RELIGION, DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Festschrift in Honor of Thorleif Pettersson

UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET
Contents

Introduction
Yılmaz Esmer, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, and Bi Puranen............................. 15

PART I: RELIGION, SECULAR EDUCATION AND EQUALITY ........... 21

2. The Impact of Religion on Moral Orientations: Evidence from the
   European Values Study
Loek Halman and Ruud Luijks ........................................................................... 23

3. Fitting Islam into the European Union: The Impact of Secular Education
   Yılmaz Esmer .................................................................................................. 45

4. The Idea of Equality of All Europeans and How It Is Supported by the
   Citizens of the European Union
Jürgen Gerhards .................................................................................................. 61

5. Ethnicity and Morals: Values Among Ethnic Groups in Denmark
Peter Gundelach ................................................................................................. 73

6. Tracking the Pulse of the People: 25 years of Value Change in South
   Africa, 1981-2006
Hennie Kotzé..................................................................................................... 91

7. Policy Disagreement in Advanced Industrial States: The Content and
   Structure of Left-Right Opinions
Christopher Cochrane and Neil Nevitte .......................................................... 119

PART II: DEMOCRATIZATION, VISIONS OF DEMOCRACY AND
   GOOD GOVERNANCE .................................................................................. 147

8. Democratization in the Human Development Perspective
Christian Welzel ................................................................................................ 149

9. Visions of Democratic Community
Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs .................................................... 181

11. Happiness and Democracy, 1972-2008
Ronald Inglehart ............................................................................................... 217
12. Competition between Institutions in Multilevel Governance: Implications for Political Trust
   *Ola Listhaug and Kristen Ringdal* ................................................................. 231

**PART III: POLITICAL VALUES, WAR AND PEACE** ............................. 255

13. Cultural Difference on Values about Conflict, War and Peace
   *Juan Díez-Nicolás* .......................................................................................... 257

14. European Values on Security and Defense: An Exploration of the Correlates of Willingness to Fight for One’s Country
   *Bi Puranen* ....................................................................................................... 277

   *Anders Mellbourn* .......................................................................................... 305

**CONCLUSION** ................................................................................................. 313

16. Some Reflections on the Value of Values Studies
   *Bernard Lategan* ............................................................................................. 315

**APPENDIX** ..................................................................................................... 335

The Works of Thorleif Pettersson........................................................................ 337

About the Contributors ...................................................................................... 349
7. Policy Disagreement in Advanced Industrial States: The Content and Structure of Left-Right Opinions
Christopher Cochrane and Neil Nevitte

Abstract
This paper explores the content and structure of individual opinions in advanced industrial countries on three dimensions of left-right disagreement typically associated with left-right self-placement: wealth redistribution, immigration, and moral outlooks. The evidence suggests, however, that these outlooks are not easily connected to one another, and this finding raises a question: if there is no logical or empirical relationship between the different dimensions of opinion that give meaning to the language of left and right, then why do all of these opinions predict left-right self-placement in many different countries? The analysis proceeds by examining individual-level public opinion data from the World Values Survey and the European Social Survey. The results indicate that opinions about wealth redistribution, immigration and morality are bundled together by politically engaged left-wingers, but hardly at all by the population as a whole. Further analyses reveal that formal education may well explain a good deal of the fragmentation of left-right opinions in the electorate. As it turns out, the coherence of these opinions among the left-wing elite seem to stem from mass-elite differences in the kinds of factors that generate support for wealth redistribution.
Most citizens orient themselves politically through the language of “left” and “right” (e.g., Lapointe 1972, 452; Budge & Klingemann 2001, 19; Kitschelt & Helleman 1990, 212). The left-right semantic is enduring; they “are two antithetical terms which for more than two centuries have been used habitually to signify the contrast between ideologies and movements which divide the world of political thought and action” (Bobbio 1995, 1). Indeed, the left-right semantic is so widespread that Alford, Funk and Hibbing (2005, 153) speculate that it might be a manifestation of genetically underpinned ideational cleavages that shape in similar ways the political landscapes of different countries.

There are, of course, important nuances to the simplifying language of left and right. First, not everyone can identify their own position in left-right space, and some use these terms incorrectly (Lambert et al. 1986, 547). Second, the categories of left and right are not values in themselves; they are vessels into which people pour specific content. Just what meaning people pour into these categories is, therefore, an empirical question in its own right (Kitschelt & Helleman 1990, 212; Benoit & Laver 2006, 131). The meanings attached to left and right have evolved (e.g., Connover & Feldman 1981, 643), and the continuum is multidimensional (e.g., Weisberg & Rusk 1970, 1179; Blais et al. 2002, 112). Thus, next-door neighbors can use the same label to denote altogether different beliefs. An additional nuance comes from evidence indicating that the left and right categories are not simply controllable. These labels may capture different priorities (e.g., Gilens 1988, 44-45), and there is no guarantee that a value which epitomizes the left necessarily has its antithesis reflected in the right (Connover & Feldman 1981, 619).

Given these nuances, the persistence of the left-right semantic and its wide application in multiple cross-national settings is intriguing. Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated the utility of the left-right continuum for comparative studies of voter and party positioning (Kim & Fording 1998, 76-77, but see Benoit & Laver 2006, 132-136), and those findings raise an important question: if left and right embody clusters of individual beliefs, values and issue positions that have no necessary or “logical” connection to one another (Klingemann et al. 2006, 5-6), then why do they take on approximately similar meanings in different countries? If there is nothing, for example, that conceptually or logically connects free market support, on the one hand, with opposition to homosexuality on the other, then why should both of these values predict consistently the left-right self-placement of respondents in so many different contexts?

One possible answer to this question is that there are attitudinal predispositions that structure in predictable ways the opinions of respondents about a variety of topics. According to these individual-level explanations, different “personalities” (Alford, Funk & Hibbing 2005, 157), or broad “value orientations” (Van Deth & Scarborough 1995, 6), underlie
disagreements about multiple issues simultaneously. A second structural possibility centers on social cleavages. Individuals belong to groups — class, religion, race, ethnicity — and group loyalties influence individuals’ views about more than one topic (Lane 1959, 197; Lipset 1960, 203; Gooding 1975, 516-517). Thus, the values that give meaning to the categories of left and right may be bundled together because they are grounded in cleavage structures, and these values may be similar from one country to the next because they are grounded in cleavage structures that countries share in common (e.g., rich versus poor, young versus old, religious versus secular).

A third possible explanation to consider involves the influence of elites or “opinion leaders” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet 1944, 58; McCloskey & Zaller 1984, 13; Zaller 1992, 6; Druckman & Nelson 2003, 729). As Converse (1964, 211) observed nearly a half-century ago, “…the shaping of belief systems of any range into apparently logical wholes that are credible to large numbers of people is an act of creative synthesis characteristic of only a minuscule proportion of any population”. Non-elites may acquire these “belief systems” via “social learning” (McCloskey and Zaller 1984, 259). From this vantage point, the meaning of left and right might be similar cross-nationally for a combination of etymological reasons (e.g., Klingemann et al. 2006, 6) and cross-national ideational diffusion (e.g., Rydgren 2005, 415).

This paper addresses three questions. First, what opinions give meaning to the categories of left and right? Second, to what extent do individuals organize their policies and opinions along similar and coherent left-right lines? Finally, how do social factors influence the public’s organization of left-right opinions? This investigation is cross-national in scope and draws on two different bodies of individual level cross-sectional data. The analysis begins by exploring empirically the usage and meaning of left-right in comparative perspective. The second section turns to consider how individual voters organize their policies and opinions about immigrants, economics and morality. The final section explores formal education and political engagement influence on the organization of left-right values.

7.1 Assigning Meaning to Left and Right in Comparative Perspective

7.1.1 The Use of Left-Right

The use of left-right is widespread, but it is not universal. Figure 7.1 plots the percentage of respondents from each country who “don’t know” their own position on the left-right continuum. The first finding, clearly, is that there are significant cross-national variations in the use of left-right. Notice that only small proportions of respondents in Norway (2%), Finland (3.8%),
the Netherlands (4.0%), Sweden (4.2%), Denmark (5.1%) and France (5.5%) are unable to position themselves in left-right space, while considerably larger shares of the populations in Italy (22.4%), Luxembourg (20.2%), New Zealand (19%), Canada (17.8%), and Ireland (16.8%) “don’t know” their own position in left-right space. Left-right usage varies from a high of 98% in Norway to a low of 78% in Italy.

There is, however, an important sub-text to the findings reported in Figure 7.1. In each country, levels of political interest and formal education are powerful predictors of left-right usage. Even so, cross-national variations in political interest and formal education explain only a small portion of the cross-national differences in left-right usage. Indeed, the greatest cross-national variation occurs among those who have the lowest levels of formal education and those who are politically the least engaged. In all but one country, Italy, more than 95% of politically interested and university-educated respondents are able to position themselves in left-right space, and even in the exceptional case, some 92% of the well-educated and engaged respondents do so. Thus, the cross-national variations among politically interested and university-educated respondents are minimal; there are, however, important differences cross-nationally among the less-educated and among the more disengaged respondents.

Why these patterns persist is an intriguing question in its own right, and how that question is answered has clear implications for the consequences of missing data for cross-national analyses. These initial findings are consistent with the intuition that knowledgeable observers of politics across a wide range of national contexts are able to speak a common political language of left and right. However, does the language of left and right carry similar meanings across different national contexts?

7.1.2 The Meaning of Left-Right

Opinions about immigration, social conservatism and free-market economics figure prominently in a number of comparative analyses of the left-right continuum (Budge et al. 2001; Lubbers 2004; Benoit & Laver 2006; Klingemann et al. 2006). This analysis draws on individual-level public opinion data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS). The construction of each measure — anti-immigration, social conservatism and free market support — corresponds closely to coding protocols that are commonly followed elsewhere (Budge et al. 2001; Lubbers 2004; Benoit & Laver 2006; Klingemann et al. 2006). The indicator of free market support in the WVS, for example, combines answers to

1 Political interest is not gauged in the second module of the CSES. Thus, political knowledge questions were used as substitutes for political interest in the United States and New Zealand.
questions about income equality, government welfare and competition (Budge et al. 2001, 224-226). The social conservatism dimension taps opinions about abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia (Benoit & Laver 2006, 168), while the anti-immigration dimension is captured using a question about support for restrictive immigration policies (Lubbers 2004, 4).

**Figure 7.2. Anti-Immigration, Moral Conservatism and Free-Market Support as Predictors of Left-Right Self-Placement (Correlation Coefficients)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-Immigration</th>
<th>Social Conservatism</th>
<th>Free Market Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA (25)**</td>
<td>FRA (29)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER (22)**</td>
<td>NED (20)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED (21)**</td>
<td>AUS (22)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS (10)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED (20)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA (10)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NED (13)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE (11)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEN (10)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUX (10)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA (9)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN (0)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIN (0)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWE (0)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

* p < .01  ** p < .05  

The following 18 countries are included in the analyses: Australia (AUS), Austria (AUT), Belgium (BEL), Britain (UK), Canada (CAN), Denmark (DEN), Finland (FIN), France (FRA), Germany (GER), Ireland (IRE), Italy (ITA), Luxembourg (LUX), Netherlands (NED), New Zealand (NZL), Norway (NOR), Sweden (SWE), Switzerland (SUI), and the United States (USA). Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey-European Values Survey.

**Source:** World Values Survey/European Values Survey, 2000-5
One straightforward strategy for examining the meaning of left and right entails measuring, for each country, the statistical relationship between left-right self-placement and outlooks toward immigration, social conservatism, and free market support, respectively. The findings, summarized in Figure 7.2, reflect the correlation coefficients that emerge from separate analyses, in each country, of the relationship between respondents' opinions about each of these issues and their self-placement in left-right space. These coefficients range from -1 to 1. A correlation coefficient above zero indicates that anti-immigration, social conservatism and free-market support are associated with rightward self-placement. Negative correlation coefficients indicate that these opinions are associated with leftward self-placement, and coefficients that are indistinguishable from zero indicate that opinions on that dimension are statistically unconnected to left-right self-placement in a given country.

The first finding in Figure 7.2 is that anti-immigration sentiment is not significantly correlated with left-right self-placement in Finland (.036) and Ireland (.055), and it is only weakly correlated with left-right identification in Canada (.058) and the United States (.089). In Italy (.245), France (.245), Belgium (.225), Germany (.220), and the Netherlands (.214), by contrast, opinions about immigration are linked more strongly with left-right self-identification. Similar cross-national differences emerge when it comes to social conservatism. Social conservatism correlates significantly with left-right self-placement in all countries except Sweden (.014), but the magnitude of the correlation varies considerably between Norway (.676) at one end, and the United States (.306) at the other. Finally, it emerges that free-market orientations are the strongest and most reliable correlate of left-right placement. Free-market support is associated with left-right self-placement at statistically significant levels in all countries, and particularly strongly in Sweden (.558), Denmark (.435), New Zealand (.428), Australia (.393), Norway (.361), Finland (.362), the United States (.317), and the Netherlands (.313). In sum, the findings from these individual-level data summarized in Figure 7.2 are quite consistent with Benoit and Laver's (2006, 134) findings about the policy positions of political parties: there are cross-national variations in the degree to which different opinions give meaning to the language of left and right.

A second important finding that emerges from Figure 7.2 is that the meaning of left and right is substantively similar from one country to the next. In 15 of 17 countries, for example, anti-immigration sentiment is significantly linked to left-right self-placement and in the expected direction. The same pattern applies to social conservatism in 16/17 countries and to free-market support in 17/17 countries. The cross-national consistency of these findings clearly suggests that these data support the proposition that the left-right continuum provides a reasonably reliable way of simplifying the patterns of political disagreement in a number of countries. In none of these countries are the results counterintuitive. Anti-immigration sentiment, social
conservatism, and free-market support is never associated with leftward self-placement. Thus, using the language of left and right to characterize opinions about these issues is efficient in the sense that it conveys the same meaning across a broad range of countries.

Certainly, there are cross-national variations in the extent to which people are inclined to locate themselves on the left-right continuum. There also cross-national variations in how strongly people link the attitudinal dimensions with left-right self-placement. However, the cross-national similarities are far more striking than the differences. First, nearly all respondents with high levels of formal education and political interest are able to position themselves in left-right space, regardless of where they live. Second, opinions about immigration, social conservatism, and the free market correlate in the expected direction with left-right self-placement in virtually all of the countries. Thus, speaking about left-wing and right-wing positions on immigration, social conservatism, and economic redistribution conveys the same meaning to informed observers of politics regardless of national context. In these respects, the left-right continuum represents a reasonably reliable and widely comparative simplification of these axes of political disagreement.

7.2 The Organization of Left-Right Thought

Opinions about immigration, social conservatism, and free-market economics being each bivariately associated with left-right self-placement is not the same as knowing whether, or how, these orientations are connected to each other. Knowing whether and how these outlooks are organized is important for interpreting the left-right continuum for a combination of reasons. First, people simultaneously hold multiple opinions. As Williams (1968, 287-288) observed, “it is the rare and limiting case if and when a person’s behaviour is guided over a considerable period of time by one and only one value. More often, particular acts or sequences of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values.” Second, political disagreement is not simply about differences of opinion when it comes to issues that people support; it is equally about differences between people in the issue positions that they oppose and perhaps find intolerable. Thus, people may be attracted to policy positions by virtue of their opinions on one value dimension, but then repelled from those same policy positions because of their opinions on a different dimension. Finally, the organization of opinions is central to explanations of left-right that focus on individual predispositions. The veracity of “left-wing” and “right-wing” personalities, ideologies and orientations is contingent not simply on the connections between different opinions and left-right self-placement, but also on the
interconnections between the different opinions that give meaning to left and right. That vantage point hitches analyses of the left-right semantic to a theory of belief systems. That being said, exploring why these opinions are organized together puts the cart before the horse. The preliminary question to consider is whether, in fact, right- and left-wing opinions are actually bundled together in a meaningful way.

7.2.1 The Organization of Left-Right Opinions

The findings in Figure 7.3 summarize the correlation coefficients from a series of bivariate analyses of individual opinions about immigration, spending versus taxes, social conservatism, and the location of political parties in left-right space. The first finding is that views about each of these issues clearly are connected to left-right self-placement. As the previous analyses suggest, opinions about immigration (.13), free market support (.29), and social conservatism (.16) are all associated with left-right self-placement. Note, too, that there is little relationship between the different views themselves. Anti-immigration correlates with social conservatism (.10) via homosexuality (.17), but neither of these outlooks are connected to support for free market principles. In effect, a right-wing opinion about the economy is just as likely to accompany left-wing opinions about both immigration and social conservatism. And a left-wing opinion about the economy is as likely to accompany right-wing opinions about immigration and social conservatism. These same patterns are consistent cross-nationally, with but one notable exception: social conservatism is associated with free market support in the United States ($r = .15, p < .001$). Aside from this case, the results of these analyses quite clearly suggest that individuals do not typically organize their opinions in coherent left-right terms.

From one standpoint, the incoherence of left-right opinions at the individual-level is surprising, and perhaps even disconcerting (Converse 1964). Political parties tend to organize their policy positions in coherent left-right terms (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006; Benoit & Laver 2006), and exposure to elite discourse is an important source of political opinion at the mass level (Converse 1964; McCloskey & Zaller 1984; Zaller 1992). From this vantage point, the incoherence of left-right opinions may reflect the cognitive disengagement of mass publics from the political world. There is certainly evidence that elite discourse is influential (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944, 58; McCloskey & Zaller 1984, 13; Popkin 1991, 47; Zaller 1992, 6; Druckman & Nelson 2003, 729), but individual outlooks are shaped by a wider variety of factors: innate predispositions (Alford, Funk & Hibbing 2005, 157), economic self-interest (Leigh 2005, 266), group loyalties and affection (Campbell et al. 1960, 314; Sniderman, Brody & Tetlock 1991, 22; Goren 2005, 894), mass media (Cohen 1963, 13), and informal “horizontal communications” with family, friends, neighbours and
The collective impact of these influences can push and pull in similar and opposing directions (Lane 1959, 197; Goodin 1975, 516-517; Druckman & Nelson 2003, 737; Druckman 2004, 683). If political parties organize their policy platforms in coherent left-right terms, then it is plausible that at least two influences on public opinion -- partisanship and the political elite -- may well serve to shape in left-right terms citizens' opinions about economics, immigration and social conservatism. Partisanship and the political elite are, however, but particular variants of a broader set of group loyalties and elite influences more generally. There are many other influences on public opinion in advanced industrial countries, not least of which is formal education.

7.2.2 Formal Education and the Fragmentation of Left-Right Opinions

Levels of postsecondary education in advanced industrial countries have risen steadily over the past several decades. In advanced industrial countries, young people are consistently more likely than their predecessors to have
higher levels of formal education. They are also increasingly likely to have parents with higher levels of formal education. Thus, the effects of postsecondary education on individual opinions may occur directly from exposure itself, or indirectly via its influences on the kinds of values that parents pass onto their children (Nunn, Crocket & Williams 1978; McCloskey & Zaller 1984; Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry 1996). There are several reasons to suppose that formal education exerts a fragmentary impact on the organization of left-right opinions. Individuals with higher levels of formal education have more money, greater income-potential, and financial security. To the extent that support for income equality is lower among those who stand to lose financially from wealth redistribution, it is reasonable to conjecture that formal education and income might drive economic outlooks rightward.

However, there are also reasons to suspect that financial security affects opinions about immigrants. First, economically vulnerable, native-born populations have to compete with immigrants for jobs and wages (Taylor & Moghaddam 1994, ch.3; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, 65-67; Lubbers, Gusberts & Scheepers 2002, 349; McLaren 2003, 915-916). If "inter-ethnic competition" for scarce resources generates hostility toward foreigners, then higher levels of formal education and income may dampen animosity toward immigrants by insulating people from having to compete at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy.

Economic competition, however, is not the only driver of anti-immigrant sentiment. Generalized out-group intolerance also matters. Out-group intolerance entails more than just animosity toward immigrants, it also includes negative opinions about such other out-groups as gays and lesbians. Individuals who dislike racial minorities, or people who are "different", are more likely to express hostility toward immigrants regardless of their own personal financial prospects (Nunn, Crocket and Williams 1978). They are also likely to express lower levels of support for gays and lesbians. Exposure to higher levels of formal education mitigates these opinions. Racism, for instance, is a socially deviant opinion in advanced industrial countries (e.g., Zaller 1992, 10-11). Such opinions may circulate in households or within closed social networks, but they find little support among the intellectual elite. Thus, formal education may increase out-group tolerance in at least

---

3 The precise causal relationship between income and formal education is difficult to disentangle empirically. Regardless of the precise direction of causality, it is clear that higher incomes, greater job security, and better financial prospects are all linked empirically to higher levels of formal education.
Figure 7.4. Opinions about Income Equality, Immigrants and Gays & Lesbians, by Years of Formal Education

Notes:
(1) Bars represent upper bound at 95% confidence.
(2) Data from 14 countries are included in these analyses: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.
(3) For the purposes of this graphic, these variables are standardized on 0-1 scales and to the mean of immigrant outlooks.

two ways: it brings individuals into contact with the opinions of the intellectual elite, and it affects the composition, size and openness of individual social networks (Granovetter 1973, 1377-8).

Figure 7.4 sorts European respondents by exposure to formal education, and plots their mean level of opposition to income equality (black bars), gays and lesbians (dark grey bars), and immigrants (lighter bars). The findings from the data are consistent with the central expectations. As formal education increases, support for free markets grows and moves ‘to the right,’ while tolerance towards immigrants and gays declines, moves ‘to the left.’ Exposure to formal education is thus associated with what are conventionally thought of as right-wing opinions about income equality and left-wing opinions about both immigrants and homosexuals. Not surprisingly, then, the direct net effect of formal education on left-right self-placement in Europe is neutral (-.03). The important interpretative point is that the effect is neutral not because it is inconsequential for the opinions that give meaning to left and right, but rather because it fragments these opinions by pushing and pulling them in opposing directions.

These same findings persist when the analysis is broadened to include Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the findings persist when opinions about gays and lesbians are substituted with opinions about social conservatism more generally. In effect, higher levels of formal education are associated, on the one hand, with right-ward opinions about economics and, on the other hand, with left-ward opinions about immigration and social conservatism. In effect, formal education pulls the opinions of citizens in ways that oppose directly the bundles of policies that parties present to voters and between which voters must choose in elections.

The effects of fragmented opinions are consequential for left-right self-placement. Consider the left-right self-placement of European respondents with “extreme” left and right opinions about income equality and immigrants. The data presented in Figure 7.5 sorts these respondents along the x-axis into three groups: those with far left positions about income equality and immigrants (“left-left”), those with “mixed” right-left or left-right opinions, and finally those with far right-positions on both issues. The proportions of respondents that fall into each category are reported parenthetically beside the labels on the x-axis. The height of the bars

---

1 The cross-nationally comparable education question in the WVS asks about a respondent’s age when they completed, or expected to complete, their highest level of formal education. As a result, the question is substantively different from the ESS question that gauges years of exposure to formal education.
represent the percentage of respondents within each category who identify with the left, center and right of the left-right continuum. Thus, for instance, 65 percent of respondents with left-wing opinions about both income equality and immigrants locate themselves to the left of center on the left-right continuum, and 54 percent of respondents with far right-wing opinions about both issues identify on the right-hand side of the political spectrum. Not surprisingly, therefore, the first finding is that respondents are more likely to identify on the left when they hold extreme left-wing positions about both income equality and immigration, and they are more likely to identify on the right when they hold extreme right-wing positions about both issues.

Notice, however, that the proportion of respondents with mixed opinions (55%) is more than twice as large as the proportions with either left-left (23%) or right-right (22%) opinions. Moreover, those holding mixed opinions are about equally likely to identify on the left (29%), center (37%), and right (34%) of the political spectrum. In effect, more than half of all respondents with extreme positions on immigration and income equality hold one opinion at the left-wing extreme and another opinion at the right-wing extreme. Moreover, of these respondents, fully 66 percent identify on one side of the left-right continuum even though they hold opinions about either income equality or immigrants that are usually associated with the opposite end of the political spectrum.

One possible explanation for these patterns is salience; some respondents prioritize one of their opinions ahead of the other. Thus, among those with extreme left positions on income equality and extreme right positions on immigrants, some may place themselves on the left because they assign a higher priority to their economic outlooks than to their opinions about immigrants. Similarly, some may place themselves on the right because their opinions about immigrants have a higher priority than their views about wealth redistribution. That being said, a large group of these respondents (37%) also locate themselves at the center. It may be that these respondents give equal weight to both positions. One plausible interpretation of that finding is that it reflects a default decision rule: people place themselves at the “center” of the political spectrum because they hold conflicting views on equally salient but different dimensions.

7.2.3 Political Engagement and the Organization of Left-Right Opinions

There are other notable sources of influence beyond levels of formal education that are worth consideration. Church attendance, predictably, is strongly associated with social conservatism (r = .33) even though it is only weakly connected to both free-market support (r = .03) and opposition to
immigration ($r = .04$). Even so, the religious-secular cleavage is likely an important factor that holds together in the minds of many citizens the different opinions that make up the measure of social conservatism: homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia. Then there is the question of ideological disagreement between the political elites themselves to consider. The patterns of ideational competition at the elite level may well be quite different than the patterns of public opinion at the mass-level (Converse 1964, 252). As a result, the politically engaged are perhaps more likely than are the disengaged to organize their opinions in coherent left-right terms.

Figure 7.6 sorts respondents along the x-axis according to their level of “political engagement”. Here, the political engagement scale (Cronbach’s Alpha = .78) is constructed by combining answers to WVS/EVS questions about levels of political interest, and the importance that respondents’ accord to politics in their lives. The percentage of the sample within each category of political engagement is reported parenthetically beneath the values on the x-axis. The lines in Figure 7.7 represent the correlations between levels of free-market support, on the one hand, and levels of social conservatism (dark line) and opposition to immigration (lighter line) on the other. Bivariate analyses were performed separately for respondents within each level of political engagement. Correlation coefficients above zero signify that opinions about the free-market, social conservatism and immigration are bundled together in coherent left-right terms. Coefficients that are below zero suggest precisely the opposite; that right-ward opinions about the economy are associated with left-ward opinions about social conservatism and immigration, or vice versa.

The first finding to note from Figure 7.6 is that free-market support is indeed associated with opinions about social conservatism and immigration. The significant additional point to note, here, is that the direction and magnitude of the association varies considerably by levels of political engagement. Among those with lower levels of political engagement, right-wing opinions about the economy are associated with left-wing opinions about social conservatism ($r = -.06, p \leq .001$) and left-wing opinions about

---

*Analyses based on WVS/EVS data, with controls for age and country. Countries in the analyses include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Data for Norway and Switzerland are from 1995. Data on market outlooks for Denmark are from 1990. All other data are from 2000 and 2005 waves of the World Values Survey.*
Figure 6: Correlation between Free-Market Support, Social Conservatism, and Opposition to Immigration by Level of Political Engagement.
increase, however, the direction of these correlations gradually reverses. The correlations approach zero for those with median levels of political engagement, and, for the most politically engaged, there is a strong and positive relationship between free-market support and both social conservatism (.27, p < .001) and anti-immigration (.20, p < .001). In effect, it is only a minority of respondents (those with very high levels of political engagement) who tend to organize their opinions about the free-market, social conservatism and immigration in coherent left-right terms. By contrast, for the more sizable segments of the population with lower levels of political engagement, a right- or left-wing opinion about the economy accompanies, more often than not, precisely the “opposite” opinion about social conservatism and immigration.

The results in Figure 7.6 suggest that, for politically engaged individuals, opinions about immigrants, social conservatism and economics are all organized together in coherent left-right terms, although there is an important caveat to consider: the coherence of these values is not evenly distributed across the left-right continuum. The analysis summarized in Figure 7.7 focuses more precisely on those respondents with higher than average levels of political engagement (>2.5) and then summarizes, for left-right identifiers, the correlation between their economic opinions, on the one hand, and their opinions about immigrants (light bars) and social conservatism (dark bars) on the other. Higher correlation coefficients indicate that these opinions are coherently organized. In effect, a left-wing opinion about the economy accompanies a left-wing opinion about immigration and social-conservatism, whereas a negative coefficient suggests that these opinions are organized incoherently (or “against”) each other in left-right or right-left bundles.

The first finding, clearly, is that opinions about free-market economics are bundled together with opinions about immigration and social conservatism for politically engaged left-wingers. For those on the left, and especially those who locate themselves on the far left, opinions about these issues run together in the same direction: a left-wing opinion about the economy is associated with left-wing opinions about moral issues and immigration. As self-placement moves rightward, however, the pattern reverses. Notice that the bars become progressively shorter as the values along the x-axis move from left to right. Indeed, for those on the right, opinions about social conservatism and immigration turn out to be completely unconnected to opinions about the free-market. For these respondents, opinions about these issues tend, more often than not, to run in opposing directions. Even for right-wingers with high levels of political engagement, the “economic-right”, “moral right”, and “anti-immigrant right” are altogether distinctive. Perhaps the only attribute that these opinions apparently share in common is that they are “not-left”.
These findings clearly raise yet another question: what explains the discrepancy between the coherence of these opinions for politically engaged leftists and the fragmentation of these opinions for politically engaged conservatives? One plausible explanation to consider is ideology. Politically engaged left-wingers are anomalous in an important respect: they are affluent, well-educated, and yet they still support income equality and wealth redistribution. Indeed, income does not at all predict market outlooks among the most highly engaged left-wingers. Their commitment to wealth redistribution stems not from economic self-interest or financial insecurity, but from what seems to be a broader ideological commitment to the secular-egalitarian principles that lie at the core of left-wing ideology, an ideological outlook that extends beyond just market considerations to encompass attitudes toward gays, racial minorities, immigrants, and morality more generally. Thus, the kinds of underlying values that motivate an affluent and well-educated individual to support greater wealth redistribution are also associated, perhaps, with greater tolerance towards out-groups and lower levels of social conservatism.

The significant point for the present analysis is that there is no such corresponding ideological bundling that seems to link together the various non-lefts. Free-market support, anti-immigrant sentiment and social conservatism are linked together on the “right” because they share in common an opposition to elements of the left-wing ideology. Free-market supporters oppose left-wing economic outlooks; social conservatives oppose left-wing moral values; and those who are hostile to out-groups oppose left-wing positions on immigration. However, there is no inherent bridge linking these opinions together for those on the right. Indeed, free-market supporters on the right tend to have higher levels of formal education and income, and therefore slightly lower levels of anti-immigrant animosity, while religious conservatives are more favorably disposed to income equality and welfare, and they are less supportive of competition.

Taken together, the coherence of left-right opinions about immigration, social conservatism and economics is confined, in the first case, to the relatively small segment of the population for whom politics is very important. This coherence is confined, in the second case, to the even smaller segment of the population who are simultaneously politically engaged and on the left, a asymmetry that may well be attributable as stemming from the unique effects of affluence on left-wing identifiers. Politically engaged citizens, on the left and the right, enjoy higher levels of financial security, but what is “left over” on the left as affluence increases are individuals whose support for wealth redistribution stems not from their own financial insecurity, but from a general commitment to the secular egalitarian principles at the core of left-wing ideology. Thus, the types of elite who support the economic left are also likely to support immigration, to
be sympathetic to out-groups, and to be non-traditional in their moral outlooks. Whatever the precise explanation for the coherence on the left, the results emerging from the analysis suggest that the overall fragmentation of left-right opinions may well have important consequences for models aimed at predicting left-right self-placement, or indeed the vote choice of respondents.

7.3 Conclusion: Value Fragmentation and the Politics of Left and Right

Clearly, the language of left and right is widely understood in advanced industrial countries. Left-right self-placement for many respondents involves making choices between economic outlooks, on the one hand, and opinions about immigrants and morality on the other. The same tradeoffs may also apply to voting. A citizen who "strongly" supports income equality and "strongly" opposes immigration carries into a ballot booth two sets of orientations that pull with equal intensity in opposing directions. From a methodological standpoint, these voters suppress the magnitude and reduce the efficiency of regression models that use left-right self-placement to predict vote choice. When these citizens vote according to their economic outlooks, for instance, they nonetheless bring their opinions about immigrants into the support base of the political party for which they vote. Thus, a voter on the economic left may wind up supporting a left-wing political party even though his opinions on immigration are wholly at odds with the policy positions of his preferred party. The reverse also applies. Those voters who support far-right anti-immigration parties also hold economic outlooks that are diametrically opposed to the kinds of anti-welfare state policies with which these parties are often identified. In effect, then, political opinions "as a whole" cannot matter a great deal to vote choice because a majority of respondents do not organize their political opinions in ways that necessarily align with the packages of policies that parties present to electorates.

A second implication of these findings is that a sizable portion of the "political center" is occupied by people whose opinions may not at all be "centrist" in the way that term is sometimes conceptualized. Indeed, among those with extreme positions on immigrants and wealth distribution, most are located at one extreme on one issue, but at the opposite extreme on the other. Respondents with extreme but "mixed" opinions are about as likely to place themselves in the center of the left-right scale as on the left or the right of the political spectrum. Indeed, the data clearly show that left-right and right-left opinion patterns turn out to be substantially more common combinations of opinions than either "left-left" or "right-right" patterns. "Inconsistent"
opinions are not the exception to the rule. On the contrary, they are quite literally the normal pattern.

Quite aside from what these data imply for interpreting the context of left and right, the evidence presented here suggests that this fragmentation may well continue apace as exposure to post-secondary education widens. Higher levels of formal education exert a decidedly leftward effect on opinions about morality and immigrants, and yet formal education is also associated with higher incomes and lower levels of support for egalitarian wealth redistribution. That trajectory of change presents a challenge to political parties: can political parties on the economic right maintain in their support bases coalitions of different kinds of right-wingers? A second question to consider is what are the consequences for left-wing party support when these parties take-up positions on immigration, social morality, or even environmentalism, that are inconsistent with the kinds of opinions that are particularly common among economically vulnerable and less educated segments of the electorate? It is these respondents who express among the highest levels of support for left-wing economic policies and right-wing immigration policies.

Finally, these results also suggest that predicting left-right self-placement is less about the content or salience of individual opinions, and more about the structure and relative salience of these opinions. In the first case, what a citizen thinks about immigrants is not a particularly reliable predictor of left-right self-placement in the absence of knowledge about what that citizen thinks of the welfare state. In the case of citizens with mixed opinions, the question to consider is not whether their opinions about immigrants are “highly salient”, but whether their opinions about immigrants are more or less salient than their opinions about wealth redistribution. It is relative salience that matters, and, thus, exploring the kinds of factors that might lead voters to set aside their economic outlooks and vote according to their opinions about immigrants, for instance, may facilitate increasingly efficient explanations of the patterns of party support in democratic countries.

The language of left and right is a particularly useful tool for predicting vote choice because it taps not only the content and salience of individual opinions, but also the structure and relative salience of these opinions. Self locating at either end of the left-right continuum is a characteristic of respondents who place more emphasis on one opinion than on other opinions, or whose opinions about a range of issues overlap with the policy proposal of a political party. In that sense, the explanatory leverage of left-right self-placement is greater than the sum of its parts. Even if it were possible to identify the entire universe of outlooks that give meaning to the language of left-right, the prevalence of fragmented opinions means that left-right self-placement likely serves on its own as a sort of ‘running tally’, a more accurate and reliable predictor of vote choice than the content and salience of all of its constituent opinions combined. Even so, rising levels of
formal education may well have the effect of straining the current
connotation of left and right by organizing political opinions into bundles
that are entirely different than the packages of policies from which voters
must choose in elections. One research question that flows from these
findings is, how do asymmetries in the opinion universes of parties and
electorates affect citizens' satisfaction with their electoral options? The
answer to that question is not just strategically pertinent to political parties
on the right, but also to those who are on the left.

Bibliography

Orientations Genetically Transmitted? American Political Science Review

Beck, Paul Allen, Russell J. Dalton, Steven Greene and Robert Huckfeldt.
2002. The Social Calculus of Voting: Interpersonal, Media, and
Organizational Influences on Presidential Choices. The American Political

Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver. 2006. Party Policy in Modern

Broadview Press.

Bobbio, Norberto. 1996. Left and Right: The Significance of a Political

Budge, Ian and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. 2001. Finally! Comparative Over-
Time Mapping of Party Policy Movement. In Budge et al. Mapping Policy
New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, Angus, Phillip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E.

Cohen, Bernard C. 1963. The Press and Foreign Policy. Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press.

141
Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES Module 2 Full Release [dataset]. June 27, 2007. These materials are based on work supported by the American National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov) under grants SES-0112029 and SES-0451598, the University of Michigan, and the many organizations that fund election studies by CSES collaborators. Any opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in these materials are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organizations.


