

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Individual-Level Determinants of Political Ideology

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SPRING 2023

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Political Science
with honors in Political Science

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ABSTRACT

Why do individuals hold different ideological beliefs? Examining the determinants of political ideology has long been a topic of research within the field of political science, due to the nature of left-right ideological position influencing many of our political behaviors. I present a model that explains certain effects of individual-level determinants on political ideology, understood on an economic dimension. Using data from the pooled European Values Survey and World Values Survey, I find that education has a left-wing effect on everyone, but there is little left-right difference between low educated women and men. However, my findings suggest that education has a bigger left-wing effect for women than men. I also find that religious individuals hold more left-wing positions than the less religious, and that higher income and age have an overall right-wing effect among individuals.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I foremost would like to thank Dr. Matthew Golder for his instrumental help, whose support and advisement allowed me to complete this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Casper and Professor Hojnacki for their guidance in the overall thesis process, and Dr. Sona Golder for serving as my honors advisor. I am forever grateful to Penn State's Political Science Department and to Schreyer for the opportunities they provided me. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family that have supported me for the last four years, and most importantly, dedicate this to my parents and specifically my mom— for everything.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why do individuals hold different ideological beliefs? Political ideology is a set of related beliefs that capture how we view the world around us and the proper role of government in that world. As such there are many different dimensions to political ideology. In this thesis, I focus on political ideology only to the extent that it speaks to the appropriate level of government intervention in the economy. Should the government play a large role in the economy, or should its role be limited? Should there be a large tax and redistribution system and a large welfare state? Or should the government limit its role in the economy?

This is an important question because an individual's left-right ideological position and beliefs are known to affect many different things such as voting behavior, policy preferences, and the makeup of political parties (Dahlberg 2013; Feldman & Johnston 2014; Lausten 2019; Smith 1999). In these studies, an individual's left-right ideological position is captured using survey data related to their desired level of government intervention in the economy. In terms of government intervention in the economy, preferences for government regulation and intervention align with left-wing ideology, whereas preferences for free market economy and limited government intervention align with right-wing ideology (Malka & Lelkes 2010). Existing studies of the determinants of an individual's left-right ideological position have focused on a wide range of factors such as economic status, religion, and cultural values (Feldman & Johnston 2014; Michaud et al. 2009; Smith 1999).

To investigate why individuals hold different political ideologies, I focus on data from the World Values Survey and European Values Survey (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). These data have been collected in surveys from 1981-2022, conducted across 116 countries and measure individuals' values, beliefs, and attitudes, including but not limited to "topics such as economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital, and subjective well-being" (Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The political ideology of an individual in any given country sheds insight on how they view the world. Individual economic position on the left-right political dimension is known to affect many of our political behaviors, one of the most common being our voting behavior (Feldman & Johnston 2014). But what are some of the factors that influence an individual's political ideology? In this chapter, I revisit the literature and focus on how individual-level characteristics related to religiosity, education, gender, income, and age affect someone's left-right ideological position.

Religiosity

Existing studies suggest that religiosity is associated with social and economic conservatism (Brint & Abrutyn 2010; Gaskins et al. 2013; Malka et al. 2011; Reynolds et al. 2020; Wald & Martinez 2001). Religiosity is generally understood as a multidimensional concept of religious beliefs and activity (Faulkner & De Jong 1966).

Empirical studies have measured religiosity in a number of ways, the most common being religious attendance, religious beliefs, and doctrinal strictness (Conway 2013; Gaskins et al. 2013; Mueller 1980; Reynolds et al. 2020). Studies that focus on religious attendance as a proxy for religiosity generally find that high religious attendance is correlated with social and economic conservatism (Brint & Abrutyn 2010; Conway 2013; Wald & Martinez 2001). In contrast, studies that focus on individual doctrinal strictness find that doctrinal strictness has a weaker correlation with economic conservatism (Gaskins et al. 2013; Mueller 1980; Ruiter &

van Tubergen 2009). Given that there is variance of doctrinal strictness in different religions, individuals can subsequently face different social norms that influence their doctrinal strictness (Gaskins et al. 2013; Mueller 1980).

One reason for these different results is due to measurements of religiosity being interrelated (Faulkner & De Jong 1966; Gaskins et al. 2013). For example, an individual's religious attendance could be influenced by their ideological beliefs or doctrinal strictness, or an individual's ideological beliefs could be created and influenced by their religious attendance. Separating the dimensions of religiosity has been acknowledged as a challenge in existing studies (Faulkner & De Jong 1966; Tilley 2015). Studies are also limited in their use of a small set of countries. For example, Wald & Martinez (2001) examine Jewish religiosity and political ideology in two countries, Israel and the United States, and their findings would be less limited if they included other countries, such as countries in Europe.

The connection of religiosity and economic conservatism is in part due to a linkage between moral values and conservative political beliefs. Scholars have suggested that this connection is due to religious individuals favoring less government intervention in the economy because the government may be perceived as a threat to religious institutions (De La O & Rodden 2008). An additional theory postulates that government intervention in the economy is viewed as being in competition with religion in terms of education and fundraising (De La O & Rodden 2008). Individuals may believe government intervention by means of higher taxation directs money to government funded programs and away from their religious institution. Therefore, religious individuals are more likely to hold conservative beliefs and advocate for less government intervention overall (Gaskins et al. 2013; Herek 1987; Inglehart & Baker 2000; Kirkpatrick 1993).

Level of Education

A second factor thought to influence political ideology is education, in particular, someone's level of education (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Marshall 2016; Marshall 2019; Remmer 2010). While existing studies have predominantly investigated the extent to which education influences individuals' political ideology about civil liberties and social beliefs, this thesis will examine how education influences beliefs about government intervention in the economy. The usual claim regarding political ideology on the social dimension is that individuals that obtain higher levels of education are associated with more left-wing social beliefs, specifically regarding civil liberties and rights (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Hanson et al. 2012; Weakliem 2002).

Existing studies utilize several explanations for the connection of higher levels of education and left-wing ideology regarding civil liberties (Bailey & Williams 2016; Hanson et al. 2012; Parinduri 2019; Syal 2012). One argument is that higher levels of education are correlated with social values that align with left-wing ideology, specifically universalism and tolerance for minority viewpoints (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Syal 2012; Weakliem 2002). These social values are aligned with left-wing ideology and studies postulate that the longer individuals obtain education, the more exposed they are to left-wing ideological values (Parinduri 2019; Syal 2012; Weakliem 2002). In terms of government intervention in the economy, some studies have found that individuals with higher levels of education prefer more government intervention in strong economic countries (Weakliem 2002). It has been suggested that individuals with higher levels of education favor the government organizing and overseeing economic activity which is directly associated with left-wing ideology (Weakliem 2002).

Conflicting studies have found that higher levels of education are not exclusively associated with left-wing ideology, rather students that ideologically lean left or right are merely pushed further along on the dimension during higher education (Bailey & Williams 2019; Hanson et al. 2012). Specifically, and according to this research, a conservative individual that attends college will become more conservative, while a left-wing individual that attends college will become more left-wing (Hanson et al. 2012). This can be explained due to individuals surrounding themselves with politically likeminded social groups (Hanson et al. 2012). In contrast, other studies find that higher education exposes all students to left-wing ideology and values, due to the ideology of professors and student groups (Gross & Fosse 2012; Parinduri 2019; Syal 2012; Weakliem 2002). These values generally promote tolerance toward minority groups and favor social welfare programs implemented and maintained by the government which require higher taxation (Parinduri 2019; Syal 2012; Weakliem 2002). Literature also suggests the institution type that an individual attends can also be impactful; if an individual attends a school where the values they previously learned at home are merely reinforced, their political ideology is unlikely to change (Syal 2012). This can be evident through conservative individuals attending conservative Catholic colleges or left-wing individuals attending small liberal arts colleges (Hanson et al. 2012).

The Gender Gap

Another factor thought to influence political ideology is an individual's gender, specifically whether an individual is a man or woman (Atmor & Friedberg 2019; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004; Coffé & Dilli 2015). The gender gap speaks to the difference between

men and women in social, political, or economic views (Condon & Wichowsky 2015). While the gender gap is commonly used in existing studies to analyze vote choice in elections, in this thesis I focus on the difference between men and women in political ideology (Condon & Wichowsky 2015).

Prior to the 1990s women historically held more conservative political beliefs than men, which is due to conservative political parties stressing family values and religion (Inglehart 2000; Mason & Lu 1988; Norrander & Wilcox 2008). The United States was among the first countries to experience a shift of women from conservative party preference to more left-wing alignment and beliefs because of widespread cultural changes (Inglehart 2000). Women in the U.S. transitioned in the 1980s from preferring conservative parties that promoted religion and family values to left-wing parties that emphasized government intervention in the economy for social welfare programs, with cultural shifts occurring shortly after among women in other countries, such as the United Kingdom in the 1990s (Inglehart 2000; Mason & Lu 1988; Norrander & Wilcox 2008).

Since the 1990s, studies have historically predicted that women are associated with left-wing ideology and men are associated with right-wing ideology (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004; Condon & Wichowsky 2015; Jelen et al. 1994). This is due to different issues being more salient for some gender groups than others, which have been termed “women’s issues” or “men’s issues” (Jelen et al. 1994). Literature demonstrates that women’s issues have generally been related to education, social welfare programs, and healthcare, whereas men’s issues have mainly been related to military and defense policies (Chaney et al. 1998; Condon & Wichowsky 2015).

Empirical studies have found that women’s and men’s issues have influenced economic dimensions of political ideology for individuals (Atmor & Friedberg 2019; Box-Steffensmeier et

al. 2004; Condon & Wichowsky 2015). Studies suggest that women favor government intervention in the economy to fund social welfare and education programs, whereas men typically favor economic conservatism because they do not benefit as greatly from government funded programs (Jelen et al. 1994). While women have been found to hold left-wing ideological beliefs for government intervention for social welfare programs, these beliefs may not translate to their ideology about other policy issues, such as energy policy (Condon & Wichowsky 2015). One reason for there being different results is simply because a woman that holds left-wing beliefs about one political dimension is not guaranteed to hold equally left-wing beliefs for other political dimensions (Condon & Wichowsky 2015). Explanations for this are due to individuals' other characteristics, such as their income level, race, gender, or political party preference on issues (Atmor & Friedberg 2019; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004; Coffé & Dilli 2015; Condon & Wichowsky 2015).

It is important to note that the gender gap in this thesis relates to the historical and theoretical differences in political ideology among men and women, which will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. However, the survey data account for the differences between men and women by having individuals signify their sex, which will be presented in Chapter 4.

Income Level

Individual income is additionally believed to impact political ideology (Jost et al. 2017; Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021). While income level is not one of the main individual-level determinants in this thesis, the effects of income among individuals will be examined due to

existing literature suggesting that income plays a significant role in economic conservatism (Jost et al. 2017).

Studies generally suggest that individuals with higher incomes hold more conservative economic positions compared to individuals with lower incomes (Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021). This idea can be explained by varying arguments that consider individual dependence on social welfare programs and beliefs about taxes (Jost et al. 2017; Suhay et al. 2021). For instance, literature has suggested that individuals with high incomes prefer less government in the economy by way of taxation and oversight because these individuals do not benefit from social welfare programs (Page et al. 2013). In contrast, individuals with low incomes that depend on social welfare programs hold more left-wing positions to ensure that they will continue to benefit from social welfare programs (Jost et al. 2017; Page et al. 2013).

Other studies suggest that individuals with high incomes hold more economic conservative positions due to the tax structure in a country (Suhay et al. 2021). Individuals that receive higher incomes throughout their lifetime fall into higher tax brackets in many countries for income tax as well as estate tax (Suhay et al. 2021). Right-wing economic policies generally promote smaller taxation and less government interference in the economy, which is favored by individuals with higher incomes that are likely to be taxed more and benefit less from government intervention (Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021). Lastly, literature has suggested that individuals with higher incomes are known to favor less government regulation in the economy as well as prefer free market capitalism, which allows higher income individuals to maintain a greater freedom of their individual resources (Page et al. 2013). The argument that individuals with higher incomes are more economically conservative is generally uncontested in existing literature (Jost et al. 2017; Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021).

Age

Individual age is also thought to influence political ideology (Cornelis et al. 2009; Glenn 1974). Age is not a main individual-level determinant in this thesis, but existing literature has postulated that older adults are linked to right-wing ideology on the social and economic dimensions (Cornelis et al. 2009; Glenn 1974).

Existing literature has suggested that aging impacts social and economic political ideology due to older adults becoming less open-minded, having fewer new experiences, and becoming overall more restrictive with their remaining financial assets (Cornelis et al. 2009; Glenn 1974). The typical argument in previous studies is that older adults that are retired are not earning incomes that they earned while in the workforce, and subsequently prefer less government intervention in the economy and taxes to maintain control over their financial assets (Cornelis et al. 2009). However, differences in left-right ideology have been linked to the financial security of older individuals, and specifically, how large an individual's retirement savings is (Cornelis et al. 2009; Suhay et al. 2021). While the general argument is that older individuals become more socially and economically conservative, older individuals that depend on social welfare programs such as Social Security in the United States have been found to hold left-wing positions because they benefit from social welfare policies and government intervention (Suhay et al. 2021). Literature acknowledges that this argument is connected to individual income, as well as other individual-level determinants, more than age, while other studies have found that older individuals that held left-wing positions earlier in life are more likely to become conservative in older age (Peterson et al. 2020).

This chapter examined existing literature regarding the role of individual-level characteristics, specifically religiosity, education, gender, income, and age, in shaping political ideology. Chapter 3 will provide the theoretical arguments for this thesis.

Chapter 3

Theories and Hypotheses

In this thesis, I reexamine the effect of individual-level characteristics such as religiosity, education level, gender, age, and income on ideological position. This thesis will focus on the left-right ideological position from an economic dimension, rather than a social one. Several hypotheses can be proposed with respect to individual-level characteristics and ideological position based on existing understandings, and the following section will provide the theoretical approaches pertinent to this thesis.

Religiosity

An individual's religiosity is influenced by various aspects of religion, specifically religious attendance, doctrinal strictness, and religious beliefs (Conway 2013; Gaskins et al. 2013; Mueller 1980; Reynolds et al. 2020). The focus of this thesis is religious attendance, which is how often an individual attends religious services. Individual religious attendance, as an extension of religiosity, has been linked to left-right political ideology on social and economic dimensions (Brint & Abrutyn 2010; Gaskins et al. 2013; Malka et al. 2011; Reynolds et al. 2020; Wald & Martinez 2001). Religiosity has been connected to social conservatism by ideas of social intolerance, specifically toward minority groups and regarding gay rights (Andersen & Fetner 2008). Furthermore, religious individuals have aligned with conservative groups on the social dimension due to shared views on school prayer and abortion policy, which is evident in the United States (Brint & Abrutyn 2010; Gaskins et al. 2013).

On the economic dimension, religiosity is linked to economic conservatism due to the preference of less government intervention in religious activity (Chaves & Cann 1992; Finke 1990; Gaskins et al. 2013; Stark & Iannaccone 1994). The general argument is that religious individuals and institutions view religion as flourishing when there is less state regulation (Chaves & Cann 1992; Gaskins et al. 2013; Stark & Iannaccone 1994). This argument is commonly understood as supply-side features of a religious market model that explains the competition between religious institutions and the government (Chaves & Cann 1992; Gaskins et al. 2013; Stark & Iannaccone 1994). The preference for limiting government regulation in religion is not a modern idea, rather this economic view has been held since the inception of some countries, such as the United States whose First Amendment of the Constitution prevents the government from regulating religion (Finke 1990).

Government intervention in the economy for religious organizations forces organizations to spend more resources and provide benefits to gain and maintain members (Gaskins et al. 2013). Additionally, government intervention could be specifically viewed as a threat to religious institutions' fundraising or in terms of education for children (Inglehart & Baker 2000). Government intervention in the economy could additionally be blamed for diverting donations from religious institutions by way of higher taxes that individuals must pay to the government (De La O & Rodden 2008; Inglehart & Baker 2000). For individuals that send their children to private religious schools, government intervention in the economy directs money to public schools which can be viewed as a disadvantage to individuals that do not benefit from the government provision of the public education system (De La O & Rodden 2008). The overall competition and economic implications have led to religious individuals preferring less government intervention in the economy, which aligns with conservative economic beliefs.

Religiosity Hypothesis: Individuals who exhibit high levels of religious attendance hold more right-wing economic positions than those who exhibit low levels of religious attendance.

Education Level

Level of education is another factor generally associated with influencing left-right political ideology (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Marshall 2016; Marshall 2019; Remmer 2010). Higher levels of education are thought to influence an individual's ideological position on the social dimension because of the assumption that education promotes social tolerance, which is generally linked to left-wing ideology (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Hanson et al. 2012; Weakliem 2002). This assumption has particularly been true for social beliefs, such as civil liberties and rights (Campbell & Horowitz 2016; Hanson et al. 2012; Weakliem 2002).

Higher levels of education have been attributed to the development of social values that have fostered tolerance toward minority groups, which is aligned with left-wing ideology (Weakliem 2002). This occurs among higher levels of education, specifically when individuals attend a college institution, because individuals become more open-minded and tolerant based on the education content that is being taught (Gross & Fosse 2012; Marshall 2016; Scott 2022; Weakliem 2002). The connection between tolerance on social issues and left-wing ideology in individuals with high levels of education can be similarly theorized for views on government intervention in the economy.

The assumption follows that individuals with higher levels of education will also be more open toward government intervention in the economy to promote social welfare programs (Hanson et al. 2012; Weakliem 2002). Individual tolerance toward government intervention

could be due to support for the government's aim of promoting help for minority groups, and the ability to direct resources to the education system (Hanson et al. 2012). The explanation is that individuals with higher education develop more left-wing ideals for social tolerance and therefore favor government intervention in the economy to promote social welfare (Hanson et al. 2012). Favoring government intervention in the economy allows the government to promote social welfare, whereas preferring less government intervention is often associated with conservative policies that cut social welfare programs. Another general idea is that individuals with higher levels of education will favor government intervention in the economy because the government can direct more funding for the education system that benefitted individuals through tax policies (Hanson et al. 2012). While favoring government intervention in the economy is directly aligned with left-wing ideology, individuals that have higher levels of education may be more appreciative of the education system and therefore want to see more money directed toward something they value (Hanson et al. 2012).

The effect of education is expected to vary with gender. The impact of education is theorized to be larger on women because women learn more left-wing policies at the university level (Macalister 1999). Women are believed to favor government intervention in the economy to fund social welfare programs because women rely on these programs, and left-wing policies do not help men as much (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006; Jelen et al. 1994). Thus, the impact of education is larger on women because women learn at the university level that more left-wing policies are beneficial to them. While education still moves men to the left a bit, education is expected to have a larger left-wing effect on women.

Education Hypothesis: An increase in education always makes people hold more left-wing economic positions. This move to the left is larger for woman than men.

Differences in Men and Women

Different issues are more salient for some gender groups than others, which are known as “women’s issues” or “men’s issues” (Jelen et al. 1994). While women’s issues have generally been related to education, social welfare programs, and healthcare, men’s issues have mainly been related to military and defense policies (Chaney et al. 1998; Condon & Wichowsky 2015). Historically, women held more conservative political beliefs than men, which is due to conservative political parties prioritizing family values and religion prior to the 1990s (Inglehart 2000; Mason & Lu 1988; Norrander & Wilcox 2008). A cultural and social shift occurred in the 1980s in the United States that led to women transitioning from preferring conservative parties that promoted religion and family values to left-wing parties that emphasized government intervention in the economy for social welfare programs, with women in other countries following soon after (Inglehart 2000; Mason & Lu 1988; Norrander & Wilcox 2008).

There are several explanations for the connection between women’s issues and left-wing ideology since the 1990s. One argument is that women favor government intervention to better fund and oversee social welfare and education programs (Jelen et al. 1994). Preferring government intervention in social welfare programs can be explained in two ways; women could be assuming a caring role in society or act out of self-interest because these policies directly benefit them (Jelen et al. 1994). Another argument that explains the connection between women’s issues and left-wing ideological beliefs is that more women have become politically aware of gender discrimination and subsequently favor government intervention to address gender inequality (Jelen et al. 1994).

Men's issues have mainly been related to military and defense policies through prescribed gendered roles (Chaney et al. 1998). Men are not generally associated with sharing the same beliefs as women about using government intervention for social welfare programs because men have not been as disadvantaged by gender discrimination as women have (Jelen et al. 1994). An explanation for the connection between men and economic conservatism is that men do not depend on government intervention as much as women do for social welfare programs, so they align more with right-wing ideology (Jelen et al. 1994). Additionally, while women have been expected to assume caring social values, scholars have postulated that men have been expected to assume competitive and combative political values (Jelen et al. 1994). The connection between men and right-wing ideology can be attributed to conservative policies pursuing less government intervention in social welfare and more aggressive defense policies (Chaney et al. 1998; Jelen et al. 1994). Therefore, the assumption between men and conservatism in the economic dimension could be due to a lower prioritization of social welfare programs and subsequently preferring less government intervention in the economy.

In contrast, women have been assumed to hold different economic beliefs than men, specifically beliefs that align more with left-wing ideology. This is due to the historical inferior status of women in the economy and the dependence of more women on social welfare programs (Chaney et al. 1998; Jelen et al. 1994). Favoring government resource allocation to social welfare programs aligns with economic left-wing ideology because it requires government intervention in the economy. A woman's motives for preferring government intervention in the economy to direct resources to social welfare programs is assumed because women would directly benefit from the intervention (Jelen et al. 1994). Additionally, women feel inclined to

take on a nurturing, or caring role, and thus prefer government intervention in the economy to direct resources to people that need economic relief (Jelen et al. 1994).

The effect of gender is assumed to vary with education. Education is expected to widen the gap between men and women, specifically at higher levels, such as the university level (Macalister 1999). For example, women that attend university level education are more likely to take classes like women's studies that instill left-wing beliefs (Macalister 1999). This education content that instills left-wing ideology tends to occur at the university level, and the gap therefore between men and women grows at the university level. Additionally, while all men have typically depended less on government intervention and social welfare programs, women, and increasingly educated women, rely on these programs (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006; Jelen et al. 1994). The gender gap is expected to widen with education because higher educated women enter the workforce and develop a greater dependence on left-wing policies and government intervention for healthcare, childcare, and education (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006). Higher educated women that enter the labor force have less time for childcare and other household work previously completed by women, and women therefore depend more on the government for childcare and education (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2006). Women align with left-wing content and policies because of their interests and choices compared to men, which explains how the effect of gender varies with education.

Female Hypothesis: Women always hold more left-wing economic positions than men.

This gap increases with education.

Other Factors

While the prior theoretical arguments for how individual religiosity, level of education, and gender influence left-right ideology, other social and economic factors are pertinent to this thesis. Additional individual-level determinants included in this thesis are income level and age, which are predicted to further impact political ideology on the economic dimension.

Income

Individuals with higher incomes have generally maintained more conservative economic beliefs compared to individuals with lower income (Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021). This is attributed to individuals with higher incomes falling into higher tax brackets for income tax and estate tax in various countries compared to people with lower incomes (Suhay et al. 2021). Additionally, individuals with higher incomes align more with conservative policies that cut social welfare programs because these individuals do not benefit from the programs, such as Social Security in the United States (Page et al. 2013). Furthermore, individuals with higher incomes are known to prefer less government regulation in the economy and favor free market capitalism to maintain a greater freedom of their individual resources (Page et al. 2013). The general argument that individuals with higher incomes are more economically conservative is typically undisputed; however, individuals with higher incomes usually have more conservative economic beliefs but not necessarily more conservative social beliefs (Page et al. 2013; Suhay et al. 2021). This demonstrates that income level influences economic conservatism among individuals which is pertinent to this thesis.

Income Hypothesis: Individuals with higher income levels hold more right-wing economic positions than those with lower income levels.

Age

An additional individual-level determinant thought to impact left-right ideology is the age of an individual (Cornelis et al. 2009). Older adults are generally thought to become more conservative on the social dimension due to individuals being less open-minded and less tolerant with age (Glenn 1974). In terms of economic conservatism, this is due to older adults being retired and no longer earning incomes that they earned while in the workforce, and subsequently preferring less government intervention in the economy and taxes to maintain control over their financial assets (Cornelis et al. 2009). The impact of age on the economic dimension is thought to influence individuals differently based on an individual's income level (Adisa 2019; Cornelis et al. 2009). For instance, an older adult that earned a higher income and has a large retirement savings may differ on economic conservatism compared to an older adult that did not earn a high income and depends greatly on social welfare programs. The overall idea that older individuals become less open-minded and more restrictive with their financial assets is generally associated with older individuals moving to the right on the economic dimension.

Age Hypothesis: Individuals that are older hold more right-wing economic positions than individuals that are younger.

While Chapter 3 presented the hypotheses and theories for this thesis, Chapter 4 will outline the research design and data collection. The next chapter will also provide details on relevant variables and control variables.

Chapter 4

Data and Methodology

The previous chapter outlined my expectations and hypotheses for the effects of religiosity, education level, gender, income, and age on individual-level political ideology. I test my hypotheses using data from the pooled European Value Surveys (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS), from 1981 until 2022 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). This thesis examines data from 116 countries and 464 surveys, which are in Appendix A.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Left-Right Ideology</i>	486,233	5.59	2.32	1	10
<i>Religious Attendance</i>	635,138	4.70	2.57	1	8
<i>Education Level</i>	575,891	2.0	0.75	1	3
<i>Female</i>	659,023	0.53	0.50	0	1
<i>Income</i>	188,138	1.98	0.80	1	3
<i>Age</i>	658,299	42.96	16.91	13	108

Dependent Variable: Political Ideology

My dependent variable, *Left-Right Ideology*, captures an individual's self-placement on a 1-10 left-right scale where 1 indicates left-wing ideology and 10 indicates right-wing ideology. There are 486,233 observations collected for *Left-Right Ideology*, and the dependent variable has a mean of 5.59 and standard deviation of 2.32.

Independent Variables: Religiosity, Education, and Female

Religiosity

This thesis measures religiosity by individual attendance of religious services. This independent variable, *Religious Attendance*, captures how often individuals report they attend religious services (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). The scale for *Religious Attendance* runs from 1-8, where 1 indicates that an individual never or practically never attends religious services and 8 indicates that an individual attends religious services more than once a week (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). *Religious Attendance* does not include religious service attendance at weddings, funerals, and christenings. There are 635,138 observations collected for *Religious Attendance*, and the independent variable has a mean of 4.70 and standard deviation of 2.57 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Level of Education

My independent variable for education, *Level of Education*, captures education level attained by individuals in this thesis. This measure of education groups people into terciles, where 1 indicates the lowest level of education tercile, 2 indicates the intermediate tercile, and 3 indicates the highest tercile. There are 575,891 observations collected for *Level of Education*, and this independent variable has a mean of 2 and a standard deviation of 0.75 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Female

The independent variable for sex, *Female*, captures the sex of the respondent. This independent variable is coded dichotomously as 1 or 0, where 1 indicates that the individual identifies as female and 0 indicates that the individual identifies as male (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). There are 659,023 observations collected for *Female*, and this variable has a mean of 0.53 and a standard deviation of 0.50 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Additional Variables: Income and Age

Income

Income Level captures the income of individuals, specifically measured on a scale from 1-3. On the 1-3 scale, 1 indicates the lowest level of income and 3 indicates the highest level of income (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). *Income Level* has 188,138 observations, and a mean of 1.98 and standard deviation of 0.80 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Age

My independent variable that captures an individual's age in years is *Age*. The min for this independent variable is 13, and the max is 108 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). There are 658,299 observations collected for *Age*, and the independent variable has a mean of 42.96 and a standard deviation of 16.91 (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022).

Individual-Level Control Variables

This thesis controls for variables that are thought to impact the independent and dependent variables to curb omitted variable bias. *Income Level* of individuals is controlled due to the claim that higher income level has generally been linked to right-wing ideology (Feldman & Johnston 2014). The usual claim is that individuals with higher incomes are more conservative on the economic dimension (Feldman & Johnston 2014). The connection between individual income and political ideology is generally understood as those with higher incomes preferring less government intervention in the economy and less taxation (Bjedov et al. 2014). Individual income level is also thought to impact some independent variables in this thesis, such as the *Female* variable. The gender wage gap speaks to the difference in wage trends between men and women, which has demonstrated that men historically have been advantaged with higher wages (Blau & Kahn 2017). Wage gaps that produce income inequality between men and women have allowed men to maintain a higher economic status than women, and higher incomes are thought to be connected with more conservative alignment on the economic dimension (Feldman & Johnston 2014). Controlling for the income level of men and women attempts to mitigate the impact of the gender wage gap on income differences.

An additional variable that is controlled for in this thesis is *Age*. Individual age is thought to influence political ideology due to the connection between older adults and economic and social conservatism (Glenn 1974). Aging is suggested to impact social and economic political ideology because of the argument that older adults become less open-minded with age and more restrictive with their financial assets (Glenn 1974). Due to retired adults not earning incomes that they previously received while in the workforce, older adults are thought to favor less

government intervention in the economy and hold socially conservative beliefs due to being less open-minded and having fewer new experiences (Cornelis et al. 2009). Another reason for controlling individual age is due to the connection between age and religious attendance. This is attributed to the possibility that older or retired individuals have more time compared to a younger employed individual to attend religious services. Another explanation that speaks to the connection between age and religiosity is the frequency of illness among older adults that may lead to higher religiosity among older populations.

Methodology

I estimate a multilevel random-effects model with robust standard errors clustered on the country-year using ordinary least squares. My model includes regional fixed effects and decade dummies. The region dummies are used to capture unobserved or unmeasured characteristics that may be relevant across geographic regions. The decade dummies account for similar factors across time.

Despite having panel data, my model includes random effects at the country-year level, and another option would have been to include country fixed effects. Country year fixed effects would be problematic in this model because several countries would be dropped from the regression analysis due to there being only one survey conducted in some countries. Random effects present the better option to estimate the effect of unobserved differences. Random effects also allow for the inclusion of time invariant variables.

In this multi-level model, the left-right ideology of an individual i in country-year j is modeled as a linear function of my covariates:

*Left – Right Ideology*_{ij}

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \beta_{0ij} + \beta_1 \text{Female}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{Education}_{ij} + \beta_3 \text{Income}_{ij} \\
 &+ \beta_4 \text{Religious Attendance}_{ij} + \beta_5 \text{Age}_{ij} + \beta_6 \text{Female Education}_{ij} + d_j \Upsilon + (u_j \\
 &+ \varepsilon_{ij})
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{1}$$

where d_j are aggregate-level fixed effects that include dummy variables for geographic region and fixed effects dummy variables for decade. $u_j \sim (u, \sigma_u^2)$ is a country-year random effect error component and $e_{ij} \sim (0, \sigma_e^2)$ is an individual-specific error component, and $\varepsilon_{ij} = u_j + e_{ij}$ is the total error.

Predictions

According to the *Religiosity Hypothesis*, more religious attendance makes individuals more right-wing, therefore I predict $\beta_4 > 0$. The effect of being female is $\frac{d\text{Left-Right}}{d\text{Female}} = \beta_1 + \beta_6 \text{Female Education}$. According to the *Female Hypothesis*, women are always more left-wing than men, therefore $\beta_1 < 0$, $\beta_1 + \beta_6 \text{Education} < 0$, for all values of education. however, the negative effect of being female should grow with education, therefore $\beta_6 < 0$. The effect of education is $\frac{d\text{Left-Right}}{d\text{Education}} = \beta_2 + \beta_6 \text{Female}$. According to my *Education Hypothesis*, the effect of education should always be negative, therefore $\beta_2 < 0$, or in other words, increased education for men moves them further left. Furthermore, $\beta_2 + \beta_6 < 0$ because education should make women more left-wing. The negative effect of education should be larger for women than for men, therefore, $\beta_6 < 0$. According to the *Income Hypothesis*, higher income makes individuals

more right-wing, therefore I predict $\beta_3 > 0$. Lastly, according to the *Age Hypothesis*, older age makes individuals more right-wing, therefore I predict $\beta_5 > 0$.

Chapter 5

Results

The results from the different multi-level regression models are reported in Table 2. The first model ignores the potential interaction between education and gender and the second model does not. Model 1 indicates that more education is associated with left-wing ideology and women hold more left-wing preferences than men. According to the *Female Hypothesis*, women should always hold more left-wing economic positions than men, which is supported by the coefficient on Female. The coefficient on Female of -0.07 indicates that women are 0.07 units more to the left than men. According to the first part of the *Education Hypothesis*, an increase in education should always make people hold more left-wing economic positions. The coefficient on Education in Model 1 shows the effect of education on all individuals, and the negative coefficient indicates support for the *Education Hypothesis* in that a 1 unit increase in education moves everyone to the left. Model 1 also indicates that more religiosity is associated with left-wing ideology. According to the *Religiosity Hypothesis*, individuals who exhibit high levels of religious attendance should hold more right-wing economic positions than those who exhibit low levels of religious attendance. The results from Model 1 are therefore inconsistent with the *Religiosity Hypothesis*. Furthermore, the positive coefficient on Income in Model 1 is consistent with the *Income Hypothesis* in that individuals with higher income levels hold more right-wing economic positions than those with lower income levels. According to the *Age Hypothesis*, individuals that are older hold more right-wing economic positions than individuals that are younger. The positive coefficient on Age in Model 1 shows support for this hypothesis.

Table 2. Determinants of Individual-Level Political Ideology

Dependent Variable: Left-Right Ideology		
Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Female	-0.07**	0.02
Education Level	-0.15**	-0.13**
Female Education		-0.05*
Religiosity	-0.09**	-0.09**
Income Level	0.19**	0.19**
Age	0.004**	0.004**
Constant	5.49**	5.45**
Regional Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Decade Dummies	Yes	Yes
σ_u	0.61	0.61
σ_e	2.29	2.29
ρ	0.07	0.07
Observations	268,622	268,622
Countries	68	68
Overall R^2	0.031	0.031

Note: Cells show coefficients from a random-effects model with regional fixed effects and decade dummies estimated using ordinary least squares. The dependent variable is an individual's left-right political ideology on a 1-10 scale where 1 indicates left-wing ideology and 10 indicates right-wing ideology (EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). σ_u shows the standard deviation for the country-year random-effect error component, u_j and σ_e shows the standard deviation for the individual-specific error component, ε_{ij} . ρ is calculated as $\sigma_u^2 / (\sigma_u^2 + \sigma_e^2)$ and can be interpreted as the proportion of the total variance within the x and y variables.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Now let's turn to Model 2 and examine whether there's a conditional relationship between education and gender. Recall that the main difference here is that we're allowing the effect of gender and education to have a conditional effect on ideology.

The coefficient on Female indicates the effect of being female when Education is 0, which is meaningless. The effect of being female, in other words the gap between women and men, is $0.02 - 0.05 = -0.03$ [0.03], when Education is at its lowest value of 1. The fact that the confidence interval contains 0 indicates that there's no statistically significant difference between low educated women and men when it comes to ideology. The effect of being female is $0.02 - 2 * 0.05 = -0.07$ [-0.04] when Education is 2. We now see that women are more left-wing than men at this intermediate level of education. This gap between women and men continues to grow with education. The effect of being female when Education is high (3) is $0.02 - 3 * (0.05) = -0.13$ [-0.07]. The modifying effect of education on the impact of being female is statistically significant. This is indicated by the statistically significant coefficient on Female * Education. In summary, the left-wing gender gap between women and men doesn't exist at low levels of education. It only starts to appear among those with intermediate to high levels of education. This is an important finding that qualifies some of the claims in the existing literature.

The effect of education for men is -0.13. This is indicated by the coefficient on Education. This tells us that an increase in education moves men to the left ideologically. The effect of education for women is $-0.13 - 0.05 = -0.18$. This shows that an increase in education moves women to the left, and that this move to the left is larger for women (-0.18) than it is for men (-0.13). Thus, education contributes to the gender gap between women and men when it comes to ideology. The modifying effect of gender on the impact of education is statistically

significant. This is indicated by the fact that the coefficient on Female * Education is statistically significant.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Cross-national survey data have been collected for decades, and specifically by the European Values Surveys and World Values Surveys for the last 40 years to examine individuals' values, beliefs, and attitudes (Achen 1975; EVS (2022); Haerpfer et al. 2022). My thesis built on previous work of examining individual-level determinants of political ideology in countries and aims to propose further studies be conducted with a large N analysis. While previous studies have not always used a large analysis due to challenges embedded in varying cultural contexts in countries, expansive comparative research will provide better insight on how individual political ideology differs throughout the world. The results from my thesis indicate support for the hypotheses and predictions, except for the *Religiosity Hypothesis*, on the effects of individual-level determinants of political ideology. Two multi-level regression models were employed to investigate why individuals hold different political ideologies regarding government intervention in the economy, and the results from this thesis serve to expand on the implications of ideology and its known effects on political behavior. Increased education has been found to make people more left-wing, but this effect is larger for women than men. A gender gap in which women are more left-wing than men exists, but only for those with intermediate or high levels of education, and there was no found ideological difference between low educated women and men. Religious attendance is associated with more left-wing ideology, whereas higher income and older age are associated with more right-wing ideological positions.

Appendix A

Countries and Survey Years by Regional Classification

Eastern Europe

Albania: 1998, 2002, 2008
 Armenia: 1997, 2008, 2011, 2021
 Azerbaijan: 1997, 2011, 2018
 Belarus: 1990, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2011, 2018
 Bosnia Herzegovina: 1998, 2001, 2008, 2019
 Bulgaria: 1991, 1997, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2017
 Croatia: 1996, 1999, 2008, 2017
 Czechia: 1991, 1998, 1999, 2008, 2017, 2022
 Estonia: 1990, 1996, 1999, 2008, 2011, 2018
 Georgia: 1996, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2018
 Hungary: 1982, 1991, 1998, 1999, 2008, 2009, 2018
 Kazakhstan: 2011, 2018
 Kosovo: 2008
 Kyrgyzstan: 2003, 2011, 2020
 Latvia: 1990, 1996, 1999, 2008, 2021
 Lithuania: 1990, 1997, 1999, 2008, 2018
 Moldova: 1996, 2002, 2006, 2008
 Montenegro: 1996, 2001, 2008, 2019
 North Macedonia: 1998, 2001, 2008, 2019
 Poland: 1989, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2017
 Romania: 1993, 1998, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2018
 Russia: 1990, 1995, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2017
 Serbia: 1996, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2017, 2018
 Slovakia: 1990, 1991, 1998, 1999, 2008, 2017, 2022
 Slovenia: 1992, 1995, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2017
 Tajikistan: 2020
 Ukraine: 1996, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2020
 Uzbekistan: 2011

Middle East/North Africa

Algeria: 2002, 2014
 Cyprus: 2006, 2008, 2011, 2019

Egypt: 2001, 2008, 2013, 2018
Iran: 2000, 2007, 2020
Iraq: 2004, 2006, 2013, 2018
Israel: 2001
Jordan: 2001, 2007, 2014, 2018
Kuwait: 2014
Lebanon: 2013, 2018
Libya: 2014, 2022
Morocco: 2001, 2007, 2011, 2021
Palestine: 2013
Qatar: 2010
Saudi Arabia: 2003
Tunisia: 2013, 2019
Turkey: 1990, 1996, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2018
Yemen: 2014

Western Europe

Andorra: 2005, 2018
Austria: 1990, 2018
Denmark: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2008, 2017
Finland: 1981, 1990, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2009, 2017
France: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2018
Germany: 1997, 1981, 1990, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2013, 2017, 2018
Greece: 1999, 2008, 2017
Iceland: 1984, 1990, 1999, 2009, 2017
Ireland: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2008
Italy: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2018
Luxembourg: 1999, 2008
Malta: 1983, 1991, 1999, 2008
Netherlands: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2017, 2022
Northern Ireland: 1981, 1990, 1999, 2008, 2022
Norway: 1982, 1990, 1996, 2007, 2008, 2018
Portugal: 1990, 1999, 2008, 2020
Spain: 1981, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2017
Sweden: 1982, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2017
Switzerland: 1989, 1996, 2007, 2008, 2017
United Kingdom: 1981, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2018, 2022

Latin America

Argentina: 1984, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2006, 2013, 2017

Bolivia: 2017

Brazil: 1991, 1997, 2006, 2014, 2018

Chile: 1990, 1996, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018

Colombia: 1997, 1998, 2005, 2012, 2018

Ecuador: 2013, 2018

El Salvador: 1999

Guatemala: 2004, 2020

Mexico: 1981, 1990, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2012, 2018

Nicaragua: 2020

Peru: 1996, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2018

Uruguay: 1996, 2006, 2011, 2022

Venezuela: 1996, 2000, 2021

Pacific Islands

Australia: 1981, 1995, 2005, 2012, 2018

New Zealand: 1998, 2004, 2011, 2020

South Asia

Bangladesh: 1996, 2002, 2018

India: 1990, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2012

Maldives: 2021

Pakistan: 1997, 2001, 2012, 2018

Sub-Saharan Africa

Burkina Faso: 2007

Ethiopia: 2007, 2020

Ghana: 2007, 2012

Kenya: 2021

Mali: 2007

Nigeria: 1990, 1995, 2000, 2012, 2018

Rwanda: 2007, 2012

South Africa: 1982, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2013

Tanzania: 2001

Uganda: 2001

Zambia: 2007

Zimbabwe: 2001, 2012, 2020

Caribbean and Non-Iberic America

Canada: 1982, 1990, 2000, 2006, 2007, 2020

Dominican Republic: 1996

Haiti: 2016

Puerto Rico: 1995, 2001, 2018

Trinidad and Tobago: 2006, 2010

United States: 1982, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2006, 2011, 2017

East Asia

China: 1981, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2018

Hong Kong: 2005, 2014, 2018

Japan: 1981, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2019

Macau: 2019

Mongolia: 2020

South Korea: 1982, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2018

Taiwan: 1998, 2006, 2012, 2019

Southeast Asia

Indonesia: 2001, 2006, 2018

Malaysia: 2006, 2012, 2018

Myanmar: 2020

Philippines: 1996, 2001, 2012, 2019

Singapore: 2002, 2012, 2020

Thailand: 2007, 2013, 2018

Vietnam: 2001, 2006, 2020

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ACADEMIC VITA

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA May 2023
Schreyer Honors College
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Global and International Studies, Minor in Ethics
Honors: Dean's List, Paterno Fellow, Phi Beta Kappa, Pi Sigma Alpha
Study Abroad: Rome, IT, Spring 2022

WORK EXPERIENCE

Centre County District Attorney's Office, Centre County, PA August 2022 – December 2022
Intern 10 hours/week

- Prepared ADA folders for arraignments, pre-trial conferences, and trials
- Organized evidence for open cases, filed and updated closed cases, and answered office phone calls

Lateral Partner Recruiting – Proskauer Rose LLP, New York, NY June 2022 - July 2022
Intern 35 hours/week

- Conducted competitive research and compiled relevant information for specific partner practice groups
- Updated internal databases and trackers

Voting Rights Research Study, Penn State, University Park September 2021 - August 2022
Research Assistant 15-30 hours/week

- Assisted in collection of over 500 county voter rolls and election results to determine levels of inequality
- Organized research and brought individual findings to collaborations of professors and research assistants

Honors Rhetoric and Civic Life, Penn State, University Park August 2020 - December 2021
Teacher's Assistant 15 hours/week

- Edited papers, provided constructive feedback, and graded weekly assignments
- Held one on one consultation during bi-weekly office hours with Schreyer students to improve writing skills

Undergraduate Fellow –Penn State, University Park September 2019 - May 2020
Rock Ethics Institute Research Fellow 20 hours/week

- Researched academic databases and collected relevant scholarly articles for a literature review
- Assisted in writing a literature review regarding the effects of digital technology on the environment

Laboratory Technician – Infinity BiologiX, Piscataway, NJ August 2020 - August 2021
Data Analyst 20 hours/week

- Worked as a technician to examine the validity of COVID-19 saliva test results
- Communicated under time-sensitive conditions with the lab members and client submissions team

LEADERSHIP AND INVOLVEMENT

Phi Alpha Delta – Penn State, University Park January 2021 - April 2022

Pre-Law Fraternity Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator 5 hours/week

- Invited speakers and shared articles and other pertinent diversity materials to promote education
- Created and oversaw the diversity and inclusion committee to create discussions and workshops

Her Campus (PSU Chapter), Penn State, University Park September 2021 - Present

Staff Writer – Culture, News, and Entertainment 5 hours/week

- Meet bi-monthly deadlines and submit articles tailored to the college-aged media platform
- Collaborate with other writers to develop current stories

Alpha Omicron Pi, Penn State, University Park January 2020 - Present

Member 2-10 hours/week

- Serve on recruitment, panhellenic, and diversity and inclusion committees
- Represent AOII with other members at the annual 46-hour Penn State Dance Marathon