Political Research Quarterly
1–15

DOI: 10.1177/1065912919856110
journals.sagepub.com/home/prq
SAGE

Trust in Government and the American Public's Responsiveness to Rising Inequality

David Macdonald[1]

Abstract

The United States has become increasingly unequal. Income inequality has risen dramatically since the 1970s, yet public opinion toward redistribution has remained largely unchanged. This is puzzling, given Americans' professed concern regarding, and knowledge of, rising inequality. I argue that trust in government can help to reconcile this. I combine data on state-level income inequality with survey data from the Cumulative American National Election Studies (CANES) from 1984 to 2016. I find that trust in government conditions the relationship between inequality and redistribution, with higher inequality prompting demand for government redistribution, but only among politically trustful individuals. This holds among conservatives and non-conservatives and among the affluent and non-affluent. These findings underscore the relevance of political trust in shaping attitudes toward inequality and economic redistribution and contribute to our understanding of why American public opinion has not turned in favor of redistribution during an era of rising income inequality.

Keywords

political trust, income inequality, redistribution, public opinion, responsiveness

The United States is becoming increasingly unequal. In 1978, the top 1 percent of Americans held 23 percent of wealth. By 2012, the amount held by the top 1 percent had nearly doubled to 42 percent (Saez and Zucman 2016). Despite a sharp rise in economic inequality and stagnant income growth among the middle and lower classes over the past four decades, American public support for economic redistribution has not increased, even among the less affluent (Kelly and Enns 2010). This is puzzling, given the economic incentives of people to support redistribution when income inequality rises (Benabou 2000; Meltzer and Richard 1981). Furthermore, majorities of Americans profess to care about inequality (McCall and Kenworthy 2009; Norton and Ariely 2011; Page and Jacobs 2009) and are aware that it has risen over the past several decades (Kelly and Enns 2010; McCall 2013).

Drawing on Hetherington's (2005) theory of political trust, I argue that trust in government can help to reconcile this puzzling relationship between income inequality and support for redistribution. The American mass public's lack of increased demand for redistribution, during an era of rising income inequality, is not due to apathy regarding, nor ignorance of, inequality but rather because people have low trust in the actor most responsible for enacting redistributive policies—the federal government. Past studies have largely overlooked trust in government, despite the strong relationship between trust and people's attitudes regarding redistributive policies (Kuziemko et al. 2015; Rudolph and Evans 2005), and support for an activist government (Hetherington 2005; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

I use time-series cross-sectional data from the Cumulative American National Election Studies (CANES) from 1984 to 2016, showing that trust in government conditions the relationship between income inequality and support for economic redistribution. When political trust is higher, increased inequality leads to increased support for redistribution. However, when trust is low, higher inequality fails to prompt demand for economic redistribution and can even depress support for redistribution. This relationship is present among both ideologically conservative and non-conservative individuals and among the affluent and non-affluent. These findings help to clarify the relationship between inequality and support for redistribution as a potential remedy, illustrating when higher inequality elicits demand for redistribution and when it

[1]Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA

Corresponding Author:
David Macdonald, Florida State University, 600 W. College Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA.
Email: dm14@my.fsu.edu

Table 1. Americans' Knowledge of Rising Income Inequality.

	Much larger	Somewhat larger	About the same	Somewhat smaller	Much smaller
%	55.6	24.0	14.9	3.8	1.7
n	8,124	3,511	2,178	558	252

Source. 2002–2016 American National Election Studies time-series studies.
The question asks, "Do you think the difference in incomes between rich people and poor people in the United States today is LARGER, SMALLER, or ABOUT THE SAME as it was 20 years ago?"

does not. This paper also contributes to our understanding of why U.S. public opinion has not shifted in favor of redistribution during a four-decade increase in economic inequality.[1]

Inequality does not exist in all contexts (Ellis 2017), and in some instances, preferences do not differ much across income groups (Branham, Soroka, and Wlezien 2017; Ura and Ellis 2008). Yet, on average, wealthy Americans vote, contact officials, and donate to campaigns at much higher rates (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012), and tend to see their preferences better represented on a host of issues (Bartels 2016; Ellis 2012; Flavin 2012; Gilens 2012; Hayes 2013). In short, there is a disconnect between people's attitudes toward income inequality and their attitudes toward redistribution. This disconnect is theoretically puzzling (Kelly and Enns 2010; Meltzer and Richard 1981) and detrimental to a well-functioning democracy (Bartels 2016; Gilens 2012; Hacker and Pierson 2010; Scheve and Stasavage 2017). These findings thus have broader implications, underscoring the role that political trust plays in fostering a more responsive mass public and a more politically equal democracy.[2]

Public Opinion toward Inequality and Redistribution

Despite decades of rising inequality, the American mass public has not turned in favor of greater economic redistribution (Shaw and Gaffey 2012). As noted by Condon and Wichowsky (2019) in a forthcoming article, the conventional wisdom characterizes Americans as either ignorant: lacking the factual knowledge to respond to growing inequality, or tolerant: accepting of inequality because of due to beliefs about mobility (but see McCall 2013). Survey data show, however, that majorities of Americans are not ignorant of, nor apathetic regarding, inequality.

Data from the 2002 to 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES), presented in Table 1, show that the American public is aware that inequality has risen, and risen considerably, since over the past several decades. Data from multiple surveys support this. For instance, a January 2014 poll from CBS showed that 70 percent of Americans thought the gap between the rich and poor was getting larger, while a December 2013 Bloomberg poll showed that 65 percent of Americans thought that the gap between the rich and everyone else had increased during the past 10 years.[3]

Although people may be ignorant of annual trends in inequality (Bartels 2016), or be uncertain regarding the true level of inequality in the country or their place in the income distribution (Gimpelson and Treisman 2018), they are clearly aware that income inequality has increased over the past several decades. Furthermore, even if people are ignorant of the true level of inequality in the United States, it may be due to the fact that they pay greater attention to inequality in their state (Xu and Garand 2010) or local areas (Newman, Johnston, and Lown 2015; Newman, Shah, and Lauterbach 2018), rather than ignorance of inequality in and of itself. In short, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the American public is at least *somewhat* aware that inequality has risen.

People also care about rising inequality and desire to see a more egalitarian distribution (Page and Jacobs 2009), viewing high inequality as an affront to equality of opportunity (McCall 2013). Data from the 2012 ANES show that a majority of Americans think that increased wealth disparities between the top and bottom 20 percent of households is a bad thing (see Table 2).[4]

A January 2014 poll from Gallup showed that only 33 percent of Americans were very or somewhat satisfied about how income and wealth are distributed in the United States. A 2017 Pew poll showed that a majority of Americans think economic inequality in the country today is a very big (48%) or moderately big (34%) problem, while only a few think it is a small problem (10%) or not a problem at all (5%). Similar data from 2013, 2014, and 2016 Pew polls show that large majorities (between 74% and 83%) think that the gap between the rich and poor is a very big or moderately big problem, while a minority (between 16% and 23%) think that it is a small problem or not a problem at all.

In short, the American mass public is aware of and concerned about rising income inequality. Despite this, extant research has produced mixed evidence regarding the relationship between inequality and redistribution,

Table 2. Americans' Views on Growing Inequality.

	Bad thing	Neither good nor bad	Good thing
%	52.6	37.2	10.2
n	2,884	2,046	558

Source. 2012 American National Election Study.
The question asks, "In 1967, households in the top 20 percent earned an average of 11 times as much as households in the bottom 20 percent. Today, the top earn an average of 15 times as much. Is it good, bad, or neither good nor bad that the DIFFERENCE between the top and bottom incomes has changed this way?"

that is, whether higher inequality will eventually prompt demand for redistribution. Some have found a positive relationship, with higher levels of local income inequality lowering people's belief in American meritocracy (Newman, Johnston, and Lown 2015) and bolstering their support for redistributive spending (Johnston and Newman 2016), organized labor (Newman and Kane 2017), and elected officials who support inequality-reducing policies (Newman and Hayes 2019). Additional observational (Franko, Tolbert, and Witko 2013) and experimental studies (Boudreau and MacKenzie 2018; McCall et al. 2017) have documented a positive relationship, with negative perceptions of inequality, and experimentally induced information regarding the extent of inequality, prompting greater support for redistributive spending and taxation. Condon and Wichowsky (2019) argue that information about inequality *can* lead to increased support for redistribution, but only when social comparisons are facilitated upward, that is, when people view themselves as worse off than the most affluent, rather than better off than the least affluent.

In contrast, some, employing observational (Bartels 2016; Hayes 2014; McCall and Kenworthy 2009; Solt et al. 2017) and experimental designs (Ballard-Rosa Martin and Scheve 2017; Sands 2017; Trump 2018; Trump and White 2018), have found a null relationship, with concern about, and information regarding, exposure to inequality having, at best, a trivial relationship with belief in economic meritocracy and support for government spending and taxation. Others, examining over-time, aggregate opinion, have demonstrated a negative relationship (Kelly and Enns 2010; Luttig 2013; Wright 2018), with higher inequality actually promoting economic conservatism among the mass public. Overall, findings are mixed (Franko 2016), and extant research has not provided a satisfactory answer as to why a mass public that has economic incentives to support redistribution, professes to care about rising inequality, and is aware of its rise has not shifted in favor of redistribution during an era of rising inequality. I argue that the decline of trust in government can help to reconcile this.

Trust in Government and Support for Redistribution

Income inequality has been rising since the 1970s. This decade also saw the erosion of trust in government. The tumult of the 1960s, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal all undermined the American public's trust in government. In 1972, more than 50 percent of Americans said they trusted the government to do the right thing "most of the time" or "just about always." Four decades later, barely 20 percent of Americans felt this way.[5] I argue that this decline in trust matters for understanding the aforementioned disconnect between Americans' attitudes toward inequality and support for redistribution.[6]

People who are trusting of government are more likely to give officials the leeway to enact and implement redistributive policies, rather than oppose government action. I argue that trust not only influences support for redistribution but also influences whether people turn in favor of redistribution when income inequality rises. Indeed, Figure 1 shows that political trust and inequality have moved in opposite directions over the past several decades.

Political trust is a broad evaluation of the entire government.[7] It reflects diffuse rather than specific support for government officials such as the president or leaders of Congress (Citrin and Stoker 2018; Easton 1975). Low trust in government, however, does not reflect dissatisfaction with the American system of democracy, that is, opposition to the Bill of Rights, but rather a negative evaluative view of the government as a whole (Intawan and Nicholson 2018). Although trust has a partisan component (Keele 2005), with Republicans (Democrats) expressing higher levels of trust when a Republican (Democrat) is president, the questions typically used to measure trust ask about the government as a whole, rather than about specific evaluations of partisan figures such as the president or congressional leaders.[8]

Hetherington (2005, 10) defines political trust as "how positively citizens perceive government's performance relative to their expectations" and views trust as a "running tally" of how well government is performing. Trust in government has broad political implications. Low trust has been shown to reduce elected officials' approval ratings, inhibiting their ability to marshal public support for their policies and address societal problems. Low incumbent approval further reduces trust, creating a political environment in which it is difficult for politicians and government to succeed (Hetherington 1998). Less trusting citizens are unlikely to afford elected officials the leeway and flexibility to enact new policies (Hetherington 1998) and are less willing to pay taxes and comply with laws (Fairbrother 2019; Scholz and Lubell 1998). This

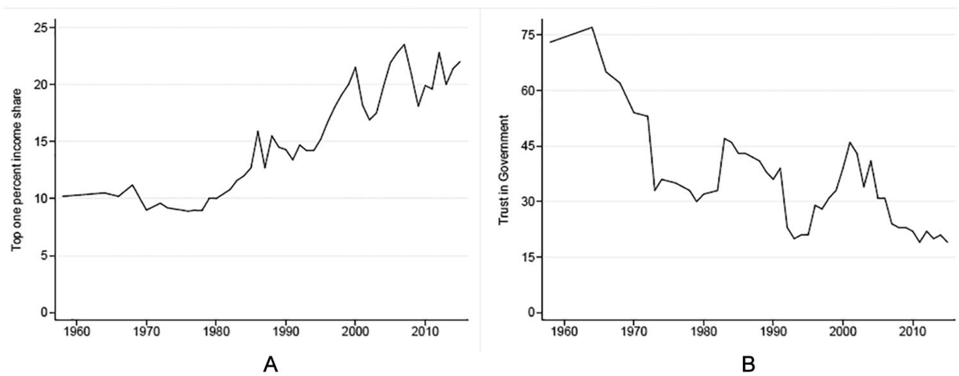

Figure 1. The movement of U.S. income inequality and trust in government over time: (A) income inequality and (B) trust in government.

Trust in government reflects the percentage of Americans who said they trusted the government to do the right thing "always" or "most of the time." Income inequality shows the pre-tax income share held by the top 1 percent of Americans. Years range from 1958 to 2015, with a few missing for trust in government depending on the availability of poll questions.

can create a vicious cycle, whereby low political trust inhibits government performance, which further reduces trust in government.

When deciding whether to support government policies, most Americans, lacking sufficient political information (Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), tend to rely on information shortcuts (Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Lupia 1994). One such shortcut is trust in government. Simply put, "trust serves as a simple decision rule for supporting or rejecting government activity" (Hetherington 2005, 51). People need to believe that government, the actor responsible for enacting and implementing redistributive politics, is not wasteful, ineffective, and/or corrupt. Otherwise, they will be unlikely to support government action to reduce inequality, even though many Americans wish to see a more equal distribution of wealth. Indeed, large majorities have pessimistic views regarding government's ability to effectively address societal problems, with less than 10 percent of Americans stating that they have a "great deal" of confidence in the federal government to handle domestic problems.[9]

I argue that low trust in government offers an explanation for the disconnect between people's attitudes toward inequality (general awareness of and opposition to it) and their failure to support increased redistribution as a means of addressing rising inequality. If people lack political trust, and indeed many Americans have pessimistic evaluations of government's problem-solving abilities, then they will be unlikely to support government efforts to redistribute wealth, even in an era of high and rising income inequality.

Government redistribution is a policy that entails some risk (Hetherington and Globetti 2002; Rudolph 2009), and thus the type of policy likely to "activate" political trust. Redistribution implies that some people bear costs, be they real or perceived, without receiving any tangible benefits. Government efforts to reduce income differences would likely require higher taxes on the wealthy and increased spending to assist the poor. Neither of these actions guarantee widely dispersed benefits, as would Social Security, Medicare, or spending on the environment (Rudolph and Evans 2005), for example.[10] Supporting government redistribution may, for many Americans, also entail value-based sacrifices. Many Americans hold humanitarian values (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001) and a strong core belief in economic individualism (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Redistribution may run counter to the notion of people "pulling themselves up by their bootstraps" and achieving success through initiative and hardwork. Furthermore, people would have to assume that government action would not be wasteful and would indeed achieve its objective of more equally dispersed wealth.

Trust in government has been strongly linked to redistributive preferences by past research, using both observational (Hetherington 2005; Rudolph and Evans 2005) and experimental research designs (Kuziemko et al. 2015). For example, Kuziemko et al. (2015, 1499–1501) experimentally lowered individuals' political trust by portraying the U.S. government as corrupt. Individuals in this treatment group, relative to a control group, were significantly less trusting of government and less supportive of means-tested redistributive spending (aid to the poor, food stamps, and subsidized housing), less willing to sign a petition asking their U.S. senators to raise the estate tax, and more likely to favor private charity over government action as a means of reducing inequality. As Hetherington and Husser (2012, 321) state, "put simply, people need to trust the government to support more government." Formally, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis: Income inequality should positively influence support for redistribution, but only among individuals who are trusting of government.

Data and Method

To test this hypothesis, I use data from the Cumulative American National Election Study (CANES) from 1984 to 2016. I combine these individual-level survey data with a measure of state-level income inequality over the same time period.

Dependent Variable—Support for Redistribution

The CANES is a general dataset and thus has fewer questions to measure support for redistribution than do individual ANES time-series studies. To maximize the number of years and states in the analysis, and thus to maximize variation in state-level inequality, I use three variables that are asked over the longest period of time in the ANES. These are seven-point scales that ask about government services and spending, a government guarantee of jobs and a good standard of living, and private versus government health insurance.[11] Rather than rely upon one survey question to capture support for redistribution, I rely on multiple measures to increase measurement validity (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008). A principal components factor analysis confirms that they each load strongly onto a single factor (eigenvalue = 1.91, variance explained = 63.7%) and provide a valid measure of the latent concept of support for economic redistribution. I use the factor score from this analysis, rescaling it to range between 0 and 1.

Independent Variable—Trust in Government

I use four questions from the CANES to measure trust in government. The four questions ask the following: how often people trust the government to do the right thing (1 = never, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time, 4 = always), how much tax money government wastes (1 = a lot, 2 = some, 3 = not very much), how many people in government are crooked/corrupt (1 = quite a few, 2 = not very many, 3 = hardly any), and whether government is run by a few big interests or for the public at large (1 = few big interests, 2 = benefit of all the people).[12] These questions serve as a standard measure of trust in government (Hetherington 1998, 2005), and a principal components factor analysis shows that they each load onto a single factor (eigenvalue = 1.80, variance explained = 44.9%) and serve as a valid measure. I use this factor score to measure trust in government, rescaling it to range between 0 and 1.

Independent Variable—State Income Inequality

I use an objective, over-time measure of income inequality. This variable is measured as the income share of the top 1 percent in a particular state-year. These data range from 1917 to 2015, and are made available by Mark Frank, as part of the World Wealth and Income Database.[13] This measure is based on income tax records from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), rather than Census data. An advantage of this is that high incomes, for example, US$250,000 and over, are not top-coded. As such, the true extent of inequality is less likely to be underestimated.

I employ the top 1 percent income share as the nature of U.S. income inequality over the past four decades has been a collection of wealth at the top of the income distribution (Bartels 2016; Volscho and Kelly 2012), and this measure of inequality reflects that. In contrast, the Gini coefficient, a measure of how equally income is distributed in a society (ranging from perfect equality where all households have the same amount of income, to perfect inequality, where one household owns all of the income), is not sensitive to changes at the top of the income distribution (Franko 2016, 963, see note 4).[14] The state is also an appropriate geographic area to examine, as previous research has found that people's perceptions of income inequality are shaped, in part, by the objective level of inequality in their states (Xu and Garand 2010), and that public perceptions of income inequality track strongly with changes in objective state income inequality over time (Franko 2017). This suggests that people are at least somewhat aware of and responsive to state-level inequality.[15]

Control Variables

I control for the following demographics: age group (eighteen to twenty-nine, thirty to forty-four, forty-five to sixty-four, sixty-five and over), education (high school or less, some college, college degree), income (five categories), race (white vs. non-white), employment status (unemployed vs. not), union household status, marital status, and gender. I also control for partisan identification and ideology, and the core value of egalitarianism (a principal components factor score constructed out of four questions; eigenvalue = 1.83, variance explained = 45.9%) and feeling thermometer ratings of Blacks, Hispanics, the Poor, and Big Business. I rescale party ID, ideology, and all factor scores and feeling thermometer ratings to range between 0 and 1. I also control for two state-level economic variables: the unemployment rate and median household income, as state economic conditions can influence whether people support redistributive spending (Franko 2016; Kam and Nam 2008). I control for year fixed effects, taking factors such as the state of the national economy and party of the president into account, and state fixed effects, accounting for time-invariant characteristics such as state political culture or region.[16]

Trust, Inequality, and Support for Redistribution

Results show that trust in government conditions the relationship between inequality and redistribution, supporting hypothesized expectations (Table 3 and Figure 2). People with higher trust in government are responsive to higher inequality, favoring greater government redistribution as their environment becomes more unequal. At the lowest level of trust, higher inequality actually has a *negative* influence, suggesting that when trust is low enough, people may actually want government to "do less," a result consistent with aggregate-level studies (Kelly and Enns 2010; Luttig 2013; Wright 2018).[17]

Consider a person at the highest level of trust in government (a value of 1 on the 0–1 scale). If she was moved from a context at the 5th percentile of inequality (the top 1% holding 11.1% of the income in a state) to a context at the 95th percentile (the top 1% holding 30.4% of the income in a state), her support for redistribution would increase by approximately 0.12. In contrast, someone near the mean level of trust (0.30 on a 0–1 scale) would be no more or less likely to support redistribution (p = .989), while a person at the lowest level of trust in government would actually be *less* supportive of redistribution, with support declining by approximately 0.05.[18] For comparison, the difference in support for redistribution between whites and non-whites is approximately 0.04, the difference between the lowest and highest income percentiles is 0.08, the difference between the most and least egalitarian individuals is 0.26, and the difference between those who feel most coldly and most warmly toward the poor is 0.10. Furthermore, even relatively small shifts in public opinion can, over time, meaningfully affect policy change (Caughey and Warshaw 2018; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). A responsive mass public, one that turns in favor of redistribution when inequality rises, can eventually incentivize government to enact policies that reduce income disparities. If trust returned near its mean level in 1964 (pre-Vietnam and pre-Watergate), the public would *respond* to higher inequality by demanding more redistribution, pressuring government to alleviate economic inequities.[19] The low levels of trust observed today, however, suggest that the mass public is unlikely to respond to higher inequality, via increased support for economic redistribution.[20]

Figure 3 further illustrates how political trust influences responsiveness to inequality. I present two plots. The first shows predicted support for redistribution at varying levels of state inequality for people who are low in political trust (a value of 0.11, which is one standard deviation below the mean of 0.30). The second plot shows predicted support for redistribution at varying levels of state inequality for people who are high in political trust (a value of 0.49, which is one standard deviation above the mean value of 0.30).[21]

Figure 3 is a way of further illustrating the results from Table 2 and Figure 2, by showing how two different groups of individuals, those who are low in political trust and those who are high in political trust, respond to rising income inequality. The results show that people who are low in political trust do not become more supportive of redistribution as their states become more unequal, while politically trustful individuals become more supportive as inequality rises. This suggests that as inequality continues to rise in the country, we will likely see a divergence, in which politically distrustful individuals (the majority of Americans) do not become more supportive of inequality, while a smaller minority of politically trustful individuals turn in favor of greater redistribution.

Considering the Heterogeneous Influence of Trust in Government

The results in Table 3 and Figures 2 and 3 show that trust in government shapes public responsiveness to inequality, with more trustful individuals supporting government redistribution when inequality is higher in their states. However, this may not be the case for all individuals. Past research has shown that trust in government matters more and is "activated" when people are asked to make sacrifices, be they material (Hetherington and Globetti 2002) or ideological (Rudolph and Evans 2005). As such, trust could be more important among people for whom supporting these policies entails a "sacrifice."

To examine this, I split the CANES data into two groups—liberals/moderates and conservatives—and regress support for redistribution on an Inequality × Trust interaction and the same set of controls included in Table 3. The positive and significant interactions in columns 1 and 2 of Table 4 show that trust matters for *both* conservatives and non-conservatives, with a slightly larger coefficient among ideological conservatives.[22]

Table 3. Trust in Government and Mass Responsiveness to Inequality.

	B	*SE*
State top 1% income share	−0.003***	(0.001)
Trust in government	−0.059*	(0.031)
Top 1% × Trust in Government	0.009***	(0.002)
Demographics		
18–29 years old (Reference)	—	—
30–44 years old	−0.003	(0.005)
45–64 years old	−0.007	(0.005)
65 years and older	−0.023***	(0.006)
Income percentile 0–16 (Reference)	—	—
Income percentile 17–33	−0.007	(0.007)
Income percentile 34–67	−0.039***	(0.006)
Income percentile 68–95	−0.063***	(0.006)
Income percentile 96–100	−0.083***	(0.008)
HS or less (Reference)	—	—
Some college	−0.020***	(0.004)
College degree	−0.022***	(0.005)
Female	0.015***	(0.003)
White	−0.039***	(0.005)
Married	0.004	(0.004)
Homeowner	−0.016***	(0.004)
Union household	0.004	(0.005)
Unemployed	0.028***	(0.009)
Political predispositions		
Party ID (Republican direction)	−0.162***	(0.007)
Ideology (Conservative direction)	−0.221***	(0.012)
Egalitarianism	0.259***	(0.009)
Group evaluations		
Feeling thermometer: Blacks	−0.004	(0.014)
Feeling thermometer: Hispanics	−0.015	(0.014)
Feeling thermometer: Poor	0.103***	(0.010)
Feeling thermometer: Big Business	−0.110***	(0.009)
State economic conditions		
Median household income	0.002***	(0.001)
Unemployment rate	−0.002	(0.002)
Constant	0.504***	(0.043)
Year fixed effects	Yes	
State fixed effects	Yes	
Observations	11,515	
R^2	.507	

Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016). Dependent variable is pro-redistributive factor score, ranges 0–1. Ordinary least squares coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by state-year in parentheses.
*$p < .1$, **$p < .05$, ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

I also split the data into low- and high-income groups (at or below the 67th percentile vs. those above the 67th percentile), examining if trust matters more for people who need to make a larger material sacrifice (Hetherington and Globetti 2002), that is, pay more in taxes and receive few, if any benefits.[23] The results in Table 5 show that trust conditions the inequality–redistribution relationship for both the affluent and non-affluent. Surprisingly, it seems to matter somewhat more among the less affluent, rather than the wealthy.

Alternative Moderators of Responsiveness to Inequality

I also consider alternative moderators of the inequality–redistribution relationship, interacting trust in government, as well as several other individual-level variables with state-level income inequality. I examine feelings toward blacks and Hispanics, long relevant for understanding attitudes toward redistributive spending (Fox 2004; Gilens 1999), and feelings toward the Poor and Big Business (a proxy for the Rich), as recent work has underscored the importance that class considerations have for understanding Americans' redistributive preferences (Piston 2018). I also interact state-level inequality with: party identification, ideology, and egalitarianism.[24] In Table 6, I show that trust in government is the key moderator of the inequality–redistribution relationship, rather than feelings toward these different social groups. Neither feelings toward Blacks, Hispanics, the Poor, nor Big Business, significantly moderated the relationship between inequality and support for redistribution. Egalitarianism was also not a significant moderator. Partisan identification and ideological identification were shown to be significant moderators of this relationship, although the magnitude of the interaction terms was smaller than for trust in government.

Unlike trust in government, which has declined over time and remained low, feelings toward all of these social groups have remained largely stable over time. Furthermore, other individual-level traits that shape redistributive preferences, such as partisan identification, ideology, and core values, are quite stable as well (Goren 2005; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). In contrast, the decline of trust in government offers a more compelling explanation as to why public opinion has not shifted in favor of redistribution as inequality has grown over the past several decades.

Prospects for Redistribution in an Era of Inequality

I have argued that the American public's willingness to support economic redistribution as a remedy to high, and rising income inequality, is conditioned by their trust in government. Drawing on Hetherington's (2005) theory of political trust, I find that increased inequality positively and significantly influences support for redistribution, but only among people who are trustful of government. A majority of Americans do not trust the federal government to do the right thing, believe government officials are corrupt, waste a substantial amount of tax dollars, and view government as looking out primarily for a few big interests rather than the public at large. Low levels of political trust, not simply ignorance of, nor apathy

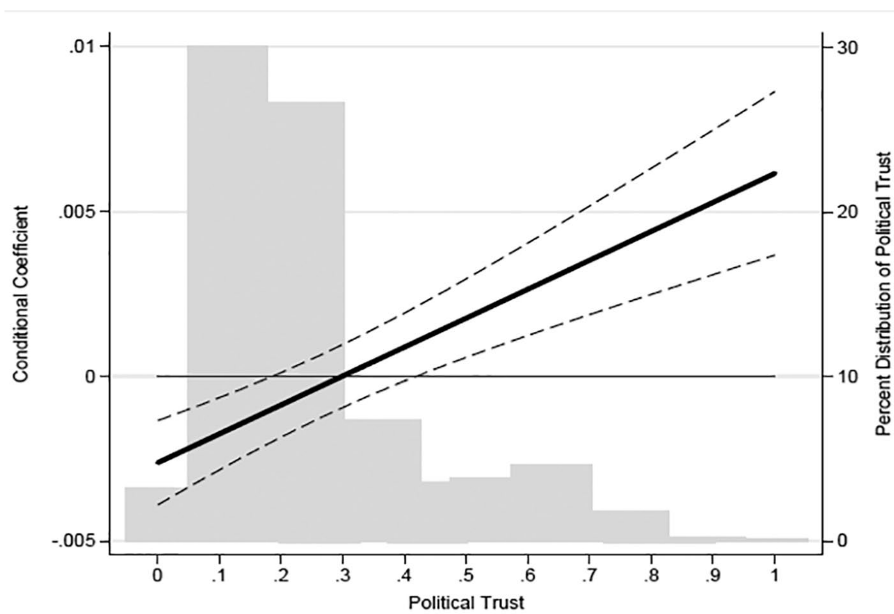

Figure 2. Mass responsiveness to state income inequality.
Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016).
Based on the ordinary least squares model in Table 3. The figure shows the marginal effect of a one-point increase in the income share of the top 1 percent in a particular state-year on support for redistribution. Dashed lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. Gray shaded bars and the right *y*-axis show the percentage of the distribution of political trust.

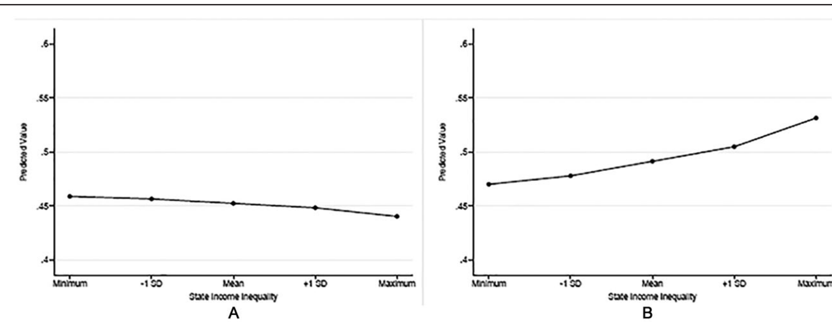

Figure 3. How low and high trust Americans respond to income inequality: (A) low political trust and (B) high political trust.
Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016).
Based on the ordinary least squares model in Table 3. The figure shows predicted support for redistribution for individuals with (A) low levels of political trust and (B) high levels of political trust at varying levels of state income inequality.

regarding, higher income inequality offers an explanation for the lack of responsiveness that American public opinion has shown toward decades of rising inequality.

This lack of mass responsiveness to rising inequality is troubling for democracy and political equality. Democratic theory assumes political equality (Dahl 2006), but in practice, “the heavenly chorus sings with an upper-class accent” (Schattschneider 1960, 35). As inequality rises, the “voice” of the wealthy is further amplified, while the less affluent are muted. Rising inequality can lead to a vicious cycle as the rich “capture politics” (Bartels 2016; Gilens 2012), further depressing the turnout of the less affluent (Solt 2008, 2010), people who are more likely to support redistributive policies (Leighley and Nagler 2013). In short, rising income inequality has deleterious consequences for political equality.

Since the 1960s, trust in government has declined and remained low, despite a few brief increases during times of economic prosperity, popular presidents, and “rally around the flag events” such as 9/11. This has occurred for a variety of reasons, including weak economic growth, unpopular presidents and scandals, declining social

Table 4. Trust in Government, Ideology, and Mass Responsiveness to Inequality.

	(1) Liberals/moderates		(2) Conservatives	
State top 1% income share	−0.002***	(0.001)	−0.004***	(0.001)
Trust in government	−0.076**	(0.036)	−0.064	(0.054)
Top 1% × Trust in Government	0.008***	(0.002)	0.012***	(0.003)
Controls	Yes		Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes		Yes	
State fixed effects	Yes		Yes	
Observations	6,739		4,776	
R^2	.335		.419	

Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016).
Dependent variable is pro-redistributive factor score, ranges 0–1. Ordinary least squares coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by state-year in parentheses.
*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 5. Trust in Government, Income, and Mass Responsiveness to Inequality.

	(1) Less affluent		(2) More affluent	
State top 1% income share	−0.003***	(0.001)	−0.003***	(0.001)
Trust in government	−0.090**	(0.039)	−0.018	(0.050)
Top 1% × Trust in Government	0.010***	(0.002)	0.007**	(0.003)
Controls	Yes		Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes		Yes	
State fixed effects	Yes		Yes	
Observations	7,125		4,390	
R^2	.456		.565	

Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016).
Dependent variable is pro-redistributive factor score, ranges 0–1. Ordinary least squares coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by state-year in parentheses.
*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

capital, and the decreased salience of foreign affairs (Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2000; Citrin and Green 1986; Hetherington and Rudolph 2008; Keele 2007).

For several decades, politicians of both parties, but particularly the post–Reagan Republican Party, have criticized "big government" and painted a picture of government as bloated, inefficient, and inept. Democratic presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama offered fairly tepid defenses of government's problem-solving capacity. Even Obama, arguably the most liberal U.S. president over the past four decades, has at times critiqued government's problem-solving capacity.

In his 2012 State of the Union, Obama stated that he ordered federal agencies to "eliminate rules that don't make sense" saying that he was "confident a farmer can contain a milk spill without a federal agency looking over his shoulder." Obama also stated that "government should do for people only what they cannot do better by themselves, and no more," a nod to widespread skepticism of government among the mass public.[25] Given the strong influence that political elites have regarding mass opinion (Zaller 1992), rhetoric that has for decades, disproportionately criticized government, rather than highlighted its problem-solving capacity, it is understandable that the mass public is distrustful of government.

Exploring how elite rhetoric can shape trust in government is an important path for future research. In recent years, many prominent Democratic officials have emphasized the necessity for government action to alleviate wealth disparities but have also criticized government as well.[26] For example, Elizabeth Warren has said that "Washington works great for the wealthy and well-connected but isn't working for anyone else."[27] It is possible that this message could bolster support for redistribution but is also possible that it could undercut Democrats' ability to marshal public support for redistributive spending and/or government regulation by painting government in a negative light. Future work would do well to explore this further, perhaps using survey experiments to examine the type of elite rhetoric that is capable of increasing citizens' trust in government.

While trust in the federal government is low, many Americans are trusting of their state and local governments (Rahn and Rudolph 2005; Weinschenk and Helpap

Table 6. Alternative Moderators of Mass Responsiveness to Inequality.

	B	*SE*
Top 1% × Trust in Government	0.008***	(0.002)
Top 1% × FT: Blacks	0.001	(0.003)
Top 1% × FT: Hispanics	0.001	(0.003)
Top 1% × FT: Poor	−0.000	(0.002)
Top 1% × FT: Big Business	−0.001	(0.002)
Top 1% × Party ID	−0.002**	(0.001)
Top 1% × Ideology	−0.003*	(0.002)
Top 1% × Egalitarianism	0.001	(0.002)
Controls	Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes	
State fixed effects	Yes	
Observations	11,515	
R^2	.508	

Source. Cumulative American National Election Studies (1984–2016). Dependent variable is pro-redistributive factor score, ranges 0–1. All constitutive terms are included but omitted here to save space. Ordinary least squares coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by state-year in parentheses.
FT = Feeling Thermometer.
*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$ (two-tailed).

2015; Wolak and Palus 2010). Higher trust in state and local governments implies that people may be more amenable to *subnational* action to address rising inequality. Future work would do well to explore this further, perhaps through the use of a survey experiment. Although state governments may be able to partially address inequality, through minimum wage increases for example, particularly when the national government does not take action (Franko and Witko 2017), the federal government is the only actor with the resources and capacity to meaningfully reduce income disparities. Rising inequality is a national issue, with national implications for political equality and democratic governance. Future work would also do well to look beyond the United States, examining the relationship between trust, inequality, and support for redistribution cross-nationally. Although inequality is especially high in the United States, it is not solely an American phenomenon (Pikkety 2014).

Political trust is unlikely to increase in the near future, given that it has a partisan component (Keele 2005), and the United States is in the midst of an era of intense partisan polarization (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). Trust will likely continue to polarize along partisan lines (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015), rather than return anywhere near to its pre-Watergate levels. Indeed, recent work by Morisi, Jost, and Singh (2019) has found that this "president in power" effect for trust has grown stronger over time, and this is particularly strong among Republicans and conservatives, who are especially distrustful of government when a Democrat occupies the White House. This will likely make it difficult for constructive governance to take place (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015) and reduce the likelihood that government can enact policies to combat rising inequality.

People tend to look more favorably upon government when spending is framed specifically rather than abstractly (Ellis and Stimson 2012; Jacoby 2000). Decades of elite rhetoric discussing "big government" in abstract terms, and criticizing government's problem-solving capacity, undermine political trust. Unless partisan polarization decreases, and elite rhetoric regarding government's competence and problem-solving capacity changes, trust is unlikely to meaningfully increase. Low trust means that mass support for economic redistribution is unlikely to meaningfully increase, even in an era of historic income inequality.

Author's Note

A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2018 Southern Political Science Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

Acknowledgments

I thank Brad Gomez, Matthew Pietryka, Robert Jackson, and Teresa Cornacchione, as well as the anonymous reviewers and editor for their helpful comments and feedback.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Although income inequality is the most pronounced in the United States, its rise is not confined toward the United States, as Pikkety (2014) shows. Rather growing inequality has resulted from a combination of factors associated with economic globalization, declining unionization, as well as fiscal policy choices made by national governments. The focus of this paper, however, is specifically on inequality in the United States and on how American public opinion has responded.
2. The Supplemental Appendix and all replication files and code to reproduce the results can be found online in the Harvard Dataverse (https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/ATWXPN).
3. See https://www.scribd.com/document/204341600/AEI-Political-Report-Income-Inequality-02-03-14.
4. That a sizable minority states that the rise of inequality is "neither good nor bad" or that it is "good" in Table 2 reflects

Bartels's (2016, 124) assessment that the glass can be viewed as "half full or half empty" when examining how much Americans care about inequality. Income shares have grown the most for the top 1 and 0.1 percent of Americans, rather than the top 20 percent, the group asked about in this question, and thus I view this 53 percent of people who view rising inequality as a "bad thing" to be a conservative estimate of how much Americans care about inequality. Had this question mentioned the difference in income growth between the top 1 percent and bottom 99 percent, for example, I speculate that the proportion of people saying it is a "bad" thing would have been higher.

5. Gallup data (https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx) and data from the Pew Research Center (http://www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/beyond-distrust-how-americans-view-their-government/) show that U.S. public has generally become, since the 1970s, less trusting of institutions such as the Church/Organized Religion, Public Schools, Newspapers, TV News, Banks, and the Medical System, and in particular the Presidency/Congress but has not become much less trusting of the Criminal Justice System, the Police, the Military, Big Business, Organized Labor, or the Supreme Court. The decline of trust in government has been particularly pronounced, compared with these other institutions. I maintain that a decline in trust in government, among these several institutions, is particularly important for understanding a lack of mass responsiveness to inequality in the United States. Although this paper focuses on the United States, low trust in government is not confined to the United States, as data from the Pew Research center demonstrate (http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/10/16/many-unhappy-with-current-political-system/pg_2017-10-16_global-democracy_1-03/). Similarly, rising inequality is not occurring only in the United States but is a larger worldwide phenomenon (Pikkety 2014).
6. Some suggest that belief in hardwork as a determinant of success, optimism regarding upward mobility, and high levels of religiosity offer an explanation for Americans' low support for redistribution, compared with other Western, industrialized nations (Alesina and Ferrara 2005; Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Scheve and Stasavage 2006). However, Americans' belief in hardwork, individual initiative, and prospects of upward mobility have remained fairly stable over time (https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/public-attitudes-wealth-taxes/), while religiosity and church attendance have actually declined (http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/). As such, these factors can explain differences between Americans' and Europeans' redistributive preferences but do not provide a satisfactory answer for why an American mass public that has economic incentives to support redistribution, professes to care about rising inequality, and is aware of its rise has not meaningfully shifted in favor of redistribution during an era of rising inequality.
7. Throughout the paper, I use the terms "trust in government" and "political trust" interchangeably.
8. Recent work by Morisi, Jost, and Singh (2019) shows that this "president in power" effect is driven more by Republicans/Conservatives than by Democrats/Liberals.
9. See http://news.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx.
10. More specifically, Rudolph and Evans (2005) argue that trust helps people to overcome ideological opposition to a policy and, as such, matters more for conservatives (liberals) when a liberal (conservative) policy is under consideration. Nevertheless, trust still matters, *on average*, for public opinion toward redistributive spending. In contrast, work by Svallfors (2013), examining public support for social spending and progressive taxation across twenty-nine countries in Europe in 2008, finds that perceived quality of government matters more for egalitarian individuals, that is, people who are generally more inclined to support redistributive policies. To address the potential heterogeneous influence of trust, I examine how trust moderates the inequality–redistribution relationship among both conservatives and non-conservatives (ideological liberals and moderates), expecting that it will matter more for conservatives than for non-conservatives.
11. All three scales were asked in the Cumulative American National Election Studies (CANES) in the following years: 1984, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016. Some may argue that a question asking about private versus government health insurance may prompt people to think about other market actors, such as insurance companies, given that many Americans receive health insurance from their employers or private corporations rather than the government. To address this, I include a control for feeling thermometer ratings of Big Business, which can serve as a "rough proxy" for attitudes toward insurance companies and other market actors that may be relevant in the domain of economic redistribution (Edlund and Lindh 2013).
12. To employ all four trust questions, and to extend the CANES dataset through 2016, I included and re-coded several trust questions from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) time-series studies. The 2012 ANES included both a standard four-category (1 = never, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time, 4 = always) and a revised five-category (1 = never, 2 = some of the time, 3 = about half the time, 4 = most of the time, 5 = just about always) version about trusting government to do the right thing. I combined these into 1 four-category version (1 = never, 2 = some of the time/about half the time, 3 = most of the time, 4 = always/just about always). The 2016 ANES only included the five-category revised version, which I also re-coded into four. The 2016 ANES also included a five-category government corruption question (1 = all, 2 = most, 3 = about half, 4 = a few, 5 = none), which I re-coded into an analogous three-category measure (1 = all/most, 2 = about half, 3 = a few/none). I then took these questions from the 2012 and 2016 ANES time-series studies and added them into the CANES dataset.
13. See http://www.shsu.edu/eco_mwf/inequality.html.
14. Frank's data also include a Gini coefficient that is similarly based on IRS tax return data. In the Supplemental Appendix, I also run a model that uses this measure of

inequality rather than the top 1 percent income share. Results are similar, with a positive and significant interaction between political trust and state inequality. I maintain, however, that the top 1 percent is the preferred measure of inequality because it better captures the concentration of income among the highest earners.

15. Inequality in one's local area (county or zip code) may be the superior measure as it is more proximate and accessible to individuals and has been shown to shape people's perceptions of and attitudes toward inequality (Newman, Shah, and Lauterbach 2018). However, these data, and specifically the top 1 percent income share in each county/zip code, are not available over time, and thus I use state inequality instead.
16. The results are similar if a random effects model (which does not include state fixed effects, and leverages variation both within and across states) is employed. See the Supplemental Appendix for a model that does not include state fixed effects. In the Supplemental Appendix, I also show (displaying the mean, standard deviations, and minimum/maximum values for each state) that there is considerable variation in inequality (the top 1%) *within* each state from 1984 to 2015. See also Franko (2017) for an illustration of over-time variation in state-level inequality. In short, there is considerable state-level variation to be leveraged.
17. This is not to claim that higher income inequality has zero influence (Rainey 2014), but the fact that the confidence interval contains zero at lower levels of trust implies that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that inequality will prompt demand for redistribution when trust in government is low.
18. The negative and significant coefficient for trust in government (–0.059) implies that when the top 1 percent own 0 percent of the income in a state, that trust will depress support for redistribution. However, this is not a plausible claim as there are no cases in which the top 1 percent do not own any wealth.
19. The mean level of trust in 1964 was 0.53 (on a 0–1 scale). This is based on factor analysis of four trust questions from the 1964 ANES time-series study (how often government does the right thing, how much tax money government wastes, how many in government are crooked, and whether government is run for a few big interests or the general public).
20. Works by Hetherington and Husser (2012) and Hetherington and Rudolph (2008) find that the influence of political trust on policy preferences depends upon the political issues that are salient in the media and what policy domains are "primed" when people think about government, for example, social welfare versus defense. For instance, Hetherington and Husser find that when issues of race are more politically salient, trust matters more in shaping people's racial policy preferences. They find a similar pattern for foreign policy attitudes. There may be some concern that the conditioning influence of political trust is "time invariant," that is, its effect is not constant over time. We might expect this if the types of people who trusted the government were systematically different today than in past decades. To assess this, I examine the correlation between political trust and the following demographics: age, income, education, race, and gender in 1972, 1984, 2000, and 2012. I show that in general, these correlations are not systematically stronger in the 2000s and 2010s than they were in the 1970s and 1980s. This suggests that the types of people who trust/distrust government have not meaningfully changed over time and that a decline has taken place among the population at large rather than among certain demographic subgroups. See the Supplemental Appendix for these analyses. I further address the possibility of "time invariance" by running a model (the same as in Table 3) that interacts (State Inequality × Political Trust × Time). Time is a simple indicator variable (1 = 1984, 2 = 1988, 3 = 1992, etc.). This ordinary least squares (OLS) model (omitting year fixed effects but including state fixed effects) shows that this triple interaction term is not statistically significant (p = .173). If it was positive (negative) and significant, it would suggest that this moderating relationship has become stronger (weaker) over time. Again, I do not discount that the moderating influence of trust could be stronger in years when economic issues are politically salient, but this suggests that (from 1984 to 2016) the moderating influence of trust on the inequality–redistribution relationship has not become systematically stronger nor weaker.
21. Figure 3A and B is created by using the OLS regression model in Table 3 and setting trust in government at 0.11 (low trust, Figure 3A) and 0.49 (high trust, Figure 3B). State income inequality is set at five different values (minimum = 9.4%; –1 *SD* = 12.6%; *M* = 18.1%; +1 *SD* = 23.6%; maximum = 34.4%). All other variables are held at their observed values.
22. I include a control for ideology in both of these models. Because the data are split by ideology, this variable indicates how liberal/conservative an individual is, that is, their strength of ideological self-identification. Results are similar if this variable is dropped, with trust significantly moderating the influence of state inequality on support for redistribution among both conservatives and non-conservatives. These results are neither wholly consistent with those of Rudolph and Evans (2005), who found that trust mattered more for conservatives' support of redistributive spending, nor Svallfors (2013), who found that the relationship between people's egalitarian values and their attitudes toward social welfare spending was significantly moderated by their perceptions of the quality of their country's government, that is, the relationship was stronger when people perceived their government to be more effective. Given that these papers used data from different countries, and examined different policies in different years, future work would do well to further examine when and for whom trust matters in the domain of redistribution.
23. These models in Table 5 also include a control for income (0–16, 17–33, and 34–67 percentiles for the less affluent, and 67–95 and 96–100 percentiles for the more affluent). See the Supplemental Appendix for the full regression models.
24. The strongest correlations among all of these variables were between feeling thermometer ratings of blacks and

Hispanics, $r = .67$. Ideology and party identification also correlated strongly at .57. All other variables interacted with state-level income inequality correlated with one another at less than .50.

25. See http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/01/24/us/politics/state-of-the-union-2012-video-transcript.html.
26. See https://www.wsj.com/articles/democratic-presidential-hopefuls-amplify-income-inequality-message-11549449000.
27. See https://elizabethwarren.com/issue/end-washington-corruption/.

ORCID iD

David Macdonald https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8820-6067

Supplemental Material

The supplemental appendix and all replication files and code to reproduce the results can be found online in the Harvard Dataverse(https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/ATWXPN).

References

Alesina, Alberto, and Eliana La Ferrara. 2005. "Preferences for Redistribution in the Land of Opportunities." *Journal of Public Economics* 89 (5–6): 897–931.

Alesina, Alberto, and Edward L. Glaeser. 2004. *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder. 2008. "The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 102 (2): 215–32.

Ballard-Rosa, Cameron, Lucy Martin, and Kenneth Scheve. 2017. "The Structure of American Income Tax Policy Preferences." *Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 1–16.

Bartels, Larry M. 2016. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University press.

Benabou, Roland. 2000. "Unequal Societies: Income Distribution and the Social Contract." *American Economic Review* 90 (1): 96–129.

Boudreau, Cheryl, and Scott A. MacKenzie. 2018. "Wanting What Is Fair: How Party Cues and Information about Income Inequality Affect Public Support for Taxes." *Journal of Politics* 80 (2): 367–81.

Branham, J. Alexander, Stuart N. Soroka, and Christopher Wlezien. 2017. "When Do the Rich Win?" *Political Science Quarterly* 132 (1): 43–62.

Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. 2018. "Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936-2014." *American Political Science Review* 112 (2): 249–66.

Chanley, Virginia A., Thomas J. Rudolph, and Wendy M. Rahn. 2000. "The Origins and Consequences of Public Trust in Government: A Time Series Analysis." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64 (3): 239–56.

Citrin, Jack, and Donald Philip Green. 1986. "Presidential Leadership and the Resurgence of Trust in Government." *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (4): 431–53.

Citrin, Jack, and Laura Stoker. 2018. "Political Trust in a Cynical Age." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21:49–70.

Condon, M. and Wichowsky, A., 2019. Inequality in the Social Mind: Perceptions of Status and Support for Redistribution. *Journal of Politics*.

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by David Apter, 206–261. New York: The Free Press.

Dahl, Robert. 2006. *Preface to Democratic Theory, Expanded Edition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politics and why it Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Easton, David. 1975. "A Re-assessment of the Concept of Political Support." *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (4): 435–57.

Edlund, Jonas, and Arvid Lindh. 2013. "Institutional Trust and Welfare State Support: On the Role of Trust in Market Institutions." *Journal of Public Policy* 33 (3): 295–317.

Ellis, Christopher. 2012. "Understanding Economic Biases in Representation: Income, Resources, and Policy Representation in the 110th House." *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (4): 938–51.

Ellis, Christopher. 2017. *Putting Inequality in Context: Class, Public Opinion, and Representation in the United States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Ellis, Christopher, and James A. Stimson. 2012. *Ideology in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fairbrother, Malcolm. 2019. "When Will People Pay to Pollute? Environmental Taxes, Political Distrust and Experimental Evidence from Britain." *British Journal of Political Science* 49 (2): 661–82.

Feldman, Stanley, and Marco R. Steenbergen. 2001. "The Humanitarian Foundation of Public Support for Social Welfare." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (3): 658–77.

Flavin, Patrick. 2012. "Income Inequality and Policy Representation in the American States." *American Politics Research* 40 (1): 29–59.

Fox, Cybelle. 2004. "The Changing Color of Welfare? How Whites' Attitudes toward Latinos Influence Support for Welfare." *American Journal of Sociology* 110 (3): 580–625.

Franko, William W. 2016. "Political Context, Government Redistribution, and the Public's Response to Growing Economic Inequality." *Journal of Politics* 78 (4): 957–63.

Franko, William W. 2017. "Understanding Public Perceptions of Growing Economic Inequality." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 17 (3): 319–48.

Franko, William W., Caroline J. Tolbert, and Christopher Witko. 2013. "Inequality, Self-Interest, and Public Support for 'Robin Hood' Tax Policies." *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (4): 923–37.

Franko, William W., and Christopher Witko. 2017. *The New Economic Populism: How States Respond to Economic Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gimpelson, Vladimir, and Daniel Treisman. 2018. "Misperceiving inequality." *Economics & Politics* 30 (1): 27–54.

Goren, Paul. 2005. "Party Identification and Core Political Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (4): 881–96.

Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2010. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hayes, Thomas J. 2013. "Responsiveness in an Era of Inequality: The Case of the US Senate." *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (3): 585–99.

Hayes, Thomas J. 2014. "Do Citizens Link Attitudes with Preferences? Economic Inequality and Government Spending in the 'New Gilded Age.'" *Social Science Quarterly* 95 (2): 468–85.

Hetherington, Marc J. 1998. "The Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 92 (4): 791–808.

Hetherington, Marc J. 2005. *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Suzanne Globetti. 2002. "Political Trust and Racial Policy Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (2): 253–75.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Jason A. Husser. 2012. "How Trust Matters: The Changing Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (2): 312–25.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Thomas J. Rudolph. 2008. "Priming, Performance, and the Dynamics of Political Trust." *Journal of Politics* 70 (2): 498–512.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Thomas J. Rudolph. 2015. *Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Intawan, Chanita, and Stephen P. Nicholson. 2018. "My Trust in Government Is Implicit: Automatic Trust in Government and System Support." *Journal of Politics* 80 (2): 601–14.

Jacoby, William G. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (4): 750–67.

Kam, Cindy D., and Yunju Nam. 2008. "Reaching Out or Pulling Back: Macroeconomic Conditions and Public Support for Social Welfare Spending." *Political Behavior* 30 (2): 223–58.

Keele, Luke. 2005. "The Authorities Really Do Matter: Party Control and Trust in Government." *Journal of Politics* 67 (3): 873–86.

Keele, Luke. 2007. "Social Capital and the Dynamics of Trust in Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (2): 241–54.

Kelly, Nathan J., and Peter K. Enns. 2010. "Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (4): 855–70.

Kuziemko, Ilyana, Michael I. Norton, Emmanuel Saez, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2015. "How Elastic Are Preferences for Redistribution? Evidence from Randomized Survey Experiments." *American Economic Review* 105 (4): 1478–508.

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (4): 951–71.

Leighley, Jan E., and Jonathan Nagler. 2013. *Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lupia, Arthur D. 1994. "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reforms." *American Political Science Review* 88 (1): 63–76.

Luttig, Matthew. 2013. "The Structure of Inequality and Americans' Attitudes toward Redistribution." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77 (3): 811–21.

McCall, Leslie. 2013. *The Undeserving Rich: American Beliefs about Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCall, Leslie, Derek Burk, Marie Laperriere, and Jennifer A. Richeson. 2017. "Exposure to Rising Inequality Shapes Americans' Opportunity Beliefs and Policy Support." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 114 (36): 9593–98.

McCall, Leslie, and Lane Kenworthy. 2009. "Americans' Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality." *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (3): 459–84.

McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

McClosky, Herbert, and John Zaller. 1984. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Meltzer, Allan H., and Scott F. Richard. 1981. "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government." *Journal of Political Economy* 89 (5): 914–27.

Morisi, Davide, John T. Jost, and Vishal Singh. 2019. "An Asymmetrical 'President-in-Power' Effect." *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 614–20.

Newman, Benjamin J., and Thomas J. Hayes. 2019. "Durable Democracy? Economic Inequality and Democratic Accountability in the New Gilded Age." *Political Behavior* 41 (1): 5–30.

Newman, Benjamin J., Christopher D. Johnston, and Patrick L. Lown. 2015. "False Consciousness or Class Awareness?

Local Income Inequality, Personal Economic Position, and Belief in American Meritocracy." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (2): 326–40.

Newman, Benjamin J., and John V. Kane. 2017. "Economic Inequality and Public Support for Organized Labor." *Political Research Quarterly* 70 (4): 918–32.

Newman, Benjamin J., Sono Shah, and Erinn Lauterbach. 2018. "Who Sees an Hourglass? Assessing Citizens' Perception of Local Economic Inequality." *Research & Politics* 5 (3): 1–7.

Norton, Michael I., and Dan Ariely. 2011. "Building a Better America: One Wealth Quintile at a Time." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6 (1): 9–12.

Page, Benjamin I., and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2009. *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pikkety, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the 21st Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Piston, Spencer. 2018. *Class Attitudes in America: Sympathy for the Poor, Resentment of the Rich, and Political Implications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rahn, Wendy M., and Thomas J. Rudolph. 2005. "A Tale of Political Trust in American Cities." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (4): 530–60.

Rainey, Carlisle. 2014. "Arguing for a Negligible Effect." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (4): 1083–91.

Rudolph, Thomas J. 2009. "Political Trust, Ideology, and Public Support for Tax Cuts." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (1): 144–58.

Rudolph, Thomas J., and Jillian Evans. 2005. "Political Trust, Ideology, and Public Support for Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): 660–71.

Saez, Emmanuel, and Gabriel Zucman. 2016. "Wealth Inequality in the United States since 1913: Evidence from Capitalized Income Tax Data." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131 (2): 519–78.

Sands, Melissa L. 2017. "Exposure to Inequality Affects Support for Redistribution." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 114 (4): 663–68.

Schattschneider, Elmer Eric. 1960. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Scheve, Kenneth, and David Stasavage. 2006. "Religion and Preferences for Social Insurance." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1:255–86.

Scheve, Kenneth, and David Stasavage. 2017. "Wealth Inequality and Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20:451–68.

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. 2012. *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Scholz, John T., and Mark Lubell. 1998. "Trust and Taxpaying: Testing the Heuristic Approach to Collective Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (2): 398–417.

Shaw, Greg M., and Laura Gaffey. 2012. "Trends: American Public Opinion on Economic Inequality, Taxes, and Mobility: 1990-2011." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (3): 576–96.

Solt, Frederick. 2008. "Economic Inequality and Democratic Political Engagement." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 48–60.

Solt, Frederick. 2010. "Does Economic Inequality Depress Electoral Participation? Testing the Schattschneider Hypothesis." *Political Behavior* 32 (2): 285–301.

Solt, Frederick, Yue Hu, Kevan Hudson, Jungmin Song, and Dong "Erico" Yu. 2017. "Economic Inequality and Class Consciousness." *Journal of Politics* 79 (3): 1079–83.

Soroka, Stuart N., and Christopher Wlezien. 2010. *Degrees of Democracy: Politics, Public Opinion, and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Svallfors, Stefan. 2013. "Government Quality, Egalitarianism, and Attitudes to Taxes and Social Spending: A European Comparison." *European Political Science Review* 5 (3): 363–80.

Trump, Kris-Stella. 2018. "Income Inequality Influences Perceptions of Legitimate Income Differences." *British Journal of Political Science* 48 (4): 929–52.

Trump, Kris-Stella, and Ariel White. 2018. "Does Inequality Beget Inequality? Experimental Tests of the Prediction that Inequality Increases System Justification Motivation." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 5 (3): 206–16.

Ura, Joseph Daniel, and Christopher R. Ellis. 2008. "Income, Preferences, and the Dynamics of Policy Responsiveness." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41 (4): 785–94.

Volscho, Thomas W., and Nathan J. Kelly. 2012. "The Rise of the Super-Rich: Power Resources, Taxes, Financial Markets, and the Dynamics of the Top 1 Percent, 1949 to 2008." *American Sociological Review* 77 (5): 679–99.

Weinschenk, Aaron C., and David J. Helpap. 2015. "Political Trust in the American States." *State and Local Government Review* 47 (1): 26–34.

Wolak, Jennifer, and Christine Kelleher Palus. 2010. "The Dynamics of Public Confidence in U.S. State and Local Government." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 10 (4): 421–45.

Wright, Graham. 2018. "The Political Implications of American Concerns about Economic Inequality." *Political Behavior* 40 (2): 321–43.

Xu, Ping, and James C. Garand. 2010. "Economic Context and Americans' Perceptions of Income Inequality." *Social Science Quarterly* 91 (5): 1220–41.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.