

Electoral Incentives, Group Identity and Preferences for Redistribution

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Introduction

The social sciences have seen an explosion of interest in how group identities shape all manner of outcomes, from voting to civil conflict. One area where this research has been particularly prominent is that on how group identities—be they religious, ethnic, racial or otherwise—influence redistribution. Empirical research suggests that heterogeneous societies redistribute less, have smaller governments and deliver fewer public goods, and individual-level data indicates that religiosity and ethnic identity have important implications for preferences for redistribution (Luttmer 2001; Alesina and Glaeser 2004). At the same time, the various theoretical models that might explain these findings provide very different arguments and often bear loose resemblance to the empirical work. The result is that we have apparently robust empirical findings without a clear understanding of their theoretical underpinnings.

In this paper, we build on recent work by Glaeser (2005), Wilkinson (2004) and others to theorize the conditions under which politicians have electoral incentives to provoke group identities. As in a number of other theoretical accounts, we suggest that strong group-based identification reduces preferences for redistribution (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Scheve and Stasavage 2006); we extend such work by arguing that the strength of those identifications is conditioned by national politicians with stronger or weaker incentives to mobilize group identities. We argue that those incentives respond to structural features of the relationship between latent groups and key features of party systems. Where between-group inequality is high and the size of minority groups climb, politicians will have stronger motivations to prime group-based identity since increasing the salience of this second dimension of political competition offers the possibility of shifting voter preferences on the redistributive dimension and attracting votes. Whether these motivations are matched by opportunity is conditioned by the party system.

Where the electoral system has low barriers to entry of new parties, it permits political entrepreneurs the opportunity to gain seats by mobilizing a second, identity-based dimension of political competition. Where all of these factors combine, we suggest that politicians have “strategic incentives” to mobilize identities, and to the extent that identity politics are salient for individual voters, they are likely to prefer less redistribution.

Thus, in our account, individual-level preferences for redistribution respond to both individual characteristics (group identification) as well as features of the national political environment (strategic incentives). Put differently, the societal demand for identity politics is structurally determined by the number of latent groups in a society. Here, we are interested in theorizing the conditions under which politicians are likely to supply identity politics in the electoral market. When politicians do so, they politicize identities and mobilize this second dimension of political competition. We expect the result to be that more voters will be “distracted” from their “natural” preferences on the redistributive dimension.

Given recent research on religious identification and preferences for redistribution (Scheve and Stasavage 2006; de la O and Rodden 2007), we focus our empirical efforts on religious identities, though we will extend our analysis to ethnic and linguistic identities in future versions of the papers. To test the argument, we use World Values survey data on preferences for redistribution. We use the same data to produce national-level measures of between-group income inequality and relative group size and combine it with characteristics of party systems to produce an indicator of politicians’ incentives to prime religious identity. To capture the joint impact of citizen characteristics and macro-level political context on preferences for redistribution, we estimate the models using mixed-level models. We find that preferences for redistribution do, indeed, respond to both individual identification and the broader national

strategic environment. When politicians' strategic incentives are strong, religious identification is associated with reduced preferences for redistribution; when their incentives are weak, religious identification has no impact on preferences for redistribution.

Our research makes two contributions. First, we provide a framework for thinking about the strategic conditions under which politicians incite group-based identities. In doing so, we explain why ethnic and religious identities vary so significantly in their salience both across countries and through time within countries. In emphasizing the extent to which group identities respond to electoral competition, moreover, we place the literature on terrain more squarely in line with recent work in social psychology (Tajfel 1982; Abrams and Hogg 1999), political science (Wilkinson 2004; Hale 2008), and economics (Shayo 2007; Akerlof and Kranton 2005), which emphasize the pliability of group-based identities. Second, we provide a more precise test of our argument than most previous work on ethnicity, religion and preferences for redistribution.² Previous empirical tests using survey data have, with few exceptions, fail to consider the impact of macro-institutional and strategic considerations in shaping individual preferences for redistribution. By explicitly modeling the interaction between individual characteristics and features of the broader political environment, we show that the two interact to shape individual preferences over redistribution.

Group Identity and Redistribution

Inspired by the clear predictions that emerge from the median voter theorem, much of the theoretical literature has explored how group identities moderate the redistributive preferences of the median voter. As formalized in the work of Meltzer and Richard (1981) and Romer (1975),

² For an exception, see Finseeras (2009), though he focuses on the relationship between income inequality and preferences for redistribution.

in a context in which voters vote on a redistributive dimension in a manner commensurate with their position in the income distribution, overall redistribution should reflect the level of income inequality. This prediction, however, receives very scant support both at the micro- (Dalton 2006) and macro-levels (Persson and Tabellini 1991; Alesina and Rodrik, 1994; Alesina and Perotti 1994; Perotti 1996; Lindert 2004).³ In response, a substantial body of work has examined the role of second dimensions—oftentimes defined in terms of group identities, be they religious, ethnic, racial, or national—in shaping preferences over redistribution. At the most general level, these accounts introduce group identity into the utility function of citizens/voters (Akerlof and Kranton 2005; Shayo 2007). More specifically, group identification shapes preferences for redistribution through several potential mechanisms, including by “distracting” poor voters from their “true” preferences over redistribution, by providing narrower, identity-based communities for social support, by generating skepticism about the role of government in redistributing across groups, by forcing voters to tradeoff the utility they receive from redistribution as an individual against the implications for the well-being of their group, etc. Though these precise mechanisms are rarely tested, there is substantial country-level evidence that heterogeneous societies provide fewer public goods and have smaller welfare states (Alesina and Glaeser 2004).

Specific mechanisms aside, the theoretical literature offers two broad but divergent accounts of how group identities shape preferences for redistribution. The first suggests that group identity introduces a second dimension to politics, and that the poor are particularly prone to being distracted from their economic interests by voting on this second dimension. In this account, the poor correctly identify their economic interests for redistribution, but the identity (or moral) dimension of politics is more salient and therefore swamps the redistributive dimension

³ For an exception at the micro-level, see Finseeras (2009). For an exception at the macro-level, see Milanovic (2000).

when it comes to voting. This argument dates to Marx, has been formalized by Roemer (1998), and subject to empirical testing by de la O and Rodden (2008), who find substantial survey-based evidence for the “distraction” argument, at least with regards to religious identification. Whether other group-based identities produce the same kind of distraction is an open question, but as a theoretical matter there is little reason to think that religious identification would differ from ethnic or racial identification in its tendency to modify the preferences of the poor over redistribution. Indeed, Austen-Smith and Wallerstein (2006), provide a model in which a racial dimension of politics alters preferences for redistribution in much the same way as religion, and Shayo (2007) produces similar outcomes when modeling national identity as the second dimension.

The chief alternative to the distraction account—call it the resource argument—is one that emphasizes the importance of group identities for shaping preferences across the income distribution. In Scheve and Stasavage (2006) religious identity provides psychic resources that cushion the fallout from adverse life events, which in turn predisposes the religious against redistribution. Members of religious groups feel taken care of by each other and, therefore, do not need the government to do it. Religious involvement substitutes for social spending as a means to insure individuals from negative shocks.⁴ In this account there is no distraction, because religiosity makes one conservative on the redistributive dimension irrespective of where one sits in the income distribution. According to the distraction argument, the poor are economically liberal, but they vote as political conservatives because of the salience of the second dimension of political competition.

⁴ Note that the opposite could also hold—welfare spending might drive religious participation down as in Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004).

Whether these different approaches explicitly introduce a second dimension of political competition (Roemer 1998) or examine how different group-wise income distributions shape the preferences of the median voter (Lind 2007), they typically rely on some exogenous parameter called “altruism” (Vigdor 2004), “group antagonism” (Lind 2007) and the like to define the relationship among groups.⁵ Yet the assumption embedded in these parameters, that religiosity or the salience of group identities are exogenous, runs contrary to a growing line of work indicating that group identities and conflicts are endogenous. From work in social psychology (Tajfel 1982; Abrams and Jogg 1999) to political science (Chandra and Wilkinson 2008) to economics (Akerlof and Kranton 2005; Shayo 2007), there is growing recognition that the salience of group identities varies considerably across both space and time, even when underlying group characteristics are similar or do not change. While there may be some deep psychological need for group membership, there are many groups to which individuals might choose to identify and only sometimes do social identities become politically salient.

That many group-based identities are latent suggests the importance of identifying the conditions under which they are mobilized. Shayo (2007) provides a general model in which identity is endogenous to the status of groups and the extent to which an individual resembles (or wants to resemble) other group members. To the extent poor members of society are more responsive to group-based identities than income-based identities, they prefer lower levels of redistribution. Shayo provides some intuitions on the structural factors likely to influence this sense of difference within and between groups, suggesting the potential importance of pre-tax income inequality (income being one potential source of status). We complement this emphasis on inequality by emphasizing the role of political entrepreneurs in priming social identities. Our

⁵ For an exception, see Austen-Smith and Wallerstein (2006). They find that race has an important impact on preferences for redistribution when affirmative action serves as an alternative redistribution, even in the absence of in-group affinities or out-group antagonisms—what they refer to as a prejudice-free setting.

argument suggests that politicians' strategic incentives to prime identities influence the extent to which these identities condition voters' preferences over redistribution.

Strategic Incentives, Between-group Inequality, and the Salience of Identity

Recent research suggests one important factor shaping the political salience of group identities is the strategic incentives of politicians to mobilize those identities for electoral gain. Wilkinson (2006), for instance, argues that Hindu/Muslim divisions become violent only in localities where political elites benefit from inflaming this dimension of politics. This happens when increased Hindu turnout associated with religious conflict exceeds the loss of Muslim votes for incumbent Hindu politicians. In contrast, where the Muslim vote represents an important share of an incumbents electoral coalition, Hindu/Muslim conflict remains latent. Similar dynamics, whereby the dynamics of political competition have important implications for group identification, are evident in settings as diverse as Zambia (Posner 2005), the post-reconstruction U.S. (Pildes 2008) and contemporary politics over immigration in Europe (Kitschelt). Glaeser (2006) formalizes the intuition, suggesting that political elites have incentives to supply hatred in the electoral market when they are members of relatively rich majority groups. By priming group identities, such politicians get poor members of the majority group to vote on the group dimension rather than a redistributive one, thereby reducing the overall demand for redistribution. The empirical implication is similar to that in the distraction argument outlined above to the extent that politicians incite identities to get poor, majority voters to vote on non-distributive issues, except that such manipulation should only occur when latent groups in a society have different income distributions. In both of these arguments, the political

salience of group identity is conditional—in Wilkinson’s case on the electoral environment and in Glaeser on between-group inequality.

These are important contributions that serve to underscore the role of political elites in conditioning the salience of identities. That said, they do not address in a comparative way the electoral constraints on the capacity of politicians to mobilize voters along an alternative, identity-based dimension of political competition. As such, we are left with several questions: How does between-group inequality interact with electoral institutions to shape the strategic incentives of politicians to prime religious, ethnic or racial identities? And how do all of these factors impact voters’ preferences over redistribution? By explicitly linking the permissiveness of the electoral system to objective features of between-group relations, we provide a general argument on the specifically electoral value of priming group identities and how those identities impact individual preferences for redistribution.

We argue that the incentives of politicians to play identity politics are a function of two general factors: the between-group characteristics in a society and the electoral system. With regards to between-group characteristics, we emphasize the importance of relative group size and between-group inequality. The relative size of majority and minority groups is important because it informs the number of votes that might be up for grabs in the event that politicians prime group identities. As the size of the majority group increases, so does the number of votes that will accrue to majority group politicians in the event that they mobilize this second dimension. Similarly, as the size of a minority group climbs, the larger the electoral returns of mobilizing group identity for a politician of that group.⁶

⁶ The empirical implications are ambiguous—a large minority group implies something approaching a bipolar distribution. A large majority group, on the other hand, implies a single large group with one or many small groups. We clearly need to figure out what we are thinking in this regard.

The second between-group characteristic that conditions politicians' incentives is the level of between-group inequality. As such inequality rises, in- and out-group politicians can have incentives to prime group identities as a means to get voters off the redistributive dimension in favor of a cultural, religious or ethnic dimension. By increasing the salience of these alternative dimensions of political competition, they can move tax policy in their favor. A similar logic underpins Huber and Piero's (2007) attempt to pin down why the poor vote for conservative parties, and Glaeser (2006) and Lind (2004), building on the finding in social psychology that group members care more about the well-being of each other than out-group members, argue that group members would rather not finance transfers to non-group members. Such between-group transfers will increase as between-group inequality climbs.⁷ Thus, elites of relatively rich majority groups will have incentives to mobilize group identities since members of that group will care more about their group's welfare than that of the larger society (which obviously includes members of the minority group or groups). As a result, poor in-group members will prefer lower redistribution than they would otherwise. Glaeser summarizes the logic nicely, explaining that "...hatred will be spread against poor minorities by antiredistribution candidates and spread against rich minorities by preredistribution candidates. As the minority becomes richer or poorer relative to the majority, the incentive to spread hatred increases because income distribution policies will have a greater impact on the resources of the minority."⁸

If between group characteristics shape the motivations of politicians to promote identity politics, features of the electoral system shape the possibility of doing so. Only if the party system provides the prospects of electoral gain by increasing the salience of group identities will

⁷ Lind (2004) also analyzes the impact of within group inequality on the demand for redistribution, an issue that we do not address here.

⁸ Glaeser (2006): 47.

politicians do so. One factor stands out in this regard, namely the ease with which new parties can emerge. Where the electoral system is permissive, the costs to political entrepreneurs of supplying identity politics declines. Smaller shares of the total vote are needed to achieve election, and therefore, the returns to carving out group-based constituencies from the broader electorate increase. Easily the most important factor in shaping the ease of entry for new parties is district magnitude—the number of legislative seats that represent a district (Sartori 1986; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Cox 1997). As district magnitude increases, the proportionality of the electoral system increases and the probability of election for new entrants with (at least initially) small vote shares increases. With specific reference to group-based identities, a higher district magnitude provides the opportunity for representation of groups. Indeed, Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) provide evidence that more ethnically heterogeneous societies produce larger numbers of parties as district magnitude increases, and a substantial body of work on the radical right in Europe has underscored the importance of high district magnitudes for providing the space for the rise of anti-immigrant, nationalist parties (Kitschelt, 1994).

Politicians can prime identities using any number of tools, and can do so either by directly affecting the status of group or by accentuating perceptions of difference between groups. In many cases, politicians use divisive linguistic or educational policies to accentuate cultural differences group-based identification (Laitin 2000). Alternatively, the introduction of group-specific redistributive policies can serve to foster voting on the group dimension at the expense of the redistributive dimension of politics as in accounts of affirmative action in the U.S. (Austen-Smith and Wallerstein 2006), Malaysia (Sowell 2004), and elsewhere, or fiscal transfers to regional governments can serve to accentuate regional identities as they have in Spain and elsewhere (Beramendi cite). In the extreme, politicians use or provoke violence between groups

to prime identities (Brass 1997; Wilkinson 2005; Fearon and Latin 2003). More generally, politicians can use their agenda-setting authority and campaigns to accentuate the importance of group identities in the public. Here we are less interested in the specific means by which politicians prime identities than theorizing the conditions under which they have the incentives to do so.

One implication of this argument is that group-based identification will have its strongest impact where politicians have the strongest incentives to compete for power, i.e. in democracies. Figure 1 provides initial, suggestive evidence on this point. Using data from the fourth wave of the World Values Survey, the figure shows the relationship between individuals' religiosity and preferences for income equality across countries. On the one hand, religiosity has the familiar negative and significant relationship with preferences for equality in democratic countries (Figure 1b). On the other hand, if we pool across all regime types the strength of religious identification has no relationship with preferences for income equality (Figure 1a). To be clear we are not arguing that identities are constructed by elite manipulation. We are suggesting, however, that one important factor influencing the salience of identity and any identity-based second dimension of political competition is how politicians use their agenda-setting power to promote some kinds of conflicts in societies. In doing so, we echo not only recent work on ethnic conflict, but a long strain of work emphasizing that on many issues, voters tend to follow elites (Zaller 1992) and that political entrepreneurs have considerable influence on the salience of issues at any given time (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

FIGURE 1 HERE

Our approach is distinct from recent papers by de la O and Rodden (2008) and Scheve and Stasavage (2006) to the extent that we theorize the connection between the macro-political environment and micro-level preferences. It is more similar to the multi-level approaches taken by Huber and Piero (2007) and Finseeras (2009). But while the former emphasizes a broad host of structural factors that might impact why poor voters vote for the political right and the latter focuses on the relationship between inequality and preferences for redistribution, we focus more explicitly on the incentives of politicians to prime identities. In doing so, we take our cue from recent research on racial politics in the U.S., comparative work on ethnic politics, and a well-established set of findings in social psychology.

Data and Methods

We focus our efforts on testing the extent to which the strategic incentives of political entrepreneurs condition the effect of religious identity on individuals' preferences for redistribution. In focusing on religiosity, we echo recent work by Scheve and Stasavage (2006) and de la O and Rodden (2008), though future versions will extend the analysis to ethnic and linguistic identities. In the absence of panel survey data that would allow us to test the *indirect* effect as theorized above, we are left to examine whether political incentives *condition* preferences in a cross-section of countries in a manner consistent with our argument, though we conclude the empirical portion of the paper with something of an attempt to assess whether or not religiosity is itself endogenous to politicians' strategic incentives.

There are no particularly excellent proxies for group-based identification or preferences for redistribution in existing survey data, and probably the best surveys in this regard, the General Social Survey in the U.S., precludes cross-national comparisons. While many cross-national

surveys ask questions relating to an individual's descriptive characteristics and group membership (religion, for instance), few provide information on the intensity of group attachments. Even more challenging is that most cross-country surveys collect no clear information on preferences for redistribution. Some researchers have used respondents' intention to vote for the left and placement on the left-right dimension as an indicator of such preferences, but these questions are quite distant from the concept of interest. The surveys that come closest to providing the data we need come from the 1999-2004 wave of the World Values survey and ISSP – Role of Government 4. While we will extend our analysis to the ISSP in the future, here we utilize the WVS because it is richer on religious identification and offers greater potential for expanding our analysis of religion identity to other group-based identities (racial, ethnic, etc.). To assess religious identification, we use the WVS question, "How important is god in your life?" which scales from 1 to 10. We analyze two separate dependent variables. First, we use the question "Income should be more equal (10) versus we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort (1)"; second and consistent with Alesina and Giuliano (2008) we use the question that asks respondents to place themselves on a scale from 1-10 in response to the notion that "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provide for"(10) or that "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves."(1). In both cases, the dependent variable is scaled so that larger values reflect a stronger preference for redistribution. We also include a series of individual-level controls that are standard in the literature—age, gender, marital status, employment status, union membership, education, income and ideology.

The key contextual variable of interest is the strategic incentives of politicians to mobilize religious identities. As discussed above, those incentives respond to three factors: the

relative size of groups, the level of inequality between groups, and the permissiveness of the electoral system. As such, we measure strategic incentives as the logged interaction among group size, between group inequality, and the square root of average district magnitude (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994). Group size is measured as the fraction of individuals with strong religious preferences relative to the country sample.⁹ Between-group inequality is measured as the between-religious group theil index.¹⁰ Both group size and between-group inequality are standardized between 0 and 10.

We use multilevel models to estimate the contextual effect of politicians' strategic incentives on the relationship between identity and preferences for redistribution. That is, strategic incentives are a level two variable whose effect on individual preferences for redistribution is contingent on religious commitment at the individual level. We model this as a cross-level interaction between strategic incentives and individual-level religious identification. In addition, we control for logged GDP per capita and inequality as national level contextual variables that might condition attitudes toward redistribution. The general form of the empirical model is:

$$Y_i = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{Group Commitment}) + \beta_{2j}(\text{Individual Controls}) + r_{ij}$$

Where Y is an individuals preference for redistribution, and

$$\beta_{0j} = d_0 + d_1(\ln\text{District Magnitude} * \text{Between-group Inequality} * \text{Group Size}) + d_2 (\text{National Controls}) + e_j$$

and

$$\beta_{1j} = d_{01} + d_{11}(\text{Strategic incentives}) + u_j$$

⁹ They are “nonreligious”, catholic, protestant, orthodox, jewish, muslim, hindu, buddhist and “others”.

¹⁰ These inequality decompositions were done using the “ineqdeco” command in Stata 10, which reports (among other things) a between-group theil index.

Below, we present the results in several stages. First, we estimate a fixed effects model that reproduces the now common result that religiosity is associated with reduced preferences for equality. Second, we estimate a random effect multilevel model which shows that once within country random effects are taken into account, the impact of religiosity on preferences disappears. Indeed, the random coefficients from the model show the impact of religiosity on preferences varies substantially across countries. We suspect this variation responds to politicians' strategic incentives. As such and third, we estimate a multilevel random effects model with a cross-level interaction between our index of strategic incentives and individual religiosity. Finally, we present preliminary evidence suggesting that individual-level religiosity may itself be endogenous to politicians' strategic incentives.

Table 1 presents results for a fixed effects multilevel model that is functionally equivalent to the linear fixed effects model of Scheve and Stasavage. The dependent variable in Model 1.1 is the answer to the "preference for equality" question while the dependent variable in Model 1.2 is the answer to the "preference for redistribution" question. The results of Model 1.1 echo Scheve and Stasavage's findings, with increased religiosity associated with reduced preferences for income equality. In Model 1.2, interestingly, religiosity has a positive association with preferences for redistribution, though it falls just short of significance at the 10 percent level.

TABLE 1 HERE

TABLE 2 HERE

By estimating models with country-level fixed effects, the standard approach in the literature forces the within country effect of religiosity on preferences to be the same for all

countries. If our argument is correct, however, the impact of religious identity should vary in systematic ways across and within countries. To explore if this is, in fact, the case, we estimate random effects multilevel models, the results of which are reported in Table 2. Note that the coefficients on religious identification in Model 1 and 2, which are now the average effect of the slopes for all the countries in the sample, echo those reported in Table 1; religious identification has a negative effect on preferences for inequality but no effect on preferences for redistribution. Yet these random effects models allow us to extract an important piece of information, namely whether the random coefficients vary across countries. We report those random coefficients in Table 3. Clearly, there is very substantial cross-national variation in the relationship between religious identification and preferences for equality and redistribution. In Argentina, France, Japan, Turkey and the U.S., religiosity is associated with reduced preferences for equality, and those countries are joined by India when it comes to religiosity having a negative association with preferences for redistribution. For many countries, however, there is no relationship at all, and in countries such as Austria, Korea and the Netherlands, the coefficient is actually positive.¹¹ Consistent with expectations, it seems that there are important contextual effects left out of these models.

TABLE 3 HERE

FIGURES 2a AND 2b

Figure 2a and b plots the country-specific random coefficients against strategic incentives as defined above. The negative slope provides suggestive evidence that the strategic incentives of

¹¹ These findings probably help explain the finding of Finseeras (2009), whose multi-level results suggest that religion has a significant but substantively small negative effect on preferences for redistribution. As we suggest below, the impact of religiosity varies in part thanks to the political incentives of politicians to prime religious identities.

politicians are one important contextual effect conditioning the effect of religious identity on preferences for redistribution. Religious respondents in countries with higher strategic incentives are more opposed to redistribution than their counterparts in countries with lower strategic incentives. To further test this relationship, we estimate a random effects multilevel model with a cross-level interaction term between strategic incentives (the contextual effect) and individual-level religious identification. Our argument suggests that religious respondents will demand less redistribution when national strategic incentives for identity mobilization are high. Consistent with expectations, the results in Table 4 show that the coefficient on the interaction between national strategic context and individual religious identification is negative¹². To get a sense of the substantive effect of the interaction, Figures 3a and 3b plot the conditional predictions of preferences for income equality (Figure 3a) and redistribution (Figure 3b) across the range of religious identification when strategic incentives are high and low. Figure 3b shows that while religious identification has no effect on preferences for redistribution when strategic incentives are low, when they are high, preferences for redistribution fall as religious identification strengthens. The picture is more confusing when we turn to preferences for equality. It is the case that preferences for equality seem to fall with religious identification when strategic incentives are high, but we have no explanation for why the level of preferences for equality are so much higher when strategic incentives are high.

TABLE 4 HERE

FIGURES 3a & 3b HERE

¹² These results are robust to the exclusion of Turkey, which is over-sampled in the WVS, and the U.S., which is fairly distinctive for its high level of religiosity among advanced industrial democracies.

Finally, we turn to the possibility that religious identification is itself endogenous to strategic incentives. Our empirical approach above suggests that religiosity is exogenous and that politicians politicize that religiosity when they have incentives to do so. Alternatively, it could be the case that political priming impacts the depth of religious identification itself. Where politicians prime such identities, citizens might hold them more dearly, and through this causal chain does religiosity become associated with reduced preferences for redistribution. Table 5 reports the results for a multilevel model in which the dependent variable is the strength of an individual's religious identification and the key independent variable is our level 2 indicator for strategic incentives. The coefficient is positive and significant at the .10 level, which lends some credence to the notion that the strength of identities are endogenous to political competition rather than the impact of identities simply being conditioned by political competition.

TABLE 5 HERE

Conclusion

To summarize, we uncover evidence that the strategic incentives of politicians condition the impact of religious group identification on preferences for redistribution. Contrary to recent empirical findings, there is no generalized negative relationship between religiosity and preferences for redistribution. Our findings suggest that important features of the national competition for office shapes the extent to which religiosity bears on redistributive preferences. That the political environment conditions the nature of religious group identification is broadly consistent with the constructivist turn in research on identity in the social sciences and more narrowly consistent with recent work on how politicians can incite identities in ways that respond to their career incentives.

There are without a doubt, important weaknesses with our approach here. First and most importantly, we are not sufficiently precise in our theorization of group size. There is little agreement in the literature on ethnic conflict, for instance, as to whether fractionalized or bipolar distributions of group identities are more problematic. Our empirical approach tests the second by measuring group size as between the religious and non-religious, but it is entirely plausible that this is not the appropriate between-group comparison. Second, while we have examined religious group identification (in large part because of extensive recent work on this topic), it would be interesting to see if the results hold when analyzing other group identities, such as race or ethnicity. There are no obvious reasons that religion should be distinctive as a group identity, despite the fact that considerable work has focused on it at the expense of other identities. Third, the lack of panel survey data makes any sort of causal test impossible. The General Social Survey is the only one we know of that has the necessary questions on redistribution and group identification in a panel setting, but it is limited to the U.S. Third, we have few level-two observations (countries). As such, we must be very cautious in interpreting the findings. One possibility would be to use MCMC simulations to assess the robustness of our findings. Fourth, we have not investigated the vast array of alternative hypotheses on preferences for redistribution that have emerged in the literature over the last decade. For instance, it could be that differences in religion mask differences in risk propensity (Cusack, Iversen and Rehm 2006), and that is these individual-level economic evaluations that are driving our findings. We are not in a position to provide empirics on this alternative account, but in the absence of a coherent account whereby religious identification is endogenous to employment risk, we doubt our findings would go away even if we controlled for individuals' economic risks.

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FIGURE 1: Religion and Preferences for Income Equality Across Regime Types

FIGURE 1a

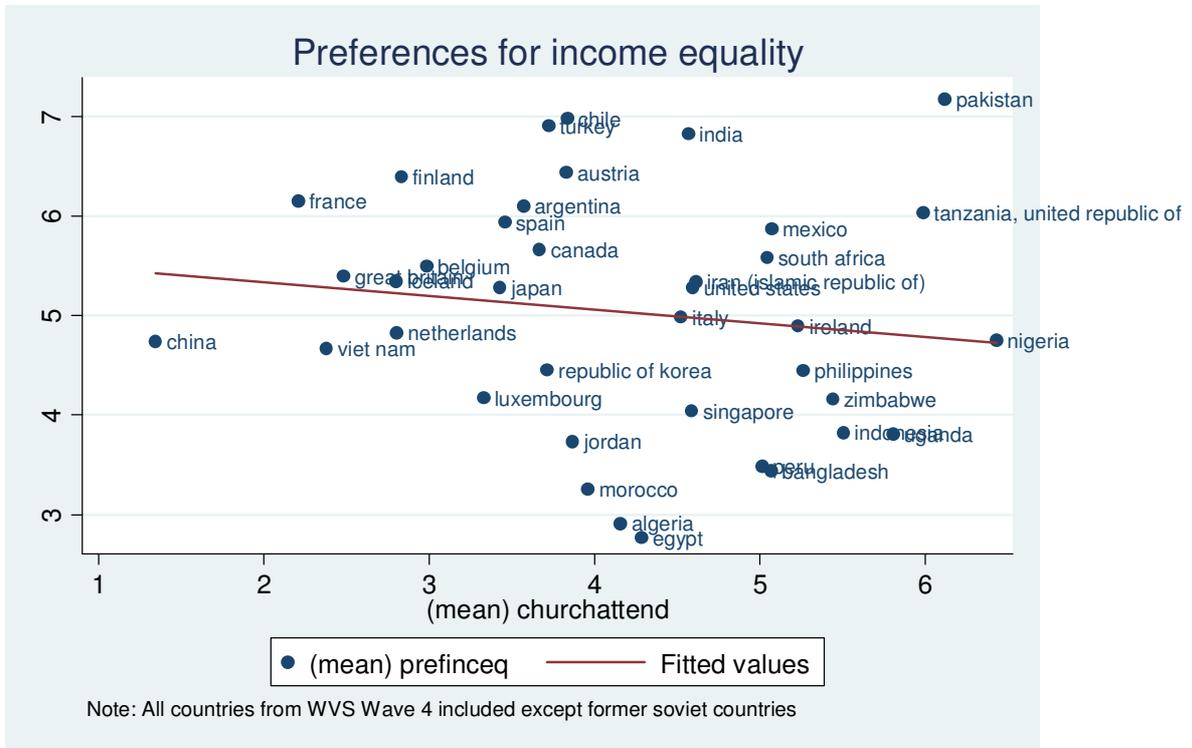


TABLE 1: FIXED EFFECTS HIERARCHICAL MODELS

Fixed Effects	Preferences for Income Equality (1.1)	Preferences for Redistribution (1.2)
Age	0.028*** [0.008]	0.011 [0.008]
Agesquare	-0.000*** [0.000]	-0.000** [0.000]
Female	0.219*** [0.045]	0.234*** [0.042]
Married	-0.054 [0.052]	-0.085* [0.049]
Unemployed	0.114 [0.093]	0.271*** [0.088]
Unionmember	0.112 [0.070]	0.117* [0.067]
Education	-0.080*** [0.012]	-0.048*** [0.011]
Income	-0.111*** [0.010]	-0.064*** [0.010]
Ideology	-0.155*** [0.011]	-0.125*** [0.010]
GodImportance	-0.020** [0.009]	0.014 [0.009]
Catholic	0.010 [0.068]	-0.093 [0.064]
Protestant	-0.006 [0.095]	-0.041 [0.092]
Orthodox	-0.073 [0.323]	0.211 [0.313]
Jews	0.474 [0.312]	0.129 [0.304]
Muslim	1.018*** [0.220]	0.181 [0.226]
Hindu	0.203 [0.195]	0.203 [0.193]
Buddhist	0.031 [0.138]	0.050 [0.133]
Otherreligion	-0.158 [0.115]	0.120 [0.111]
Constant	6.759*** [0.241]	6.271*** [0.325]
Variance Level-1	7.584969	7.107228
Variance Level-2	.3141833	1.195612
Observations	15952	16615
Countries	17	17
Standard errors in brackets *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

TABLE 2: RANDOM EFFECTS HIERARCHICAL MODELS

Random Effects	Preferences for Income Equality (2.1)	Preferences for Redistribution (2.2)
Age	0.029*** [0.008]	0.012 [0.008]
Agesquare	-0.000*** [0.000]	-0.000** [0.000]
Female	0.221*** [0.045]	0.232*** [0.042]
Married	-0.055 [0.052]	-0.087* [0.049]
Unemployed	0.109 [0.093]	0.263*** [0.088]
Unionmember	0.115* [0.070]	0.111* [0.067]
Education	-0.081*** [0.012]	-0.049*** [0.011]
Income	-0.112*** [0.010]	-0.064*** [0.010]
Ideology	-0.153*** [0.011]	-0.123*** [0.010]
GodImportance	-0.022* [0.012]	0.008 [0.017]
Catholic	0.010 [0.068]	-0.115* [0.065]
Protestant	-0.015 [0.096]	-0.082 [0.094]
Orthodox	-0.062 [0.323]	0.213 [0.313]
Jews	0.413 [0.313]	0.010 [0.306]
Muslim	1.045*** [0.220]	0.335 [0.232]
Hindu	0.211 [0.195]	0.245 [0.193]
Buddhist	0.036 [0.138]	0.047 [0.134]
Otherreligion	-0.160 [0.115]	0.100 [0.112]
Constant	6.781*** [0.255]	6.338*** [0.339]
Variance Level-1	7.578633	7.086967
Variance Level-2	.4246544	1.333472
Vari(godimport)	.0010303	.0037595
Observations	15952	16615
Number of Countries	17	17
Standard errors in brackets *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

TABLE 3: RANDOM COEFFICIENTS**Random coefficients from Model 2.1 and Model 2.2:**

Countries (WVS)	Random Coefficients on Preferences for Income Equality (Model 2.1)	Random Coefficients on Preferences for Redistribution (Model 2.2)
Argentina	-.0529069	-.0462044
Austria	.00083	.0351931
Belgium	-.0126892	.0213396
Canada	-.0244557	.003568
Finland	-.0113542	.0486294
France	-.0420405	-.0131658
India	-.0137087	-.0854786
Ireland	-.018033	-.0024717
Italy	-.0172599	.0933279
Japan	-.0363106	-.0119699
Korea	.0040882	.062812
Mexico	-.0028161	.0761204
Netherlands	.0024977	.0538565
Spain	-.0301176	.0041806
Turkey	-.058811	-.08656
UK	.0012527	.0365521
US	-.0656782	-.0554794

FIGURES 2a AND 2b:

FIG 2a: Random coefficients on Preferences for income equality and Strategic Incentives

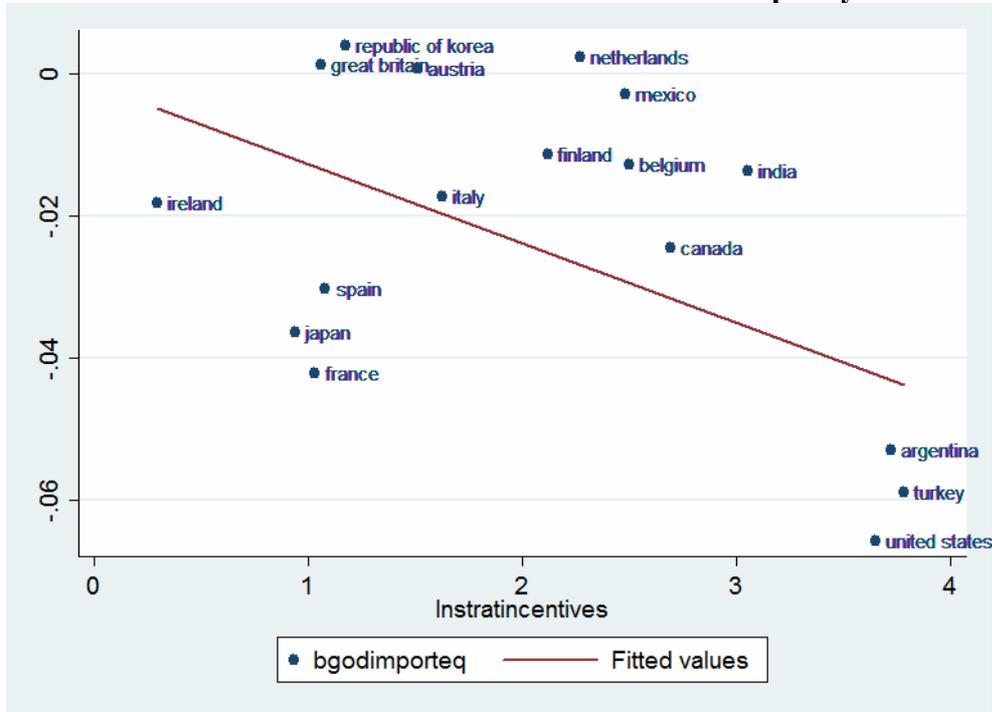


FIG 2b: Random coefficients on Preferences for Redistribution and Strategic Incentives

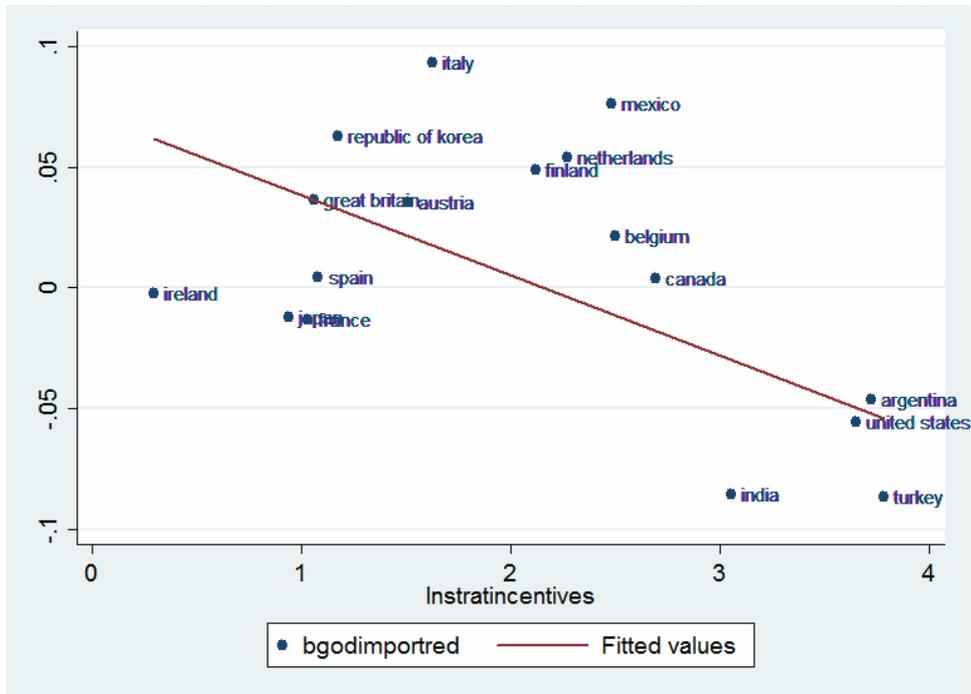


TABLE 4: RANDOM EFFECTS MODELS WITH CROSS-LEVEL INTERACTIONS

Random Effects Model With Cross-level Interaction	Preferences for Income Equality (4.1)	Preferences for Redistribution (4.2)
Age	0.029*** [0.008]	0.012 [0.008]
Agesquare	-0.000*** [0.000]	-0.000** [0.000]
Female	0.222*** [0.045]	0.232*** [0.042]
Married	-0.053 [0.052]	-0.086* [0.049]
Unemployed	0.108 [0.093]	0.263*** [0.088]
Unionmember	0.114 [0.070]	0.112* [0.067]
Education	-0.082*** [0.011]	-0.049*** [0.011]
Income	-0.112*** [0.010]	-0.064*** [0.010]
Ideology	-0.153*** [0.011]	-0.123*** [0.010]
GodImportance	0.014 [0.025]	0.076** [0.033]
Catholic	0.016 [0.068]	-0.114* [0.065]
Protestant	-0.008 [0.095]	-0.080 [0.094]
Orthodox	-0.063 [0.323]	0.206 [0.313]
Jews	0.392 [0.314]	-0.004 [0.306]
Muslim	0.977*** [0.221]	0.336 [0.234]
Hindu	0.110 [0.198]	0.230 [0.195]
Buddhist	0.033 [0.138]	0.041 [0.134]
Otherreligion	-0.163 [0.115]	0.105 [0.112]
Constant	14.659*** [3.639]	9.336 [8.736]
Level two		
InStrategicincentives	0.402** [0.160]	-0.053 [0.290]
InStrategicincentivesXGodImportance	-0.018 [0.011]	-0.034** [0.015]
InGINlcoefficient	-1.406* [0.756]	1.341 [1.828]
InGDPpc	-0.352* [0.192]	-0.805* [0.455]
Variance Level-1	7.578282	7.08707
Variance Level-2	.3235913	1.142136
Vari(godimport)	.0008578	.0026411
Observations	15952	16615
Number of Countries	17	17
Standard errors in brackets *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

FIGURES 3a AND 3b: CROSS-LEVEL INTERACTIONS

FIGURE 3a: Conditional effect on Preferences for income equality

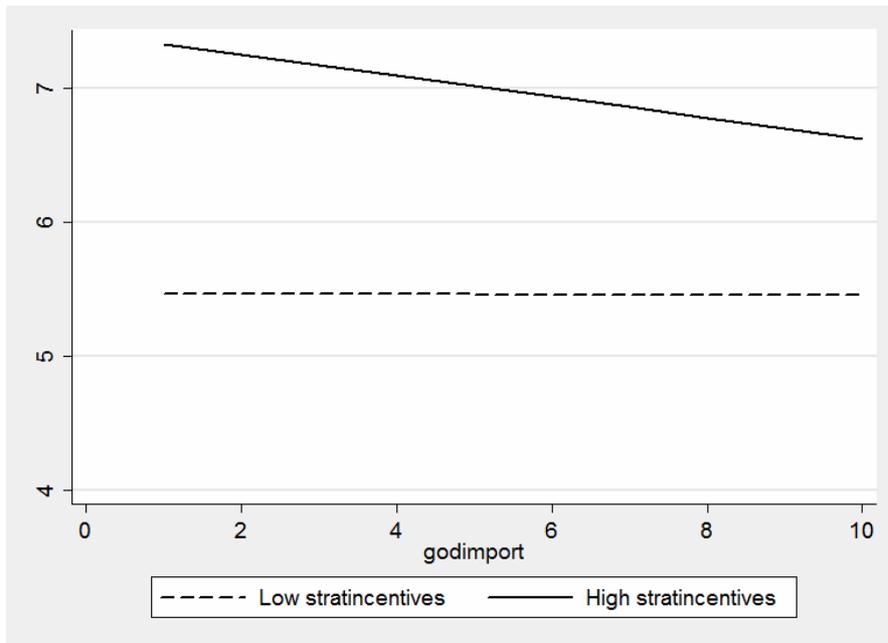


FIGURE 3b: Conditional effect on Preferences for redistribution

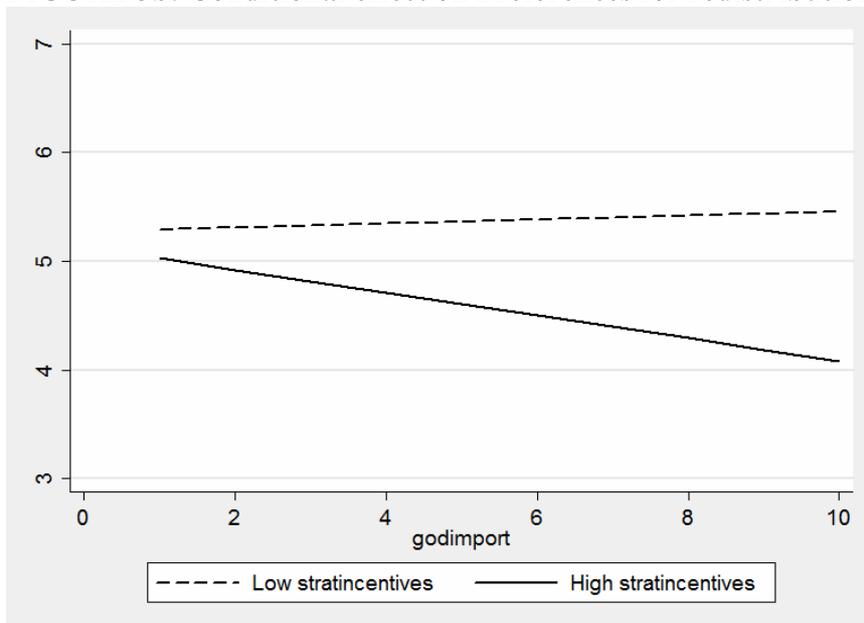


TABLE 5: INDIVIDUAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND STRATEGIC INCENTIVES

Fixed Effects Hierarchical Model	Religiosity at the individual level "Importance of God" (5.1)	Religiosity at the individual level "Importance of God" (5.2)
Age	0.005 [0.007]	0.006 [0.006]
Agesquare	0.000 [0.000]	0.000 [0.000]
Female	0.627*** [0.037]	0.299*** [0.033]
Married	0.178*** [0.043]	0.053 [0.038]
Unemployed	0.001 [0.078]	0.054 [0.069]
Unionmember	-0.104* [0.060]	-0.077 [0.052]
Education	-0.022** [0.010]	-0.014 [0.008]
Income	-0.063*** [0.009]	-0.032*** [0.008]
Comfort		3.274*** [0.041]
Ideology	0.125*** [0.009]	0.074*** [0.008]
Catholic	2.732*** [0.053]	1.336*** [0.050]
Protestant	2.931*** [0.079]	1.487*** [0.072]
Orthodox	2.952*** [0.279]	1.736*** [0.257]
Jews	1.004*** [0.270]	0.387* [0.235]
Muslim	4.176*** [0.195]	2.239*** [0.169]
Hindu	2.638*** [0.170]	1.522*** [0.147]
Buddhist	1.086*** [0.119]	-0.018 [0.117]
Other religion	3.356*** [0.095]	1.772*** [0.085]
Constant	-6.825 [8.166]	-5.236 [5.456]
Level two		
InStrategicincentives	0.457* [0.266]	0.319* [0.178]
InGINIcoefficient	3.468** [1.711]	2.495** [1.142]
InGDPpc	-0.368 [0.425]	-0.180 [0.285]
Variance Level-1	5.686182	4.106528
Variance Level-2	1.013218	.4489019
Observations	16816	15695
Number of Countries	17	17
Standard errors in brackets *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		