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RESPONSIVENESS TO CITIZEN PREFERENCES
AND SOCIETAL PROBLEMS IN
AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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This study is concerned with how officials in fifty-one American cities respond to both citizen preferences and societal problems when enacting and implementing policy in three issue areas. In the area of gun control, city officials are found to be responsive to neither citizen preferences nor societal problems. In the area of air-pollution control, officials respond indirectly to societal problems and directly to public opinion. And in the area of open housing, officials respond directly to both public opinion and societal problems.

Political scientists interested in urban and local politics are beginning to examine the effects of the diverse political characteristics of communities. Such research requires the establishment of standard (or criterion variables) for assessing the performance of urban governments. For example, research concerning formal governmental institutions should seek to determine whether "reformed" council manager systems perform better than "unreformed" mayor-council systems in terms of such standards as efficiency, equality, and citizen

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satisfaction. A standard that has received a substantial amount of attention in recent years concerns the level of "policy responsiveness" of local political systems.

The concept of responsiveness is a particularly attractive standard because it is, simultaneously, an important normative goal and a concept that can be operationalized for inclusion in empirical research. Hannah Pitkin has argued, policymakers in a representative government are supposed to be responsive to the preferences and needs of their constituents.¹ Although many analysts and citizens would object on philosophical grounds to the adoption of such values as equality and efficiency as standards of system performance, there is almost unanimous agreement that political systems should be responsive to citizen preferences and/or needs. Responsiveness is also an attractive standard for empirical research because—unlike many normative goals—policy responsiveness can be measured. State policy analysts have, for example, developed imperfect but useful measures of the extent to which each of the fifty states have been "responsive to citizen preferences" and "responsive to public needs and problems."² The development of valid equivalent measures of the responsiveness of American communities would significantly enhance the quality of empirically based theory on the effects of various political structures at the local level.

Despite its importance, political scientists concerned with community politics are just beginning to study the concept of responsiveness through systematic empirical research. This paper is an attempt to contribute to our understanding of responsiveness. In the first part, previous conceptualizations and operationalizations of responsiveness are discussed. By pointing out the relative merits and shortcomings of these formulations, the meaning of this important concept can be clarified. In the second part, a data base for examining the policy responsiveness of policymakers in local American communities will be presented. In the third and fourth parts, these data will be employed to address two major questions: (1) To what extent are the policy actions of urban officials responsive to citizen preferences? (2) To what extent are

community policies more a response to community problems than to citizen preferences?

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIVENESS

The term *responsiveness* refers to stimulus-response relationships. A responsive behavior or action occurs when a person "reacts readily" or "makes answer" to a stimulus. Firemen are responsive when they react swiftly to a fire alarm; patients are responsive when they react positively to treatment. Similarly, in political-science usage, responsiveness refers to the reactions of policymakers to external stimuli. Yet, in the literature on responsiveness, the concept has been accorded various meanings, depending upon the nature of the stimuli to which policymakers are expected to respond. Two types of stimuli appear to be especially important in the literature on responsiveness: (1) citizen preferences and demands and (2) public needs and problems. The notion that policymakers should respond positively to citizen preferences is articulated by Ronald Weber:

responsiveness occurs when policymakers take some form of action consistent with the demands for action by individuals and groups . . . representation of interests occurs only when the substantive demands of the interests are embodied in policy.³

The notion that policymakers should respond, not to citizen preferences, but to the existence of social problems and needs is articulated by John Grumm:

The responsive capacity of the system refers to its ability to respond effectively and efficiently to needs and problems arising in society or in the general environment of the political system. The response is in the form of policy outputs designed to meet these needs or solve these problems.⁴

In short, there is a concern with the degree to which policymakers adopt, implement, and deliver policies that reflect citizen demands and opinions; we call this concept, "responsiveness to citizen preferences." There is also a concern with the degree to which policymakers adopt,

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implement, and deliver policies in response to specific problems arising within their environments; we call this "responsiveness to social problems." In order to understand these two dimensions of responsiveness better, it is useful to review those studies that have attempted to develop systematic measures of the responsiveness of state and local governments.

RESPONSIVENESS TO CITIZEN PREFERENCES

Three major studies of comparative state and community politics—Eulau and Prewitt's *Labyrinths of Democracy*, Verba and Nie's *Participation in America*, and Shaffer and Weber's *Policy Responsiveness in the American States*—have been concerned with policy responsiveness to citizen preferences.⁵ Despite the many significant accomplishments in these studies, our understanding of responsiveness remains incomplete and unsatisfactory because of difficulties these scholars had in conceptualizing and measuring such responsiveness.

Eulau and Prewitt adopted a conceptualization of responsiveness to citizen preferences that runs counter to the common notion that responsiveness involves reacting positively to dominant public opinion. They conceptualized (and measured) responsiveness in terms of the responses of political elites to specific population groupings, such as "attentive publics" or "ad hoc interest groups," rather than any broad opinion base. Eulau and Prewitt are very explicit in rejecting the preferences of all citizens as the appropriate stimuli to which councilmen should respond. In their study, councilmen are labeled "responsive" if they are willing to "take a stand against the majority."⁶

We have no quarrel with the notion that political scientists can speak of "responsiveness to specific groups." Certainly policymakers can and do react positively to stimuli provided by attentive publics, interest groups, and protest groups.⁷ Nevertheless, whether responsiveness to particularistic group demands is more appropriate than responsiveness to dominant public preferences in a representative democracy is a dubious assumption. Eulau and Prewitt claim to derive their concept of responsiveness from Hannah Pitkin. But, as Eulau and Prewitt themselves note, Pitkin argues that representative democracy involves "acting in the interests of the represented" and behaving "in a manner

responsive to the sentiments of the constituents.”⁸ For Pitkin, the “represented” and “constituents” certainly include all members of the polity, and Pitkin makes no argument that representative systems are or should be more responsive to some constituents than others. Thus, it is difficult to accept the notion that responding to citizen preferences entails reacting more to particularistic group interests than to dominant, and, perhaps, majority preferences.

In addition to conceptualizing responsiveness to citizen preferences in a way that is at odds with conventional usage in democratic theory, Eulau and Prewitt encountered major difficulties in measuring responsiveness. Because their Bay Area project was an elite study, they gathered little data on either citizen preferences or actual policymaking behavior. Thus, instead of measuring responsiveness in terms of the extent to which policymakers enacted and implemented policies consistent with citizen preferences, Eulau and Prewitt were forced to rely upon policymakers’ assessments of their responsiveness. Such role perceptions could easily be at odds with actual behavior.

Unlike Prewitt and Eulau, Verba and Nie studied the responses of policymakers to the preferences of all citizens:

Leaders are responsive if they accurately *perceive* citizen priorities, if they *agree* with the citizenry on the nature of the community problems, and if they are *active* in trying to solve those problems seen by the citizenry. (Emphasis added.)⁹

Verba and Nie’s notion of responsiveness thus reflects a widely shared view that the stimuli to which responsive policymakers must react are the preferences and priorities of all citizens. Indeed, their concern with all constituents is demonstrated by their focus upon the equality, as well as the level, of responsiveness. Thus, their conception of responsiveness—that officials are responsive when they behave in ways preferred by all citizens—is consistent with democratic theory.

Verba and Nie operationalized responsiveness in terms of attitudinal concurrence between elites and citizens. This procedure has three important failings which diminish the utility of Verba and Nie’s findings. First, concurrence simply implies attitudinal congruence between pol-

icymakers and the public. Missing is the important element of a *policy* response; there is no assurance that even sympathetic leaders will enact public policies that reflect citizen desires. In other words, even if elites agree with citizens' policy preferences and engage in some activities that seek to enact policies corresponding to these preferences the nature of the relationship between these perceptions and behaviors and substantive policy remains unexplored. If sympathetic elites fail to enact and implement policies that reflect citizen preferences, it is questionable whether they can rightfully be considered responsive.

Second, Verba's and Nie's measure of concurrence only indicates the degree to which elites and citizens have similar perceptions of the most pressing problems facing the community. As they note, concurrence does not imply agreement on the appropriate policy responses aimed at solving these problems.¹⁰ Public welfare might well be considered a pressing problem by both conservative elites and low-income citizens, but this type of concurrence could easily vanish when specific policies are proposed. Third, Verba's and Nie's operationalization is further weakened by the small number of elites and citizens surveyed in each of the sixty-four communities comprising their sample. Surveys of seven leaders and of twenty-two to thirty citizens per community cannot be considered representative of either elite or mass-community opinions. Because of these deficiencies, the inferences regarding responsiveness to citizen preferences drawn by Verba and Nie and Hansen must be treated as suggestive, but without adequate empirical validation.¹¹

Perhaps the most satisfactory treatment of responsiveness to citizen preferences has been conducted by Shaffer and Weber. These state-policy analysts conceptualize responsiveness in terms of the extent to which public policy enactments correspond to the dominant preferences of all citizens of each state. In their analysis, the stimuli to which responsive policymakers react are citizens' preferences as measured by public-opinion simulation techniques.¹² The behavioral responses of policymakers under investigation are the enactment, or lack thereof, of various regulatory policies (e.g., gun-control laws, public employees' right-to-strike laws, right-to-work laws, etc.). Thus, their measures of

responsiveness essentially reflects the amount of correlation between simulated public opinion and policy enactments.

Despite the obvious merits of this treatment of responsiveness, Shaffer's and Weber's approach is not without its difficulties. First is the question of the direction of causality between public preferences and public policy. The notion of responsiveness implies a directional relationship in which public opinion causes public policy rather than vice versa. Shaffer and Weber recognize the directional nature of the responsiveness linkage by studying opinion at time T and policy at time $T + 2$ years.¹³ Yet, they believe that responsiveness can occur when public opinion changes to become congruent with policy. They argue, for example, that

For capital punishment and parochial aid legislation, our analysis indicates that a change in opinion was one of the principal determinants of increased . . . responsiveness. For these two areas of state regulation, there was little or no change at all in policy; instead greater responsiveness occurred when the citizenry changed its opinion to conform with existing policy.¹⁴

In short, Weber and Shaffer measure responsiveness as the degree of correspondence between opinion and policy, even if this preference-policy congruence is not caused by policymakers' reactions to public opinion. We contend that the integrity of the responsiveness concept requires that responsiveness be indicated only when it can be shown that opinion causes, at least in part, changes in policy outputs. In short, measures of responsiveness should indicate the impact of public preferences treated as independent variables on public policy, treated as dependent variables, when proper controls have been applied for reciprocal causation and spurious relationships.

A second difficulty with Shaffer's and Weber's operational treatment of responsiveness lies with their "majority rule" treatment of public preferences and with their dichotomous treatment of public policy. In Shaffer's and Weber's analysis, policymakers are found to exhibit "perfect responsiveness" if 50 percent or more of the citizens favor a policy and if that policy has been adopted. Policymakers also exhibit perfect responsiveness if less than 50 percent of the citizens favor a policy and

if that policy has not been adopted. In situations where public opinion and public policy are incongruent, policymakers are considered to be less unresponsive when public opinion is "near the 50 percent midpoint" than when the vast majority of citizens hold preferences that are counter to public policy. This approach to measuring responsiveness has two important limitations. First, Shaffer and Weber assume that 50 percent is the salient bench mark for policymakers. However, it is possible that policymakers consider 40 percent, 60 percent, or some other level of public opinion as the salient stimulus requiring a policy response.¹⁵ Which level of public support is most highly related to public policy is an interesting empirical question. Second, Shaffer's and Weber's approach to responsiveness must assume that policy adoptions are fundamentally dichotomous—that policymakers either adopt or fail to adopt specified public policies. However, some states adopt strong regulative policies (e.g., open-housing laws that apply broadly to realtors, landlords, and homeowners), while other states adopt weak policies (e.g., open-housing laws that exempt homeowners, live-in landlords, etc.). Shaffer's and Weber's approach to responsiveness requires that these unequal regulative policies be classified as equals. Less information would be lost by treating these policies as continuous variables ranging from strong policies to weak (or nonexistent) policies and by relating them to the degree of citizen support for these laws, with preferences also being treated as continuous variables.

A third difficulty in Shaffer's and Weber's operationalization of responsiveness to citizen preferences is that they focus on the impact of public preferences on policy adoptions, rather than on policy outcomes. By measuring only policy adoptions, they ignore the possibility that many of the policy responses were symbolic gestures that went unimplemented and/or unenforced. From this perspective, a more rigorous measurement of responsiveness to citizen preferences would measure not only policy adoptions but also the extent to which policy adoptions are fully implemented and enforced.¹⁶

In summary, an examination of the various conceptualizations and operationalizations of "responsiveness to citizen preferences" indicates the utility of the Shaffer and Weber approach, albeit with some substantial modifications. Responsiveness to citizen preferences occurs

when policymakers enact, implement, and deliver policies that are positive reactions to dominant citizen preferences.¹⁷ In contrast to the measures developed by Eulau and Prewitt and Verba and Nie, Shaffer's and Weber's more useful indicator of responsiveness incorporates measurements of both public preferences (as simulated) and actual policy adoptions. Nevertheless, this important research can be improved upon by measuring policy implementations, as well as policy adoptions, by discarding the majority-rule elements in their operationalization of responsiveness, and by paying more attention to directional relationships (rather than simple correlations) between public preferences and public policy.

RESPONSIVENESS TO SOCIETAL PROBLEMS

Although the concept of "responsiveness to citizen preferences" has been widely investigated, the concept of "responsiveness to societal problems" has received much less attention. The major empirical research in this regard has been conducted by Grumm; Clynych and Shaffer have also presented a paper dealing with this concept.¹⁸ In these analyses, responsiveness is conceptualized in terms of the actions that policymakers take to reduce specific problems. According to this conceptualization, police departments are responsive when they react quickly and effectively to crime. Courts are responsive to the condition of de facto school segregation when they order busing of students. In short, these studies suggest that policymakers are supposed to respond to an "objective measurement of need," even when these responses are independent of, and perhaps contrary to, public preferences.¹⁹ If the public prefers neighborhood schools but such policies fail to reduce the problem of segregation, responsive policymakers would be expected, by Grumm and Clynych and Shaffer, to respond to the "objective problem."

This illustration demonstrates that being responsive to citizen preferences does not ensure being responsive to societal problems. Although responsiveness to citizen preferences is the more important standard in democratic theory, a normative argument could be made that policymakers should be concerned with implementing policies that reduce the severity of social problems.²⁰ This suggests that the concept

of responsiveness should not be reserved exclusively for the reactions of policymakers to citizen preferences. Responsiveness to problems and objectively defined needs within the community environment represents another valid application of the concept. Rather than choosing among these conceptions of responsiveness, we believe that both conceptions of responsiveness are useful.

Responsiveness to societal problems is measured by Grumm and Clynch and Shaffer as the degree of correlation between independent variables indicating the extent to which a problem exists within a community (e.g., crime rates) and dependent variables measuring the policies directed at alleviating the problem (e.g., spending local and federal funds on police protection). Although this approach can be criticized for being too concerned with policy initiatives rather than with policy outcomes, it is essentially sound and points the way to future empirical investigations of responsiveness to societal problems.

DATA

Because of the previously discussed difficulties in conceptualizing and measuring responsiveness to citizen preferences, and because little systematic empirical work has been conducted regarding responsiveness to societal problems, it is clear that substantial research remains to be conducted concerning these important concepts. In this paper, we shall examine the levels of responsiveness to both public preferences and societal problems in the fifty-one middle-sized communities comprising the National Opinion Research Center's Permanent Community Sample.²¹

The dependent variables used in this paper are summary indices of public-policy enactments and implementations in the issue areas of gun control, air-pollution control, and open housing. Using data attained from informants in each city,²² three indices of policy in each issue area were created: (1) an index of the stringency of policy enactments; (2) an index of the stringency of policy enforcements; and (3) an index of total policy effort.²³ Data for each of these indices were obtained and analyzed for the years 1965 and 1975.

In order to measure public policy preferences, a simulation model

developed by Frank Munger and his associates was adapted and modified for application in urban settings. This model uses a combination of national survey data and census data to estimate public preferences in each community. The methodology used to obtain these estimates and the validity of these measures are described in Weber and Schumaker.²⁴

Measures of the societal problems used in this study varied, depending upon the issue area under investigation. The homicide rates of each city, as listed in the *1970 FBI Uniform Crime Reports*, were used as an index of the extent to which a problem existed in the gun-control policy area. The extent to which each community experienced pollution problems was measured by the degree to which informants in the original PSC study considered air pollution to be a community problem. The Tauber index of segregation was used as a measure of the extent to which communities were experiencing a problem in the area of open housing.²⁵

The extent of responsiveness in a policy area is determined by intercorrelating these measures of public policy, citizen preferences, and societal problems. Responsiveness to citizen preferences is indicated when there is a strong positive correlation between citizen preferences and public policy. Responsiveness to societal problems is indicated when there is a strong positive correlation between our measures of problems or needs and public policy. In Appendix B, a procedure for inferring causality (e.g., that preferences cause policy) from these correlations is presented.

RESPONSIVENESS TO CITIZEN PREFERENCES

Previous research on the responsiveness of state governments to citizen preferences has shown substantial variation in the degree of association or congruence between measures of citizen preferences and measures of corresponding public policy in various issue areas.²⁶ In this section, two hypotheses regarding this variation are developed and tested.

I. Urban policymakers will be most responsive to citizen preferences in those issue areas where such preferences are salient demand stimuli.

for policymakers.²⁷ Public preferences will be most salient in those issue areas where they are intense, informed, and consensual.

This hypothesis is based on the recognition that policymakers frequently respond to a variety of pressures other than citizen preferences, and the pressure of public preferences is frequently perceived by policymakers as being relatively nonsalient. Three types of demand pressures on policymakers are fundamental to the policymaking process: (1) unarticulated public preferences (public opinion), (2) articulated group demands, and (3) articulated elite-expert preferences.²⁸ In certain issue areas, policymakers will be most responsive to the intense preferences of well-organized interest groups. When policymakers perceive that the "public" has weak or divided preferences in an issue area, and when policymakers are simultaneously confronted with intense demands from strong interest groups that are only weakly opposed by counter groups, public policy will not be responsive to public opinion. Among the three issue areas under investigation in this analysis, gun control is the issue where group demands should be the most salient demand stimuli for policymakers. The strength of the American Rifleman's Association lobby is, of course, well established. At the same time, public-opinion research shows that, although gun-control measures are desired by the majority of citizens, these preferences are not intensely held, and there is a substantial minority in opposition to stricter gun-control regulation.²⁹

In other issue areas, policymakers will be most responsive to the preferences of elites and experts. When issues are perceived by both policymakers and the public as involving complex technical considerations, citizen preferences will again have little impact on the precise direction of public policy. Pollution control may represent such an issue. The public expresses nearly unanimous agreement in desiring cleaner air (see Appendix A), a situation that obviously stimulates policymakers to take some action. But the public is also likely to be perceived as being relatively uninformed about the complex trade-offs that result from applying strict antipollution ordinances. Because the public prefers low unemployment, stable prices, cheap and abundant energy, as well as clear air, and because strict pollution-control measures may adversely affect the attainment of the goals, policymakers

normally perceive that public preferences are little help in reaching specific decisions in these areas. The priorities of policymakers among these diverse goals and expert projections of the cost of various pollution-control programs are probably stronger determinants than "public opinion" of policy regarding the control of air pollution.

Underlying public preferences should be most reflected in public policy in the area of open housing. Studies at the national and state level have found that policymakers are highly attentive to public preference in areas of civil-rights legislation.³⁰ The attentiveness of policymaker to the public in this area reflects the belief among policymakers that in the 1960s and early 1970s civil-rights issues constituted nontechnical questions of value that were closely monitored by constituents. Although civil-rights issues have not been consensual at the national level, dominant preferences with respect to civil rights could be identified in most localities. Thus policymakers frequently perceived that there existed within their communities salient public preferences on civil rights. Elective pressures are likely to have required prudent policymakers to be responsive to public preferences in this issue area.

2. Urban policymakers will be more responsive to "public opinion" than to "popular opinion" in enacting and implementing public policy. According to Robert Nisbet, popular opinion refers to the directive opinions of citizens on specific issues.³¹ Popular opinion is what is measured when pollsters inquire of the public, "Do you favor or oppose policy X?" Such opinions may be of little importance in the policy process because of the lack of conviction with which they are held and because of their subsequent instability and manipulability.³² According to Nisbet, popular opinion is transitory—the mere whims of the times. Public opinion, however, refers to a set of cultural norms and values that are much more stable. Public opinion is concerned with diffuse support or opposition for governmental or societal action in an issue area, but it is silent about *specific* policies and remedies. Public opinion does not provide policymakers with clear directives of what the public specifically demands; rather, public opinion provides a general, constraining cultural context within which policymakers are permitted to find acceptable policies. The difference between these two types of citizen preferences can best be illustrated in the area of civil rights.

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Popular opinion in this area would be measured by a survey question asking respondents for a definite position favoring or opposing a specific open-housing bill. Public opinion in this area would be measured by a survey question asking respondents if they accepted, as a public policy goal, the achievement of integrated housing.

Policymakers are more likely to be influenced by public opinion than by popular opinion for two reasons. First, on philosophical grounds they are likely to perceive public opinion as a more proper expression of public sentiment than popular opinion.³³ Second, in representative democracies, policymakers have incentives to be concerned with electoral judgments of their performances, but the electoral judgment of policymakers is retrospective.³⁴ This means that citizens tend to vote for their representatives on the basis of the acceptability of the political outcome, rather than on the basis of congruence between popular opinion and policy enactments. In short, public acceptance of policy results, not transitory results of public-opinion polls, constitutes the important electoral incentive to which policymakers are most attentive.

The data in Table 1 regarding the degree of correlation between citizen preferences and public policy in three policy areas are consistent with both of our hypotheses. This table shows the zero-order Pearsonian correlation coefficients between various measures of preferences and policies over the fifty-one PCS cities. As predicted by the first hypothesis, urban policymakers are most responsive to citizen preferences in the area of open housing, and they are least responsive in the area of gun control. These findings hold for both the policy enactment and policy-enforcement stages of the political process. The responsiveness to citizen preferences appears to vary among issue areas depending on the saliency to policymakers of these preferences.

The second hypothesis is also supported by the results presented in Table 1. Our measures of public opinion in the areas of pollution control and open housing are strongly and significantly related to both policy adoptions and enforcement; our measures of popular opinion in these issue areas show much weaker congruence with their corresponding measures of public policy. (No measures of public opinion were available in the area of gun control.) These results suggest that there may well be two separate dimensions of public preferences

TABLE 1
ZERO-ORDER PEARSONIAN CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CITIZEN
PREFERENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY ACROSS PCS CITIES

Gun Control				
Public-Policy Measures	Popular-Opinion Measures			
	Percent Favoring Gun-Control Law (1963)^a		Percent Favoring Gun-Control Law (1973)	
Stringency of policy enactments	.04		-.01	
Stringency of enforcements	.12		.10	
Summary index of gun-control efforts	.12		-.18	
Pollution Control				
Public-Policy Measures	Public-Opinion Measure	Popular-Opinion Measure		
	Percent Perceiving Pollution as Serious Problem (1966)	Percent Preferring Strict Regulation of Industrial Pollution (1972)		
Stringency of policy enactments	.28**	-.03		
Stringency of enforcement	.43***	-.14		
Summary index of pollution control effort	.44***	.01		
Open Housing				
Public-Policy Measures	Public-Opinion Measures		Popular-Opinion Measures	
	Percent Accepting Housing Integration (1964)	(1968)	Percent Favoring Government Open Housing Laws (1966) (1973)	
Stringency of enactments	.40***	.50***	.04	-.13
Stringency of enforcements	.41***	.48***	.32**	-.03
Summary index of open-housing effort	.38***	.50***	.15	-.07

^a See Appendix A for a discussion of the measures of public preferences used in this table.

* Significant at .10 level. ** Significant at .05 level. *** Significant at .01 level.

which policymakers can respond. Citizens may provide diffuse sentiments regarding general policy outcomes (public opinion), and they may provide directives on specific policy alternatives (popular opin-

ion). This distinction between diffuse and specific public sentiments on policy parallels a previous distinction that political scientists have made regarding public sentiments on democratic principles.³⁵ Just as mass diffuse agreement on general democratic principles appear to be more important to the maintenance of democracy than is public disagreement about the specific application of these broad principles, so mass diffuse public opinion be more important than specific popular opinion in the policymaking process. Unlike popular opinion, public opinion may be a sufficiently flexible constraint on policymakers enabling them to move in general policy directions that are acceptable to the public.

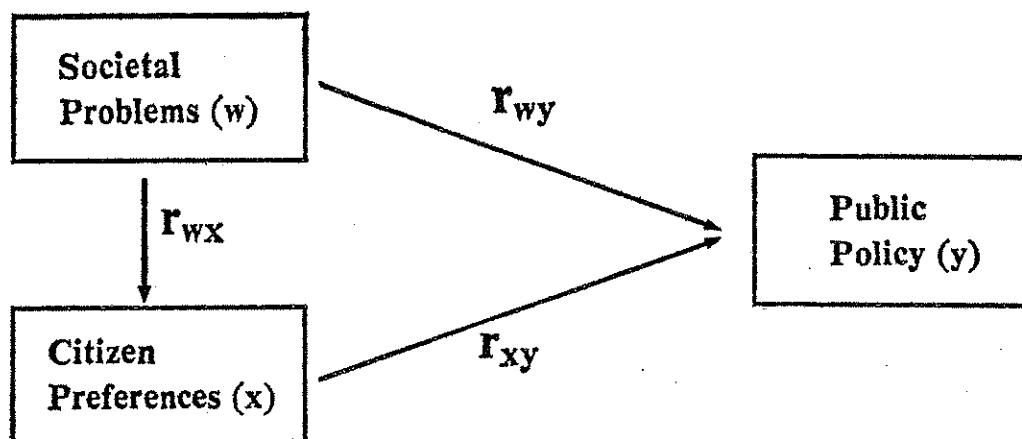
SOCIETAL PROBLEMS, CITIZEN PREFERENCES, AND POLICY RESPONSES

Well-defined societal problems, such as rising homicide rates, severe pollution conditions, or heavily segregated housing patterns, may be important policymaking stimuli. Indeed, there could well be some substantial interrelationships between problems and public preferences that affect policy enactments and implementation. Figure 1 represents a model of one probable set of linkages among societal problems, citizen preferences, and subsequent public policies. Although the model oversimplifies the complexities of these interrelationships, it does facilitate a preliminary investigation of how policymakers create policies in response to community problems. In addition, this model permits an examination of the independent effects of both problems (controlling for preferences) and preferences (controlling for the existence of problems) on policy. In Table 2, data pertaining to these relationships are presented for three policy areas. Different processes are observed in each issue area.

Gun-control policies appear to be no more responsive to identifiable community problems than they are to citizen preferences. To a certain extent, gun-control policies can be considered as "counterresponsive" because both the existence of gun problems and the existence of public preferences supporting stricter gun-control laws are weakly, but inversely, related to stringent gun-control policies. Even when commu

FIGURE 1

**Public Policy: A Response to Citizen Preferences
and/or to the Existence of Societal Problems**



ities have high homicide rates and high support of gun-control laws; policies in this area remain perversely unresponsive.

Open-housing policies, however, appear to be responsive to the ex

TABLE 2

CITIZEN PREFERENCES, THE PRESENCE OF SOCIETAL PROBLEMS, AND PUBLIC POLICY IN THREE REGULATORY AREAS

Relationship Between:	Issue Area		
	Gun Control	Pollution Control	Open Housing
Problem and preferences: r_{wx}	.33***	.57***	-.07
Preferences and policy: r_{xy}	-.18	.44***	.50***
Preferences and policy, controlling for problem: $r_{xy.w}$	-.14	.31**	.61***
Problem and policy: r_{wy}	-.15	.34***	.30*
Problem and policy, controlling for preferences: $r_{wy.x}$	-.12	.11	.38**
Joint Effect of Problem and Preferences on Policy: R^2	.05	.20	.40

a See Appendix A for discussion of the measure of public policy and public preference used in this table.

* Significant at .10 level. ** Significant at .05 level. *** Significant at .01 level.

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istence of observable housing problems (as measured by Tauber's index of housing segregation), as well as being responsive to citizen preferences. The widespread existence of neighborhood segregation is moderately related to stringent open-housing laws ($r = .30$). Interestingly, almost no relationship exists between the degree of neighborhood segregation and public preferences regarding open housing. Thus, both the existence of a housing problem and public opinion have nearly equally substantial independent impacts on open-housing policy. This finding suggests that there are, indeed, two separate stimuli to which policymakers can and do respond. The importance of these two stimuli is indicated by the finding that they explain 40 percent of the variance in open-housing policy.

In contrast to our finding that segregation problems have an impact additive to that of public opinion on open-housing policy, the extent to which communities have identifiable air-pollution problems appears to have only a small, perhaps insignificant, independent effect on air-pollution policy. Although the zero-order correlation between pollution problems and policies is a moderately strong one ($r_{wy} = .42$), the problem-policy linkage is reduced to insignificance when citizen preferences are controlled. If city officials respond to environmental problems, they appear to do so indirectly. The existence of pollution problems appears to create public opinion supporting policies alleviating these problems ($r_{wx} = .57$). Public officials, in turn, respond to these citizen preferences ($r_{xy \cdot w} = .31$). In short, the pattern of response in the area of pollution appears to be best characterized as a developmental sequence in which the existence of pollution problems creates public support for solutions to these problems which, in turn, prompts officials to enact and enforce more stringent pollution-control laws.

To summarize, we have found three distinct patterns in which community problems may relate to public policies. For gun-control policies, the existence of a serious crime problem was simply unrelated to firearms regulation. Conversely, the presence of a segregated housing problem was directly and independently related to strong open-housing policies. Of special interest here was the additive impact of preferences and problems upon policies. Finally, an indirect relation:

was found between pollution problems and policies, operating through the activation of public opinion. In none of the regulatory policy areas was a strong relationship discovered between a societal problem and policy responses in the absence of citizen preferences congruent with the policy results. Such a relationship would not be unexpected, however, in other issue areas where policymakers might be forced to enact unpopular policies in response to serious community problems (e.g., recognition of public employees' unions).

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to clarify, both conceptually and operationally, the idea of responsiveness. Responsiveness has been conceptualized as a condition that occurs when policies produced by public officials are enacted and implemented in accordance with the stimuli of (1) citizen preferences and/or (2) environmental problems. An examination of the extent of responsiveness to these stimuli in fifty-one American cities has led to a number of suggestive findings. First, there is substantial variation in responsiveness to citizen preferences among different issue areas. It is in those issue areas (such as civil rights) where public preferences are most intense and well defined that policy reflects public sentiments. Second, citizens' preferences can be differentiated into popular opinion and public opinion. The diffuse permissive sentiments of the public that specifies the outer boundaries of acceptable policies (public opinion) appear to be the type of public preference to which policymakers respond. Specific policy directives (popular opinion) may be too fragmented and transitory to constitute an important constraint on policymakers.

Third, we hypothesized that community policies would be responsive to identifiable problems. For open housing, our analysis suggested that the existence of the problem of segregated housing did have an independent impact upon antidiscrimination policies. The analysis also suggested that air-pollution policies are affected by the severity of environmental deterioration, but in this case the impact of the environmental problem on policy was indirect. The problem appeared to affect public preferences which, in turn, affected public policies.

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The analysis presented in this paper represents an attempt to investigate in the urban setting the concept of responsiveness through comparative and quantitative methods. Because our investigation examined only a few of the many questions regarding the responsiveness of city officials, and because our empirical investigations were limited to three regulative policy areas, this analysis must be considered exploratory. Political scientists have only begun to develop an empirically based understanding of responsiveness, but such an understanding seems of growing importance if we are to comprehend citizen-government linkages.

APPENDIX A

MEASURES OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND PUBLIC PREFERENCES USED IN VARIOUS STAGES OF THE ANALYSIS

The measures of policy enactments, policy enforcement, and policy effort reported in Table 1 are discussed in note 23. The summary indicators of policy effort in each issue area were used in the analysis reported in Tables 2 and 3.

The community-level measures of public preferences were obtained by a modified version of a simulation model requiring the use of national survey data. The survey data used to obtain specific measures of citizen preferences are as follows:

(a) *Percent Favoring Gun Control (1963)*. This measure was obtained from the American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO) Survey 681 (December 1963). This survey measured whether or not various "citizen-types" favored "a law which would require a person to obtain a police permit before he or she could buy a gun."

(b) *Percent Favoring Gun Control (1973)*. This measure was obtained from the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) 1973 General Social Survey. This survey used the same question as the AIPO poll of 1963.

(c) *Percent Perceiving Pollution as Serious Problem (1966)*. This measure of public opinion was obtained from Verba's and Nie's *Participation in America* survey (NORC, 1966). Respondents were asked

to indicate whether "pollution of the air is a serious problem faced by the community."

(d) *Percent Preferring Strict Regulation of Industrial Pollution (1972)*. This measure of popular opinion was drawn from the 1972 Election Study of the Survey Research Center (SRC). Respondents were asked how strict they felt government should be in curbing individual polluters, with a range of response running from 1 (very strict) to 7 (very lenient). Scores of 1 to 3 were scored as preferences for strict legislation. There was little intercommunity variation in the simulated scores on this variable, as between 80 percent and 90 percent of all citizens in each community supported strict pollution control. This may explain the weak relationships between this measure and public-policy indicators.

(e) *Percent Accepting Housing Integration (1964 and 1968)*. These measures of public opinion were drawn from the 1964 and 1968 SRC Election Study. Respondents were asked whether they accepted (or rejected) the concept of housing integration.

(f) *Percent Favoring Governmental Open-Housing Laws (1966)*. This measure of popular opinion was drawn from Verba's and Nie's *Participation in America* study, with respondents being asked to indicate "should (or should not) government play a role in open housing."

(g) *Percent Favoring Governmental Open-Housing Laws (1973)*. This measure of popular opinion was obtained from the 1973 General Social Survey of NORC. Respondents were asked to choose between two possible laws:

1. A homeowner could choose not to sell to Negroes if he so desired; and
2. Such discrimination would be prohibited.

The percent choosing the second alternative was used to simulate community open-housing preferences in 1973.

In Table 2, gun-control preferences were measured by (b); pollution-control preferences were measured by (c); and open-housing preferences were measured by (e-1968).

In Table 3 (*Appendix B*), public preferences regarding gun control at Time 1 were measured by (a); these preferences at Time 2 were measured by (b). Public preferences regarding pollution control at

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Time 1 were measured by (c); these preferences at Time 2 were measured by (d). Popular opinion regarding open-housing laws at 1 and 2 were measured by (f) and (g) respectively; public opinion regarding open-housing laws at Time 1 and 2 were indicated by the 1963 and 1968 measures of (e).

APPENDIX B

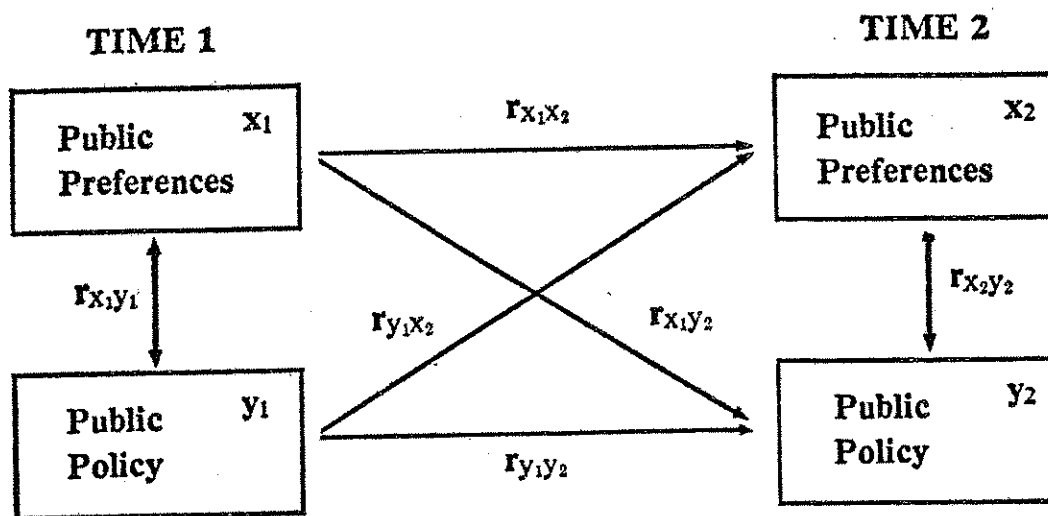
PREFERENCES AND POLICIES: A TWO-WAY STREET

Because the concept of responsiveness assumes that preferences cause policy, the substantial correlations between public opinion and public policy in the areas of pollution control and open housing do not indicate a high degree of responsiveness by local officials. An alternative interpretation of these correlations is that citizen preferences changed in response to policy adaptations. In other words, any coincidence between preferences and policy may be due to the possibility that policy adoptions cause a realignment of public sentiments so that they correspond with existing policy.³⁶ To examine the flow of causality between citizen preferences and public policies, the procedure of making "cross-lagged comparisons" of correlations between citizen preferences and public policies at two points in time was adopted. This procedure is depicted in Figure 2. The correlations that are of most interest to us are those between preferences at Time 1 and policy at Time 2 ($r_{x_1y_2}$), and those between policy at Time 1 and preferences at Time 2 ($r_{y_1x_2}$). As Gurr notes, "the rationale [of cross-lagged comparisons] is simply that if X causes Y, and the two are temporarily separated, X should have some distinct effect on Y later [$r_{x_1y_2}$ should be significantly positive], but that Y now will have little effect on X [$r_{y_1x_2}$ should approach zero]."³⁷

The results of cross-lagged comparison analyses are given in Table 3. Examining first the issue area of gun control, these data reinforce our earlier finding that public preferences and gun-control policies are not related. On this issue, preferences at Time 1 (1963) do not affect policy in 1975 ($r_{y_1x_2} = -.01$), and policies at Time 1 (1965) do not affect preferences in 1973 ($r_{y_1x_2} = .04$).

FIGURE 2

Temporal Relationships Between Citizen Preferences
and Public Policy



Regarding pollution control, the method of cross-lagged comparisons gives some support to the notion that preferences cause policy. Although our measure of policy at Time 1 (1965) is unrelated to pref-

TABLE 3
CROSS-LAGGED CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CITIZEN
PREFERENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY AT TWO POINTS IN TIME

Relationships Between:	Gun Control	Pollution Control	Open Housing	
			Popular Opinion	Public Opinion
Preferences at Time 1 and Policy at Time 1 (r_{X1Y1})	-.03	.11	-.26*	.32**
Preferences at Time 1 and Policy at Time 2 (r_{X1Y2})	-.01	.28**	-.10	.41***
Preferences at Time 1 and Preferences at Time 2 (r_{X1X2})	.29**	-.13	.92***	.87***
Policy at Time 1 and Preferences at Time 2 (r_{Y1X2})	.04	.00	-.36	.41
Policy at Time 1 and Policy at Time 2 (r_{Y1Y2})	.92***	.24	.50**	.50**
Preferences at Time 2 and Policy at Time 2 (r_{X2Y2})	.06	-.06	-.18	.50**

* Significant at .10 level. ** Significant at .05 level. *** Significant at .01 level.

erences in 1972 ($r_{y_1x_2} = .00$), our measure of preferences at Time 1 (1966) is significantly related to policy in 1975 ($r_{x_1y_2} = .28$). Nevertheless, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings. First, the correlations are not strong. Second, our measures of preferences at Time 1 and Time 2 are not strictly comparable, because our measure of pollution-control preferences at Time 1 indicates public opinion, while our measure of opinion at Time 2 indicates popular opinion.

It is with open-housing issues that the most interesting preference-policy relationships emerge, and these are made most informative because it is possible to employ measures of both popular opinion and public opinion at two separate times. According to Gurr's criteria for assessing causality, the data in Table 3 make clear that the linkage between preferences and policies in the area of open housing is not well captured by the inference that preferences simply cause policy. Instead, the linkage between preferences and policy in this issue area appears to be one of reciprocal causation. Moreover, a precise specification of the preference-policy relationship must take into account whether preferences are diffuse or specific.

All of the relationships between specific *popular* opinion and policy in the area of open housing are negative. The strongest and most suggestive of these relationships is the one between policy in 1965 and preferences in 1973 ($r_{y_1x_2} = -.36$). This indicates that those cities with the strongest open-housing laws in 1965 were precisely those cities having the least public support for specific open-housing ordinances in subsequent years. This finding suggests a limitation on the notion that citizens frequently and easily change their opinions in order to make them conform to existing policy.³⁸ In this case at least, the data suggest that the creation of regulatory policy may result in hostility toward (rather than support for) policies.

The data in Table 3 show positive correlations that are significant at the .05 level between all measures of diffuse *public* opinion and public policy. The findings that preferences at Time 1 (1964) are strongly related to policy in 1975 ($r_{x_1y_2} = .41$) and that policy at Time 1 (1965) is strongly related to preferences in 1968 ($r_{y_1x_2} = .41$) suggest that policymakers both respond to public opinion and help create an environment of public acceptance through their policy enactments. Appar-

ently the enactment of open-housing policy in communities legitimizes the abstract notion of integrated housing for many citizens, but this diffuse support for integration is not translated into specific support for restrictive open-housing laws. Nevertheless, an environment of diffuse support of integration, rather than an environment of specific support for open housing, is sufficient to enable policymakers to enact new open-housing legislation in subsequent time periods. Thus, in the area of open-housing, policymakers appear to create, through their policies, a public-opinion environment to which they can "be responsive" at a later time.

In summary, this analysis of cross-lagged comparisons in three regulative issue areas has suggested three distinct patterns of causality linking public preferences and policy adoptions. In the area of gun control, preferences and policy are not linked in any causal fashion. In the area of pollution control, there is evidence of a linkage in which preferences cause policy; such a pattern, of course, indicates "responsiveness" as we conceptualize that term. In the area of open housing, there is evidence of reciprocal causation in which preferences affect policy and vice versa. We suspect that this third pattern of causal interrelationships describes the true linkages between preferences and policy in many issue areas. If such an inference is correct, it suggests a need to disentangle single measures of association between preferences and policy into two component parts. Only the impact of preferences on policy—not the impact of policy on preferences—indicates "responsiveness."

NOTES

¹ H. F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

² W. R. Shaffer and R. E. Weber, *Policy Responsiveness in the American States* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1974); J. G. Grumm, *A Paradigm for the Comparative Analysis of Legislative Systems* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973).

³ R. E. Weber, "The Political Responsiveness of the American States and their Local Governments," in *People vs. Government: The Responsiveness of American Institutions*, ed., L. N. Rieselbach (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1975), p. 193.

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⁴ Grumm, *A Paradigm for the Comparative Analysis of Legislative Acts*, p. 19.

⁵ H. Eulau and K. Prewitt, *Labyrinths of Democracy: Adoptive Linkages, Representations, and Policies in Urban Politics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973); S. Verba and N. H. Nie, *Participation in American Political Democracy and Social Equality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Shaffer and Weber, *Policy Responsiveness in the American States*. Research concerning the "ethos theory" of urban politics—for example, the seminal article by R. L. Lineberry and E. P. Fowler, "Reformism and Public Policy in American Cities," *American Political Science Review* (September 1967): 701-16—is not included in this discussion because this research is concerned with the responsiveness of urban institutions to varying conceptions of "the public interest" and to "community cleavages." Because of the unclear and problematic relationship between these ethos theory concepts and the concepts of "citizens' preferences," Lineberry and Fowler's analysis tells us little about how different kinds of government respond to citizens' preferences. For a critique of the conceptual and methodological ambiguities of the ethos theory in this regard, see T. M. Henne, "Problems in Concept Formation: The Ethos 'Theory' and the Comparative Study of Urban Politics," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 14 (November 1970): 537-65 and Albert K. Karning, "Private-Regarding Policies, Civil Rights Groups, and the Mediating Impact of Municipal Reform," *American Journal of Political Science* 19 (February 1975): 92-94. The work of Shaffer and Weber is selected as the most ambitious study representative of a broader number of state policy studies, including those of F. J. Munger, "Opinions, Elections, Parties, and Policies: A Cross-State Analysis" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, September 1969); W. L. Shade, "F. J. Munger, 'Consensus, Conflict, and Congruence: Policy-Making in the American States'" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, September 1973); A. Hopkins, "Opinion Publics and Support for Public Policy in the American States," *American Journal of Political Science* 18 (February 1974): 117-78; and R. L. Sutton, "The States and the People: Measuring and Accounting for State Representativeness," *Polity* 5 (Fall 1973): 451-76.

⁶ Eulau and Prewitt, *Labyrinths of Democracy*, p. 434.

⁷ P. Schumaker, "Policy Responsiveness to Protest Group Demands," *Journal of Politics* 37 (May 1975): 488-521.

⁸ Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, p. 210.

⁹ Verba and Nie, *Participation in America*, p. 302.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹¹ S. B. Hansen, "Participation, Political Structure, and Concurrent Policy," *American Political Science Review* 69 (December 1975): 1181-99.

¹² R. E. Weber, *Public Policy Preferences in the States* (Bloomington: Indiana Institute for Public Administration, Indiana University, 1971).

¹³ Schaffer and Weber, *Policy Responsiveness in the American States*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁵ Hopkins, "Opinion Publics and Support for Public Policy in the American States."

¹⁶ F. S. Levy, A. J. Meltsner, and A. B. Wildavsky, *Urban Outcomes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 4-8.

¹⁷ It should be clear from this discussion that the concept of "citizen policy preferences" is closely related to, yet distinct from, the concept of "citizens' attitudes." In political science research, "attitudes" usually refer to individual affect (like/dislike) toward various political objects and ideas. Individual evaluations of abstract principles of governance (e.g., "minority rights"), institutions (e.g., "the two-party system"), and personalities are all included in analyses of "political attitudes." In contrast, only citizens' evaluations of public policy (here defined as referring to governmental actions or inactions on behalf of specified political goals) are included in the more narrow concept of "citizens' policy preferences." Moreover, in the present context, citizens' policy preferences refer to aggregated, macro- or community-level measures of public support or opposition to particular policies, rather than to individual- or micro-level attitudes toward policies or other objects of citizen evaluation.

¹⁸ Grumm, *A Paradigm for the Comparative Analysis of Legislative Systems*; E. J. Clynch and W. R. Shaffer, "Policy Responsiveness in the American States with Respect to LEAA Black Grants" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, May 1975).

¹⁹ Grumm, *A Paradigm for the Comparative Analysis of Legislative Systems*, p. 42.

²⁰ T. J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1969); S. R. Huntington, "The Democratic Distemper," *The Public Interest* 41 (Fall 1975).

²¹ P. H. Rossi and R. L. Crain, "The NORC Permanent Community Sample," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32 (Summer 1968): 261-72. The Permanent Community Sample (PCS) was selected because, in other papers, we intend to examine the determinants of responsiveness. Many of the community characteristics, such as community power-structure variables, that may affect responsiveness have been measured for each of the fifty-one PCS cities. See T. N. Clark, "Community Structure, Decision-making, Budget Expenditures, and Urban Renewal in 51 American Communities," *American Sociological Review* 33 (August 1968): 576-92, for an illustrative discussion of some of the measures available for such analysis.

²² Questionnaires regarding public policy were sent to three informants in each of the fifty-one cities during the summer of 1975. These informants were: (1) the editors of the major metropolitan newspaper, (2) the mayor or city manager in each city, and (3) the president of the League of Women Voters in each city. Responses to the questionnaires were obtained from at

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least one (and normally two or three) informant in each city. However, because informants were sometimes uncertain or gave conflicting indications of community policy in these areas, the number of cities included in the final analysis varies from issue to issue (for gun control, N = 48; for pollution control, N = 48; for open housing, N = 42).

²³ Informants were asked if specific ordinances—such as (1) prohibitions on the sale of Saturday Night Specials, (2) laws requiring registration of any firearms, and (3) laws requiring permits to carry handguns—exist in their communities. Indices of the “stringency of policy enactments” were created for each of the three policy areas by simply summing the number of these specific ordinances each community had in 1965 and 1975. Additionally, for each policy area, informants were asked to indicate, on a four-point scale, the extent to which existing ordinances were “fully enforced.” Indices of “the stringency of policy enforcement” were developed by averaging the judgments of the various informants. The “index of total policy effort” was created as a multiplicative combination of the policy enactment and policy-enforcement scores.

²⁴ Weber, *Public Policy Preferences in the States*; P. D. Schumaker, “Synthetic Estimate of Citizen Policy Priorities for American Communities” (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Phoenix, April 1977).

²⁵ K. Tauber and A. Tauber, *Negroes in Cities* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1965).

²⁶ Sutton, “The States and the People”; R. E. Weber and W. R. Shaffer, “Public Opinion and American State Policy-Making,” *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 16 (November 1972): 683–99.

²⁷ R. S. Erikson, “The Relationship Between Public Opinion and State Policy: A New Look Based on Some Forgotten Data,” *American Journal of Political Science* 20 (February 1976): 25–36.

²⁸ R. Getter and P. D. Schumaker, “Public Opinion, Group Demand, and Allocation of Revenue Sharing Funds in Local Communities” (Paper presented at the Western Political Science Association, San Francisco, April 1–3, 1976).

²⁹ H. Erskine, “The Polls: Gun Control,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 1972): 460.

³⁰ For studies at the national level, see W. E. Miller and D. E. Stokes, “Constituency Influence in Congress,” *American Political Science Review* 57 (March 1963): 45–56; C. F. Cnudde and D. J. McCrone, “The Link Between Constituency Attitudes and Congressional Voting Behavior: Causal Model,” *American Political Science Review* 60 (March 1966): 67–72. For a study at the state level, see Weber and Shaffer, “Public Opinion and American State Policy-Making.”

³¹ R. Nisbet, “Public Opinion versus Popular Opinion,” *The Public Interest* 41 (Fall 1975): 168.

³² See P. E. Converse, “Attitudes and Non-Attitudes: Continuation or Dialogue,” in *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*, ed., E.

Tufte (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1970); M. Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 7-11.

³³ K. Prewitt and H. Eulau, "Political Matrix and Political Representation—Prolegomenon to a New Departure from an Old Problem," *American Political Science Review* 63 (June 1970): 430.

³⁴ V. O. Key, *The Responsible Electorate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

³⁵ J. W. Prothro and C. M. Grigg, "Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," *Journal of Politics* 22 (August 1960): 276-94.

³⁶ Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*.

³⁷ T. R. Gurr, *Politimetrics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 165.

³⁸ Shaffer and Weber, *Policy Responsiveness in the American States*, p. 55.