to be saying a little about a lot.

For some, a discussion of egocentrism and sociotropism may seem dated. Indeed, these approaches have been prominent features of many literatures, fields, and disciplines for decades. However, much of our thinking about these concepts has become stagnant. Many have hardened into a Manichean view, accepting one without reservation and rejecting the other as endogenous or epiphenomenal. I have offered an attempt to synthesize these two approaches and problematize sociotropism and egocentrism as behaviors.

As an approach to mass political economy, self-interest’s greatest strengths and weaknesses share origins in the theory’s simplicity. Proponents of these explanations often highlight the parsimony and face validity of egocentrism. It is rare to have a theory generate so
many predictions with such simple logic. On the other hand, these predictions are so frequently rejected by empirical realities. Critics of egocentrism have repeatedly demonstrated that our brains are far from calculating machines of self-interest. I have argued that we can progress by understanding egocentrism as one internal cause of human behavior amongst many.

Much of the criticism leveled at explanatory egocentrism results from its close association with rational choice theory. A far cry from the “universal grammar of social science” it was once held to be, rational choice theory nonetheless continues to exert a large influence on political science (Hirshleifer 1985). Defenders of this approach often claim that individuals need not consciously optimize across alternatives as long as their resulting behavior can be explained “as if” they had (Friedman 1953). Indeed, it is puzzling that rational choice theories can be as accurate as they often are when predicting aggregate behavior while simultaneously being so wrong about what actually seems to happen in our heads (Chai 2001). While the “as if” explanation remains frustrating, I believe this dissertation helps explain some of these empirical patterns. I have argued that individuals can approach political economy in self-interested, but not necessarily rational, ways at predictable times. Ignoring observability, as the vast majority of past work has, would lead to a predictably mixed record for self-interest. This project helps explain some of the mixed record of one of rational choice’s most common utility functions, egocentrism.

7.2 The Road Ahead

This dissertation also helps us gain a greater understanding of sociotropism and provides a unified framework for explaining self and other-interested political behavior. The patterns of sociotropic attitudes and behavior exhibited in my analysis are broadly consistent with both the strong and weak understandings of reciprocity. The results from Chapter 4 show two distinct
pathways for observability to increase sociotropic economic voting behavior. Within the ANES, respondents who disclosed their answers to a face-to-face interviewer were more likely to express exclusively sociotropic candidate preferences while those in private were more likely to do so egocentrically. In this case we cannot distinguish between the act of verbally conveying attitudes and the simple presence of an interviewer’s watchful gaze. Perhaps this interview mode activates the reputational concerns of weak reciprocity, and participants experience a different set of incentives for sociotropic and egocentric behavior. Alternatively, face-to-face interviews could be capturing something subliminal like the eye images in previous work (Haley and Fessler 2005). This would suggest a mechanism more consistent with strong reciprocity. I expect that both pathways were activated in this scenario. The results in Chapter 5, employing German SOEP data, also provide little chance to discriminate between these two types of reciprocity.

However, accompanying empirical results in this project offer a better opportunity to distinguish between strong and weak reciprocity. For example, the other analysis in Chapter 4 from the CSES and EES provides the best case for a finding driven by strong reciprocity. Here, disclosure of responses to another human is held constant. The effect of observability is captured in the difference between face-to-face and telephone interviews. While proponents of weak reciprocity will point to the reality that respondents of face-to-face interviews may have a greater concern of being identified in the future, this variation is the closest to the kinds of treatments, like images of eyes, employed by advocates of strong reciprocity.

Alternatively, my online survey experiment offers the best case for weak reciprocity to cause variation in sociotropic and egocentric behavior. The treatment of publicizing donation decisions provides the closest test of a pure incentive for reputation management. The fact that the treatment is most effective amongst those who stand to reap the greatest benefits from being
observed as reciprocal (younger individuals and those with heterogeneous social networks) reinforces this dynamic. In the end, this analysis is only suggestive. Future research is needed to distinguish between these two specific pathways. A factorial experimental design that manipulates the incentives and subliminal cues of observability could help explain the mechanism behind these results. However, my analysis is consistent with both of these approaches influencing the causal power of observability. I would expect a factorial experiment to show both distinct and additive effects of these pathways.

In addition to distinguishing between strong and weak reciprocity, this dissertation opens at least two additional promising avenues for future research. While I have focused on a contextual explanation of egocentric and sociotropic behaviors, there is likely to be important individual, baseline variation in these behaviors as well. Here, personality seems to be an especially promising approach. The “Big Five” personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience have a robust empirical record in explaining baseline differences in individual political behavior (McCrae and Costa 1987, Mondak 2010). Amongst other predictions, I would expect individuals exhibiting high levels of agreeableness to be more likely to engage in sociotropic evaluations.

Existing work has established a pattern of agreeable individuals engaging in various forms of prosocial behavior. Individuals with high levels of agreeableness demonstrate higher levels of non-kin altruism (Ashton et al 1998). We can also expect these citizens to exhibit greater empathy in their political behavior. Specifically, agreeableness is associated with support for policies that may lack tangible benefits for the respondent like broad social spending and environmental protection (Gerber et al 2011, Markowitz 2012). In addition to the direct effects of personality, I would expect certain individuals to be more susceptible to the effects of
observability. To this end, preliminary analysis of economic voting and donating behavior shows that individuals with high levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to new experiences exhibit the largest effects of observability.

My empirical strategy in this project has focused dichotomously on the drivers of individual and other-oriented political behavior. There is much to unpack in the latter. While I have largely operationalized sociotropism in terms of benefits to an individual’s nation at large, there are many intersecting subgroups that are likely to play important roles in these attitudes and behaviors. How an individual thinks of their own identity, and those of others in their country, is likely to exert large effects on baseline and contextual propensities for self and other-interested behaviors. Social identity theory has established robust effects of this nature in the American context (Tajfel 1974, Theiss-Morse 2009, Achen and Bartels 2017).

Understanding how observability and group identity interact will be a difficult endeavor, but the potential implications offer an exciting agenda for my future research. The previously mentioned experiment by White et al (2014) shows one potential approach. These authors demonstrate how observability decreases the propensity for Black students to “sell out” group interests. Perhaps observability works not only at the national level but also within smaller group interests across identities. Additionally, the strength of these identities is likely to shape the propensity for specific egocentric and sociotropic attitudes. Theiss-Morse (2009) demonstrates that Americans with strong national identities are more likely to hold other-oriented attitudes. However, these individuals also have a higher probability of enforcing clear and restrictive in-group boundaries of who deserves various benefits. Here I am interested in exploring a couple of future questions. First, how does observability interact with the strength of national and other group identities? Second, who is doing the observing? The presence of in-group or out-group
observers has the potential to help distinguish between various causal pathways of how observability and social context shape our attitudes and behavior.

Finally, it has become fashionable to highlight the irrational and contradictory nature of human attitudes and behaviors in the social sciences. I often echo these sentiments throughout the pages of this dissertation. However, we need to be measured and careful about the conclusions we draw from these observations. In their recent book, *Democracy for Realists*, Achen and Bartels (2017) argue that these patterns result in an inability of citizens to hold governments accountable and call for a reevaluation of the classic notion of democracy. They claim, “the choice between candidates is a coin toss … elections are capricious collective decisions based on considerations that ought to be largely irrelevant – and will in any case soon be forgotten by the voters themselves” (2016, 9). I would not be so quick to abandon the “folk” theory of democracy.

I have argued, and demonstrated with evidence, that humans approach political economy in both sociotropic and egocentric manners. Either of these approaches are fine ways for citizens to hold elected officials accountable. As social scientists, it is easy to identify biases and pathologies in the decision making of the masses without stopping to examine our own. If we, or our analysis, assume that individuals only engage in one of these types of behavior, as Achen and Bartels do with sociotropism, or much of traditional political economy does with egocentrism, we will miss a wide range of relevant outcomes. It should not be surprising that individuals articulate all kinds of contradictory and absurd attitudes, but this does not rule out systematic patterns in behavior. I have simply demonstrated one of these. In public, humans are more likely to approach politics sociotropically. In private, we are more likely to do so egocentrically. There are likely to be many more important patterns that are relevant to making democracy work. As
researchers, we have a responsibility to be more careful in where and how we look for these patterns.
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Appendix

Table A1.1: Country (and Year of Survey) Included in the CSES Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure A1.1: Histogram of EES “Incumbent Vote Probability
### Appendix A6.1: Logit Models of Egocentric Donors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egocentric Total Donor</th>
<th>Egocentric Tax Donor</th>
<th>Egocentric Visa Donor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-0.469*</td>
<td>-0.545*</td>
<td>-0.707*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.194)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td>(0.270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>-0.447</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner X Treatment</td>
<td>0.843*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.373)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.845*</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>0.476*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>474.00</td>
<td>474.00</td>
<td>474.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*p value <.05

### Appendix A6.2: Heterogeneous Treatment Regressions

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Total Egocentric Dollars</th>
<th>Total Egocentric Dollars</th>
<th>Total Egocentric Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>1.928</td>
<td>-21.783</td>
<td>-19.304*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.700)</td>
<td>(14.259)</td>
<td>(8.585)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>10.597</td>
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<td>Millennial X Treatment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(12.115)</td>
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<td>Social Media</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(6.693)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media X Treatment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.773)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous Network</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(8.443)</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>246.196*</td>
<td>243.227*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.961)</td>
<td>(9.828)</td>
<td>(6.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>474</td>
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*p value <.05
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Egocentric Welfare Dollars</th>
<th>Egocentric Trade Dollars</th>
<th>Egocentric Tax Dollars</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat Scale</td>
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<td>5.118*</td>
<td>-2.210*</td>
<td>1.407</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.806)</td>
<td>(0.796)</td>
<td>(0.872)</td>
<td>(0.904)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>62.026*</td>
<td>55.922*</td>
<td>57.967*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.408)</td>
<td>(1.390)</td>
<td>(1.525)</td>
<td>(1.579)</td>
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</table>

| R²             | 0.02                          | 0.08                       | 0.01                     | 0.01                   |
| N              | 474                           | 474                        | 474                      | 474                    |

*p value <.05