

## Cross-National Variations in Attitudes toward Government Responsibility for Welfare State Programs

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### Abstract

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*This paper examines attitudes toward government responsibility for public pensions and unemployment programs in six countries. Specifically, I re-test a welfare state regime theory to explain country-level differences, and I test two individual-level theories used to explain differences: self-interest and political ideology. I find that Esping-Andersen's regime typology, first introduced in 1990, does seem to be a valid predictor of country-level differences on attitudes toward public pensions. The success of this typology is contrary to the literature that has tested this regime theory with attitudes previously. I also find that both self-interest and political ideology predict individual attitudes.*

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**Key words:** Cross-national, Welfare States, Unemployment, Pensions

### 1. Introduction

Should the government responsible be for taking care of the elderly and the unemployed? The decades between the 1930's and 1960s were marked by growing welfare states in most nations. Beginning in the 1970s, however, many European nations and the United States enacted modest measures to reduce public expenditures on welfare state programs (Quadagno and Pederson 2012). In some countries this reduction in public expenditures was aided by an increased push for more reliance on the market. Restructuring took many forms, an example being the privatization of a portion of public pensions in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom took steps in the 1980s to create two different public pensions (Pederson and Quadagno 2012). Workers were asked to choose between investing a sum of money from the government into the stock market or continuing to pay taxes into the state funded and distributed pension fund. It is such changes that make it important to understand how people feel about government responsibility for vulnerable populations like the elderly and unemployed, even more so than previously.

This article examines public opinion on government responsibility for the elderly and the unemployed in a cross-national context. Unlike much previous research, I find that Esping-Andersen's typology fits well with country-level differences in attitudes about government responsibility. On the individual-level, I find that while support for government responsibility is still very high, individual-level variations based on self-interest and political beliefs are significant and important.

When political elites want to reform programs, they often refer to public opinion to support their claims (Cook and Jacobs 2002). Opponents of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act provide a recent example in the United States. After several polls showed less than 50 percent of Americans favored the law, many Republican elites began to speak out against it and against President Obama, as they credited him for passing the law (De Pinto 2012). For example, House speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), is quoted on CBS's "Face the Nation" stating, "The American people do not want to go down this path. They do not want the government telling them what kind of insurance policy they have to buy and how much they have to pay for it" (Falcone and Dwyer 2012).

Health care reform is just one example of leading public opinion. In fact, the passage of the Social Security Act in the United States has often been credited to Franklin D. Roosevelt's ability to lead public opinion (Shaperio and Young 1989). Political elites use public opinion to sway voters and to encourage or discourage change, yet often public opinion is ignored or extorted for political gain (Cook and Jacobs 2002). Thus, delving into what shapes public attitudes becomes increasingly important as a way to understand complex policy debates.

With this in mind, public opinion about public pensions and unemployment are analyzed based on individual characteristics and at the country level (Countries included are United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Sweden, and Denmark). Additionally, for the three countries where data was available, ethnic differences are examined.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Individual-level theories explaining attitudes**

Individuals' attitudes toward the welfare state are diverse, but certain trends have emerged. Self-interest and political ideology are two theories that have been suggested as explanations for these individual-level variations. Researchers have long debated how self-interest influences attitudes toward policies. Do people primarily decide what policies to support based on whether they will benefit personally from these programs? The literature offers some support for and some evidence against this perspective (see Pontusson and Rueda 2010 for summary). While many researchers have criticized the self-interest theory as being too simplistic (Kulin and Svallfors 2010), some evidence supports this explanation for at least some portion of attitudes toward welfare programs. Admittedly, I use the term self-interest to describe an individual economic response to welfare state programs. Ideas similar to self-interest have been called things like social risk (Quadagno and Pederson 2012) and situational factors (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003). For the purposes of this article I am using the term "self-interest" as an umbrella term for the collective idea that people consider how much a program will cost or benefit them when making attitudinal decisions. This economic approach asserts that attitudes originate from individual's calculations on what policies will have the most personal benefit to them. This benefit can come in the form of receiving social assistances, paying lower taxes if programs are cut, or working in the social service sector (Andreß and Heien 2001). As such, people are less likely to favor policies that hurt them financially or where they feel their economic loss does not outweigh the social gains (Brooks and Manza 2007). Self-interest theory is situated in the idea that people will favor policies that benefit them financially; therefore, it is reasonable to presume that socioeconomic status would have a significant impact on welfare policy preferences.

Researchers have suggested an alternative to the self-interest approach when it proves inadequate as the basis for individual attitudes toward social policies, the political ideology theory. The political ideology theory suggests that people rely on their basic value systems to influence their ideas about complex policy options. More specifically, attitudes toward the welfare state are rooted in values regarding the proper relationships between the individual, the state, and various institutions (Brooks and Manza, 2007; Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003).

Political ideology is measured in several ways in the welfare state literature. Liberal/left party preference is one variable that researchers have used to operationalize this theory. Jaeger (2006) finds that left party preferences increased support for redistribution, while a conservative/right party preference has no effect. Jacoby (1994) uses party identification and a measure of liberal-conservative self-placement to measure American's beliefs about ten different government programs, including welfare programs and non-welfare programs. He finds that both party identification and the measure of liberal-conservative placement has a significant effect on attitudes toward government spending on both types of programs. His research also asks whether public attitudes toward welfare and defense correspond closely with one's choice between candidates and parties. While some have argued that racial attitudes have driven the party effect on welfare attitudes in the United States (see Abramowitz 1994 for summary), the relationship between political party identification and attitudes exists in other countries as well (Jaeger 2006). Another measure of political ideology is a belief in social rights. Hasenfeld and Rafferty (1989) find that a belief in social rights is a key predictor of welfare state support.

Brooks and Manza (2007) use this theory to investigate whether welfare state programs are likely to converge as nations face rising public budgets and a need for retrenchment. They find that the public (both right-leaning and left-leaning) is opposed to welfare state retrenchment, which gave elected officials pause when trying to cut programs for fear of retribution by voters. The relationship between history, politicians, and voters' attitudes is intertwined in a way that makes each country's welfare state unique.

Egalitarian attitudes have also been used as supplements to political ideology theory. Those with higher levels of egalitarian attitudes have more favorable attitudes toward welfare state programs. Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) find that egalitarian attitudes at both the individual and state level mediate self-interest characteristics like age in regards to attitudes toward welfare state programs for the elderly. While a few studies have tested both theories simultaneously (see Quadagno and Pederson 2012, for example), this debate has in no way been exhausted.

## 2.2 Country-level theory explaining attitudes

Welfare state attitudes do not only differ within countries; attitudes differ between countries, although how they differ is still widely debated. Some researchers have tried to use *regime* theories to understand welfare state attitudes. A regime is a cluster of countries that share similar characteristics. The use of this type of theory has received much empirical and theoretical attention in research concerned with welfare state formation, policies, and ideologies. The most well-known typology in the welfare state literature was created by Esping-Andersen (1990). It quickly became a contemporary classic. In his typology, countries are clustered into three regimes: liberal, conservative/corporatist, and social democratic.

In regard to attitudes, applying classifications of countries based on different measures of welfare structures has proven somewhat difficult. One reason for this is because this typology was originally intended to show redistribution on the country-level, so attitudes were not part of the methodology. Yet, many researchers have tried to apply Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology to attitudes. In this typology, welfare states are clustered into three distinct regimes (social democratic, liberal, and conservative). Social democratic countries, geographically located in Scandinavia, are known for high levels of de-commodification, a focus on full employment, and low levels of stratification. Conservative/corporatist countries, including France and Germany, have welfare states that are based on the Catholic Social Doctrine. These countries have higher levels of stratification than social democratic countries and are more likely to encourage traditional family structures. Liberal countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have low levels of de-commodification and the highest levels of stratification. Using this typology to understand different programs and policies has proven fruitful for some scholars (see Arts and Geilsen 2002 for summary), but others question how well it explains attitudes (see Svallfors 2004 for example).

Jeager (2006) argues that one reason Esping-Andersen's regimes do not seem to work with attitudinal data is because the regimes have not been operationalized correctly. While I take a different approach, I feel that using countries that exemplify these regimes with the program that they were created with is one way to see just how well the regime hypothesis can explain attitudes. Therefore, instead of using as many countries as possible - which admittedly results in more statistical variation and thus more advanced multilevel modeling techniques - I am using six countries that represent ideal types of the three regimes. My two liberal countries are the United States and the United Kingdom. I use Sweden and Denmark to represent the ideal types of social democratic countries. I use Germany and France to represent the conservative welfare regime.

Given the changing structure of elderly demographics, as well as the often-changing structure of public welfare programs, examining people's attitudes about these programs are more salient than ever. By using established individual-level theories and re-examining the importance of Esping-Andersen's regime typology, this article analyzes patterns of attitudes that reflect both individual and national values. Two programs, unemployment and public pensions, are used as case studies for these difficult questions. Welfare programs are used to redistribute resources throughout a population. The reasoning behind each Welfare program differs. Some are designed to increase equality, some to ensure social rights, some to maintain current political economic systems. Regardless, resources, often in the form of taxes, are redistributed to groups that are seen as needy or deserving. Some welfare programs are universal, meaning that everyone in a given population is eligible to receive benefits, while others are targeted at a specific sub-group of the population.

## 2.3 Unemployment Programs

Unemployment benefits/insurance are payments made, usually by the state, to people who are registered as being unemployed. In some areas, unemployment benefits may be rather small while in other areas these benefits may cover the full or partial amount of the previous salary (Mitchell, Harding, Gruen 1994). To be eligible for unemployment benefits/insurance most countries require that a person has participated in the labor force, paid into the unemployment fund, and employment can only be lost under certain conditions. Countries also may require that a person meet other conditions once receiving unemployment benefits. Sometimes these conditions include proof of continual job search or taking job related classes. Some countries use the Ghent system for distributing unemployment benefits, in which unions, as well as the state, are responsible for allocating unemployment benefits. Those who receive unemployment are often stereotyped because of the stigma that is associated with someone relying on the government in times of uncertainty. This objection to people not working can be characterized in part by the Protestant work ethic (Furnham 2011). Working has been framed as the way to make a valuable contribution to society, and the stigma associated with the unemployed is not new.

Henry VIII of England created a system of public works to deal with the unemployed and beggars. This was used as a type of punishment in the form of public humiliation (Lees 1998). Several studies have confirmed that negative attitudes toward the unemployed still exist. Breakwell, Collie, Harrison, and Propper (1984) asks young unemployed people how they feel about other unemployed people and find that even though the young people they were asking were currently unemployed, they have negative attitudes about others who were unemployed. McFadyen (1998) examines how political orientation and experiences of unemployment affects attitudes toward the unemployed. She finds that many people do express negative opinions of the unemployed. Within the group she studied, political moderates hold less harsh attitudes than then those who are politically polarized about those receiving unemployment benefits. Surprisingly, having formally been unemployed did not impact attitudes.

## 2.4 Public Pension Programs

Unlike unemployment benefits, public pensions are typically viewed as a right for elderly workers who have contributed to the system throughout their working years and earned their retirement. Pensioners are seen as having a right to their benefits because they have met the standards (both age and time in labor market, or marriage) established by the government, and thus earned the right to receive a pension (Cook and Jacobs 2002). Therefore, while both unemployment benefits and public pensions are part of the welfare system, they are viewed differently by the public. By examining both a stigmatized program and a popular program, a better picture of attitudes on government responsibility and spending should emerge.

Understanding attitudes about public pensions and unemployment matter on both the academic and political level. One reason this topic needs further investigation is that attitudes about welfare programs influence political decision-making. For example, an official seeking reelection will be unlikely to defend a program that lacks voter support. Alternatively, a politician will not cut a program that is popular with his/her constituents (Brooks and Manza 2007). Another reason welfare state attitudes matter is because collectively, they embody the institutional characteristics of policies in different countries. Attitudes are not just an individual phenomenon but are influenced by the country in which a person lives. This idea is supported by previous research, which shows both individual and country-level variation in attitudes about welfare programs (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003), but some questions about country-level influences on attitudes remain.

## 3. Data and Methodology

This article uses the 2006 wave of the International Social Survey (ISSP), which focuses on the role of government. The ISSP is ideal for this study because it combines multiple country-level surveys into one comparative dataset that is publically accessible. It is deemed one of the most reliable datasets of this type. This data is also ideal because previous waves have been used for similar investigations. Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003) used the 1995 ISSP data to examine how situational and ideological factors affected attitudes at both the country and the individual-level. This study analyzed data on 23 countries that pertained to programs for the unemployed, programs for the sick, and programs for the elderly. The current project mirrors Blekesaune and Quadagno's theoretical model on individual attitudes but uses fewer countries to facilitate testing Esping-Andersen's typology specifically. This study also uses methodological elements from Busemeyer et al. (2009) to model attitudes toward spending, which were not incorporated into the Blekesune and Quadagno article. Using more current data also ensures that the political and social events that have occurred since 1995 are incorporated in the answers of respondents.

### 3.1 Dependent Variables

This paper addresses how attitudes toward public pensions and unemployment benefits differ between individuals and countries as measured by belief about government responsibility. Therefore, I have selected two dependent variables as being best fit to answer these questions. To address government responsibility, the questions states:

Listed below are various areas of government responsibility. Please show whether you would like to see more or less government responsibility in each area. Is it the government's responsibility to provide a decent living standard for the: (1) old, (2) unemployed.

Answer categories were originally 'definitely should be', 'probably should be', 'probably should not be', 'definitely should not be'. The difference between stating 'definitely should be' and 'probably should be' are minimal because both answers convey a belief in the government being responsible, therefore, these answer categories are collapsed. In a similar way, the people who answered 'probably should not be' and 'definitely should not be' are showing attitudes that do not favor government responsibility.

Because of this similarity, these answer categories are also collapsed. Therefore, this dependent variable is collapsed from four categories into two response categories: those who think it is the government's responsibility to take care (referent) of the elderly or the unemployed and those who feel it is not the governments responsibility to provide a basic standard of living for either the elderly or the unemployed. Given that the dependent variable is binary, I use logistic regression models to understand how people feel about government responsibility toward the elderly (table 3) and toward the unemployed (table 4). I discuss the analytical technique in detail in the following sub-section.

There are two analytical aims with each of the dependent variables. The first is to determine if spending attitudes vary by regimes. The second is to identify which factors, self-interest or political ideology, contribute the most to attitudes about public pension and unemployment policies. To make sure that country spending levels were not influencing the relationship between country-level differences in spending attitudes; I conducted a preliminary analysis to address any confounding effects. While I found that social spending<sup>1</sup> in these countries differed significantly, this difference does not explain or affect the magnitude or direction of any of the reported results. The regression models include country-level dummies to account for country specifics, such as spending levels, which can cause different intercepts (Following the work of Busemeyer, Goerres, Weschle 2009).

### 3.2 Independent Variables

Based on previous literature and available data, several independent variables at the individual-level are used to test self-interest and political ideology. The operationalization of these variables is discussed in table 1: Description of Variables.

To evaluate the validity of the impact of self-interest on attitudes toward public pensions, I examine five independent variables. Age is measured as a continuous variable. Gender is measured as a dichotomous variable, where female is coded as the referent group. Social class is created using a self-reported subjective measure. Respondents were asked what social class they felt they belonged to in comparison with others, which was then coded as a measure of subjective social class (working, middle, or upper). I also use education as a rough proxy of social class. For the purposes of this study, I code education dichotomously so the reference group is those who have completed a college degree or more (college) compared to those who do not have a college degree. I also measure employment status with four categories, employed (referent), unemployed, retired, and not in the labor force.

I measure political ideology in two ways: in terms of political party identification and egalitarian attitudes regarding the role of government. To measure political party identification, I use three dummy variables: right leaning (referent), left leaning, and other or no party. Respondents who answered "Other" could have either left or right leanings, as is true for people who said they did not have a political party. To address political ideology more broadly, I add a second variable, egalitarian attitudes. This variable was derived from a question that asks if the gap between the rich and the poor should be reduced. This question has four response categories where higher answers are more anti-egalitarian and lower scores reflecting more egalitarian attitudes. I then reverse code this variable purposes of this study. Therefore, higher scores indicate more egalitarian views. This variable has been used in other studies examining welfare state attitudes in Europe (see Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003 for example). Descriptive statistics for each variable are located in table 2. After each regression model is run I use the "test" command in STATA to run an omnibus Wald test to see if the variables I use do influence attitudes significantly, and I also report the Chi<sup>2</sup> statistic for each model which helps determine what model has the most influence on the dependent variable. I use a Wald Chi<sup>2</sup> test to examine different levels of variance because this test is especially useful for multilevel models where simple or complex null hypotheses need to be tested.

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<sup>1</sup> Social spending was operationalized in three different ways. In the first operationalization, country-level spending on education, health care, public pensions and welfare were combined. I did this using three different variables (welfare and pension spending were combined into two variables over a four year time period (2002-2006) in each of the six countries. I tested the effects of these variables with the country dummies included and excluded. While spending levels are different, they do not appear to influence individual attitudes about spending in this case.

Table 1: Description of Variables, ISSP Role of Government Survey, 2006

Dependent Variables		Definition of Variables
Government Responsibility for Elderly		Response to question that asks if it is the government's responsibility to provide for the elderly. If respondents answered yes, or definitely yes, they are coded as 1, if they answered no, or definitely no, they are coded 0.
Government Responsibility for Unemployment		Response to question that asks if it is the government's responsibility to provide for the unemployed. If respondents answered yes, or definitely yes, they are coded as 1, if they answered no, or definitely no, they are coded 0.
Self Interest Independent Variables		
Age		Continuous variable representing respondents age, ranging from 18-94
Gender		"Sex of respondent". Dummy coded: female=1, male=0
Education		"Comparative: highest completed degree of education". Dummy coded: college degree or higher = 1, lower than a college degree=0
Employment		Currently in paid work" coded: Employed = currently working, Unemployed = not currently working, but looking for employment, Retired = formally paid work, now retired, No labor status = housewife, student, or other not in the labor force.
Subjective Social Class		Response to question: what social class do you belong (TOPBOT)? Ranging from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Recoded: working (0-3), middle (4-7), and upper (8-10). Based on Bean and Papadakis, 1998.
Political Ideology Independent Variables		
Political Party ID		"Comparative: Political ideology" Left-leaning, Right-leaning, Other/no party (Other includes: other, no specific, no party preference which are combined by ISSP and cannot be separated)
Egalitarian Attitudes		"Government should reduce income differences between rich and poor". Should =1, should not=0.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Dependent Variables	Mean	S.D	Low	High
Government Responsibility for Elderly	0.594	0.491	0	1
Government Responsibility for Unemployment	0.208	0.406	0	1
Self Interest Independent Variables				
Age	49.004	16.400	18	94
Gender	0.578	0.499	0	1
Education	0.396	0.489	0	1
Employment	2.283	0.946	0	3
Subjective Social Class	0.870	0.687	0	2
Political Ideology Independent Variables				
Political Party ID	0.995	0.853	0	2
Egalitarian Attitudes	0.654	0.476	0	1
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### **3.3 Analytical Technique**

To examine attitudes about government responsibility, I use clustered logistic regression with robust standard errors, which is a basic type of generalized linear mixed models, also known as multilevel or hierarchical models. These models are "mixed" because they allow fixed and random effects, and they are "generalized" because they are appropriate for continuous Gaussian responses as well as binary, count, and other types of limited dependent variables (Cohen 2003). I established that a multilevel model must be used in this research because the intra-class correlation (ICC) between countries is significantly different. In other words, the between country variation for the dependent variables is significantly different from one another, and without multilevel modeling some variation would be ignored. There are several ways to model multilevel questions. I used the Hausman test to compare fixed effect, random effect, and mixed effect models. Based on the results of this test, I have determined that a mixed model is most beneficial. A technique called clustering is used to group (or cluster) countries in the analysis, thus, addressing the non-independence of within-country observations (Tai and Treas 2009). This regression model includes both macro level dummy variables that account for country-level differences and individual-level variables previously discussed.

## **4. Results of Analysis**

### **4.1 Country-level results for responsibility on public pensions**

Attitudes about the government responsibility for pensions do vary by regime type. These results can be seen in table 3. By clustering on the country-level to control for non-measured differences between countries and then creating a dummy variable that addresses Esping-Andersen's regime typology, both tables 3 and 4 show that attitudes about public pensions do vary by country and by regime type. For the government responsibility dependent variable, social democratic countries are more likely to support the idea that it is the government's responsibility to support the elderly. Between the conservative/corporatist and liberal countries, the liberal countries are more likely to support government responsibility than the conservative countries (analysis for this relationship in Appendix D). The significant difference between the three regimes was not expected given previous research. Not only are the regimes significantly different, but they are different in a way that suggest the Esping-Andersen's typology is theoretically sound when it comes to explaining attitudes toward pensioners. The social democratic countries are strongly in favor of government responsibility compared to the countries in the other two regimes. Yet, the other regimes are also significantly different from each other. While this has not been suggested in previous research, it is not necessarily surprising given that Esping-Andersen used pensions as one of his primary variables in creating the original typology.

### **4.2 Country-level results for responsibility on unemployment**

While Esping-Andersen's regimes seem to be well represented in country-level attitudes about government responsibility for the elderly, the results are less clear in regards to country-level attitudes about government responsibility for the unemployed. These results are available in table 4. While the attitudes toward government responsibility for the unemployed differ significantly between social democratic countries and corporatist countries, they are not different between social democratic countries and liberal countries. Also, the direction of the relationship is intriguing. People in corporatist countries have two times higher odds of supporting government responsibility toward the unemployed than people in social democratic countries. One possible explanation is that social democratic countries have unemployment programs that are so well developed and integrated into society that they are not truly thought of as support for unemployment. For example, Danish people may not think of paying citizens to go to college as part of unemployment support, but it certainly can be used as a form of unemployment insurance.

Thus, country-level attitudes on public pensions closely mirror Esping-Andersen's typology, but the same evidence is not as clear regarding country-level variations in attitudes on government responsibility for the unemployed. However, in both cases, some regime level variation is noted.

### **4.3 Individual-level results for responsibility on public pensions**

When respondents are asked if it is the government's responsibility to ensure a standard of living for the elderly, women are 31 percent more likely than men to agree. Gough and Sozou (2005) argue that one reason women may be more likely to have favorable attitudes toward government involvement in pensions is because they have saved less for retirement than men, on average.

While their sample is small and not generalizable, this supports the argument that self-interest is an important predictor of attitudes toward public pensions. Next, as age increases so does the likelihood that respondents agree that public pensions are the government's responsibility. This supports the self-interest hypotheses as well, because it is the elderly who benefit from this program. As people age, they become more aware of their need/desire to one day retire (Canaan et al. 1993). Respondents with at least a college or more education are less likely to believe that it should be the government's responsibility to provide pensions. If education is used correctly as a proxy for class, this also is consistent with the idea that people want to get the maximum benefit for themselves out of government programs. People with a college education tend to have a higher social status than those without (see Gelissen 2001 for example on using education as a social class proxy). Therefore, people with higher levels of education are more likely to be able to fund their own retirement. However, when self-reported social class is examined, the attitudes are not significantly different. Compared to people who are in full-time employment, those who are not in the labor force and the retired are more likely to believe that it is the governments' responsibility to provide a pension. Perhaps this is the best indicator of the relevance of the self-interest theory because retirees have the most at stake if pensions were to change.

Table 3: Logistic Regression, Government Responsibility for the Elderly

	Model 1: Self Interest	Model 2: Political Ideology	Model 3: Full Model
Gender (Female)	1.374***		1.316***
Age	1.014*		1.013*
Education (College+)	0.648**		0.703*
Class (Upper)			
Working	0.956		0.848
Middle class	0.814		0.826
Employment (employed)			
Unemployed	1.136		1.004
Retired	0.888		0.828*
No labor status	1.268**		1.229**
Party (right)			
Left		1.297*	1.306*
Other		1.011	1.033
Egalitarian attitude		2.377***	2.196***
Corporatist	0.347***	0.346***	0.302***
Liberal	0.581***	0.621**	0.548**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.052	0.067	0.083
Observations	7151	7151	7151

Significance: \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.005; \*p<.05; +p<.10

Data: ISSP, Role of Government 2006

Not surprisingly, I also find some evidence of the political ideology theory. Those who have left leaning political beliefs (compared to right leaning) and who are egalitarian are more likely to believe it is the government's responsibility to provide pensions. This supports the other finding regarding party preference and welfare state attitudes (Jeager 2006). Interestingly, this relationship holds even when examining public pensions, a universal program, and not just targeted welfare state programs. In the past, most political parties around the world have supported pensions because they encourage capitalism while rewarding taxpayers for years in the labor force as productive members of society (Castles 1999). Lastly, respondents with egalitarian attitudes were much more likely to believe in government responsibility for pensions. This supports previous findings by Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003). Therefore, evidence supporting both the self-interest and political ideology theories are present when examining attitudes toward government responsibility for the elderly.

After models 1 and 2 and 3 were run, I used the “test” command in STATA to run an omnibus test for goodness statistic. This test was significant ( $p > .005$ ) for the self-interest model, the political ideology model, and the full model. This means that at least one of the variables used to measure these two theories are significantly different from each other and not just 0. The chi2 statistic was higher for the political ideology model than the self-interest. This suggests that the political ideology variables explain the variation in government responsibility for pensions is a better model than just the self-interest variables.

#### 4.4 Individual-level results for responsibility on unemployment

Table 4 tests attitudes about government responsibility for unemployment programs. Perhaps the most important support for the self-interest theory is that those who are unemployed are three times more likely to support government responsibility for the unemployed than those currently employed in the labor market. Findings also suggest, that those who are retired and those with no current labor status are more likely to support government responsibility for the unemployed. In model 1, females are 15 percent more likely to support government responsibility for the unemployed than men. However, in the full model (model 3) the significance of this relationship is no longer apparent. Age and education are also not significant indicators of support for unemployment programs. These results are somewhat inconsistent with the self-interest theory because those with lower levels of education are at more risk of being unemployed (Nickell and Bell 1996), yet no difference is discernable between educational levels. In model 1, the working classes have significantly higher odds of supporting responsibility for the unemployed, but similar to the gender variable, this relationship is not evident in the full model. Most importantly, however, every type of employment status is significantly more likely to support government responsibility for the unemployed when compared to those currently employed.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Models, Government Responsibility for the Unemployed

	Model 1: Self Interest	Model 2: Political Ideology	Model 3: Full Model
Gender (Female)	1.157**		1.066
Age	1.003		1.002
Education (College+)	0.840		0.949
Class (Upper)			
Working	1.277**		1.171
Middle class	0.953		1.033
Employment (employed)			
Unemployed	3.466***		3.091***
Retired	1.359**		1.300**
No labor status	1.837***		1.790***
Party (right)			
Left		1.735**	1.693**
Other		1.334***	1.271***
Egalitarian attitude		4.460***	4.195***
Corporatist	2.098***	2.172***	2.395***
Liberal	0.880	0.912	1.003
R <sup>2</sup>	0.044	0.067	0.107
Observations	7151	7151	7151

Significance: \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .005$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; + $p < .10$

Data: ISSP, Role of Government 2006

The political ideology variables are also important in explaining who supports government responsibility for the unemployed. Compared with people who identify as leaning right politically, those who identify as left have 69 percent higher odds of supporting government responsibility for the unemployed. Those who say they are “other/no party” also have significantly higher odds of supporting more government responsibility for the unemployed. People with egalitarian attitudes are four times as likely to support government responsibility for the unemployed. Therefore, both the self-interest and political ideology theories are supported from these findings.

When descriptively comparing the findings from both tables, we see that the self-interest variables for each program are significant for the particular program but not for the other program. This means that, while being unemployed is important and significant in understanding how self-interest affects attitudes about employment, it is not important or significant for understanding how self-interest affects attitudes about pensions. This is something few studies have been able to tap into because they combine multiple programs into one statistical model. By doing this, they lose the variations each program creates, and conclude that political ideology is a better predictor of attitudes (see Allan and Scruggs 2004 for exception). With that being said, there is clearly a strong correlation between political ideology and attitudes toward welfare state programs. The idea that both political ideology and self-interest are important in explaining welfare state attitudes is consistent with several other bodies of literature that study similar, yet different, areas of the welfare state. One example of this is a study by economists, Corneo and Gruner (2002) which finds that the ‘public values effect’, and the ‘social rivalry effect’ play a significant role in shaping people’s attitudes toward redistribution of tax dollars. While these theories sound different, they are similar to what is being tested here. Specifically, they examine how people make decisions based on their own financial needs and the needs of society more generally. The authors state, “The main novelty of the current analysis is however that pecuniary self-interest is not the only force behind people’s support for governmental redistribution (Corneo and Gruner, p. 85)”. Thus suggesting similar findings as the individual-level results of the current study.

To confirm this, I used the “test” command in STATA to run an omnibus test for goodness of fit statistic. This test was significant ( $p > .005$ ) for the self-interest model, the political ideology model, and the full model. This means that at least one of the variables used to measure these two theories are significantly different from each other and not just 0. The  $\chi^2$  statistic was higher for the political ideology model than the self-interest. This suggests that the political ideology variables explain the variation in government responsibility for pensions is a better model than the self-interest variables.

## 5. Conclusion

While other research suggests that Esping-Andersen’s typology does not work when applied to attitudes, my results suggest otherwise. I re-examine the research question, do attitudes about government responsibility for welfare programs vary by regime type. My answer is yes. For both public pensions and unemployment, I find support that suggests that a country’s regime type is correlated with peoples’ attitudes. Perhaps part of the reason I find this while others do not is because I look at programs independently of the welfare state as a whole. By examining pensions separate from unemployment I am able to better capture the nuances between the two programs. However, my results do not fit neatly into previous logic that states that social democratic regimes should have the most favoritism toward government responsibility and conservative should have the least. This is perhaps an artifact of more recent conflicts over privatization that has people in some countries more concerned about the longevity of programs.

On an individual-level, results are reported that answer the question, what affects people’s attitudes, self-interest or political ideology? In the models for pensions and unemployment, we can see evidence that supports both theories. First, there is some evidence that suggests self-interest cannot be ignored. When asked about pensions, older people are more likely to support government responsibility than younger people. When asked about unemployment, the unemployed are more likely than then employed to support government responsibility. These are the groups that are benefiting from these programs so they have a personal stake in seeing them thrive. There is also evidence to suggest that political ideology may affect people’s attitudes, mainly when examining the polarized ends of the political spectrum. The left and right have significantly different attitudes toward government responsibility for both unemployment and public pensions. This is true even when model three controls for influence of both theories. Therefore, when it comes to understanding attitudes toward government responsibility on pensions and unemployment both theories are important and should be included in future research.

Public pensions were studied separately from unemployment because previous research argues that using aggregate attitudes to understand variation is problematic because differences between social policy fields are crucial (Bussemeyer et al 2009). My results support this argument. However, I would add that the differences between the dimensions of the welfare state are also crucial to understanding attitudes.

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