**Social Policy Preferences and the Welfare State**

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**Possible Topic Areas**

* Individual Level and Employers’ Preferences for Social Policy
* The Politics of Social Policy Reform and Design (Russian or comparative)
* The Origins of Social Policy/the Welfare State (Russian or comparative)
* Labor Market and Economic Outcomes of Social Policy
* Electoral Targeting of Social Policy Benefits

**Current Project: The Foundations of Social Policy Support: Experimental Evidence on How Institutional Quality Affects Redistributive Preferences** (with Joseph B. Schaffer and Sarah Wilson Sokhey [University of Colorado, Boulder])

We examine how variation in institutional quality—specifically tax evasion—influences individuals’ support for redistributive policies. While much is known about preferences for social policy, there is less research examining how institutions condition these preferences.  To address this, we conduct laboratory experiments in the USA at the University of Colorado and in Russia at the Higher School of Economics.  In our experiment, individuals vote on a tax rate which contributes to a common pot, complete a clerical task (or are randomly assigned to be unemployed), and then receive payment based on how well they complete the task and their portion of the common pot which is distributed equally.  Participants play 3 rounds and vote on their preferred tax rate at the beginning of each round after being updated with information about their own productivity relative to the average and, when relevant, how prevalent underreporting is.  In one version, participants are not allowed to cheat by underreporting their earnings.  In the other versions, participants may underreport their earnings with either the same risk of audit across individuals or a variable risk of audit across individuals.  This research design allows us to test our expectation that individual productivity and the risk of being caught interact to influence a person’s preference for redistribution (as captured by her preferred tax rate).  Our research offers valuable contributions to existing work by considering how and to what extent institutional quality influences individual preferences for social policies.  To our knowledge, this is the first experiment to examine this question.

**Related Publications**

Marques, Israel (2016). *Political Institutions and Preferences for Social Policy in the Post-communist World*. Ph.D dissertation. Columbia University.

Marques, Israel (2018). “Firms and Social Policy Preferences Under Weak Institutions: Evidence from Russia”. *BOFIT Discussion Papers* 7/2018. Bank of Finland.

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