abstract, tables and figures to accompany.....

Bee-tas and Bay-tas: How Social Structure Shapes
Attitudes in Britain and the United States

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Abstract and Summary*

Anglo-American differences have intrigued travelers and essayists
for centuries, but systematic social science data are scarce.
Recent studies (Kerckhoff, Campbell and Trott, 1982; Robinson and
Kelley, 1979; Treiman and Terrell, 1975; Vanneman, 1980) suggest
suprising similarities in the two "objective" stratification
systems, but, prior to the ISSP, persuasive data on attitudes and
opinions were scarce.

Table 1a defines 10 such "subjective" variables and Figure 1
displays their national differences, with the vertical scale in
terms of U.S. standard deviations. Britons are strikingly
more favorable on welfare state issues and strikingly lower on
political efficacy; they are more liberal on sex items
(Abortion, Premarital sex, Homosexuality) and two of four civil
liberties items (Suspect's right, Death Penalty). On free
speech there is little difference for "revolutionaries" while the
British are less tolerant of free speech by racists. Britons are
a bit more conservative in their party preference - if one is
willing to equate Tories and Republicans. By and large,
though,the theme is one of greater "liberalism" in Britain.

Table 1b defines ten standard independent variables that might
account for the national differences and Figure I shows sharp
transatlantic differences on eight. While Americans and Britains
differ little in Age and and Occupational structure, the British
are strikingly less religious (Greeley, 1987) and strikingly
lower in Educational attainment, Income, Relative Income, and
Subjective Class.

In sum, "America is a pious middle class nation, while Britain
is a secular working class one", a broad generalization supported
in Table 2 where we see most Britons define themselves as
working class and irregular church goers, while most Americans do
not.

The analyses in this report ask whether these sharp difference in
social structure can account for the differences in attitudes and
opinions.

First, looking at the independent variables (Table 3 and Figure 2)
we see, though their means differ sharply, the structural
coefficients are quite similar in the two nations. The two sets
of coefficients correlate .796 and the correlation rises to .893
if the outlier, Age and Income,is removed.

Figure 3 scrutinizes that outlier. We see neither relation is
linear. Instead, they are inverted Vs - sharp for the U.S., muted
for Britain. Could it be that the much smaller increase in income
from ages 20 to 50 in Britain explains the (false) impression that
British occupational mobility is less than American?

Figure 4 gives the basic data, multiple regressions of the 10
subjective variables on the seven predictors in the two countries.
As in Table 3, there is fair agreement (r = .684), although I'd
say it is less than for Table 3. Figure 4 displays the mean
absolute coefficient for the seven predictors. It seems to say:

(1) Age, Education, and Church Attendance are the best
predictors in both countries - though Americans may be more
sensitive to Religiosity and Britons to Age (analyses not
reported here suggest that Religiosity operates in pretty much the
same way within major faiths in both countries).

(2) Income,Subjective Income, Class, and Occupation have weak
effects in both nations. These negative findings challenge the
popular impression that class makes a bigger difference in
Britain, and the Sociologists' assumption that occupational level
is a powerful predictor of behavior anywhere. (Exception: as in
Vanneman, Subjective class predicts Party in Britain but not the
U.S.)

Having seen that independent variables whose levels differ between
countries seem to relate to dependent variables within countries,
let us ask whether these relationships can account for the
national differences.

The approach is to substitute British means in American equations
and American means in British equations and ask what happens to
the differences between the countries.

Figure 5 summarizes. The left hand points show the original
difference, the right hand points the difference after equating
on both Education and Church attendance, and the middle points the
differences when the controls are adjusted one at a time. (The left
side displays the British data, the right U.S.) The main story is
told by the tilt of the lines. If they slope down, Education and
Religiosity tend to explain the national differences.

The first two do slope down. For the political items,
Efficacy and Welfare State, Education and Religiosity reduce but
do not explain the original differences. That is, part of the
reason Britains are less efficacious and more pro Welfare state is
their lesser schooling and piety.

For the sex and free speech items (REV, PRESEX, HOMOSEX,
ABORT, and RAC) things are not so simple - the control variables
work in opposite directions! Secularism tends to liberalize.
Indeed, when we adjust religiosity alone, we can (almost) explain
each of the differences. But Education also tends to liberalize,
so it operates as a suppressor variable - the liberalism lead of
the British, which wilted when Religiosity was adjusted, tends to
perk up when Education is equated. Since the two variables work
work in opposite directions, the final result when both Education
and Church are adjusted is a fluctuating compromise.

Political Party shows a third pattern — both Education and Church operate as suppressor variables. Thus, British party preference becomes even more "consevative" when we adjust.

Finally, the two "crime variables", CRIM and DEATH, show inconsistent results because the structural coefficients differ in the two countries.

To perhaps impose more pattern on the results than the data warrant:

...By comparison, Great Britain is distinctly secular and down market.

...Politically, this goes some way toward explaining Britons' lesser feelings of efficacy and greater endorsement of the Welfare state...despite which, they are less enthusiastic about their left party than are Americans.

...In terms of permissiveness on social issues, the greater British tolerance is heavily influenced by their secularism (the greater American conservatvism by our relative piety); but it is simultaneously dampened by their lower Education levels.

...The results on attitudes toward criminals are too mixed to admit of a snappy summary.

In sum: While Britain is unambiguously secular and down market compared with America and these variables affect attitudes and opinions similarly in both nations; the structure of the coefficients is such that as often as not, the objective variables operate as suppressors or work in opposite directions.Thus, when the accounts are added up, SES and Secularism do not tell us why Britains and Americans differ on attitudes and opinions.

Table 1a

Dependent Variables

1) Civil Liberties

a) Free Speech, Revolutionaries (REV)

Two-item scales from ISSP module (GSS=REVSPEAK,REVPUB;
BSA=REVMEET, REVPUB). "First, consider people who want to
overthrow the government by revolution. Do you think such people
should be allowed to....hold public meetings to express their
views....publish books expressing their views...? Answers to each
range from 1=Definitely to 4=Definitely Not. The scale is the
average of the two answers.

	GSS85	BSA85
Mean	2.470	2.390
Std. Dev.	1.121	1.053
N	612	1401

b) Free Speech, Racist (RAC)

Same as 1a) for "people who believe that whites are racially
superior to all other races"...

	GSS85	BSA85
Mean	2.392	2.701
Std. Dev.	1.078	1.077
N	611	1407

c) Suspect's Rights (CRIM)

Three-item scales from ISSP module: "Suppose the police get
an anonymous tip that a man...without a criminal record...is
planning to break into a warehouse. Dou you think the police
should be allowed, without a court order to...keep the man under
surveillance (GSS=MANTAIL, BSA=NONCRIM1)...tap his telephone
(GSS=MANTAP, BSA=NONCRIM2)...open his mail (GSS=MANREAD,
BSA=NONCRIM3)...detain the man overnight for questioning?
(GSS=MANHOLD, BSA=NONCRIM4)? Answers range from 1=Definitely to
4=Definitely Not. Scale is the mean on the four items.

	GSS85	BSA85
Mean	2.878	3.017
Std. Dev.	.652	.706
N	596	1416

d) Death Penalty (CAPPUN)

     GSS (CAPPUN): "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?" 0=Favor 1=Oppose.
     BSA (BCAPPUN): "Are you in favour of or against the death penalty for...murder in the course of a terrorist act...murder of a policeman...other murders?" For "other murders" 0=In favour of, 1=Against.

	GSS82-86	BSA85
Mean	.243	.318
Std. Dev.	.429	.466
N	7477	1448

2) Sex Norms

a) Premarital Sex (PRESEX)

     GSS (PREMARSX) "If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is (1) Always wrong (2) Almost always wrong (3) Wrong only sometimes or (4) Not wrong at all?"

     BSA (PMS) "If a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage, what would your general opinion be? (1) Always wrong (2) Mostly wrong (3) Sometimes wrong (4) Rarely wrong (5) Not wrong at all?"

	GSS82-86	BSA85
+1	Not wrong at all	Not wrong at all
0	other	other
-1	Always wrong	Always wrong
Mean	.127	.294
Std. Dev.	.820	.697
N	5293	1743

b) Homosexual Sex (HOMOSEX)

     GSS (HOMOSEX), BSA (HOMOSEX) "What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex....?"

     Responses and recodes same as for Premarital Sex (above).

	GSS82-86	BSA85
Mean	-.598	-.477
Std. Dev.	.725	.710
N	4331	1731

c) Abortion (ABORT)

     GSS "Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion (Yes, No) if....she is married and does not want any more children

(ABNOMORE)....the family has a very low income and cannot afford
any more children (ABPOOR)....she is married and does not want to
marry the man (ABSINGLE)...?

BSA ..."Please say whether or not you think the law should
allow an abortion (Yes, No) (if)....the couple agree they do not
not wish to have the child (ABORT2)...the couple cannot afford
any more children (ABORT4)... the woman is not married and does
not wish to marry the man (ABORT3)...?

The index is the sum of "yes" answers from zero to three.

	GSS82-86	BSA85
Mean	1.326	1.752
Std. Dev.	1.372	1.282
N	5660	1403

3) Politics

a) Party Identification (PARTY)

. GSS (PARTY), BSA (PARTYID2)

	GSS82-86	BSA85
+1	Republican	Conservative
0	Independent	Alliance
-1	Democrat	Labour
Mean	-.1624	-.0664
Std. Dev.	.9250	.8881
N	7481	1501

b) Welfare State Spending (WELFARE)

These three-item scales come from an ISSP battery of eight
"various areas of government spending". Respondents were asked
whether they would like to see the government...1) Spend much more
(2) Spend more (3) Spend the same as now (4) Spend less or (5)
Spend much less...on:

	GSS Mnemonic	BSA Mnemonic
Health	SPHLTH	GVSPEND2
Old Age Pensions	SPRETIRE	GVSPEND6
Unemployment benefits	SPUNEMP	GVSPEND7

The index is the mean on the three items

	GSS85	BSA85
Mean	2.653	2.157
Std. Dev.	.709	.608
N	616	1414

c) Political Efficacy (POLEFF)

These four-item scales come from an ISSP battery of 10

Agree/Disagree statements:

	GSS Mnemonic	BSA Mnemonic
The public has little control over what politicians do in office (Agree=2, Disagree=1)	POLEFF1	POLITIC1
The average person can get nowhere by talking to public officials (Agree=2, Disagree=1)	POLEFF2	POLITIC2
The average person has considerable influence on politics (Agree=1, Disagree=2)	POLEFF3	POLITIC3
The government is generally responsive to public opinion (Agree=1, Disagree=2)	POLEFF7	POLITIC7

The index is the average for the four items

	GSS85	BSA85
Mean	.177	1.036
Std. Dev.	1.388	1.091
N	527	1106

Table 1b

Independent Variables

Variable		GSS82-86	BSA85
Age	Max	89	96
	Min	18	18
	Categories	72	79
	Mean	44.8987	44.4539
	Std. Dev.	17.8627	18.1756
	N	7543	1764
	Mnemonic	AGE	RAGE
Education	+1	college degree	university degree
	0	all other	all other
	-1	less than high	No O levels
	Mean	-.104	-.480
	Std. Dev.	.658	.626
	N	7571	1744
	Mnemmonic	DEGREE	EDQUAL
Occupation	+1	Prof., Mgrs.	I,II*
	0	Crafts, Farm, Clerical,Sales	III*
	-1	Operatives, Labor, Service	IV,V*
	Mean	-.058	-.030
	Std. Dev.	.788	.724
	N	7093	1598
	Mnemonic	OCC	RSOCCLAS

* Registrar General's classification

Family Income*	Max	$80,000+	$30,000+
	Min	$500	$1,500
	Mean	$24948	$13804
	Std. Dev.	$20874	$8975
	N	5579	1508
	Mnemonic	INCOME82	HHINCOME

* US = 17 dollar categories recoded to midpoints and plausible top
Britain = 11 pound categories recoded to midpoints and plausible top and converted to dollars assuming pound=1.5 dollars.

Subjective Income			
	+1	"Above average"	"High"
	0	"Average"	"Middle"
	-1	"Below Average"	"Low"
	Mean	-.102	-.466
	Std. Dev.	.695	.537
	N	7504	1759
	Mnemonic	FINRELA	SRINC

Subjective Social Class			
	+1	Upper, Middle	Upper middle, Middle
	0	Working, Lower	Upper Working, Working, Poor
	Mean	.491	.287
	Std. Dev.	.500	.452
	N	6741	1720
	Mnemonic	CLASS	SRSOCCL

Church Attendance			
	+1	Weekly+	Weekly+
	0	Other	Other
	-1	No religion	No religion
	Mean	+.291	-.233
	Std. Dev.	.591	.635
	N	7537	1757
	Mnemonic	RELIG,ATTEND	BATTEND

Figure 2

POLITICS

WELF. STATE ● .70
EFFICACY (low) ● .62

PARTY (RIGHT) ● -.10

SEX

ABORTION ● .31
PREMARITAL ● .26
HOMOSEX ● .17

CIVIL LIBERTIES

SUSPECTS ● .21
DEATH PEN ● .18
REVOLUTIONARY ● .07

RACIST ● -.29

SES

OCC ● .04

CLASS ● -.41
RELATIVE INCOME ● -.52
INCOME ● -.53
EDUC ● -.57

AGE, CHURCH

AGE ● -.02

CHURCH ● -.85

STD. DEV. (US)

+1.00

+.50

.00

-.50

-1.00
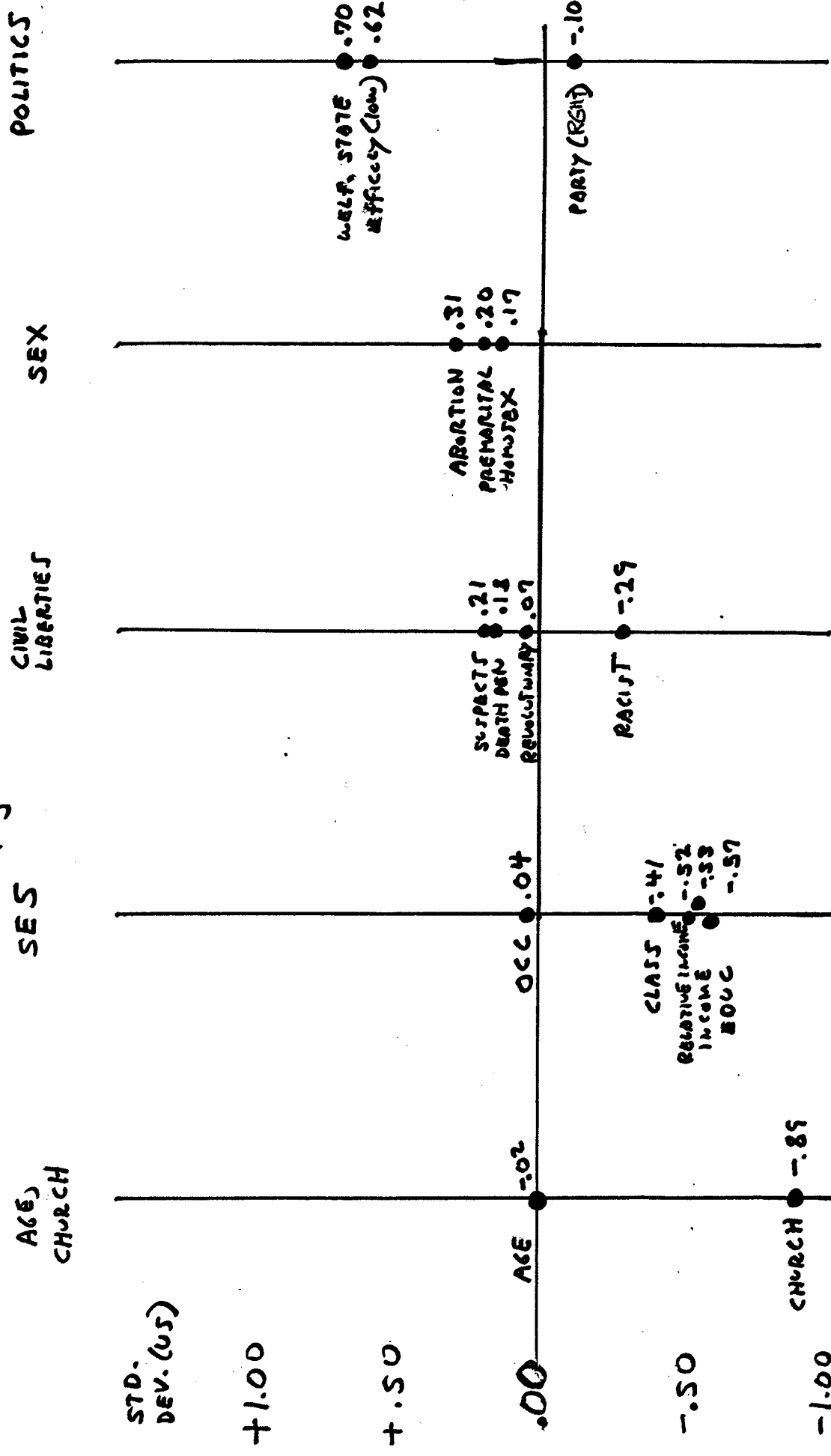
BRITISH MEAN MINUS US MEAN

Source: Tables 2a & 2b

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Table 2.

Nation, Subjective Social Class, and Church Attendance

(2a)

Subjective Class

Nation	Church	Working	Middle	Total %	
Britain	Weekly+	7.0%	4.4%	11.4%	
	Other	39.1%	15.1%	54.2%	
	No Religion	25.2%	9.2%	34.4%	
	Total	71.3%	28.7%	100.0%	(N=1710)
USA	Weekly+	16.9%	19.1%	36.0%	
	Other	30.9%	25.9%	56.8%	
	No Religion	3.8%	3.4%	7.2%	
	Total	51.6%	48.4%	100.0%	(N=7055)

(2b)

Per Cent.......	Britain	USA
Working Class AND Less than Weekly	64.3%	34.7%
Middle Class AND Some Religion	19.5%	45.0%

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Table 3.

Regressions (Betas) for Independent Variables

Class	Subj.. Income	Income	Occ.	Educ.	Age	Dependent	Nation	R
					-.346	Educ.	Britain	.35
					-.261	"	USA	.26
			.528	.161		Occ.	Britain	.50
			.535	.104		"	USA	.52
			.277	.246	-.247	Income	Britain	.55
			.228	.251	-.006	"	USA	.42
		.503	.057	.058	.052	SubInc	Britain	.54
		.454	.075	.082	.027	"	USA	.52
	.155	.098	.090	.253	.117	Class	Britain	.43
	.221	.091	.105	.162	.192	"	USA	.44
.017	.049	-.033	.017	.131	.298	Church	Britain	.43
.026	.015	-.021	.001	.034	.203	"	USA	.20

Figure 2.

Plot of Absolute Values in Table 3

1=Age
2=Education
3=Occupation
4=Income
5=Subjective Income
6=Subjective Class
7=Church Attendance

Figure 3

AGE AND FAMILY INCOME IN THE USA AND BRITAIN*

$25109 - 93 \times Age$
(r = -.079)
(eta = .295)

$21219 - 169 \times Age$
(r = -.338)
(eta = .426)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	MEAN (N)
USA ●	19180 (679)	23648 (1568)	30615 (1105)	32801 (964)	25591 (805)	16214 (618)	11249 (343)	MEAN (N)
BRITAIN ✱	14522 (186)	15693 (363)	16920 (326)	16624 (214)	11819 (227)	6915 (155)	4835 (53)	MEAN (N)
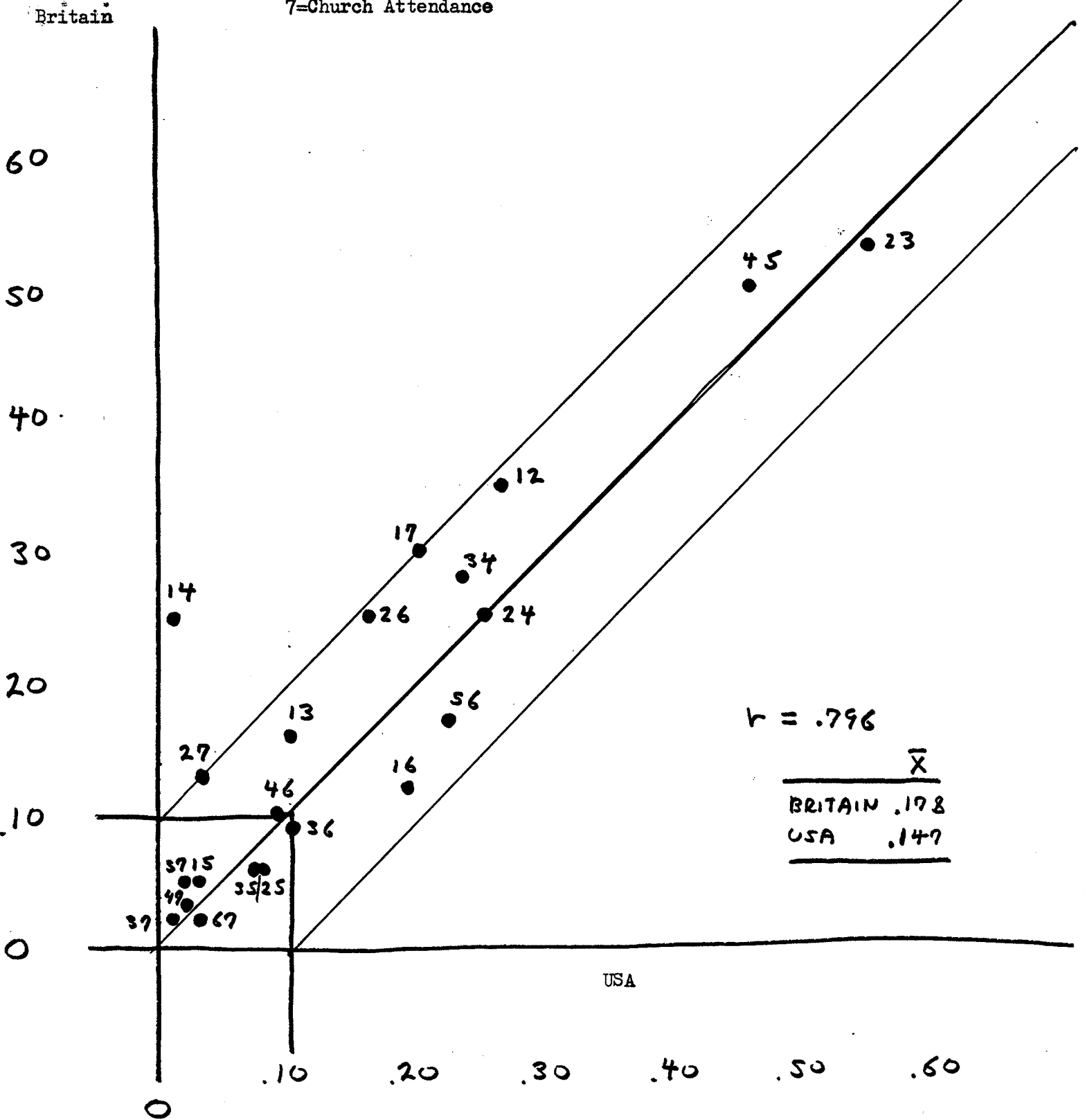
35000
30000
25000
20000
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10000
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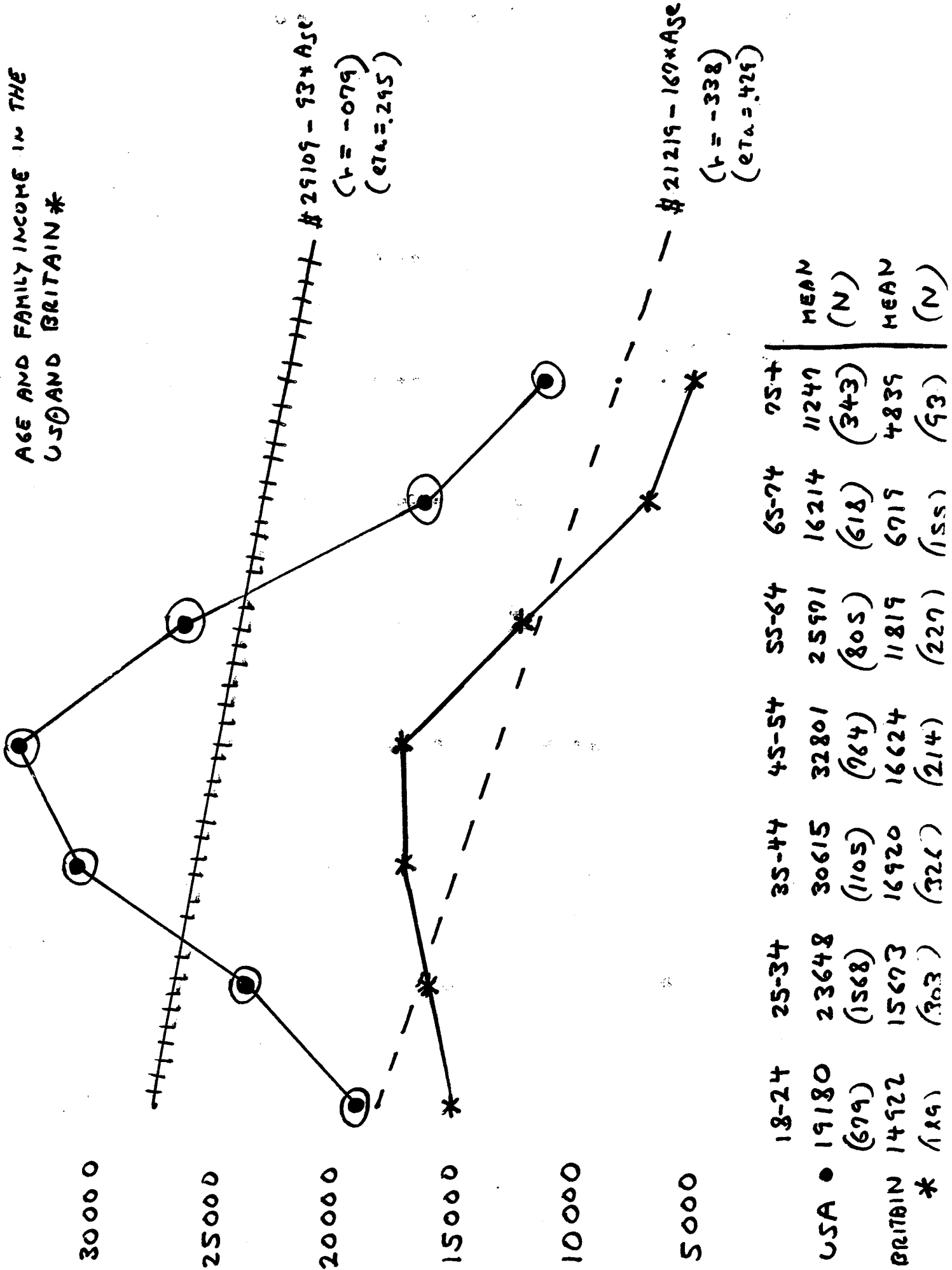
Table 4.

Regressions: Independent and Dependent Variables

Age	Church	Educ	Occ.	Income	Subjective Income	Class	Dep.	Nat.	R
−.252	−.069	+.157	+.026	+.006	−.070	−.018	REV	GB	.35
−.264	−.206	+.221	−.034	−.067	+.087	+.080	"	US	.47
−.028	−.125	+.115	+.044	+.134	−.035	−.019	RAC	GB	.26
−.109	−.221	+.253	−.010	−.029	+.103	+.043	"	US	.41
−.072	−.083	+.081	+.002	−.035	−.086	−.081	CRIM	GB	.19
−.020	+.041	+.102	−.081	−.010	−.005	.027	"	US	.11
+.003	+.082	+.259	+.022	+.043	−.008	−.020	CAPPUN	GB	.30
−.012	+.042	+.011	−.026	−.065	−.044	+.007	"	US	.11
−.366	−.229	−.028	−.010	+.082	−.040	−.051	PRESEX	GB	.50
−.227	−.357	+.046	+.089	+.038	+.023	+.023	"	US	.48
−.140	−.141	+.199	−.030	+.064	−.008	−.016	HOMOSEX	GB	.35
−.111	−.250	+.153	+.095	−.003	+.030	+.038	"	US	.39
+.050	−.125	+.030	+.004	+.028	−.025	−.001	ABORT	GB	.23
+.025	−.338	+.161	+.057	+.035	+.027	+.035	"	US	.41
−.126	−.028	+.039	−.099	−.224	−.062	−.202	PARTY	GB	.41
+.016	−.039	−.046	−.038	−.063	−.069	−.072	"	US	.20
−.035	−.028	−.038	−.051	−.189	−.133	−.128	WELFARE	GB	.39
−.004	−.061	−.065	−.088	−.205	−.062	−.043	"	US	.35
−.171	−.054	−.170	+.035	+.018	−.075	−.093	POLEFF	GB	.29
−.026	−.138	−.192	+.023	+.020	−.139	_.020	"	US	.29

Signs for dependent variables: Positive end = Tolerant/REV, Tolerant/RAC, Pro suspect/CRIM, anti death penalty/CAPPUN, Tolerant/PRESEX, Tolerant/HOMOSEX, Yes, would allow/ABORT, Labour or Democratic/PARTY, Spend more/WELFARE, Less efficacious/POLEFF.

Figure 4

Average Absolute Value of Coefficients in Table 4

BRITAIN
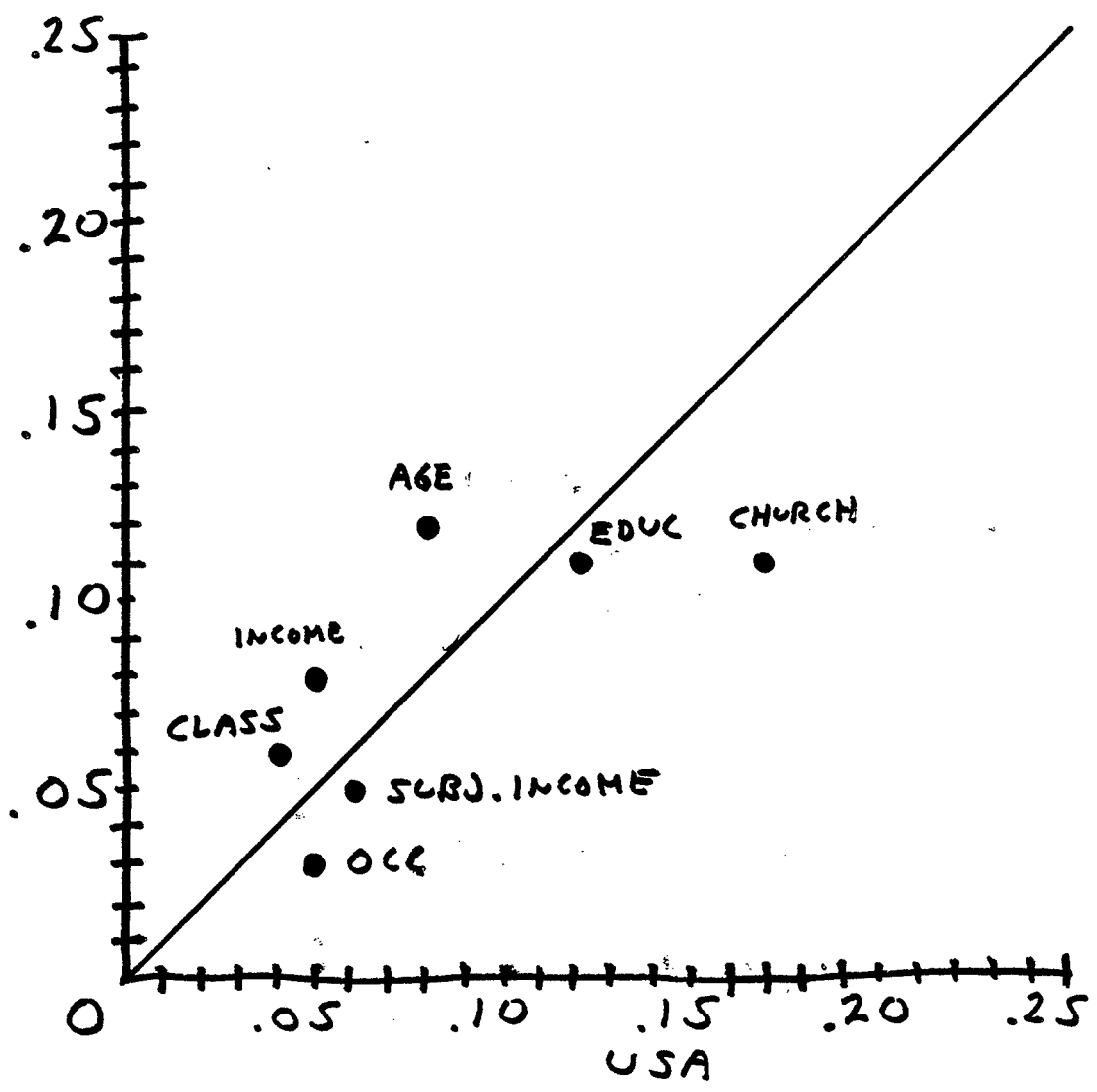
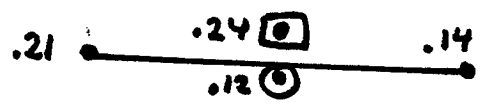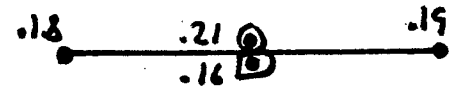|	AGE	CHURCH	EDUC	OCC	INCOME	SUBJECTIVE INCOME	CLASS
BRITAIN	.124	.108	.112	.032	.082	.054	.063
USA	.081	.169	.125	.054	.054	.059	.039

Figure 5.
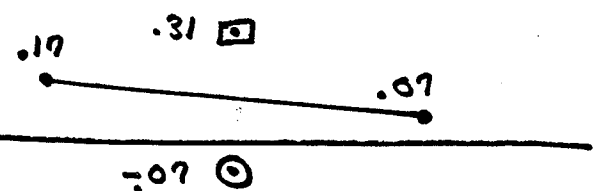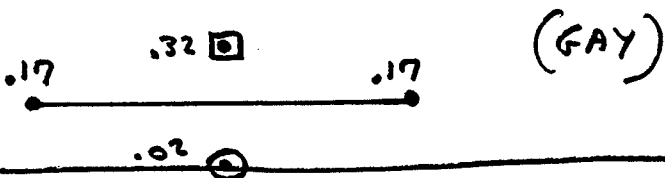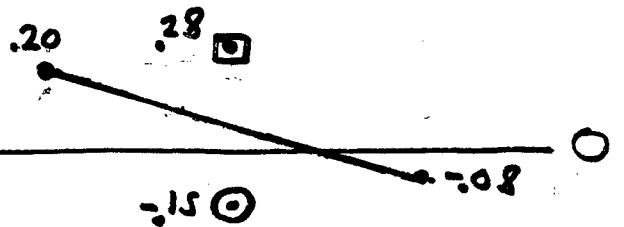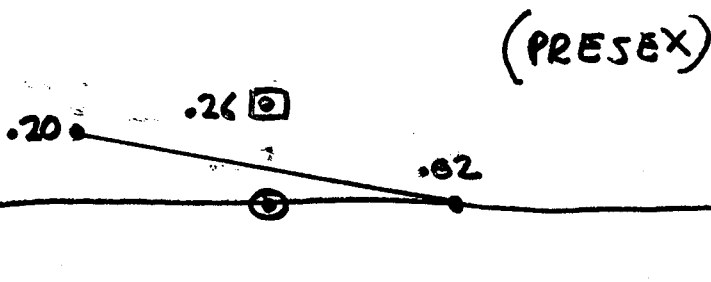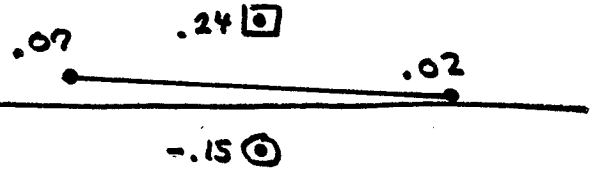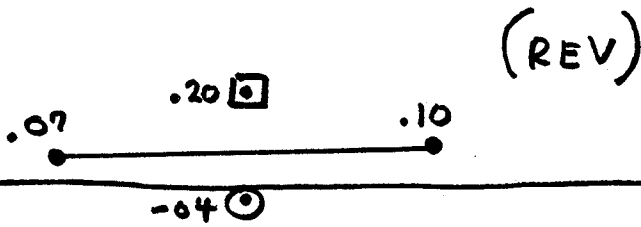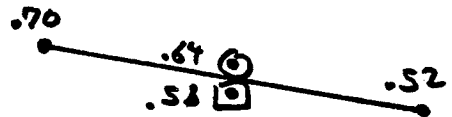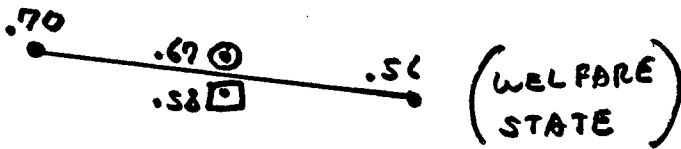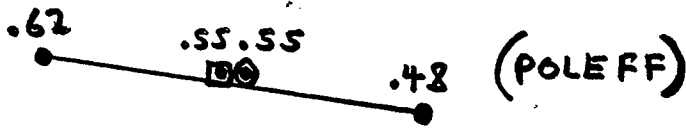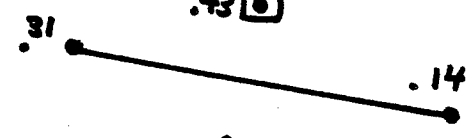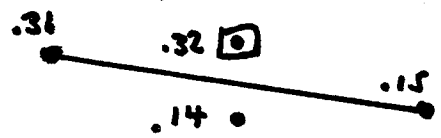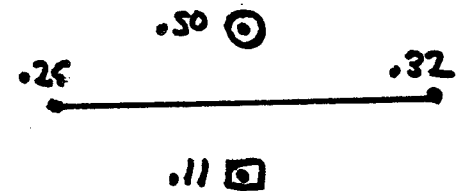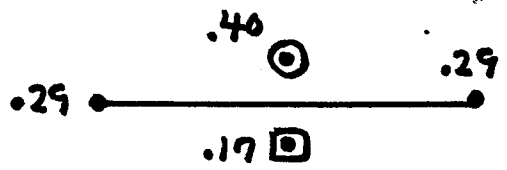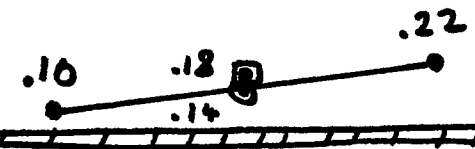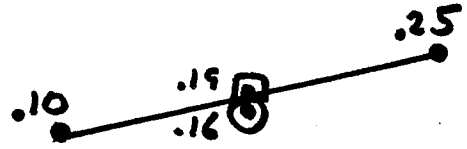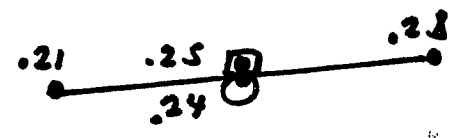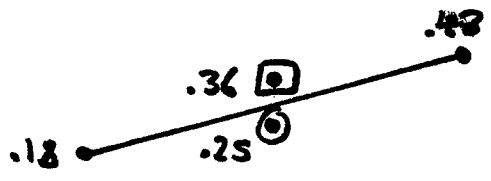
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similarities and contrasts" in Roger Jowell, Sharon Witherspoon,
and Lindsay Brook, eds., British Social Attitudes: the 1986
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    (Compares British and American marginals for the 1985 ISSP
module)

James A. Davis and Tom W. Smith (1986) General Social Surveys,
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