

Distributive Justice and Attitudes Toward the Welfare State¹

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Current debates concerning the viability of the welfare state evoke the question of the social bases of support of the welfare state. Past research has documented fairly consistent relationships between sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes toward welfare policies. Yet, the nature of these relationships is not well understood. In the paper we argue that the level of support for the welfare state is largely determined by the principles of distributive justice espoused by individuals as well as their images of society. We develop a theoretical framework, which outlines the structural relationship between social attributes, principles of justice, perceived conflict, and support for the welfare state. Using data from a recent population survey on the legitimation of inequality, conducted in Israel in 1999 (N = 1057), we test a number of hypotheses. For the empirical analysis we use structural equation modeling with multiple indicators. Our findings reveal substantial support for policies aimed at reducing inequality. At the same time we find strong support for rewards according to merit and unequal earnings distribution. The impact of social attributes on attitudes toward the welfare state is partially mediated by the justice principles and images of society.

KEY WORDS: distributive justice; welfare state; inequality; ISSP.

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INTRODUCTION

The social fabric of the welfare state was woven in the 1950s and 1960s, through agreements between workers, employers, and the state. This fabric is now falling apart as many countries are in the process of redefining their welfare policy in an attempt to cut down public spending (Castells, 1998; Giddens, 1994; Kitschelt, 1994; Strange, 1996). On the ideological level, the neoliberal attitude that upholds the principles of market economy and seeks to reduce the involvement of the state has gained a hegemonic position following the breakdown of the Communist experiment and the failure of Socialist regimes to generate economic growth (Fligstein, 1998).

Welfare policy, like any policy, is a political action. As such it is forged in a social-historical process on the basis of the interests of social agents and the cooperation and conflicts they have (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Consequently the characteristics and the very existence of the welfare state depend on the nature of the social rifts and the coalitions that develop around one policy or the other. Although welfare plans can be developed without wide public support, it is difficult to sustain them for a long time without such support. In recent decades public attitudes, expressed directly through polls and indirectly through various agents and brokers, have gained an important position in shaping policies (Crespi, 1997; Kuechler, 1998; Miller, 1992). It is important, therefore, to examine public support for welfare policy and to identify the demographic, ethical, and structural characteristics that are at the heart of the support or rejection of this policy (Swift et al., 1995).

In the present study we investigate the support given to the welfare state in Israel, and the social bases of that support. Our aim is to examine to what degree the perceptions of distributive justice and the perception of society as a conflictive system mediate the relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes toward the role of the state in reducing of inequality in Israel through redistribution.

THE SOCIAL BASES OF SUPPORT FOR WELFARE STATE

The welfare state can be defined as the sum of the practices that aim to bring about the decommodification of the life prospects of citizens; that is, to assure decent living conditions irrespective of the position of people in the market. The welfare state was established as a response to two central phenomena of industrialization and the emergence of capitalist economy. One is the loss of economic security and the weakening of the traditional support bases of family and community. The other is the demand for social and economic equality to ensure the full realization of citizenship (Flora and Heidenheimer, 1987; Marshall, 1950; Roller, 1995).

The literature discussing the welfare state is far and wide, and reading it leads to the conclusion that there is no one welfare state but various models that were developed in various political–historical contexts.⁴ Esping-Andersen (1990) has provided one of the better-known typologies, which outlines three major models of the welfare state: social–democratic, conservative–corporate, and liberal. Although these models are an abstraction of concrete sets of practices, kind of “ideal types,” Esping-Andersen used this typology to classify states categorically. Thus, for instance, the social–democratic welfare state is characteristic of the Scandinavian countries; central European countries are typically conservative welfare states, whereas the Anglo-Saxon states are classified as liberal welfare states. The Israeli welfare state cannot easily be classified according to these models because welfare policies carried out in Israel are a mixture of various practices. Although some rights are universal, many rights are not and are ensconced one way or the other in social, national, and gender statuses. In this sense, the Israeli welfare state is closer to the conservative–corporate model than to any other model of the welfare state (Rozenhek, 1998; Shalev, 1993).

Historically, the welfare state was a major bone of contention between capital and labor in most industrialized countries. The workers demanded the extension of social citizenship and a policy that would grant economic security and a degree of equality in rewards (Hicks, 1999). Yet, Esping-Andersen’s comprehensive research demonstrated that the welfare state cannot be understood as a simple result of class mobilization (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The political organization of workers is important, but the political coalitions that labor parties join are just as important in shaping the specific character of the welfare policy in a given country. Furthermore, countries differ in the degree that the bourgeois class is involved in the welfare state. As a rule, the bourgeoisie tends to prefer minimal involvement of the state in the economy, and even that only when the market fails (Edlund, 1999; Kluegel and Miyano, 1995). Wilensky (1975) for example, argued that the expansion of the welfare state would cause a backlash from the middle class that will express its displeasure regarding the redistribution of resources and of the fact that the taxes it pays go to the poor. But even the attitude of the bourgeoisie is not uniform. Welfare policy in the USA is clearly a bone of contention between the working class and the middle class, whereas the middle class in Sweden and also in Germany is attached in complex ways to the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

In Israel, class rifts have intensified since the mid-1980s, following structural changes in the economic and political arenas. During this period a growing distinction emerged between those who benefit from the liberalization of the Israeli

⁴From a comparative point of view, the question is: what stratification structure does the social policy advance? This perception accepts that the rights promising decommmodification developed in different ways in the advanced capitalist countries, and as a result created qualitative differences in the nature of the arrangements between the state, the market, and the family. This point of view makes it possible to distinguish between welfare regimes according to various aspects of social policy.

economy and its openness to world markets [McWorld, as Barber (1996) calls it] and those who stand to lose. The latter, whose education and occupational training prevents them from taking part in the new economy [Barber (1996) calls this category “jihad”], are threatened by free competition and considerations of economic efficiency.

While the class cleavage has been at the heart of the welfare state debate from the outset, in recent years social categories based on ethnicity and citizenship are becoming increasingly important in shaping attitudes toward the welfare state. Although many issues of contention are related to economic well-being, they find expression in ethnic conflict between dominant and subordinate groups; between those who occupy elite positions in the economy, government, and academia, and those who feel they are not citizens of equal status. The political mobilization of these categories is especially salient in voting patterns, defined traditionally by the attitude to foreign affairs and security matters (Ram, 2000). Yet, in the past decade conflict over public assistance programs and social welfare has gained prominence (Shafir and Peled, 2000).

The gender cleavage has also gained prominence in the welfare debate. As a whole, the position of women in the labor market and in society is less secure than that of men. They are more exposed to the dangers of unemployment and low income. The dependence of women on the welfare state also derives from their roles within the family as mothers or housewives. Hence, women face a dilemma of choosing between the demand for equality (which will enable them to participate in the labor market and enjoy social privileges related to position at the place of work just like the men) and the demand to recognize the “difference”; that is, privileges based on activities outside the labor market (Korpi, 2000; Pateman, 1988; Sainsbury, 1996).

PRINCIPLES OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND SUPPORT FOR THE WELFARE STATE

As we mentioned earlier, the purpose of this research is to examine the way in which values mediate between the position of the individual in society and the degree of support for the welfare state. Roller (1995) claims that there is a connection between the general value preferences people hold and the attitude they display toward the welfare state. A central component in the value system that might affect attitudes toward the welfare state is the notion of distributive justice held by individuals (Arthur and Shaw, 1978; Miller, 1999).

Three principles are usually identified as central to the concept of distributive justice: Equity, Equality, and Need (Miller, 1999). The principle of Equity justifies unequal rewards on the grounds of differential investment or abilities, and as such is a central framework of legitimating social inequality (Alwin, 1992; Berger

et al., 1972; Ritzman and Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992).⁵ The concept of Equity is very abstract and does not define the relevant investments or the relevant comparisons (Bell and Schokkaert, 1992). To retain a theoretical focus, we chose one aspect of Equity as expressed in the principle of Merit (Benabu, 2000; d'Anjou et al., 1995). Following Michael Young's allegory (Young, 1958), Merit is usually interpreted as an achievement based on the combination of ability and effort. The common perception is that high intellectual ability accompanied by effort has a potential to contribute significantly to the common good, and therefore deserves a high reward. The central aspects discussed in this context are education (as reflecting intellectual ability), effort, and responsibility (Miller, 1999; Sen, 2000).

Jasso's theory (Jasso, 1980) presents a different perception of distributive justice, as it gives the principle of Equality normative priority. Justice, according to the principle of Equality is based on membership in a community (especially the nation state), which serves as criterion for rewarding the individual (Miller, 1999). Therefore, members of the group will evaluate the degree of legitimacy of the rewards on the basis of the deviation from an egalitarian distribution within the group (Kelley and Evans, 1993).

The third principle is Need. This principle recognizes the fact that individuals vary in their ability to attain the resources necessary for their well-being. The demand for distribution of rewards according to need arose following the industrial revolution, which deprived the household of the ability to secure the well-being of individuals (Roller, 1995). The idea behind this principle is that differential abilities and handicaps are the outcome of "nature's lottery" (Rawls, 1971) and therefore equality in resources will not bring about equality in life chances. Marmor (2000) argues that "from a moral point of view everyone deserves to have sufficient resources to live an autonomous, decent and satisfactory life" (p. 61). Therefore, a valuation of justice rooted in the Need principle is based on securing the minimal resources that are sufficient for living according to socially accepted standards (Miller, 1999). Although the concepts of need and equality are related, in this study we shall retain the distinction between principles of reward that are based on ascribed characteristics, and a more general outlook that places the principle of equality of rewards with no reference to the characteristics of those who receive them.

Examining the intervening status of value preferences (as expressed in support for the principles of distribution), between the position of the individual in stratification system and the degree of support for welfare policies requires that we outline the connection between the principles of distribution and welfare policy,

⁵Legitimization processes that are based on this principle can also work in the opposite way; people can regard individuals that receive high rewards as contributing more, even if they have no information supporting this. From this point of view the principle of Equity enables the preservation of a perception of justice in society, even in the face of clear and considerable economic and social inequality (Della Fava, 1986).

and the way in which one's position in society influences his or her support for the principles of distribution. To guide our exploration of these relationships, we shall focus on four theoretical propositions. These include the general proposition of self-interest, the dominant ideology hypothesis, the enlightened attitude, and the feminist conception of gender principles of justice.

The concept of self-interest is broad and the implications that can be derived from it are many. In the present context we address one component of self-interest and argue that the principles of distribution that individuals support are influenced by their position in the stratification system (d'Anjou et al., 1995). According to this theory, positions in the social system are associated with different levels of control over resources, which, in turn, lead to different life prospects. Individuals that are higher-up in the social system tend to support the existing social order. As a result they will express weaker support for egalitarian distribution and the distribution of rewards according to Need. They will justify their privileges by pointing to principles of Merit and to their own contribution to society. Conversely, individuals that are in a disadvantaged position in the social system will support an approach that would ameliorate their life prospects. As a result they will express weaker support for rewarding according to degree of contribution to society, and support a more equal distribution of rewards and a distribution that will compensate them for their disadvantages (according to Need).

Past research in this field has indeed revealed a positive relationship between one's position in the social system and the support for the principle of Merit. Likewise, researchers have found a negative relationship between social position and the support for the principle of Need (d'Anjou et al., 1995) and that of Equality (Ritzman and Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Shepelak, 1989). We shall therefore expect that, in the case of Israel, individuals with higher income, academics, and males of European American origin will express stronger support for the principle of Merit and a lower degree of support for the principles of Need and Equality.

The dominant ideology hypothesis maintains that the values and attitudes of an individual toward inequality are shaped by the ideology hegemonic in his or her society (d'Anjou et al., 1995). Ideology in this context is a set of beliefs common to a particular society, which shape and organize the attitudes of people toward a specific subject. This thesis assumes that people strive for consistency in their behavior and attitudes, and therefore, when they have to evaluate the legitimacy of a particular distribution of rewards they will do so on the basis of the dominant norms in their society. Research carried out in the USA, for example, showed the principles of merit to be dominant and that its dominance leads people to assume *a priori* that those who receive more resources contribute more, or have qualities that contribute more to productivity. Contrary to the expectation derived from previous hypothesis, the dominant ideology hypothesis suggests little or no difference in the beliefs held by various class, ethnicity, gender, and age categories (Della Fava, 1986).

The enlightened individual hypothesis assumes that while acquiring education (especially higher education), people are introduced to the central values of Western civilization, among them the value "Equality" (Robinson and Bell, 1978). The relation between level of education and support for the principle of Equality stems, according to this theory, from the political and social importance of the concept and especially from the central role equality plays in the democratic system. In addition, there is a high likelihood that people who gained higher education will be more exposed to information concerning the degree of inequality in society, and therefore will be more aware of deviations from a state of equality.

The last position we shall refer to in our examination of the characteristics that influence the support for various principles of redistribution is the feminist position concerning gender principles of justice. According to this position men and women differ in their evaluation of justice (Gilligan, 1982). Men tend to use an "ethics of justice" which tends to stress principles of Merit, whereas women tend to use an "ethics of care" which is closer to the principle of Need. The tendency of women to use justice evaluation on the basis of need, more than men do, derives from their personal experience of care, both in the private sphere, and in the public sphere as employees of the welfare state (Wearness, 1987).

It should be noted that the propositions just outlined are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In some cases it will be difficult to tell if the gender differences derive from different justice evaluations (as maintained by Gillian's feminist attitude), or from a different position in the stratification structure (as maintained by the self-interest attitude). The enlightened individual and the self-interest theories would suggest opposite hypotheses concerning the relationship between education and equality as justice. More complex relationships are also possible. For example, research in Israel has pointed to the hegemony of the liberal-merit ideology in public discourse in the past two decades (Ram, 2000). One can, therefore, expect to find broad-based agreement regarding the principle of Merit. Because of this expected consensus, a theoretical position that combines the dominant ideology theory and the theory of self-interest should lead to the following conjecture: One's position in the stratification system will affect support for the principles of Need and Equality, but not for the principle of Merit.

IMAGES OF SOCIETY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WELFARE STATE

Israel is a country with overlapping social cleavages. The class cleavage coincides with ethnic, religious, gender, and national rifts. Taking these rifts into account, welfare policy in Israel can be seen, like in many other countries, as a central arena for expressing social solidarity as well as the conflicting interests. This is an arena of social conflicts among groups with various

resources, world visions, and cultural values (Edlund, 1999; Orloff, 1996; Svallfors, 1997).

Although this argument draws a straight line between interests arising from one's social position and support for the welfare state, Zagorski (1999) suggests that the attitudes toward the welfare state derive also from individuals' fundamental views of social relations. He argues that viewing society as a reality of conflict means interpreting the distribution of resources in society as the result of struggles in a power-driven arena.⁶ Such an attitude questions the legitimacy of the distribution of material resources in society and rejects the notion of the market as a neutral arena of exchange. Individuals' perception of conflict is important because it also shapes their political preferences while identifying self-interests, and therefore influences attitudes toward government programs such as welfare policy and support for political parties (Kelley and Evans, 1995).

To the extent that the views of societal harmony and conflict might affect attitudes toward policies of redistribution, it is important to identify the preconditions for the emergence of conflictive attitudes. According to the classic materialist argument, individuals are inclined to identify with their objective class and support it in political struggles (Moorehouse, 1976). Individuals from lower classes in society are inclined to perceive their position as deriving from structural factors such as lack of opportunities (Shepelak, 1989). Hence, they call into question the legitimacy of the existing unequal distribution of resources. On the other hand, individuals from the upper classes have a more harmonious view of society and are inclined to perceive their situation as reflecting and compensating their efforts and qualifications (Kelley and Evans, 1993, 1999). Therefore, individuals from lower classes will tend to identify this class conflict more readily than individuals from higher classes.

Gender is particularly relevant when discussing the way social relations are perceived in society. Today, even more than in the past, women are an integral part of the labor market, but within each class they hold lower positions than do men. Hence, economic stratification is largely stratification according to gender (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Mann, 1986). In support of the independent existence of gender interests, Orloff argues that even in societies that are ethnically and racially divided one is likely to find conflicting attitudes toward the welfare state which are based on gender relations (Orloff, 1996). Indeed, the empirical results support the expected relationship, although the differences are not large (Kelley and Evans, 1999).

The ethnic cleavage in Israel is an especially potent source of social conflict. First, Israeli social policy is characterized by a division between universal programs and labor market programs that correspond to the existing segmentation in the

⁶Zagorski's assumption is derived from game theory, and from the distinction between a zero-sum game and a positive-sum game. He argues that individuals who have a conflict perception hold more egalitarian attitudes only when the conflict is perceived as a zero-sum game, that is, at the end of each conflict there are winners and losers. This is not the case for individuals who conceive the conflict as a positive-sum game, that is, the conflict ends with everyone winning.

labor market (Rozenhek, in press; Shalev, 1993). Second, formal and informal mechanisms of exclusion are used by the Israeli welfare state, which both reflect and structure an ethnic hierarchy (Rozenhek, 1998). According to this view, the explanation for ethnic and class stratification is the historical context within which Israeli welfare policy developed. We can, therefore, expect that individuals that belong to subordinate ethnic groups in Israel will tend to view social relations in the economic sphere as conflictive more than the dominant group.

We summarize the many propositions outlined in the previous paragraphs with the help of the conceptual model presented in Fig. 1.⁷ The theoretical model that will be put to empirical test assumes that the effect of one's position in the social structure on his or her attitudes toward welfare policy is mediated by value preferences regarding redistribution and a harmonious conflictive image of society.

METHODOLOGY

Data and Population

The data for this study were collected in the winter of 1999–2000 as part of the ISSP (International Social Survey Program) survey on “social inequality.”⁸ Data collection was carried out in face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of the urban (communities of less than 2,000 inhabitants were not included in the sample) adult population (18+) in Israel. The original sample had 1208 interviewees, but in this study we limited the research population to Jews only. The exclusion of the Arab population was done for methodological reasons, and is contrary to our position that it is important to examine the relationship between nationality and support for the welfare state.⁹ The analysis was finally based on the answers of 1057 interviewees. The distribution of the demographic characteristics of the sample is close to the distribution among the adult Jewish population in Israel: 54% women and 46% men; ~24% with academic degrees and an average age of 41 years (SD = 16.2 years).

Method of Analysis

The research arguments presented a complex set of relationships between abstract, theoretical concepts measured by empirical indicators whose validation has

⁷We include religiosity in the model mainly in order to control its effect, because of the relationships that exist in the Israeli society among economic position, ethnicity, and religiosity.

⁸The aim of the ISSP is to enable and facilitate international comparative research of attitudes and values pertinent to central social issues. The topics of the survey vary from 1 year to the next.

⁹Unfortunately we obtained very poor measurement models for the latent variables in the sample of Arabs. This means that the indicators do not reflect the theoretical concepts being researched, and therefore do not measure what they were supposed to measure.

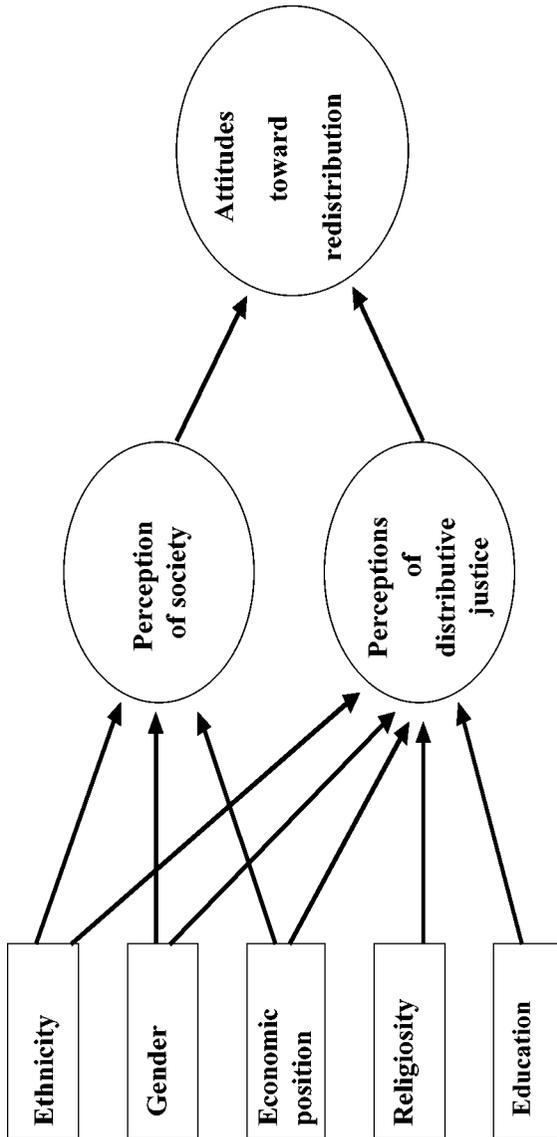


Fig. 1. Theoretical Model.

to be substantiated. To cope with these two issues, we used the Structural Equations Modeling—a multivariable analysis which combines “factor analysis” with “path analysis” in one model (Marvyama, 1998). This method of analysis is particularly well-suited to a complex set of relations between endogenous variables, as is the case in this research.¹⁰

Variables

Endogenous Variables

The endogenous variables in this research represent attitudes and value preferences that cannot be observed directly. Each of the abstract concepts or latent variables was measured by empirical indicators (full definitions of the variables appear in Appendix A).

Attitudes Toward the Welfare State. Following some previous studies (Edlund, 1999; Roller, 1995; Shepelak, 1989), we use two indicators that directly examine the respondent’s attitude toward the role of the state in the redistribution of income (see Table 1). The values of this variable and all other endogenous variables were recoded so that a high value indicates agreement with the statement.

Principles of Distributive Justice. To measure the principles of Need and Merit, the respondents were presented with various criteria and asked to what degree each of them is important for determining workers’ wages (for similar procedures, see d’Anjou et al., 1995; Ritzman and Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). Support for the principle of *Need* was derived from the importance respondents attributed to “the sum needed to support a family” and “whether the worker has children to support” in determining wages. Three indicators measure the principle of *Merit*: “number of years spent in education or training,” “how well he or she does the job,” and “how hard he or she works at the job.”

Equality is measured as a ratio of the earnings individuals thought appropriate for an “owner of a big factory” and “unskilled laborer.” The index is expressed as the logarithm of the result multiplied by -1 , so that high values indicate a more egalitarian position.¹¹

Perceived Social Conflict. Following previous studies on the subject (Kelley and Evans, 1995, 1999; Zagorski, 1999) the concept of perceived social conflict was measured by three indicators. In each case interviewees were asked their opinion regarding the extent of the struggles between various groups in society.

¹⁰The analysis was carried out using AMOS 4.0 software (for more information about the software, see Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999).

¹¹Other studies employed Likert-type indicators to evaluate perceptions of equality in a way similar to that used to measure the principles of justice, Need, and Merit. The present data file did not include such items. Nonetheless, the indirect measure used in this study is likely to be more valid because it reduces the possibility social desirability bias in responses (Kelley and Evans, 1993).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Name of variable	Range	Average (SD)	Percentage ^a
<i>Attitudes toward redistribution^b</i>			
Government's responsibility to reduce the gaps in incomes between people with high incomes and those with low ones	1–5	4.09 (1.06)	79.5
Government's responsibility to reduce the gaps in incomes between the rich and the poor	1–4	3.46 (0.83)	87.5
<i>Principles of distributive justice</i>			
<i>Need^b</i>			
What is needed to support a family?	1–5	3.74 (1.15)	67.9
Whether the worker has children to support	1–5	3.61 (1.24)	63.9
<i>Merit^b</i>			
Education or training	1–5	3.87 (0.99)	71.6
Quality of performance	1–5	4.30 (0.70)	89.3
Effort	1–5	3.94 (0.97)	72.9
<i>Equality^c</i>	–4.02 to +2.12	–1.84 (0.82)	2.1 ^d
<i>Perceived social conflict^b</i>			
A conflict between rich and poor	1–4	2.20 (0.94)	35.7
A conflict between management and workers	1–4	2.47 (0.88)	47.2
A conflict between people at the top and people at the bottom of society	1–4	2.32 (1.03)	42.1
<i>Background variables</i>			
<i>Income</i>	0–15,000	4142.0 (2936)	
<i>Labor force status</i>			
Belong to the labor force			60.5
Do not belong to the labor force			39.5
<i>Education</i>			
Academic degree			23.5
No academic degree			76.5
<i>Class</i>			
Employer/self-employed			4.6
Service relations			21.7
Routine nonmanual			17.0
Labor contract			17.2
Retired			14.4
Unemployed			25.1
<i>Ethnic origin</i>			
Asia–Africa			48.2
Europe–America and second generation Israelis			51.8
<i>Gender</i>			
Women			54.2
Men			45.8
<i>Religious orthodoxy</i>			
Orthodox, ultraorthodox			17.1
Somewhat religious, conservative, secular			82.9

^aIn variables of Attitude, the percentage denotes the people who “supported” or “supported very much” the statement (answers 4–5).

^bA high value denotes a position of support for the statement; a low value denotes a position opposed to the statement.

^cThe equality index was calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{Equality}_{\text{inc}} = -1 \left[\ln \frac{\text{income a large company owner should earn}}{\text{income an unskilled manual worker should earn}} \right]$$

High values express a more egalitarian position.

^dThe percentage denotes the people who thought that the income of an unskilled manual worker and that of an owner of large factory should be equal, or that the laborer should earn more than a factory owner.

All three indicators refer to conflicts in the economic arena, namely, between “the rich and the poor,” between “workers and management,” and between “people at the top of Israeli society and people at the bottom.”¹² A high value on these items reflects a conflictive concept of society.

Exogenous Variables

Class: We used the Goldthorpe seven-category class schema, adapted to Israeli society (Goldthorpe, Yaish, and Kraus, 1997). However, our data permitted separate identification of only four out of the seven original categories: Self-employed and employers (petty bourgeoisie), employees with a service contract (used as the reference category), employees with a labor contract, that is, skilled and unskilled laborers, and a fourth category of routine nonmanual employees. We also identified separately retired individuals, and those who were unemployed or were not participating in the labor force.

Income: This variable indicates the net earnings in the previous month. With regard to respondents who were not in the labor force at the time of the survey (and hence did not have earned income), we created a predicted value of income, on the basis of several variables (see Appendix A for the full regression equation).

Labor force participation: A distinction was made between those currently participating in the labor force (coded 0) and those who are not (coded 1). This variable is introduced alongside the income variable and is not used in the class model.

Education: On the basis of reports on highest educational level, we distinguish between respondents with an academic degree (coded 1) and respondents without an academic degree (coded 0).

Ethnic origin: In line with past research in Israel (Cohen and Haberfeld, 1998), we dichotomized continent of origin into two groups: Jews of Asian African descent (coded 1), and Jews of European American descent and second generation Israelis (coded 0).

Religious orthodoxy: To control religiosity effects, we created a dichotomous variable, which distinguishes between orthodox and very religious people (coded 1), and nonreligious and somewhat religious people (coded 0).

Gender: Respondents were coded as follows: women received the value 1 and men the value 0.

¹²In order to avoid the effects of socially desirable responses the three questions opened with the following preamble: “In all countries one can find differences and even struggles between various social groups. In your opinion, to what degree is there in Israel a struggle between. . . .” (Kelley and Evans, 1995).

RESULTS

Descriptive Overview

Before presenting the findings of the multivariable model, we shall describe some central findings that came out of the descriptive analysis of the endogenous variables of this research (Table 1). First, we examined the degree of support for “the role of the state in reducing the economic inequality” among Jews in Israel. The findings show that most of the respondents support the idea that the government should be responsible for reducing the gaps in income between people with high incomes and people with low ones, and between rich and poor (79.5% and 87.5% respectively). The level of support is high when compared with other societies (Edlund, 1999) and the standard deviation is quite small (1.06 and 0.83, respectively). Nevertheless, there are some differences among individuals in the degree of support for redistribution which we shall try and explain with the help of the multivariable model.

Second, as for the principles of justice, it was found that most of the Jewish public in Israel considers criteria of merit such as the quality of performing one’s work (90%), the degree of effort, and the extent of education and training the job requires (72%) vital or very important in deciding workers’ wages. A very low percentage thought that these criteria are not important in determining workers’ wages (between 1.0% and 10%).

A large proportion of respondents expressed a value preference that favored “need” considerations when rewarding individuals. Approximately two thirds of respondents thought that what is needed to support a family should be taken into consideration when setting workers’ wages. Almost the same proportion (64%) thought the presence of children was important. Yet, a substantial percentage of the respondents perceive these two criteria as having no importance in determining workers’ wages (16% and 20%, respectively). Although a sizeable portion of the population considers both merit and need of importance, clearly, the merit principle drew stronger support and produced more consensus than did the principle of need.

The index of Equality examines the difference in rewards between those who are at the top and those who are at the bottom of the occupational scale, which is viewed as legitimate. The more negative the value the greater the acceptance of inequality. We found that only a small percentage of respondents (2%) thought that the reward of an unskilled laborer and that of an owner of a factory should be equal (or that a laborer should earn more than a factory owner). In fact, we found that 50% of the Jewish public in Israel thinks that the owner of a factory should earn at least six times more than an unskilled laborer. It would seem, therefore, that there is a relatively high legitimization of income gaps between the top and the bottom of the occupational ladder.

Third, as for the “image of society” held by individuals, we found that the respondents tend to hold relatively moderate attitudes regarding class conflict. The most widely held attitude is that the struggle between various groups in society is not particularly severe (between 32% and 40%) and only a few thought that there is a very severe struggle (between 10% and 16%). On the other hand, only about a quarter or less of the respondents thought there is no struggle at all. These findings are not much different from those reported in other societies (Kelley and Evans, 1999).

Results of the Multivariate Analysis

To retain theoretical coherence in the examination of the mediation model as well as continuity with past research, two separate models were tested in the multivariate analysis. The first included income as an indicator of economic position, whereas the second included social class. Because of the fact that for most of the hypotheses the two models showed similar findings, the following discussion will refer to the income model. However, specific references will be made in cases of inconsistency between the two models (see Appendix B for full results of the multivariate model based on the class variable). It should also be noted that the construct of Merit is not included in the multivariate analysis. In several models that we estimated, the Merit principle generally was not affected by the background variables,¹³ and had no influence on attitudes toward redistribution. This did not change when we tried several manipulations of the Merit variable. We believe that this is a result of the high consensus regarding the Merit principle as described earlier.

The Measurement Model

The analysis of the structural equations will be carried out in two stages, estimation of a measurement model followed by a structural model. The estimation was done with the technique of Maximum Likelihood Estimation, using the correlation matrix between all variables as input. The results of the measurement model are presented in Table 2. The figures are the standardized loading coefficients of the theoretical constructs on the indicators. Given the high factor loadings (coefficients range from 0.58 to 0.97), we conclude that the indicators properly reflect each of the theoretical constructs included in the model.

The Structural Model

The model presented in Table 3 was estimated in two stages. We began with a model, which assumed that the relationship between individuals’ characteristics

¹³The degree of support for the merit principle was approximately between 78% and 84% among all the social and economic groups of interest in the current study.

Table 2. Results of the Measurement Model: Standardized Factor Loadings

	Conflict	Need	Equality	Redistribution
Conflict 1	0.75			
Conflict 2	0.58			
Conflict 3	0.82			
Need 1		0.79		
Need 2		0.97		
Equality ^a			1.00	
Redistribution 1				0.78
Redistribution 2				0.68

Note. Indicators for Model fit: $\chi^2 = 20.55$; $df = 15$; P value = 0.15; P close = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.02; RMR = 0.01; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99.

^aThis latent variable has only one empirical indicator.

and support for a policy of redistribution is fully mediated by individuals' value preferences, and their attitude toward conflict in society. On the basis of methodological (the model fit statistics) and theoretical considerations, we relaxed the assumption of no direct effects of "ethnic origin" and class (in the class-based model) on support for redistribution.¹⁴ The quality indexes of the model for both stages of analysis are presented in Table 3.

The order of presenting the results of the structural model will be as follows. We shall start with detailing the influence of the endogenous and exogenous variables on the support for redistribution. We shall then discuss the influence of the exogenous variables on the mediating variables. Finally, we shall compare the exogenous variables, according to their degree of influence on attitudes toward redistribution. The coefficients that appear in Table 3 are partial regression coefficients, and therefore the relations we shall refer to in this part control for other variables in the model.

As can be seen, the results correspond in most cases to the hypotheses discussed in the earlier section and outlined in Fig. 1. In accordance with the conflict assumption and the research done by Zagorski (1999), we found that the stronger the belief in economic conflict, the greater one's support for a policy of redistribution. In addition, we found that the stronger the support for the principles of Equality and Need, the support for a policy of redistribution is stronger. An examination of the standardized coefficients shows that among the endogenous variables included in the model, the principle of need had the strongest influence on the attitudes toward redistribution (0.27), followed by the attitude toward conflict (0.18) and Equality (0.10).

Contrary to the hypothesized model, which assumed that the influence of the exogenous variables on support for redistribution policy is fully mediated through the attitudes toward distribution principles and conflict, we found a direct influence

¹⁴Testing for the direct influence of all other exogenous variables on support for redistribution did not result in statistically significant coefficients.

Table 3. Structural Model for Predicting Attitude Toward Redistribution, Conflict, Need, and Equality: Standardized Coefficients

Variable	Stage 1	Stage 2
<i>Redistribution</i>		
Need	0.28**	0.27**
Equality	0.09*	0.10**
Conflict	0.19**	0.18**
Asia–Africa ^a	—	0.08*
Income	—	—
<i>Need</i>		
Income	–0.16**	–0.16**
Labor force status ^b	0.08*	0.08*
Academic education ^c	–0.14**	–0.14**
Asia–Africa ^a	0.16**	0.16**
Women ^d	–0.01	–0.01
Ultraorthodox ^e	0.06	0.06
<i>Equality</i>		
Income	–0.16**	–0.16**
Labor force status ^b	0.00	0.00
Academic education ^c	0.02	0.02
Asia–Africa ^a	–0.05	–0.05
Women ^d	0.11**	0.11**
Ultraorthodox ^e	0.05	0.05
<i>Conflict</i>		
Income	–0.21**	–0.22**
Labor force status ^b	–0.03	–0.03
Asia–Africa ^a	0.10**	0.10**
Women ^d	–0.01	–0.01
<i>Indicators for model fit</i>		
χ^2	83.27	78.72
df	47.00	46.00
P value	0.001	0.002
P close	1.000	1.000
RMSEA	0.027	0.026
RMR	0.023	0.022
GFI	0.989	0.990
AGFI	0.975	0.976

^aReference category–Europe–America and second generation Israelis.

^bReference category–responders who belong to the labor force.

^cReference category–responders without academic education.

^dReference category–men.

^eReference category–non-Orthodox.

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$.

of ethnic origin on the attitude toward redistribution, as well as indirect effects. More specifically, we found that after controlling for the effects of the endogenous variables, people of Asian African descent expressed stronger support for the policy of redistribution than did people of European American or Israeli descent. Indeed, the direct effect appears to be stronger than the indirect effect (0.08 and 0.06, respectively). We will further elaborate these results toward the end of this section.

An examination of the influence of the individual's characteristics on attitudes regarding the principles of distribution finds only partial support for the research hypotheses. In line with the self-interest hypothesis we found a negative effect of income on support for the principles of Need and Equality, similar to that found in other studies (d'Anjou et al., 1995; Shepelak, 1989). The higher the income of a person, the more he or she tends to disagree with the principles of Equality and Need. It was also found that the education variable had a negative effect on the support for the principle of Need, but lacked any influence on the support for the principle of Equality. This means that people with academic education reported lower support for the principle of Need than did people with no academic education. These findings negate both the enlightenment hypothesis and the self-interest hypothesis. The overall influence of education, however, on attitudes toward justice is most compatible with the self-interest proposition. In a similar vein we found that people who are active in the labor force agreed less with the need principle than did people who are not active, but no difference was found regarding the equality principle. Anticipating the benefits they will enjoy if the need principle is employed, nonactive individuals tend to show stronger support for it.

Examination of the influence of ethnic origin on attitudes also produced a mixed bag. In agreement with the self-interest hypothesis, people of Asian African descent support the Need principle more than people of European American descent. This disagreement regarding the principle of Need can be related to the differences between the origin groups in their resources and family size, which may not be captured by the income variable. Contrary to the self-interest hypothesis, however, there was no evidence of origin having any influence on support for the principle of Equality. This finding shows that the ethnic groups seem to agree on the desirable nature of income distribution of income in society.

Finally, we found a positive effect of the gender variable on the support for the principle of Equality, but not on the principle of Need. According to this finding, women express stronger support for the principle of Equality than do men, but do not express a stronger support for the principle of Need. In addition, we found no differences in the degree of support of redistribution based on religious orthodoxy. It would seem, therefore, that after controlling for income (representing life prospects), the degree of religiosity has no effect on the support for various principles of distribution.

The findings regarding the views of social conflict are pretty much as predicted. We found a negative effect of income on attitudes toward conflict. As their income rises individuals tend to see social relations as more harmonious, whereas people with lower incomes tend to adopt a conflictual view of society. It was also found that respondents of Asian African descent perceive society as having more conflicts than respondents of European American descent. This finding is explained by the subordinate position of this group within the social structure.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found that women did not hold different attitudes toward conflict in society than men did. This finding puts into question the assessment that gender has become a central rift in society (Kelley and Evans, 1999; Svallfors, 1997).

Before summarizing the effects of economic position on attitudes toward redistribution, we shall briefly discuss the differences that were found in the class model as compared with the income model (see Appendix B for full results of the multivariate model using the class variable). First, we found a direct effect of class on attitudes toward redistribution, in addition to the direct effect of ethnicity. As can be seen from Table B1 (Appendix B), people from the working class and retired people tend to express greater support for redistribution policies than people from the service relations class. The fact that such an effect was not found when income was used as an indicator of economic position attests to the importance of class as a social entity.

Second, adopting the class perspective instead of income produced verification (albeit limited) for our hypothesis regarding the effects of class on justice beliefs and on the perception of society. As for the former, it was found that retired people and those who were unemployed or not in the labor force expressed more support for the principle of Need as compared with people in the service relation class. However, class location did not have any significant effect on justice beliefs toward the Equality principle. As for the latter, we found that the unemployed and people not in the labor force expressed a more conflictual perception of society than do people holding service relations positions. It is worth noting that in contrast to our expectation, we did not find any differences in the justice beliefs and perception of conflict between people holding service relations and labor contract positions.

As a way of summarizing the results of the structural model we shall compare the total influence of the exogenous variables included in this study on the attitude toward redistribution. The total influence of each exogenous variable is the sum of the direct and indirect effects of each variable on the attitude toward redistribution. The direct effect expresses the influence of the exogenous variable on the attitude toward redistribution, while controlling for other exogenous and endogenous variables examined in this model. To compute the indirect influence of the exogenous variables, we multiplied the path coefficient of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable by the path coefficient of the endogenous variable on the attitude toward redistribution. For exogenous variables whose influence on redistribution is mediated by more than one latent variable, we added up all the routes of influence. As can be seen from Table 4, ethnic origin and income are the variables with the strongest influence on attitude toward redistribution. As was described above, the relative portion of the direct influence of the origin variable on attitudes toward redistribution is higher than that of the indirect influence.

Table 4. Direct and Indirect Effects (Standardized Coefficients) of the Exogenous Variables on Attitude Toward Redistribution

Variable	Direct influence	Indirect influence	Total influence
Income	0.00	-0.10	-0.10
Labor force participation	0.00	0.02	0.02
Education	0.00	-0.04	-0.04
Ethnic origin	0.08	0.06	0.14
Gender	0.00	0.01	0.01
Religious orthodoxy	0.00	0.00	0.00

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The theoretical model that guided our research was based on the proposition that preferred principles of reward and images of society are largely influenced by one's position in the stratification system. These beliefs, in turn, shape attitudes toward redistribution. From these propositions it derives that the extent to which society is viewed as conflictive and the preferred principles of reward mediate (and hence "explain") the relationship between position in society and support for the welfare state. The analysis we carried out highlighted many aspects of these complex relationships and we will briefly mention the more important ones.

We found that statuses that represent lower positions in the stratification system were generally associated with stronger support for redistribution. There were differences, however, in the social mechanisms that produce these relationships. In the case of statuses that simply indicate one's position in the social hierarchy, such as education and income, the entire effect is mediated through the image of society and preferred principles of distributive justice. In contrast, social characteristics which serve as focal points for collective identification in addition to hierarchical position, such as class and ethnicity, have a strong unmediated effect on support for redistribution policies. Indeed, the latter findings, which reaffirm the results of previous studies (e.g., Kluegel and Miyano, 1995; Roller, 1995), attest to the importance of the class factor in shaping attitudes toward the policy of redistribution and negate the notion of the withering of class cleavages.

Despite a partial overlap between class and ethnicity in Israeli society, ethnic origin had an independent and strong effect on attitudes toward redistribution. The effect was partly mediated by attitudes toward principles of redistribution and regarding conflict, but for the most part ethnicity exerted a direct effect on attitudes toward the welfare state. The Jewish and Zionist ethos of Israel has continuously emphasized the ingathering of exiles and the shared heritage and identity of Jews in Israel regardless of place of origin and cultural differences. Yet, in reality there is a clear and long-standing schism between Jews of European origin and Jews who immigrated to Israel from the Moslem countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Rather than serving as a melting pot, central institutions such as the

educational system and the labor market have preserved and even increased the gaps between the groups, to the detriment of the latter group. It is in this context, we believe, that our findings must be interpreted. The observed patterns appear to reflect the structure of stratification in Israel and the particular role played by the state in mediating ethnic conflict remedying the doings of the market by means of redistribution.

Regarding the effect of gender, we found only a weak effect on attitudes toward redistribution which was mediated by the views of social conflict held by men and women and by the preferred principles of distribution. Although our finding lends some support to the argument that there is a gender rift regarding the welfare state (Svallfors, 1997), it also points to the fact that this rift is rather minor and is clearly less central than are the ethnic and class rifts.

We found broad support for Merit as a principle of reward in the economic sphere and this principle is espoused by all parts of society. Indeed, it appears that the merit principle acquired the position of dominant ideology in Israel, as was found in the USA (Della Fava, 1986; Ritzman and Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). This value consensus is in line with arguments of researchers regarding the strengthening of the liberal-merit ideology at the expense of national-egalitarian ideology in Israeli society (Ram, 2000). As to the extent of acceptable inequality, it appears that the public in Israel favors "bounded inequality." The average ratio of the rewards deemed acceptable for occupations at the bottom and the top of the occupational ladder was 1:6. In one sense these attitudes appear to be complementary. People accept the need for inequality in the economic realm, but are clearly interested in limiting the extent of inequality. Furthermore, individuals distinguish between market and nonmarket processes and expect the state to correct for the failure of the market to provide rewards that meet the needs of the least advantaged.

It should be noted that our findings may also be interpreted as representing attitude inconsistency (acceptance of competing justice principles). This may be a result of an ideological shift in Israeli society from a socialist-egalitarian ideology to a neoliberal one. In this case different attitudes may temporarily coexist in the belief system of individuals. However, our cross-sectional data do not permit us to further investigate this interpretation. Longitudinal data will greatly enhance our understanding of stability and change in the support for the welfare state in Israel.

As we noted at the outset of the paper, societies differ in the nature of their welfare state and the political contexts in which they emerged. Hence, an examination of the theoretical model we proposed with data from additional societies is needed to validate our conceptualization of the relationship between social position and support for the welfare state. Such analysis may also reveal that the structure of relationships differs in various clusters of welfare states.

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APPENDIX A: OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

Table A1. Exogenous Variables: Operational Definitions and Range of Values

Variable	Operational definition	Range of values
Income	What is the income group you belong to according to your net monthly income from work last month (including overtime etc)? Respondents who did not have a job received a predicted income value based on the following regression equation: $\text{Income} = 2.83 + 0.05 \text{ age} + 0.09 \text{ school years} - 2.22 \text{ sex} + 0.04 \text{ ethnicity} + 0.59 \text{ academic} - 2.35 \text{ employment status}$.	1 = 0–2000 2 = 2001–4000 3 = 4001–6000 4 = 6001–8000 5 = 8001–10000 6 = 10,001–15,000 7 = 15001 plus
Labor force participation	Current employment status: do you?	1 = Not belong to the labor force 0 = Belong to the labor force
Education	What is your highest level of education?	1 = Academic degree 0 = Less than academic degree
Ethnic origin	In what country were you born? Israelis born were coded according to the origin of father	1 = Asia–Africa 0 = Europe–America and Israel second generation
Class	Goldthorpe's classification was used—4 categories combining occupation and occupational status (self-employed, employee). Two additional categories were added to this classification, which refer to individuals who did not have a job at the time of the survey	1 = Service relation—I + II ^a 2 = Employer/self-employed Iva + IVb 3 = Routine nonmanual IIIa + IIIb 4 = Labor contract V + VI + VIIa 5 = Retired 6 = Do not work (unemployed, student, housewife, permanently disabled, do not work for other reasons)
Gender	The sex of the interviewee	1 = Women 0 = Men
Religious orthodoxy	Would you describe yourself as...?	1 = very religious and ultrareligious 0 = somewhat religious and nonreligious

^aGoldthorpe class classification: I–higher grade professionals; II–lower grade professionals; IIIa–higher grade routine non manual; IIIb–lower grade routine non manual; IVa–small employer; IVb–self-employed; IVc–farmers; V–technicians; VI–skilled workers; VIIa–unskilled workers; VIIb–agricultural Workers.

Table A2. Endogenous Variables: Operational Definitions

Variable	Operational definition	Range of values
1. Attitude toward redistribution	Do you agree or disagree that it is the responsibility of the government to reduce the gaps in income between people with high income and people with low one.	5 = Definitely agree 1 = Definitely do not agree
	In general, do you think that the government should or should not be responsible for the following: reducing the gap in income between rich and poor?	4 = Should definitely be responsible 1 = Should definitely not be responsible
2. Principle of distributive justice: Need	When deciding the wages of people, in your opinion, to what degree should the following be taken into account:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is needed to support a family • Whether the worker has children to support 	5 = Essential 1 = Not essential at all 5 = Essential 1 = Not essential at all
3. Principle of distributive justice: Merit	When deciding the wages of people, in your opinion, to what degree should the following be taken into account:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of years spent in education or training • How well he/she does the job 	5 = Essential 1 = Not essential at all 5 = Essential 1 = Not essential at all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How hard he/she works at the job 	5 = Essential 1 = Not essential at all
4. Principle of distributive justice: Equality	In your opinion, how much should the people in the following occupations earn: owner of a big factory (the highest proper wages), an unskilled laborer in a factory (the lowest proper wages). See Table 1 for the computation of the index	Between 2.12 (an unskilled laborer should earn more than the owner) and -4.02 (the owner should earn more than the unskilled laborer).
5. Perceived social conflict	In all countries one can find differences and even conflicts between various social groups. In your opinion, to what degree is there in Israel a conflict between	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich and poor. 	4 = Very strong conflict 1 = No conflict at all
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and workers • People at the top of Israeli society and people at the bottom 	4 = Very strong conflict 1 = No conflict at all 4 = Very strong conflict 1 = No conflict at all

APPENDIX B: RESULTS OF THE MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS—CLASS AS AN INDICATOR FOR ECONOMIC POSITION

Table B1. Structural Model for Predicting Attitude Toward Redistribution, Conflict, Need, and Equality: Standardized Coefficients

Variable	Stage 1	Stage 2
<i>Redistribution</i>		
Need	0.28**	0.26**
Equality	0.09*	0.11**
Conflict	0.19**	0.19**
Asia–Africa ^a	—	0.09*
Working class ^b	—	0.07*
Retired ^b	—	0.14**
<i>Need</i>		
<i>Class^b</i>		
Employer/self-employed	0.04	0.04
Routine nonmanual	0.02	0.02
Working class	0.02	0.02
Retired	0.11**	0.10*
Unemployed	0.15**	0.15**
Academic education ^c	–0.15**	–0.15**
Asia–Africa ^a	0.17**	0.16**
Women ^d	0.06	0.06
Ultraorthodox ^e	0.07*	0.07*
<i>Equality</i>		
<i>Class^b</i>		
Employer/self-employed	–0.03	–0.03
Routine nonmanual	0.02	0.02
Working class	–0.04	–0.04
Retired	0.01	0.01
Unemployed	0.06	0.06
Academic education ^c	–0.01	–0.01
Asia–Africa ^a	–0.05	–0.05
Women ^d	0.15**	0.15**
Ultraorthodox ^e	0.05	0.05
<i>Conflict</i>		
<i>Class^b</i>		
Employer/self-employed	–0.01	–0.01
Routine nonmanual	0.06	0.06
Working class	0.07	0.07
Retired	0.00	–0.00
Unemployed	0.12**	0.12**
Asia–Africa ^a	0.10**	0.09**
Women ^d	0.07	0.07
<i>Indicators for model fit</i>		
χ^2	114.47	93.42
df	62.00	59.0
<i>P</i> value	0.000	0.003
<i>P</i> close	1.00	1.00
RMSEA	0.029	0.024
RMR	0.01	0.009
GFI	0.987	0.989
AGFI	0.968	0.972

^aReference category—Europe–America and second generation Israelis.

^bReference category—Service Relations class.

^cReference category—responders without academic education.

^dReference category—Men.

^eReference category—non-Orthodox.

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$.

Table B2. Direct and Indirect Effects (Standardized Coefficients) of the Exogenous Variables on Attitude Toward Redistribution

Variable	Direct influence	Indirect influence	Total influence
<i>Class^a</i>			
Employer/self-employed	0.00	0.00	0.00
Routine nonmanual	0.00	0.00	0.00
Working class	0.07	0.00	0.07
Retired	0.14	0.03	0.17
Unemployed	0.00	0.06	0.06
<i>Education</i>	0.00	-0.04	-0.04
<i>Ethnic origin</i>	0.09	0.06	0.15
<i>Gender</i>	0.00	0.02	0.02
<i>Religious orthodoxy</i>	0.00	0.02	0.02

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