

# CLEAVAGE REVISITED

## Income Inequality and the Influence of Value Orientations on the Vote

Constantin Manuel Bosancianu

Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations  
Central European University

European Political Science Association Annual Meeting  
Edinburgh, Scotland: June 20, 2014

# A face on the story

These days, *you have to struggle* [...]

*Someone who makes two hundred or three hundred thousand a year, who eats a regular meal, who doesn't have to struggle, who doesn't worry if the lights are going to be turned out—if he doesn't walk in your shoes, he can't understand.*

(Barbie Snodgrass, OH, 2008)

# A face on the story

*Such a change in party allegiance across a vast section of the electorate takes **decades to achieve, and to undo**. But this year should mark the beginning of a reverse migration. [...] wages have stayed flat while income inequality has increased; the numbers of uninsured have soared; unemployment recently passed six per cent, its highest level since the early nineteen-nineties; gas and heating-oil prices have doubled, while basic food prices have gone up by fifty per cent; and the country's financial system has come closer to collapse than at any moment since 1929.*

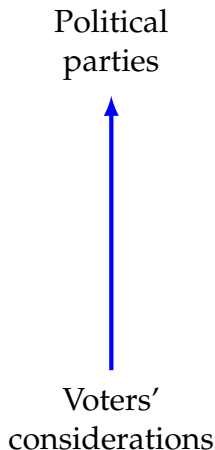
(George Packer, "The Hardest Vote", *The New Yorker*, October 2008)

# Class voting in decline

For some time, the ability of social cleavages to structure the vote has been weakening (Achterberg, 2006; Nieuwbeerta, 1996; but, see Brooks, Nieuwbeerta, & Manza, 2006; van der Waal, Achterberg, & Houtman, 2007).

New factors have *partially* replaced them such as value orientations or candidate evaluations.

# Explanations for the trend



Growing affluence and cognitive mobilization of the working class;

Value change (Inglehart, 1990);

New social cleavages, based on gender, race, language, or region.

# Explanations for the trend

Political  
parties



Voters'  
considerations

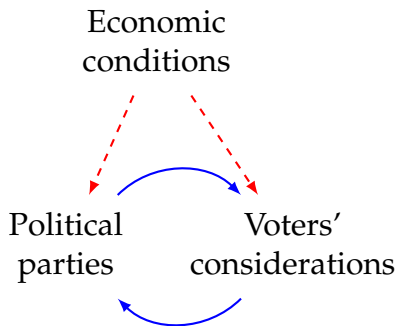
“Dilemma of electoral socialism”  
(Przeworski & Sprague, 1986);

Parties have the power to provide  
frames of interpretation for events.

# Explanations for the trend

A more **holistic** perspective, focusing on constraints and dynamics of the voter-party dyad.

Economic conditions (unemployment, immigration) shape both the parties' and voters' choice set (Arzheimer, 2009; Knigge, 1998; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002).



# Hypotheses

Income inequality could act as one of these external factors, primarily shaping voters' choice considerations, by...


- ▶ Amplifying the impact of socio-economic factors (income, education) on the vote choice ( $H_1$ );
- ▶ Amplifying the impact of Left–Right materialist orientations on the vote ( $H_2$ );
- ▶ Muting the impact of authoritarian orientations ( $H_3$ ).



# Data

- ▶ Individual-level data: World Values Surveys, six-waves (1981–2013), covering 26 OECD nations;
- ▶ Party-level data: Comparative Manifesto Project, version 2013b;<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Inequality data: Frederick Solt's SWIID dataset, version 4.0.

---

<sup>1</sup>To match voters' electoral preference with party characteristics 

# Gini index

Two types of Gini were constructed (Fairbrother, 2014):

- ▶ Cross-sectional – average over-time Gini for each country;

$$20, 30, 40 \Rightarrow 30, 30, 30$$

- ▶ Longitudinal – compute year deviations from this average.

$$20, 30, 40 \Rightarrow -10, 0, 10$$

# Methods

3-level mixed-effects model, where the dependent variable is choice for a party of the Left versus one of the Right.

The substantive interest is in the cross-level interactions between income inequality and income, education, or value orientations.

# Individual-level predictors

Their effect confirms the findings of previous investigations:

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Direction</i>
Age	+
Gender	n.s.
Education	-
Married	-
Income	-
Religiosity	-
Economic progressiveness	+
Authoritarian orientation	-

Effect of predictors of voting for Left party.

# Income inequality

No evidence of a direct effect on the probability of voting for the Left (see Meltzer & Richard, 1981), although there are faint clues that the effects are different in a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective (Fairbrother & Martin, 2013).

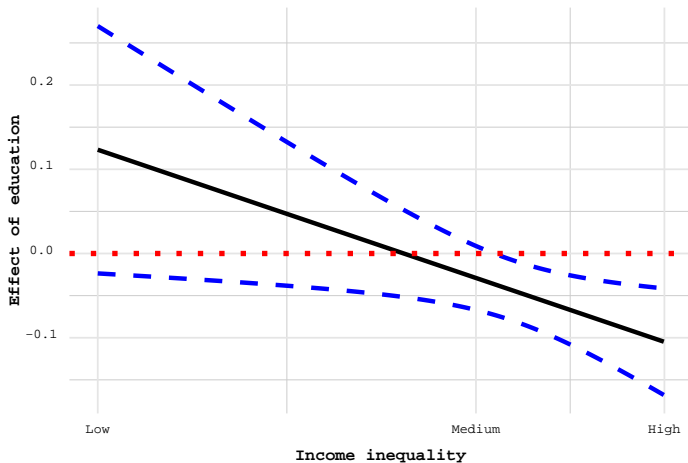
# Moderation effect

Weak support for  $H_1$  and  $H_3$ .

<i>Interaction with...</i>	$\beta$
Education	-0.03* (0.01)
Income	-0.01 (0.01)
Economic progressiveness	0.03 (0.02)
Authoritarian orientation	0.17 <sup>†</sup> (0.11)

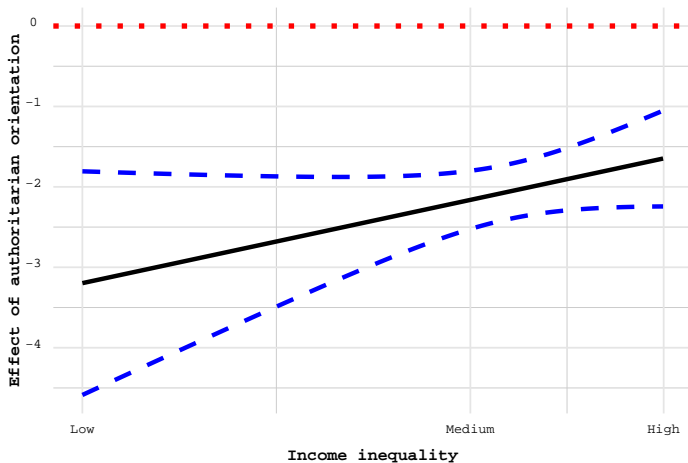
Effect of predictors of voting for Left party ('\*'  $p < .05$ , '†'  $p < .1$ ).

# Visualizing interactions



Effect of education on vote intention at different levels of inequality.

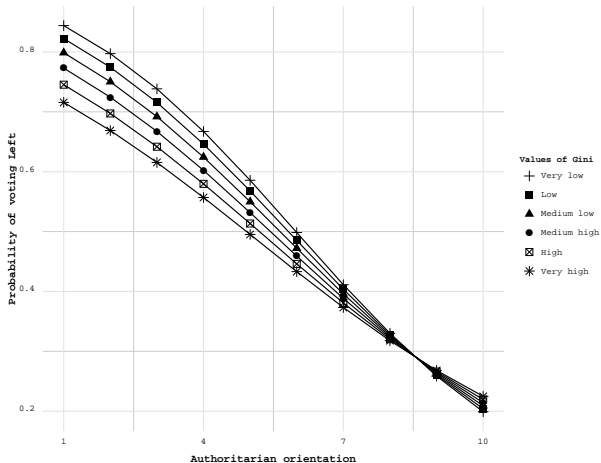
# Visualizing interactions



Effect of authoritarianism on vote intention at different levels of inequality.



# Visualizing interactions



Predicted probabilities of voting for Left at different levels of authoritarianism and inequality.

# Additional tests

Refining the model by adding additional country-level predictors (party polarization, unemployment rate, or GDP per capita) strengthens the conclusions: only  $H_1$  and  $H_3$  are supported by the evidence.

Using a different data source for Gini<sup>2</sup> leads to substantively similar conclusions.

---

<sup>2</sup>“Growing Inequalities’ Impacts” project: [www.gini-research.org](http://www.gini-research.org).   

# Findings

Intensified effect of income and education on vote choice in contexts with higher economic inequality (see McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006).

Mitigated effect of authoritarian orientations on vote choice – goes against the “diversionary theory of nationalism” (Solt, 2011).

# Findings

Methodological: different dynamics between inequality and political attitudes or behaviors between a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective.

Potential for a renewed strengthening of the socio-economic cleavage in Western Europe?

Thank *you* for the kind  
attention!

# References I

- Achterberg, P. (2006). Class Voting in the New Political Culture: Economic, Cultural and Environmental Voting in 20 Western Countries. *International Sociology*, 21(2), 237–261.
- Arzheimer, K. (2009). Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe, 1980–2002. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 259–275.
- Brooks, C., Nieuwbeerta, P., & Manza, J. (2006). Cleavage-based Voting Behavior in Cross-national Perspective: Evidence from Six Postwar Democracies. *Social Science Research*, 35(1), 88–128.
- Fairbrother, M. (2014). Two Multilevel Modeling Techniques for Analyzing Comparative Longitudinal Survey Datasets. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 2(1), 119–140.
- Fairbrother, M., & Martin, I. W. (2013). Does Inequality Erode Social Trust? Results from Multilevel Models of US States and Counties. *Social Science Research*, 42(2), 347–60.
- Inglehart, R. F. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

## References II

- Knigge, P. (1998). The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 34(2), 249–279.
- Lubbers, M., Gijsberts, M., & Scheepers, P. (2002). Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(3), 345–378.
- McCarty, N., Poole, K. T., & Rosenthal, H. (2006). *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Meltzer, A. H., & Richard, S. F. (1981). A Rational Theory of the Size of Government. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 89(5), 914–927.
- Nieuwbeerta, P. (1996). The Democratic Class Struggle in Postwar Societies: Class Voting in Twenty Countries, 1945–1990. *Acta Sociologica*, 39(4), 345–383.
- Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1986). *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Solt, F. (2011). Diversionary Nationalism: Economic Inequality and the Formation of National Pride. *The Journal of Politics*, 73(3), 821–830.

## References III

van der Waal, J., Achterberg, P., & Houtman, D. (2007). Class Is Not Dead–It Has Been Buried Alive: Class Voting and Cultural Voting in Postwar Western Societies (1956–1990). *Politics & Society*, 35(3), 403–426.