

**The Impact of Interests, Institutions, Identities and Values on
Public Support for Redistributive Public Policies**

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Abstract

Growth in income inequality in advanced industrial democracies has intensified researchers' interest in citizens' attitudes towards income redistribution. This paper incorporates a broad range of factors that have been theoretically and empirically linked to public opinion on two distinct forms of redistribution in order to determine which have the greatest effects on citizens' public policy preferences. While material interests are important, they are much more important determinants of citizens' views on *generalized income equalization* than they are of views on the *provision of adequate living standards*. In the latter case, values and beliefs are more influential. Attitudes towards the efficacy of the market, social conservatism, authoritarianism, feminism and economic self-determination all have important effects. While institutions and identities undoubtedly play an important role in the process that transforms public opinion into policy outputs, they seem to have more limited direct impacts on the formation of public opinion.

May 2, 2011

Introduction

Why doesn't everyone want to redistribute income? Why does anyone care about the very poor? Rationalist accounts of human behaviour provide relatively clear answers to these questions. Some people don't want to redistribute income because they are very rich. Some people care about the very poor because they are very poor. But the very rich and the very poor constitute small minorities of the population. The evidence indicates that many who could benefit from income redistribution do not support it, and many who would not benefit from helping the very poor do support helping those who are. There are substantial proportions of the population who do not seem to support redistributive public policies that are in their interests.

Interest-based models of political redistribution often use the individual citizen as the point of departure. Meltzer and Richard's (1981) classic piece, for example, illustrates how informed, rational voters could collectively choose to redistribute a positive lump-sum benefit through public financing via a tax on income within a political system in which the median voter's preferences dominate public policy. The key implications of this model are that (1) those with higher incomes oppose redistribution while those with lower incomes support it and that (2) as income inequality increases, citizens will use the political machinery of the state to increase redistribution to the lesser advantaged.

This simple model has been the subject of a variety of extensions (Alesina and Rodrik 1994; Benabou and Ok 2001; Boix 2003; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005). It has also been the target of numerous criticisms. On the one hand, several analyses suggest that there is little empirical support for the model (Persson and Tabellini 1994; Benabou 1996; Perotti 1996; Luttmer 2001; Alesina and Angeletos 2005; Iversen and Soskice 2006; Kenworthy and McCall 2008). On the other, it has been criticized for its singular focus on only one type of redistribution. For example, as Moene and Wallerstein emphasize, means-tested policies that specifically target low-income groups "cannot be examined in a model of self-interested voting. The probability of receiving payments targeted for poverty alleviation [is] virtually zero for a majority of voters" (2003, 494). Put another way, while interest-based models may be able to explain why many citizens support broad-based income redistribution, their internal logic suggests that public support for policies that ensure for the provision of the socio-economically least-advantaged should be considerably lower.

Available data – and numerous pieces of recent scholarship – draw attention to the fact that during the course of the last sixty years trends in the distribution of income in advanced industrial democracies have changed dramatically. While the gap between the rich and the poor gradually decreased during the first half of the post-war period, over the past three decades this trend has reversed (UN 1996, 2001; OECD 2008a). Evidence of rising levels of income inequality in the Canadian case is presented using cross-national and cross-provincial comparative frames in Figure 1 below. This upward trend in inequality has heightened researchers' interests in the causes and consequences of economic inegalitarianism (Clayton and Pontusson 1998; Piketty and Saez 2003; Kenworthy and Pontusson 2005; Kenworthy and McCall 2008; Wilkinson and

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Pickett 2009; Hacker and Pierson 2010; Johnston *et al.* 2010). It also provides an excellent opportunity to test the central prediction of the Meltzer-Richard model: that as inequality increases, citizens' demand for redistribution will also increase.

Other data, however, appear to contradict a key implication of this model. For while its emphasis on the anticipated benefits that accrue to median voters seems to imply that *ceteris paribus* support for generalized income equalization should be higher than support for policies that ensure for the provision of adequate living standards, there is scant evidence that this is the case. Data from the *Canadian Elections Study (CES)* and *World Values Survey (WVS)* indicate that there are only small differences between levels of support for each of these policy types. During the past two decades, *CES* respondents were 2.7% more likely to indicate support for generalized income equalization policies than policies to ensure adequate living standards. Over the same time-period, Canadian *WVS* respondents were 5.3% more likely while *WVS* respondents from 10 comparable advanced industrial democratic states¹ were 4.2% more likely to indicate support for income equalization policies than policies to ensure adequate living standards.² These similarities are striking, particularly given that the *CES* and *WVS* employ very different questions.³ On average, support for income equalization is higher, but marked differences in levels of support for the two policy types are not evident.

Longitudinal analysis of these data provides even less evidence in favour of the hypothesis that public support for income equalization policies is substantially higher than for policies to ensure the provision of adequate living standards. Figure 2 summarizes the principal trends in support for each of these types of policies both in Canada and cross-nationally during the last two decades. This figure suggests that differences in levels of support for the two policy types were small at the beginning of the 1990s, and that by the latter half of the 2000s, differences are either not statistically significant or support for adequate standards actually exceeds that for income equalization. While support for income equalization is on average

[Insert Figure 2 here]

slightly higher than for the provision of adequate living standards, this difference is driven by marked differences in support at the midpoint of the time-period considered. The upward trajectory of support for both forms of redistribution seems to indicate that income inequality and support for redistribution are correlated. But contrary to the predictions of interest-based models, there appears to be virtually no evidence of persistent differences in citizens' willingness to support these two very different forms of redistribution.

This analysis will investigate citizens' attitudes towards these two types of redistributive public policy. The 'class conflict' perspective concentrates on *generalized income equalization*. Here, the key question is whether respondents favour redistribution from the more to the less economically advantaged. The 'social justice' perspective, however, focuses on the *provision of adequate living standards* for every member of society. The key question for this approach is whether respondents favour alleviating economic deprivation. The empirical puzzle that the paper addresses is: "How can levels of support for these very different policy types be so similar when most citizens are clearly more likely to benefit from one than the other?" The core research question asks: "What explains differences in citizens' willingness to support *different* redistributive policy types?" Following this introduction, the paper begins with a discussion of previously identified determinants of public support for redistribution. The paper's hypotheses are introduced, followed with a justification of case and data selection and the measures and methods of the project. Empirical results are presented, and the paper closes with a summary of the principal conclusions of the analysis and a consideration of possible extensions.

Previously Identified Determinants of Public Attitudes towards Redistribution

Preceding theoretical and empirical research identifies a broad range of factors that may further the understanding of variations in individuals' redistributive outlooks. Each component of this expansive set can be identified within one of four schools of thought that can be used to organize the diverse range of identified determinants. First, some scholars emphasize the role of an individual's *self-interest*. Research demonstrates that those with higher incomes, financial expectations, levels of education, labour market security and occupational status are less likely to benefit from – and therefore are less likely to support – redistribution (Svallfors 1993, 1997, 2003; Alesina and La Ferrara 2001; Fong 2001; Jaeger 2006). Age has also been shown to be an important determinant of those who receive, and therefore those who support, the benefits of social policy programs (Busemeyer *et al.* 2009). The anticipated effects of shifts in levels of aggregate economic output, however, are theoretically indeterminate. Some analysts argue that citizens will have more empathy for redistributive goals when macroeconomic conditions are good, but others suggest that the demand for redistribution will be greater when macroeconomic conditions are less favourable (Blekesaune 2007; Kam and Nam 2008). The anticipated effect of macro-level inequality is also unclear. Cross-national and longitudinal effects differ in direction (Kenworthy and McCall 2008). States with publics who are less supportive of redistribution tend to have more inequality, such that income inequality will be negatively correlated with support for redistribution. But over time, increases in inequality should lead to increases in support for redistribution, suggesting a positive relationship (Romer 1975; Meltzer and Richard 1981).

Second, *institutions* may have significant effects. Cross-national research indicates that welfare state or production regime types may have important consequences (Esping-Andersen 1990, Hall and Soskice 2001). Power resource theory identifies unions and government partisanship as important determinants of redistributive outcomes (Stephens 1979; Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1984; Esping-Andersen 1985, 1990). Theories of the relationship

between political elites and mass publics suggest that public opinion is shaped by political leadership (McCloskey and Zaller 1984; Zaller 1992). Parties of the left and unions may be expected to increase citizens' support for redistributive policies through their organizational and advocacy activities. Conversely, dominance of parties of the right and a lack of organized labour should decrease public support. Perceptions of the institutional costs of redistribution may also be important (Okun 1975). As the 'transfer cost' of redistribution from the taxed to the benefit recipient increases, public opinion in favour of redistribution should decrease. To the extent that citizens perceive that their bureaucracies can effectively implement public policy, they should have greater confidence in their public servants. This confidence should translate into lower perceived costs, leading to higher levels of support for redistribution.

Third, *group memberships* may also matter. Given that they are more likely to have lower incomes and suffer from poverty, women, ethnic minorities and immigrants may feel that they are more likely to be recipients of redistributive policies. They may also feel a sense of shared experiences and commonality that predispose them to support redistributive policies even if individually they are no more likely to benefit. Conversely, inter-group antipathy may have opposing effects. Racial intolerance and intolerance towards immigrants may reduce an individual's propensity to support redistributive politics. The effects of these sentiments, however, may be less overt. Research suggests that they may function at a contextual level, such that increases in ethnic diversity may decrease citizens' willingness to redistribute (Alesina, Glaeser and Sacerdote 2001; Luttmer 2001; Alesina and Glaeser 2004). Religion is another group membership that may have a significant impact on redistributive outlooks. Research suggests that the Weberian thesis still applies (Barker and Carman 2000). More recently, interest-based analysts theorize that religion may operate as a form of private group insurance that mitigates an individual's exposure to risk, thus reducing one's incentive to support redistributive politics (Clark and Lelkes 2005; Scheve and Stasavage 2006; Dehejia, DeLeire and Luttmer 2007). One's sentiments towards citizenship, or group membership in a state, may also have important effects. Some analysts argue that nationalism can foster sentiments of social solidarity and in-group cohesion that reinforce redistributive politics (Barry 1991; Tamir 1993; Miller 1995; Béland and Lecours 2006). Others contend that nationalism may be a divisive force that competes with notions of class solidarity (Hobsbawm 1990; Shayo 2009).

Finally, citizens' *values and beliefs* may have important consequences. Previous research demonstrates that values and beliefs affect citizens' policy preferences, issue positions, partisan identification and vote choice (Rokeach 1973; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Feldman 1988; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Knutsen 1995a, 1995b; Nevitte *et al.* 2000; Blais *et al.* 2002; Gidengil *et al.* 2011). Values can be thought of as 'core beliefs' that structure ideas and information and simplify complicated decisions (Sniderman *et al.* 1991; van Deth and Scarbrough 1995; Blais *et al.* 2002; Nevitte 2002). Because of their semi-stable nature, values and beliefs provide an important resource that can be usefully employed to identify and explain trends in public opinion. Previous research on the impacts of values and beliefs has identified two principal factors that affect public attitudes towards redistribution. First, a number of previous analyses find that redistributive outlooks are shaped by the extent to which respondents believe that individuals' economic fates are self-determined or affected by external

factors beyond their control (Picketty 1995; Alesina, Glaesar and Saradote 2001; Fong 2001; Linos and West 2003; Alesian and Glaeser 2004; Fong, Bowles and Gintis 2005). Those with stronger beliefs in individuals capacities for self-determination are less likely to support redistribution. Second, research demonstrates the importance of citizens' locations on the 'left-right' ideological spectrum (Bean and Papadakis 1998; Kam and Nam 2008; Alesina and Guiliano 2009). This simplification of a complex political reality incorporates a range of different value cleavages (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976; Knutsen 1995a; van der Eijk *et al.* 2005; Cochrane 2010). In order to more fully capture the diversity of respondents' attitudes towards these political phenomena, the present examination will take a multi-dimensional approach to the analysis of citizens' values and beliefs. It will consider five distinct components: (1) the *market efficiency* dimension captures outlooks on government intervention in the private sector; (2) the *social conservatism* dimension incorporates attitudes towards abortion, gays and lesbians, and women's role in the family; (3) the *authoritarianism* dimension includes views on confidence in the armed forces and willingness to engage in lawful demonstrations;⁴ (4) the *feminism* dimension reflects orientations towards feminists; (5) following previous research, the *economic self-determination* dimension captures the extent to which respondents have faith in individuals' capacities to affect their own economic circumstances.

Hypotheses

The discussion of previously identified determinants of support for redistribution presented in the preceding section establishes expectations about the anticipated effects of a broad range of factors that can be linked to the interests, group memberships, and institutionalist schools of thought. Reasonable expectations about the direction of the effects of the five value and belief dimensions can be derived from the basic ideological underpinnings of the left-right dichotomy. Analysts have argued that those on the left share a commitment to 'progressive' social and political change that effects increased equality, while those on the right oppose or seek to slow the rate of change (Lipset *et al.* 1954; Inglehart 1977; Bobbio 1996). Those with values and beliefs that align with the left of the political spectrum – those sceptical of the efficacy of markets, social progressives, anti-authoritarians, feminists and those dubious of individuals' capacities to determine their own economic circumstances – assume more egalitarian value positions. Recent research demonstrates that there is much greater consistency in the values and beliefs of those on the left than of those on the right. Cochrane (2010) argues that this result obtains because the logical conclusions that can be derived from a commitment to equality are more evident than those that follow from a lack of support for it. However, the cognitive demand for consistency that principles of equality place on those on the left imply that those who hold associated values and beliefs should be more likely to support redistribution than those on the right:

- H₁: Those who have values and beliefs on the right of the political spectrum – those who express confidence in the efficacy of the market, social conservatives, authoritarians, anti-feminists and those who believe in one's capacity for economic self-

determination – are less likely to support both types of redistributive policy than those on the left of each of these respective dimensions.

Of the four schools of thought within which the range of identified determinants can be located, the importance of individuals' interests on their willingness to support redistributive policies is certainly the least dubitable. While a large body of empirical research confirms that individuals' levels of income and education, labour market security and occupational status all have important effects, expectations about the relative magnitudes of the effects of the group memberships, institutions, and value and belief dimensions are less evident. One important consideration is the extent to which the effects of institutions and identities on redistributive policy preferences are mediated by values and beliefs. For example, some scholars who examine the effects of different welfare state institutions identify values and beliefs as intervening variables which mediate the effects of these institutions on citizens' support for redistributive policies (Esping Andersen 1990, 1999; Korpi and Palme 1998; Albrekt Larsen 2006). This may also be true of institutional variables included in the model. For example, parties' discourse strategies may be effective because they change voters' beliefs. Similarly, it seems plausible that the influences of other social institutions – such as the media, religious or feminist organizations and conservative social movements – are also mediated by individuals' values and beliefs. This may also be the case for group membership dimensions. Women who have particularly strong views about the extent of gender-based discrimination or sentiments of intra-group identification with other women seem likely to manifest these perceptions through decreased propensities to believe in individuals' capacities for economic self-determination and though stronger attachments to the feminist movement. If values and beliefs mediate a significant proportion of the effect of intra-group identities and political and social institutions, this would lead us to predict that:

H₂: The interests and value and belief dimensions will have stronger effects than the group membership and institutional dimensions.

To this point in the discussion, factors have only been considered in terms of their impacts on support for or opposition to redistribution. The preponderance of the preceding literature that analyzes public attitudes towards redistributive public policies focuses on redistribution as a general concept and is primarily limited to investigations of support for income equalization policies. Distinguishing between different policy types, however, is a key component of the paper. Having hypothesized that the interests and value and belief dimensions will be the key factors that influence redistributive preferences, the next question to be addressed is: "In what ways would we expect these key factors to differently affect support for different types of redistributive policies?"

Interest-based models have made important contributions to the understanding of variations in citizens' preferences for redistribution. By assuming that support for policies will be a function of the benefit that citizens expect to receive from particular redistributive programs, interest-based theory implies that within democratic political systems, increases in income inequality will encourage median voters to increase levels of redistribution. This 'political class conflict' perspective certainly contributes to an explanation of preferences for

or against generalized income equalization. However, given that the median voter is considerably less likely to benefit from policies that ensure the provision of adequate living standards, interest-based theory seems much less able to explain why citizens might support this policy type. What instead drives citizens' attitudes towards social policies that benefit the poor? Since interests are less likely to influence citizens' preferences, it seems reasonable to expect that value and belief dimensions play a greater role. As Inglehart points out, a deemphasis of class conflict issues may precipitate a reemphasis on self-actualization, self-expression and quality of life concerns (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997). Instead of being motivated by self-interest, support for the provision of adequate living standards may instead be driven by sociotropic concerns for social justice, shifting the basis of support from interests to values and beliefs.

H₃: Interests dimensions will tend to have greater effects on one's willingness to support generalized income equalization policies, while value and belief dimensions will tend to have greater effects on one's willingness to support policies that ensure the provision of adequate standards.

The expectation is that this broad hypothesis will hold generally. Not every dimension categorized within each of these schools of thought is likely to behave in precisely these ways, however. For example, some interests dimensions compare economically secure with economically insecure groups of citizens. The unemployed generally have lower incomes than the employed, and so will be more likely to support redistribution than their employed counterparts. However, the *ceteris paribus* effect of unemployment is a marked increase in economic insecurity, which seems more likely to translate into support for the provision of adequate living standards than support for broad-based income redistribution. Similarly, younger citizens are generally in a highly insecure position relative to older citizens. Given their circumstances, those in less secure positions are more likely to support policies that provide economic security.

H₄: Dimensions that compare differences between economically secure and economically insecure groups – such as labour market position and age – will have greater effects on one's willingness to support policies that ensure the provision of adequate standards than on one's willingness to support generalized income equalization policies.

Next, consider two of the political values dimensions: authoritarianism and feminism. Authoritarianism and anti-authoritarianism are dispositions towards each of the two ends of social power hierarchies; they are outlooks on the *relationship* between those at the top and those at the bottom (Eckstein 1969; Altemeyer 1996, 2004; Flanagan and Lee 2003). While there are good reasons to suppose that anti-authoritarians may be more likely to express support for the provision of adequate standards than their authoritarian counterparts, the focus of this value dimension on those located at both ends of social power distributions suggests that anti-authoritarians will also tend to be concerned with the distribution of social resources to the economically most-advantaged. Similarly, while many feminists may often express concern for the economically least-advantaged, they also focus considerable

attention on the upper echelons of power distribution hierarchies (Bashevkin 1994, 2009a, 2009b; Young 1997, 2000; Tremblay 1998; Trimble and Arscott 2003; Carbert 2006, 2009; Goodyear-Grant 2009). Hence, although both authoritarianism and feminism are values dimensions, and generally value dimensions are more likely to impact concerns for adequate standards, the particular focus of these two political value dimensions emphasizes more broad-based orientations towards egalitarianism.

H₅: Political values that focus on those at both ends of social power hierarchies – such as authoritarianism and feminism – will have greater effects on support for generalized income equalization than on support for the provision of adequate standards.

Case Selection, Measures and Methods

While the empirical puzzles addressed by this dissertation are equally identifiable in most comparable states, the primary focus will be a cross-provincial analysis of the Canadian case. Rather than concentrating on a cross-national analysis, the proposed examination will treat Canadian substate units – Canadian provinces – as the macro-level units of analysis. The ideal case for a substate analysis would be one that, to the greatest extent possible, replicates the conditions of autonomous welfare states. A decentralized federal state with significant social policy discretion at the substate level and significant variation in the values and beliefs of the citizens of different substate units would be the most proximate comparison. The ideal case would also be more typical, rather than exceptional. These conditions make a Canadian inter-provincial analysis the obvious choice. Canada is one of the most decentralized federal states in the world (Watts 1996, 1999, 2008; Thorlakson 2007). Canadian provinces have a particularly high degree of autonomy with respect to social policy in comparison to other federal states, particularly with respect to redistribution. In the field of social assistance, for example, the federal governments of Australia and the United States exercise a greater degree of authority, while municipal governments have a greater degree of responsibility in Germany. Given its vast geography and periodic settlements of diverse immigrant groups within different provinces, Canadian substate units have distinctive political cultures (Simeon and Elkins 1980; Wiseman 2007). This seems less likely to be the case in the substate units of smaller European states with higher population densities. The German case also poses additional difficulties given the unification of a citizenry whose formative years occurred under both democratic and authoritarian political regimes, making it an atypical case and thus more difficult to generalize from. Similarly, given the United States' historic role as an outlier in the fields of material egalitarianism and social policy progressiveness (Sombart 1906; Lipset 1977, 1996; Lowi 1984; Lipset and Marks 2001), this case is also a less than ideal candidate for selection. In the relevant sense, the Canadian federation can be thought of as an ideal laboratory for social policy experimentation.⁵ There are also more pragmatic considerations. An equally compelling reason for the selection of the Canadian case, to be discussed below, is data availability.

Given the range of factors that have been theoretically and empirically linked to public support for redistribution, this analysis draws on both micro- and macro-level data. Micro-data

are taken from the *CES*. Data from the 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *CES* are merged in order to provide coverage for the specified time-period. This sample includes 7,091 respondents in 50 contexts.⁶ A search of potential alternative data sources suggests that no other comparable data are available. Neither the American nor the Australian National Elections Study has consistently included measures for both of the two identified forms of redistribution during the specified time-period, while the German National Election Study has included neither. The Austrian National Elections Study appears to be just getting underway.⁷ *CES* question wordings for the micro-level dimensions are available on my research webpage.⁸ Macro-level data are collected for the economic growth, income inequality, government partisanship, union density and ethnic diversity dimensions. Ethnic diversity is estimated from *CES* data. The other macro-level data are taken from Statistics Canada. Measures of welfare state and production regime type are not incorporated in this analysis. While they stress that there are notable differences between the Canadian and American cases and important variations amid the Canadian provinces, Haddow and Klassen (2006) indicate that each of the Canadian provinces' welfare states and market economies can be fairly typified as 'liberal'.

A final note about the measures is warranted. In the *CES*, the question that best measures attitudes towards generalized income equalization asks respondents: "how much should be done to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in Canada?" with those selecting the options "more" and "much more" counted as being in support of redistribution. There is some minor variation in the question wordings and response categories in earlier *CES* waves.⁹ The question that best measures support for the provision of adequate living standards asks respondents whether they agree that "the government should see to it that everyone has a decent standard of living", rather than that "the government should leave people to get ahead on their own." If we presume that most respondents do not believe that the government already sees to it that everyone has a decent standard of living, then these measures can both be thought of as 'relative'; they ask respondents the extent to which they support *increases* in levels of redistribution. Consequently, a measure is included to control for the extent to which a given context already redistributes. Following Kenworthy and McCall (2008), this measure of redistribution is calculated by taking the difference between the pre- and post-tax-and-transfer Gini coefficients for a given context. As with the inequality dimension noted above, the data for this measure is obtained from Statistics Canada.

The analyses broadly follows the comparative approach recommended by Prezworkski and Tuene (1970) to permit generalization across space and time. Given that the present analysis incorporates both micro- and macro-level factors, a 'mixed' model is used. Two separate strategies will be used to estimate factors' effects on the identified types of redistribution. First, independent models will be used to estimate effects for each of the two types of policy. In these models, separate dichotomous dependent variables indicate whether respondents do or do not favour either income equalization or the provision of adequate living standards. Second, models will be used to estimate relative effects of factors on support for one policy type rather than the other. In these models, the sample will be limited to those respondents who express support for one policy but opposition to the other, with one dichotomous dependent variable indicating

which of the policy types the respondent prefers.¹⁰ The use of dichotomous dependent variables requires a generalized linear model.¹¹

Reported coefficients are transformed into predicted probabilities. At the micro-level, these estimates indicate how much change can be expected in the probability of expressing support for a given redistributive policy from a one-unit change in each of the independent variables, *ceteris paribus*. Because all micro-level factors have been coded at either the binary, nominal, or ordinal level, all elements are coded either as a 0 or a 1. This means that they each indicate the absence or presence of a particular attribute. Thus the predicted probability of a one-unit increase is equivalent to the predicted change in the likelihood of support given the absence or presence of a particular characteristic. For example, the predicted probability for 'female' simply indicates the predicted change in likelihood of support for a given redistributive policy if one were to change the respondent from a man (gender = 0) to a woman (gender = 1). Because all micro-level variables have been treated using this same approach, comparison between individual-level effects is greatly simplified. Given the continuous nature of the included macro-level factors, however, comparisons across these dimensions are not always as straightforward. A one-unit increase in income inequality, for example, corresponds to an increase in the Gini coefficient from a state of perfect equality (Gini = 0) to perfect inequality (Gini = 1). Hence in order to facilitate comparison, the difference between the context with the lowest and the highest actual values on each of the macro-level dimensions is determined, and predicted probabilities are calculated on the basis of these differences.

Empirical Findings

Which factors have the greatest effects on citizens' support for redistribution? First, consider the estimated effects of the interests dimensions presented in Table 1.1. Many results accord with the findings of previous research. Those with higher incomes, more education and greater labour market security are clearly less likely to support both forms of redistribution than those who are less comfortably situated. One novel finding that emerges is that age clearly matters. The oldest members of Canadian society are manifestly less supportive of each of the two forms of redistribution. However, what is most striking about the effects of these dimensions is the extent to which effects differ for each of the two types of redistributive policy. Those with higher incomes are markedly less likely to support generalized income equalization than policies that ensure for the provision of adequate living standards. Conversely, the older are much more likely to support income equalization than policies that ensure for the provision of adequate living standards. These findings provide partial support for H₃ and H₄. Income seems to have a much greater effect on support for income equalization, while age has a much greater effect on

[Insert Table 1.1 here]

support for the provision of adequate standards. The effects of macro-level inequality is also striking. The impact of this dimension is positive and statistically significant for both forms of redistribution. This seems to provide evidence that supports the Meltzer-Richard model: as inequality increases, support for redistribution also seems to increase. Notice, however, that the estimated effects of this variable are virtually identical for each of the types of redistribution. This finding draws into question the accuracy of the prediction that income inequality will have greater effects on support for income equalization than for policies that ensure the provision of adequate living standards.

Table 1.2 presents estimates of the effects of the institutional dimensions. Union members are clearly more likely to support both forms of redistribution than non-members. These effects, however, are modest. Confidence in the civil service seems to result in a moderate increase in support for the provision of adequate living standards. Perhaps most intriguing is the

[Insert Table 1.2 here]

apparent effect of the union density dimension. Although the estimated effects are not statistically significant, they are consistently negative, suggesting that if anything, increased union presence may decrease citizens' willingness to support redistributive policies. Overall, the lack of substantial effects provides support for H₂. These institutional dimensions do not appear to have particularly strong impacts on citizens' attitudes.

Next, consider the estimated effects of the group membership dimensions presented in Table 1.3. Clearly ethnic heterogeneity has the most substantial effect; as heterogeneity increases, support for both forms of redistribution decreases. Otherwise, group membership dimensions do not seem to be particularly important. Consistent with the findings of previous research, women are more likely to support both types of redistributive policy than men.

[Insert Table 1.3 here]

These effects are moderate. Religiosity seems to modestly increase support for both redistributive policy types. There are few other consistent effects. Couples appear to be somewhat less likely to support the provision of adequate living standards than singles. Nationalism has no discernable effect. There is some evidence that East Asians may be less prone to support redistribution, but generally there is little indication that ethnicity is an important dimension. Broadly speaking, the effects of groups memberships are not particularly striking. These findings also provide support for H₂.

Finally, consider the estimated impacts of the value and belief dimensions presented in Table 1.4. Each of the five dimensions conforms to the predictions specified in H_1 . Those with confidence in the market, social conservatives, authoritarians, antifeminists and those with greater faith in individuals' capacities for economic self-determination are less likely to support both forms of redistribution than those who are sceptical of the efficacy of markets, social progressives, anti-authoritarians, feminists and those who believe that fortune and social structures play a greater role in determining individuals' life-chances, respectively.

[Insert Table 1.4 here]

Interestingly, the effect of the feminism dimension on support for generalized income equalization is of comparable power to the market efficiency and economic self-determination dimensions. Conversely, the estimated effects of the market efficiency and economic self-determination dimensions on support for the provision of adequate living standards is greater than that of the feminism dimension. This is because these two economic perceptions are much more powerful predictors of support for this second type of redistributive policy. Similarly, social conservatism has a much greater effect on the social justice than the class conflict form of redistribution. In combination with the differential effects of income discussed earlier, these findings confirm H_3 . However, while the direction of the estimated effects of the authoritarianism and feminism dimensions conform to the prediction of H_5 , these effects are not statistically significant. This provides some suggestive evidence, but none strong enough to reject the null hypothesis that each of these two political value dimensions has no stronger effect on the one than the other type of redistributive policy.

Conclusions

This paper presents a model that incorporates a diverse range of theoretically and empirically identified factors framed by a simple methodology designed to facilitate the comparison of the magnitudes of effects on support for two distinct forms of redistributive public policies. A longitudinal analysis of public opinion data suggests that as income inequality increases, the citizens of advanced industrial democracies are increasingly willing to support these policy types. However, the current analysis uses a pooled rather than a longitudinal treatment of the data. A possible extension of this research is to use a panel approach in order to determine not only those factors that drive variations in citizens redistributive outlooks, but also to determine what effects *change* in citizens attitudes towards each of these types of redistributive public policy.

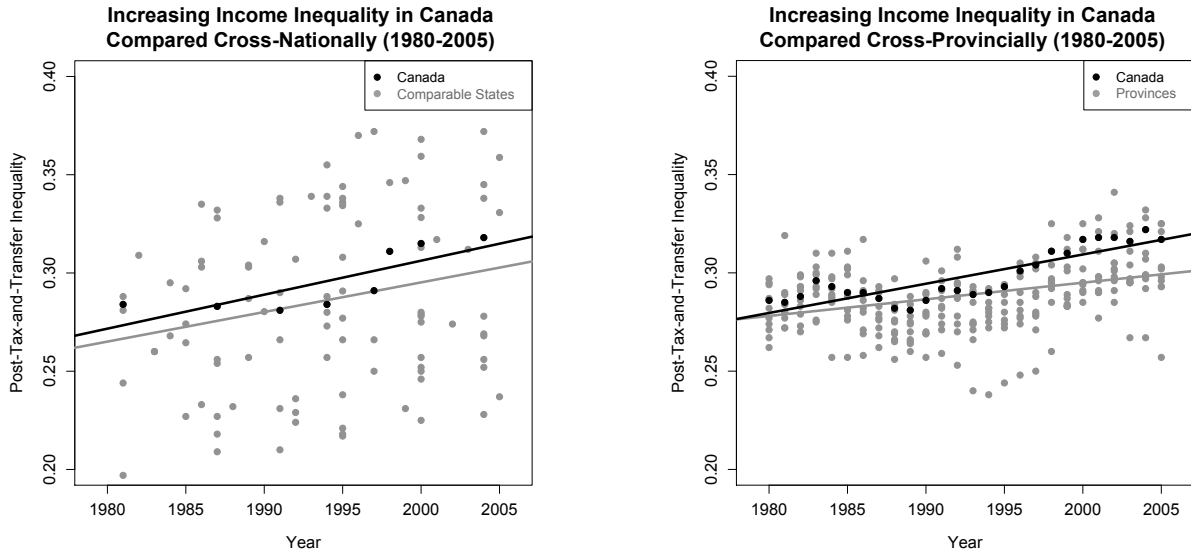
This analysis finds that income, education, labour market security, gender, union membership, and beliefs in economic self-determination all have effects that conform to the results of previous research. These findings also confirm that the interests and value and belief dimensions generally have much stronger effects than the institutions and identities dimensions.

Novel results that accord with theoretical predictions include the effects of core values and beliefs and increasing income inequality. Perhaps the most surprising discovery was the extent to which attitudes towards feminism determine one's orientation towards generalized income equalization.

The investigation also reveals a number of key findings regarding citizens' willingness to support different forms of redistributive policies. Those with higher incomes are clearly less likely to support generalized income equalization. This result also accords with expectations, given the "class conflict" perspective that lies at the heart of this type of social policy. Conversely, one's beliefs about the efficacy of the free market, social conservatism and the capacities of our fellow citizens to successfully provide for themselves are key factors that affect one's willingness to express support for the "social justice" perspective on redistribution. Taken together, the results of this examination confirm that the magnitude of the effects of interests and value and belief dimensions depend on the type of redistribution. This leads us to the key idea to be taken from this analysis: while what one has is a more important determinant of attitudes towards generalized income equalization, what one thinks has a greater impact on support for the public provision of adequate living standards for every member of society.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Trends in Income Inequality in Canada Compared Cross-Nationally and Cross-Provincially (1980-2005)



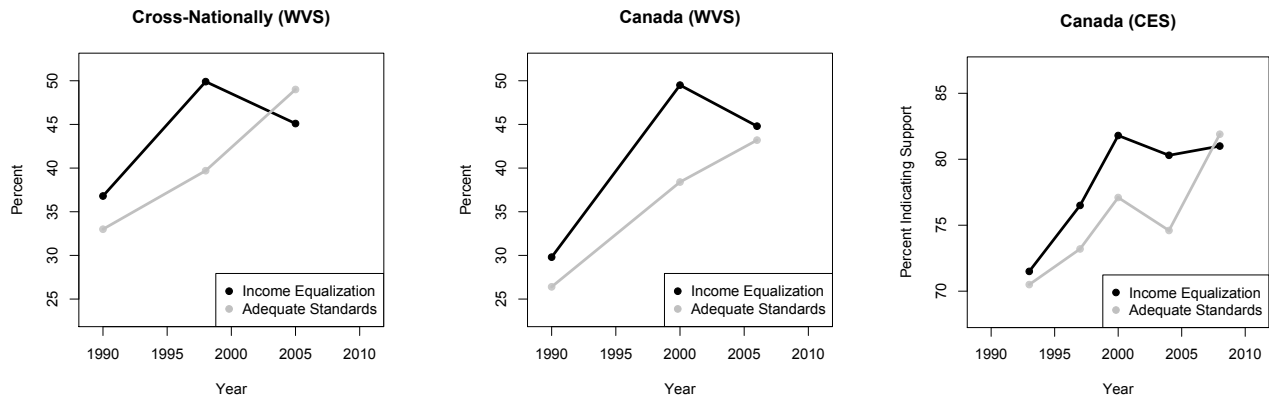
Sources: Luxembourg Income Study, supplemented with data for Japan and New Zealand from Solt's Standardized World Income Inequality Database.

Notes: Relationships are estimated using simple bivariate linear regressions. The slopes of each of the lines of best fit are significantly greater than zero at a 95% level of confidence.

Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM table 2020709.

Notes: Relationships are estimated using simple bivariate linear regressions. The slopes of each of the lines of best fit are significantly greater than zero at a 95% level of confidence.

Figure 2: Trends in Support for Types of Redistributive Policies both Cross-Nationally and in Canada (1990-2008)



Sources: Data are drawn from Waves II to V of the *World Values Survey (WVS)* and the 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *Canadian Election Study (CES)*. The countries included in the above cross-national analysis are the ten of the eighteen advanced industrial democracies considered that both collected data on each of the two forms of redistributive policy considered and participated in at least three of the four waves of the *WVS* considered. Along with the years in which data were collected, these countries and years are Canada (1990, 2000, 2006), Finland (1990, 1996, 2000, 2005), France (1990, 1999, 2006), Italy (1990, 1999, 2005), Japan (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005), the Netherlands (1990, 1999, 2006), Norway (1990, 1996, 2007), Sweden (1990, 1996, 2006), the United Kingdom (1990, 1999, 2005) and the United States (1990, 1995, 1999, 2006).

Table 1.1: Estimated Effects of Interests on Support for Redistributive Public Policies

	<i>Independent Analyses</i>						<i>Comparative Analysis</i>		
	Support for Income Equalization (Relative to No Support)			Support for Adequate Living Standards (Relative to No Support)			Support for Income Equalization (Relative to Adequate Standards)		
	Δ in	Δ in	P-Value	Δ in	Δ in	P-Value	Δ in	Δ in	P-Value
	Log Odds	Predicted Probability		Log Odds	Predicted Probability		Log Odds	Predicted Probability	
Interests									
Income (Base = Low Income)									
Missing Data Dummy	-0.80	-0.143	0.000 ***	-0.59	-0.107	0.000 ***	-0.27	-0.067	0.332
Medium Low	-0.33	-0.052	0.014 *	-0.16	-0.026	0.194	-0.22	-0.056	0.315
Medium	-0.60	-0.100	0.000 ***	-0.43	-0.074	0.001 **	-0.23	-0.056	0.340
Medium High	-0.82	-0.146	0.000 ***	-0.43	-0.074	0.003 **	-0.51	-0.126	0.044 *
High	-1.02	-0.191	0.000 ***	-0.77	-0.145	0.000 ***	-0.27	-0.067	0.331
Very High	-1.52	-0.313	0.000 ***	-0.96	-0.188	0.000 ***	-0.82	-0.198	0.002 **
Education (Base = Incomplete Highschool)									
Highschool	-0.03	-0.004	0.783	-0.06	-0.010	0.526	0.09	0.023	0.609
Some University	-0.31	-0.048	0.003 **	-0.27	-0.045	0.006 **	0.04	0.010	0.821
University	-0.42	-0.066	0.000 ***	-0.26	-0.043	0.017 *	-0.16	-0.039	0.405
Age (Base = Low)									
Middle	0.04	0.006	0.700	-0.12	-0.018	0.307	0.37	0.090	0.054 .
High	0.27	0.034	0.023 *	-0.20	-0.033	0.091 .	0.76	0.175	0.000 ***
Senior	0.31	0.039	0.050 *	-0.23	-0.038	0.128	0.73	0.170	0.005 **
Employment Status (Base = Unemployed)									
Employed	-0.32	-0.049	0.069 .	-0.50	-0.088	0.005 **	0.29	0.072	0.309
Retired	-0.41	-0.066	0.066 .	-0.50	-0.088	0.023 *	0.13	0.032	0.729
Self-Employed	-0.59	-0.099	0.002 **	-0.72	-0.134	0.000 ***	0.27	0.065	0.390
Student	-0.31	-0.047	0.195	-0.29	-0.049	0.237	0.07	0.016	0.875
Homemaker	-0.24	-0.036	0.284	-0.51	-0.090	0.020 *	0.35	0.084	0.354
Other	0.19	0.025	0.600	-0.11	-0.018	0.737	0.40	0.097	0.483
Senior X Retired Interaction									
Net Effect	-0.26	-0.039	0.300	-0.32	-0.054	0.165	0.21	0.052	0.611
Post-Tax-and-Transfer Inequality	12.62	0.102	0.006 **	14.17	0.121	0.000 ***	-0.15	-0.003	0.975
Redistribution Control	9.96	0.108	0.062 .	7.13	0.095	0.116	7.93	0.207	0.111
Macroeconomic Trend	0.03	0.031	0.361	-0.02	-0.020	0.572	0.06	0.099	0.092 .

Significance Indicators: *** < 0.001 0.001 < ** < 0.010 0.010 < * < 0.050 0.050 < . < 0.100

Source: The 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *Canadian Elections Study*.

Table 1.2: Estimated Effects of Institutions on Support for Redistributive Public Policies

	<i>Independent Analyses</i>						<i>Comparative Analysis</i>					
	Support for Income Equalization (Relative to No Support)			Support for Adequate Living Standards (Relative to No Support)			Support for Income Equalization (Relative to Adequate Standards)					
	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value			
Institutions												
Confidence in the Civil Service (Base = Low)												
Medium Low	0.04	0.006	0.703	0.13	0.019	0.219	-0.17	-0.042	0.387			
Medium High	0.18	0.024	0.124	0.39	0.052	0.001 ***	-0.36	-0.090	0.082 .			
High	0.18	0.024	0.367	0.47	0.061	0.017 *	-0.45	-0.113	0.165			
Union Membership Status (Base = Not)	0.23	0.029	0.003 **	0.17	0.025	0.020 *	0.09	0.022	0.496			
Left Government Domination	0.35	0.058	0.053 .	0.30	0.055	0.064 .	-0.02	-0.007	0.916			
Union Density	-2.60	-0.133	0.111	-1.01	-0.049	0.478	-2.63	-0.187	0.131			
Significance Indicators:	*** < 0.001			0.001 < ** < 0.010			0.010 < * < 0.050			0.050 < . < 0.100		

Source: The 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *Canadian Elections Study*.

Table 1.3: Estimated Effects of Identities on Support for Redistributive Public Policies

Identities	Independent Analyses						Comparative Analysis		
	Support for Income Equalization (Relative to No Support)			Support for Adequate Living Standards (Relative to No Support)			Support for Income Equalization (Relative to Adequate Standards)		
	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value
Couple (Base = Single)	-0.11	-0.016	0.145	-0.29	-0.048	0.000 ***	0.25	0.062	0.053 .
Gender (Base = Male)	0.20	0.026	0.004 **	0.39	0.052	0.000 ***	-0.24	-0.059	0.043 *
Ethnicity (Base = Canadian)									
British	-0.11	-0.016	0.355	-0.06	-0.009	0.614	-0.20	-0.050	0.316
French / Quebecois	0.09	0.012	0.534	-0.10	-0.015	0.446	0.21	0.052	0.340
Other European	-0.10	-0.014	0.428	-0.15	-0.024	0.217	-0.01	-0.002	0.969
South Asian	-0.11	-0.016	0.779	-0.08	-0.012	0.836	0.08	0.019	0.906
East Asian	-0.45	-0.073	0.080 .	-0.57	-0.103	0.025 *	0.22	0.055	0.607
African	0.13	0.018	0.802	0.51	0.066	0.361	-0.87	-0.209	0.502
Middle Eastern	0.15	0.020	0.819	0.48	0.062	0.471	-0.05	-0.013	0.963
Aboriginal	0.87	0.090	0.053 .	0.44	0.058	0.277	0.81	0.186	0.421
Other Ethnicity	0.24	0.031	0.459	0.58	0.073	0.090 .	-0.48	-0.120	0.426
Immigrant (Base = Not)	0.29	0.037	0.006 **	-0.03	-0.005	0.735	0.28	0.068	0.121
Racism (Base = Not)	-0.03	-0.004	0.805	0.02	0.003	0.854	-0.06	-0.016	0.741
Anti-Immigrant (Base = Not)	0.09	0.012	0.285	-0.23	-0.037	0.003 **	0.45	0.107	0.002 **
Racism X Anti-Immigrant Interaction	-0.13	-0.019	0.557	0.31	0.043	0.147	-0.59	-0.146	0.112
Net Effect	-0.07	-0.010		0.10	0.015		-0.21	0.052	
Religion (Base = Other)									
Not Religious	0.10	0.013	0.531	0.00	0.000	0.995	0.04	0.009	0.893
Protestant	-0.16	-0.023	0.259	-0.14	-0.023	0.308	0.01	0.003	0.955
Catholic	0.19	0.024	0.204	0.17	0.025	0.233	0.09	0.021	0.734
Jewish	-0.80	-0.143	0.027 *	-0.56	-0.100	0.110	-0.46	-0.114	0.556
Religiosity (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	0.05	0.007	0.691	0.14	0.021	0.274	-0.08	-0.021	0.705
Medium High	0.25	0.032	0.045 *	0.28	0.039	0.022 *	-0.06	-0.015	0.771
High	0.34	0.042	0.009 **	0.35	0.047	0.007 **	-0.02	-0.006	0.914
National Pride (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	0.11	0.015	0.188	-0.08	-0.013	0.315	0.29	0.072	0.041 *
Medium High	-0.13	-0.019	0.164	-0.02	-0.003	0.840	-0.19	-0.047	0.237
High	-0.12	-0.018	0.226	-0.08	-0.013	0.392	-0.06	-0.014	0.733
Ethnic Heterogeneity	-5.66	-0.191	0.004 **	-5.32	-0.189	0.002 **	0.33	0.015	0.867

Significance Indicators: *** < 0.001 0.001 < ** < 0.010 0.010 < * < 0.050 0.050 < . < 0.100

Source: The 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *Canadian Elections Study*.

Table 1.4: Estimated Effects of Values and Beliefs on Support for Redistributive Public Policies

	<i>Independent Analyses</i>						<i>Comparative Analysis</i>		
	Support for Income Equalization (Relative to No Support)			Support for Adequate Living Standards (Relative to No Support)			Support for Income Equalization (Relative to Adequate Standards)		
	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value	Δ in Log Odds	Δ in Predicted Probability	P-Value
Values and Beliefs									
Market Liberalism (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	-0.42	-0.067	0.000 ***	-0.40	-0.069	0.000 ***	0.06	0.016	0.678
Medium High	-0.66	-0.114	0.000 ***	-0.89	-0.172	0.000 ***	0.35	0.084	0.026 *
High	-0.96	-0.177	0.000 ***	-1.34	-0.282	0.000 ***	0.59	0.139	0.001 **
Social Conservatism (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	-0.27	-0.041	0.007 **	-0.23	-0.037	0.025 *	0.03	0.008	0.856
Medium High	-0.15	-0.023	0.163	-0.39	-0.066	0.000 ***	0.30	0.074	0.104
High	-0.15	-0.022	0.227	-0.48	-0.084	0.000 ***	0.52	0.123	0.015 *
Authoritarianism (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	-0.05	-0.007	0.621	-0.01	-0.001	0.952	0.06	0.016	0.722
Medium High	-0.23	-0.035	0.029 *	-0.13	-0.021	0.204	0.01	0.004	0.935
High	-0.33	-0.051	0.006 **	-0.13	-0.021	0.256	-0.18	-0.044	0.378
Antifeminism (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	-0.27	-0.041	0.013 *	-0.15	-0.024	0.137	-0.08	-0.019	0.665
Medium High	-0.66	-0.113	0.000 ***	-0.44	-0.075	0.000 ***	-0.25	-0.062	0.201
High	-0.92	-0.169	0.000 ***	-0.68	-0.126	0.000 ***	-0.25	-0.063	0.220
Economic Self-Determination (Base = Low)									
Medium Low	-0.35	-0.055	0.014 *	-0.25	-0.041	0.082 .	-0.09	-0.022	0.717
Medium High	-0.80	-0.143	0.000 ***	-0.97	-0.191	0.000 ***	0.30	0.074	0.193
High	-1.09	-0.208	0.000 ***	-1.38	-0.291	0.000 ***	0.46	0.111	0.052 .
	Base Log Odds	Base Predicted Probability	P-Value	Base Log Odds	Base Predicted Probability	P-Value	Base Log Odds	Base Predicted Probability	P-Value
Intercept	1.60	0.832	0.000 ***	1.47	0.812	0.000 ***	0.14	0.535	0.087 .

Significance Indicators: *** < 0.001 0.001 < ** < 0.010 0.010 < * < 0.050 0.050 < . < 0.100

Source: The 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2008 iterations of the *Canadian Elections Study*.

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Notes

- ¹ See Figure 1 for a list of the states included in this analysis.
- ² During the past two decades, support for generalized income equalization policies amongst *CES* respondents averages 77.5%, while support for policies to ensure adequate living standards averages 74.8%. Support for income equalization policies amongst Canadian *WVS* respondents averages 41.9%, while support for policies to ensure adequate living standards averages 36.6%. Amongst *WVS* respondents from 10 comparable advanced industrial democratic states, support for income equalization policies averages 44.5%, while support for policies to ensure adequate living standards averages 40.3%. See Figure 1 for a list of included states included in the cross-national analysis.
- ³ In the *CES*, the question that best measures attitudes towards generalized income equalization asks respondents: “how much should be done to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in Canada?” with those selecting the options “more” and “much more” counted as being in support of redistribution. The question that best measures support for the provision of adequate living standards asks respondents whether they agree that “the government should see to it that everyone has a decent standard of living”, rather than that “the government should leave people to get ahead on their own.” The *WVS* question that best measures attitudes towards income equalization asks respondents the extent to which they agree that “incomes should be made more equal” rather than that “we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.” The question that best measures support for adequate living standards asks respondents the extent to which they agree that “the government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for” rather than that “people should take more responsibility to provide for themselves”.
- ⁴ The construction of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension follows Kitschelt’s ‘authority and participation’ measure (1995, 283). The measure incorporates the ‘willingness to participate in lawful demonstrations’ and ‘confidence in the armed forces’ items, as the ‘respect for authority’ and ‘support for the disarmament movement’ items are not available. As mentioned in note 9, the Cronbach’s alpha scores for pairings of items in the *WVS* data that compose this dimension indicate that the measure is not particularly reliable. All three items will be retained for the measurement of this dimension because (1) the pairing of items with the lowest alpha coefficient is the same as the two items used to construct the dimension in the Canadian analysis, thus preserving comparability and (2) the inclusion of the item with the lowest pairs of alpha coefficients marginally improves the overall alpha score. The *WVS* also includes a range of other items that have been linked to the authoritarianism dimension and could be used to increase the reliability of the measure of this dimension in the proposed analysis.
- ⁵ My thanks to Prof. Robert Vipond for drawing my attention to this point at an early stage of my doctorate.
- ⁶ Observations from respondents are included in the analysis only if responses are available for both dependent variables, to ensure that differences in effects are not caused by differences in the samples. Because of concerns about non-random respondent attrition, respondents who participated in the 2004-2006-2008 *CES* panel study were only included in the present analysis as respondents in the 2004 wave.
- ⁷ See: <http://methods.univie.ac.at/projects/autnes/>.
- ⁸ My research webpage is located at: <http://individual.utoronto.ca/sealey/Site/Research.html>.
- ⁹ There is a change in response options between 1997 and 2000 elections in the *CES*. In 1993 and 1997, respondents are asked whether they “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with the statement “the government must do more to reduce the income gap between the rich and the

poor". In 2000, 2004 and 2008, the question is "how much should be done to reduce the gap between the rich and poor in Canada?" In addition to providing the comparable responses of "much more," "more," "less," and "much less," a fifth, neutral option ("about the same") is included, and counted entirely as not being supportive of redistribution. Presuming that at least some of the individuals who choose "stay the same" in 2000, 2004 and 2008 would have responded "more" had they been asked to choose between only "more" and "less", this implies that our measure is probably biased against redistribution in these latter three elections. This implies that more recent levels actually favour redistribution *more* than is indicated by these figures. Hence to the extent that the measure is biased, the provided graphics underestimate the extent of the increase in preferences for redistribution between 1997 and 2000. Question wordings are available on my research webpage at:

<http://individual.utoronto.ca/sealey/Site/Research.html>.

¹⁰ In order to provide a comparative analysis of the effects of determinants of support for one type of policy instead of the other, respondents who express support for or opposition to each of the two identified types of redistributive policies are excluded from the analysis. In the Canadian analysis, this reduces the sample size from 7,091 to 1,662. In the cross-national analysis, the sample size is reduced from 63,221 to 26,488.

¹¹ The analysis uses a glmer (generalized linear mixed effects in R) model with family=binomial(link="logit") from Bates and Maechler's lme4 R package (2010). See <http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/lme4/lme4.pdf> and <http://lme4.r-forge.r-project.org/>.