Economic Hardship, Rightwing Authoritarianism & the Demand for Socially Conservative Policies

Catherine E. De Vries [*] Margit Tavits[†] Hector Solaz[‡]

July 13, 2017

* This is a very, very preliminary draft, please do not cite without permission of the authors. All comments and suggestions are very welcome.*

[*]University of Essex
[†]Washington University in St. Louis
[‡]University of Essex

Introduction

Evidence suggests that economic crises and their aftermaths coincide with increased vote shares for far-right parties and the electoral success of rightwing authoritarian and socially conservative platforms (Funke, Schularick & Trebesch 2016). The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States, the outcome of the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom or the electoral success of rightwing populist parties in Europe in the decade after the onset of the global financial crisis seem to lend further empirical support for this idea. Recent scholarship aims to account for the electoral success of rightwing authoritarian and socially conservative platforms by focussing on the strategic activities of elites. When it comes to far right parties for example, Meguid (2008) suggests that these parties have been particularly successful in carving out an ideological niche that is distinct from mainstream parties and recognisable to voters, and others show that these efforts may be particularly successful when economic conditions worsen (Jackman & Volpert 1996; Golder 2003, see Knigge 1998; Arzheimer & Carter 2006 for opposing views). When it comes to rightwing parties more generally, Tavits & Potter (2015) demonstrate that as economic inequality rises and the constituency favorable to redistribution appeals grows, rightwing parties have a strategic incentive to put more emphasis on socially conservative issues rather than economic ones in order to avoid losing votes to leftwing competitors. Finally, when it comes to left- and rightwing parties in government, De Vries & Solaz (2017) show that faced with deteriorating economic conditions incumbents shift attention away from economic to social values dimension to skirt responsibility for the worsening of economic conditions in the eyes of voters (see also Pardos-Prado & Sargazazu 2017).

These studies thus suggest that when faced with deteriorating economic conditions or rising levels of economic inequality, political parties strategically divert attention towards socially conservative platforms in order to boost electoral demand or skirt responsibility for economic conditions. Surely supply-side explanations are important, yet, they ignore the role of voters and are therefore unable to explain who goes along with the social conservative

agenda and why. We address this question and argue that economic hardship leads to a higher demand for socially conservative policies by increasing levels of rightwing authoritarianism (RWA). We provide a first preliminary test of our argument by relying on panel data from the US that allows us to precisely track how income or job loss increases RWA. In turn, we show that these increasing levels of RWA are linked to more support for the socially conservative policies, such as the construction of the border wall, the muslim ban or women's right to choose, as well as electoral support for Trump. In a second step, we bolster the external validity of these findings by presenting survey data from 28 countries in Central East European, Central Asian and Caucasus countries in 2010. This evidence supports our theoretical intuition. Specifically, we show that being economically adversely affected by the 2008/2009 financial crisis coincides with higher levels of RWA, and this is linked to more socially conservative viewpoints, such as opposition to immigration or climate change denial. Taken together, the evidence from the US context and Central East Europe, Central Asia and Caucasus suggests that negative changes in objective economic conditions are linked to the development of RWA and socially conservative policy preferences.

The pertinent question is what explains this link? We suggest a two-fold argument. First, based on the theory of scarcity developed by Mullainathan & Shafir (2013), we argue that economic hardship is mentally taxing. It decreases people's bandwidth, namely the brain's ability to perform the basic functions that underline higher-order behaviour, decision-making and problem-solving (Schillbach et al. 2016), something Kahnemann (2011) refers to as System-2. Rather it triggers automatic thinking, System-1, which is prone to biases, prioritizes the short-term and discounts the future. Values associated with RWA reflect intuitive human biases and require less mental effort, while motivation to control intolerance or reject uniformity is mentally taxing. Following these insights, the reduction in bandwidth experienced by those dealing with economic hardship should in turn make them more susceptible to RWA thinking that prioritises conformity, obedience to authority, and aggression toward others (Hetherington and Suhay 2011), and supports prejudicial, restrictive, and/or

aggressive government policies and actions (Feldman 2003; Feldman & Stenner 1997; Lavine, Lodge & Freitas 2005; Rickert 1998; Stenner 2005). Second, by expanding the literature that links RWA to threat perception, we argue that the effect of economic hardship on RWA is conditioned by the degree to which people view the social world around them as threatening. When people perceive the world as a threatening, dangerous place, economic hardship is *unlikely* to increase their level of RWA as they are susceptible to a more authoritarian mindset in the first place. Yet, for those who view the world as less threatening, economic hardship will increase RWA. By relying on our US panel data evidence, we are able to show that the development of RWA, and in turn more socially conservative policy preferences, is a product of both deteriorations of objective economic conditions as well as subjective perceptions of how threatening the world is. This is important for understanding why public demand for social conservatism varies across individuals and groups, and why it increases in times of crisis.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we introduce the concept of RWA, the link to socially conservative policy preferences, and the debate about its origins. In the first section we also briefly spell out the expectations guiding the empirical analysis. Second, we introduce our data, measurement and methodological approach. Third, we briefly discuss our first empirical findings. Finally, we conclude by highlighting our main contributions and further tests in terms of data collection and analyses.

Rightwing Authoritarianism, Economic Hardship & Socially Conservative Policy Preferences

The concept of rightwing authoritarianism (RWA) was first introduced in a comprehensive fashion by Adorno and colleagues (1950) who argued that the rise of anti-semitism and naziism in Germany was largely the result of the prevalence of an antidemocratic or fascist personality type. While this study popularized the concept of RWA, it was heavily criticized on methodological grounds. Since the 1980s the concept made somewhat of a renaissance,

in particular through the work of Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996) who views RWA as a combination of three covarying traits, namely submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups. Within political science, the work of Feldman (2003), Stenner (2005) and Hetherington and colleagues (Hetherington & Weiler 2009; Hetherington & Suhay 2011) has been most influential. While the approaches of these authors differ in many ways, they generally argue that obedience to authority and strict adherence to conventional norms are at the core of an authoritarian mindset. RWA matters for policy preferences. Research shows that those who are more authoritarian than others are more likely to support prejudicial, restrictive, and/or aggressive government policies and actions (Feldman 2003; Feldman & Stenner 1997; Lavine, Lodge & Freitas 2005; Rickert 1998; Stenner 2005). Numerous studies have linked authoritarianism to ethnocentrism, prejudice, and anti-immigrant attitudes and the use of military force, which are related to social conservatism more generally. A close link seems to exist between RWA and socially conservative policy preferences (for an overview see Pettigrew 2016).

There is much debate about the origins of RWA. Is it a stable personality construct or a response to changing political or economic conditions? The classical approach by Adorno and colleagues (1950) views RWA largely as a fixed value disposition of individuals that is the product of childhood and early-adulthood socialization, most notably the product of strict parenting styles. This viewpoint dovetails with recent evidence from twin studies that has revealed hereditary aspects of RWA (Ludeke & Krueger 2013; McCourt, Bouchard, Lykken, Tellegen, & Keyes, 1999), or correlations between RWA levels in young adults and their parents (Altmeyer 1996). In contrast, other classical approaches emphasize the importance of contemporary economic, social and physical insecurity on authoritarianism (Fromm 1940, Rokeach 1960; Lipset 1959). This viewpoint fits with aggregate level findings that link turbulent times in US history to increases in RWA and socially conservative policies, such as larger police budgets and harsher prison sentences (Sales 1973), greater popularity of presidential candidates perceived to be "strong" leaders (McCann 1997), and increased support

for censorship (Doty, Peterson, and Winter 1991). Moreover, individual-level evidence from the US context suggests that experience with or the fear of terrorism increased self-reported RWA, conservatism and support for President Bush, a leader with a reputation among many citizens for protecting security (Bonanno and Jost 2006; Landau et al. 2004; Willer 2004, Hetherington and Suhay 2011). Similarly, exposure to rising levels of Chinese imports is shown to increase self-reported RWA among British voters (Ballard-Rosa et al. 2017).

We maintain that there is no need for these two perspectives to be mutually exclusive (Pettigrew 2016). Susceptibility to RWA could form in childhood and adolescence or rise and fall as a result of life experiences. Clearly, some level of demand for social conservatism always exists among voters, which suggests that RWA can be a consistently salient predisposition for some individuals. But how and why does this demand fluctuate? We explore if and how economic hardship, in the form of income or job loss, is linked to RWA, and in turn to increased public demand for more socially conservative policies. Specifically, we make a two-fold argument. We argue that economic hardship reduces people's mental bandwidth and increases RWA. Yet, the degree to which economic hardship matters for RWA is conditioned by people's susceptibility to an authoritarian mindset in the first place. Let us elaborate our two main theoretical conjectures in turn.

First, based on the theory of scarcity developed by Mullainathan & Shafir (2013), we argue that economic hardship is mentally taxing. Scarcity of resources creates a cognitive overload, which arises because it depletes attentional resources that now cannot be used elsewhere (Mullainathan & Shafir 2013). In short, scarcity of resources decreases people's bandwidth, namely the brain's ability to perform the basic functions that underline higher-order behaviour, decision-making and problem-solving (Schillbach et al. 2016), something Kahnemann (2011) refers to as System-2. Rather, it triggers automatic thinking (System-1) which is prone to biases, prioritizes the short-term and discounts the future. Values associated with RWA reflect intuitive human biases and require less mental effort, while motivation to control intolerance or reject uniformity is mentally taxing. The reduction

in bandwidth experienced by those who dealing with economic hardship will make them more susceptible to RWA thinking that prioritises conformity, obedience to authority, and aggression toward outgroups. The importance of scarcity may account for the classical finding documented by Lipset (1959) that authoritarianism was so prevalent among the working class who due to their low socioeconomic status and lack of economic security are more likely to be exposed to scarcity.

Second, we maintain that objective economic hardship, and the experience of scarcity, will lead to higher levels of RWA among those who are not already pre-disposed towards an authoritarian mindset. People's social world views, or subjective perceptions of social threat, will matter greatly. People who perceive the world around them as threatening and dangerous are more likely to display RWA attitudes. These subjective perceptions of how the world works, is it dangerous or not, might reflect more stable dispositional orientations that develop in response to certain social and family situations in childhood (for an overview see Jost et al. 2003). If this view is indeed accurate, it would follow that economic hardship is unlikely to increase people's level of RWA among those who perceive the world around them as a dangerous place. Due to chronic perceptions of threat, they should be susceptible to a more authoritarian mindset to begin with (Hetherington and Suhay 2011). RWA values of order, conformity, respect of authority, etc. are comforting for someone who is chronically threatened and function as a coping mechanism. Indeed, prior research shows that right-wing authoritarians experience unusually high levels of stress and anxiety (Jost et al. 2003; Lipset 1959). For the chronically threatened people, economic downturn may simply confirm their anxiety, but the fact that they already believe that the world is a dangerous place leaves little room for life events to increase the level of threat.

On the other hand, for those who view the world as less threatening, we would expect economic hardship to increase RWA based on the reduced bandwidth mechanism developed in the scarcity theory. The interaction between deteriorations of objective economic conditions as well as subjective perceptions of how threatening the world is are crucial for the

development of RWA, and in turn more socially conservative policy preferences.

Data, Operationalizations & Measurement

In order to examine the relationship between economic hardship, RWA and demand for socially conservative policies, we rely two different sources of data: (1) panel data from the US context, and (2) cross-sectional data from 28 countries in Central-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. With regard to the US case, we use several waves of The American Panel Surveys (TAPS) conducted in 2015 and 2016. TAPS is a monthly online survey of a national probability sample of about 2,000 adults in the US conducted for the Weidenbaum Center of the University of Washington at St Louis. The panel collects socio-demographic information of respondents as well as a variety of economic and political attitudes and behaviors. The panel was recruited in late 2011, using an address-based sampling frame. That is, from a random selection of residential addresses, stratified using ancillary data on age and ethnic group, a panel of 2,000 was recruited. Replenishment efforts were completed in mid-2012 and early 2013. TAPS surveys are administered online; selected panelists who do not have a computer or on-line service are provided access by TAPS. The panel results in a minimum of 1,550 completed interviews per month.

In order to operationalize economic hardship, we rely on two measures: *changes in income* and *loss of employment*. In the 2015 and 2016 waves, respondents were asked to specify their household income over the last year and if they were currently working for pay. When it comes to household income, respondents could choose between sixteen answer categories in US dollars ranging from "below 10,000" to "300,000 or more" [1] We create a variable *changes in income* by subtracting people's self-reported household income in 2015 from that in 2016. This variable ranges from -14 to +14. Due to limited numbers of observations at the tails,

[1]The full list of categories includes (1) below 10,000; (2) from 10,000 to 19,999; (3) from 20,000 to 29,999; (4) from 30,000 to 39,999; (5) from 40,000 to 49,999; (6) from 50,000 to 59,999; (7) from 60,000 to 69,999; (8) from 70,000 to 79,999; (9) from 80,000 to 89,999; (10) from 90,000 to 99,999; (11) from 100,000 to 124,999; (12) from 125,000 to 149,999; (13) from 150,000 to 199,999; (14) from 200,000 to 249,999; (15) from 250,000 to 299,999; (16) 300,000 or more.

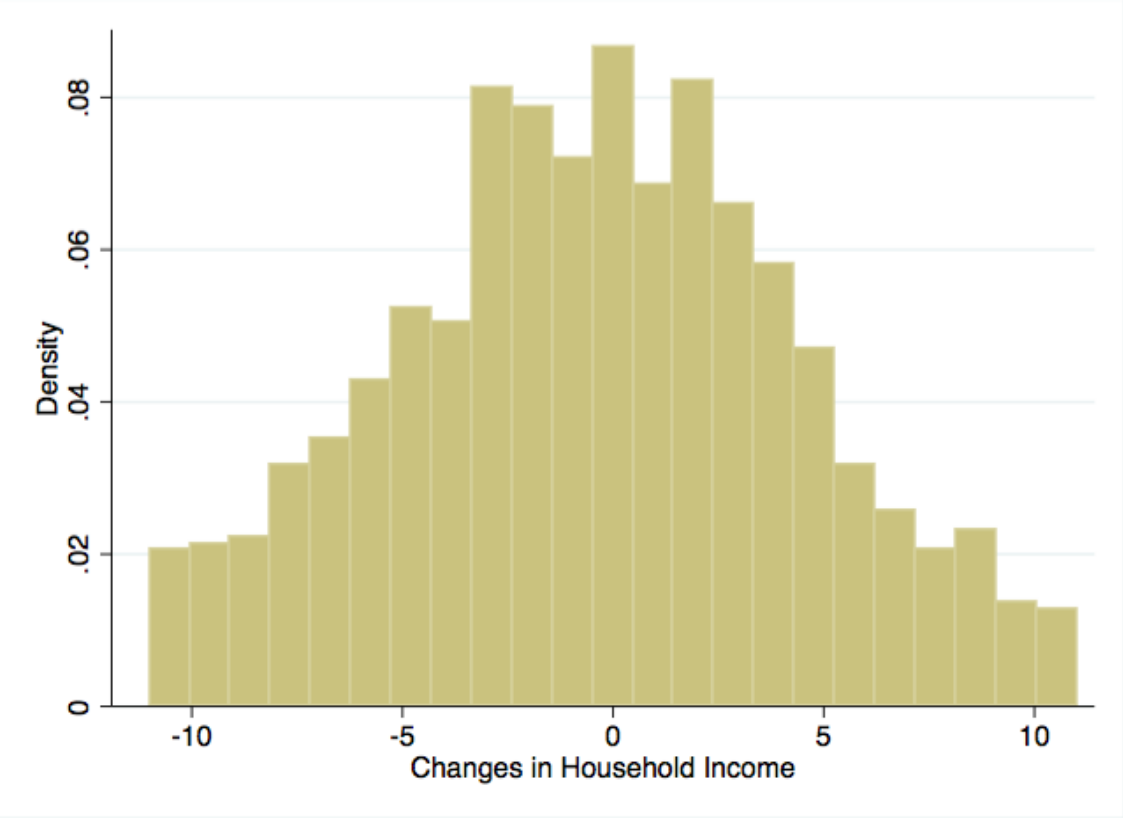

Figure 1: Changes in Household Income, The American Panel Survey 2015-2016

we recoded the variable to range from -11 to +11. Figure 1 displays the distribution of the variable.

We capture the effect of changes of employment by comparing respondents' self-reported employment status in 2015 and their self-reported status in 2016. Respondents were asked if they were currently working for pay. We create three variables: (1) *loss of employment* that takes on a value of "1" when the respondent is not working for pay in 2016, but was in 2015 and "0" otherwise; (2) *not employed* that takes on a value of "1" if the respondent was not working for pay in 2016 and 2015, and "0" otherwise; and (3) *employment* that takes on a value of "1" when the respondent was working for pay in 2016 and 2015, and "0" otherwise. The reference category are those respondents who gained a job or are still in school. Overall, 14 per cent of respondents experienced a loss in employment.

Measuring RWA is perhaps more tricky, and has inspired a large literature in psychology

and political science. Asking people about the degree to which they adhere to authoritarian values is a difficult exercise as people may not wish to admit this or are not aware of it. Authoritarianism is most often measured by asking respondents about what is more important for children: respect for elders or independence; obedience or self-reliance; to be well-behaved or being creative; and to have good manners or to be curious (Feldman & Stenner 1997). This measure captures authoritarians' emphasis on order and control, conformity, and obedience. Moreover, these broadly defined child-rearing values are fairly well divorced from the outcomes political scientists are interested in, such as political ideology and attitudes. Child-rearing values are unlikely to be conflated with social conservatism and is easily distinguished from the dependent variables. We follow the classical measurement strategy set out by Feldman and Stenmer (1997) who tap into authoritarian values by relying on a battery of child rearing questions. This measurement has now become common practice. Specifically, we rely on four items included in the May round of TAPS data in 2016

- Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: independence or respect for elders?
- Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: obedience or self-reliance?
- Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: to be considerate or to be well-behaved?
- Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: curiosity or good manners?

We combine the answers to the following four questions to create an additive scale where "4" signifies "most authoritarian" responses as people always responded that children should be well-behaved, obedient and respectful of elders, and "0" signifies "least authoritarian" responses as people always responded that children should be independent, responsible and curious.

In order to capture the interaction between economic hardship and people's perceived level of social threat, we rely on people's responses when asked if society works best if (a) people realize that the world is dangerous, or if (b) people assume all those in far away places are kind. We create a variable coded as "1" when people respond that the others should realize that the world in dangerous, and "0" when they do not.

We tap into socially conservative policy preferences and behaviour by using a range of items included in the 2016 waves of the TAPS survey. We rely on the following questions:

- Do you agree or disagree that the United States should build a wall or fence across the entire border with Mexico? (May wave)
- Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to ban Muslims from entering the United States, at least temporarily? (July wave)
- Do you think the world's temperature has been going up? (October wave)
- Do you generally support or oppose using U.S. ground troops to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria? (June wave)
- Do you generally support or oppose building the Keystone XL oil pipeline? (June wave)
- Who did you vote for in the presidential election? (November wave)

We recode these items as binary variables where "1" indicates socially conservative policy preferences and behaviours (i.e., pro border wall, Muslim ban, ground troops, pipeline and Trump as well as disagreeing that the world's temperature has been rising), and "0" not.

We capture the effect of experiencing a change in income or loss of employment on RWA by relying on a ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with standard errors clustered at the state level. We use a similar model specification to estimate the the interaction between experiencing a change in income or loss of employment and social threat perception. as well as the relationship between RWA and socially conservative policy preferences and

behaviours. In all three sets of analyses, we control for a host of demographic characteristics of respondents, such as age, gender, marital status, religiosity, race, household income, level of education and home ownership.

In a second step, we turn to cross-sectional survey data from Central-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in order to test the external validity of the evidence from the US case. Specifically, we rely on the 2010 Life in Transition (LiT) survey that includes data for 28 countries: Albania (ALB), Armenia (ARM), Azerbaijan (AZR), Belarus (BLR), Bosnia-Herzegovina (BSN), Bulgaria (BUL), Croatia (CRT), the Czech Republic (CZE), Estonia (EST), Georgia (GEO), Hungary (HUG), Kazakhstan (KAZ), Kosovo (RKS), Kyrgyzstan (KZS), Latvia (LTV), Lithuania (LTH), Moldova (MLD), Montenegro (MNT), FYR Macedonia (MCD), Poland (POL), Romania (ROM), Russia (RU), Serbia (SRB), Slovakia (SLK), Slovenia (SLE), Tajikistan (TJK), Ukraine (UKR) and Uzbekistan (UZB). This set of countries in 2010 is an extremely useful setting to explore the effects of economic hardship as the Great Recession hit the post-Soviet transition region more than Western Europe or any of the other emerging markets, as the growth rate dropped on average over 10 per cent between 2007 and 2009.

The LiT survey asks respondents if they were financially adversely affected during the 2008/2009 crisis ('over the last two years'), and what the source of this change was. Respondents could choose between a set of different sources: (a) 'head of household lost job', (b) 'other household member lost job', (c) 'family business closed', (d) 'working hours reduced', (e) 'wages delayed/suspended', (f) 'wages reduced', (g) 'reduced flow of remittances', (h) 'family member returned home from aboard' or (i) 'other.' We created a variable *crisis effect* which takes a value of "1" when people were adversely affected by the crisis and "0" if they were not. Forty-three per cent of respondents were adversely affected by the 2008/2009 crisis.

Due to the fact that being affected by the crisis might be related to precarious economic and job status in the first place, we also check the robustness of our main results by using

a matching technique in order to isolate the effect of being adversely affected by the crisis by matching respondents on a whole set of demographic variables. We employ the nearest-neighbour (NN) matching as an optimization method for finding the closest (or most similar) individuals. Closeness is expressed in terms of a dissimilarity function: the less similar the individuals, the larger the function values (Rubin 1973). It selects for each treated individual the control individual with the smallest distance from the treated individual. NN matching allows us to estimate the effect of being adversely affected by the crisis by accounting for the covariates that predict the likelihood of being affected in the first place (like employment status, level of education, age, etc.). Finally, people who receive or have remittances might differ from the general population based on their attitudes towards the incumbent and migration (see for example Bravo 2012). Therefore, we re-ran our models by excluding them from economic loss variable. The results remain virtually unchanged compared to those reported in the main text (these results are reported in the Supplementary Appendix).

RWA is measured using an item that asks respondents if they think on a scale from 1 to 10 if in their country today, people should show more respect for authorities, where "10" indicates a desire for high obedience and "1" more questioning. Finally, we tap into socially conservative viewpoints through two items included in the survey. The first asks respondents if they think that immigrants enrich their country ranging from "5" strongly disagree to "1" strongly agree while the second asks them if they think that the seriousness of climate change is being exaggerated ranging from "5" strongly agree to "1" strongly disagree. We capture the effect of being affected by the crisis on RWA as well as of RWA on social conservatism by relying on a ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with standard errors clustered at the household level and country fixed effects. We also added a host of control variables, such as age, gender, home ownership, marital status, education, religious affiliation, respondents' employment status, and a household wealth index.

Empirical Analysis

We begin our analysis by exploring how changes in income and employment affect people's level of RWA using the TAPS data from 2015 and 2016. The second column of Table 1 reports the results of an analysis whereby we predict RWA based on the changes in income people experienced between 2015 and 2016 whilst controlling for a host of demographic characteristics. The coefficient for changes in income is negative and statistically significant indicating that as people experience losses in income their level of RWA is higher compared to those who experience gains. Figure 2 shows the predicted changes in RWA across the different changes in income that people experienced. It suggests that people's level of RWA is higher when they lose income while it is lower when they gain income. The third column in Table 1 shows the results for changes in employment. Interestingly, the results show that only those who experience a loss in income are significantly different from the reference category, i.e. those who gained employment or are still in school. Respondents who lost paid employment between 2015 and 2016 display statistically significantly higher levels of RWA. When we perform statistical tests to examine if the coefficients for respondents who lost employment between 2015 and 2016 is different from those for respondents who were not in employment in both years or who were in paid employment in both years, we find that the difference in coefficients is statistically significant in both cases, i.e. 0.252 at p=0.07 level compared to the not employed, and 0.187 at p=0.06 level compared to the employed. These results suggests that similar to the case of declines in income, people who experience a loss of employment display higher levels of RWA compared to those who do not.

In a next step, we explore how higher levels of RWA are associated with people's preferences for social conservative policies. Figure 3 plots the coefficients stemming from fully specified regression models that aim to explain people's support for a Muslim ban, a border wall with Mexico, military action against ISIS, the building of the XL Keystone pipeline, Trump in the 2016 election as well as their belief that climate change is a hoax. The plot shows the effect of one-unit increase in RWA on these preferences. RWA consistently is

Table 1: Rightwing Authoritarianism, Changes in Income & Loss of Employment, The American Panel Survey 2015-2016

Predictors	**Changes in Income**	**Loss of Employment**
Changes in Income	-.025***	
	(.008)	
Loss of Employment		.143***
		(.070)
Not Employed		-.110
		(.136)
Employed		-.044
		(.096)
Social Threat	.819***	.776***
	(.121)	(.104)
Gender	.041	.090
	(.083)	(.083)
Age	.001	-.000
	(.003)	.002
Home Ownership	-.304***	-.307***
	(.127)	(.104)
Religiosity	-.012	.009
	(.029)	(.024)
Married	.098	.137*
	(.101)	(.080)
Education	-.002	-.015
	(.032)	(.023)
Income	.070***	.004
	(.027)	(.022)
Black	-.040	.014
	(.180)	(.153)
Hispanic	.061	-.042
	(.122)	(.115)
Other	.138	.083
	(.131)	(.125)
Constant	1.213***	1.485***
	(.273)	(.208)
R-sq	.08	.07
Obs.	915	1367

Notes: Table entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors clustered at the state level in parentheses. *** significant at $p \leq 0.01$; ** significant at $p \leq 0.05$; * significant at $p \leq 0.10$ (two-tailed).

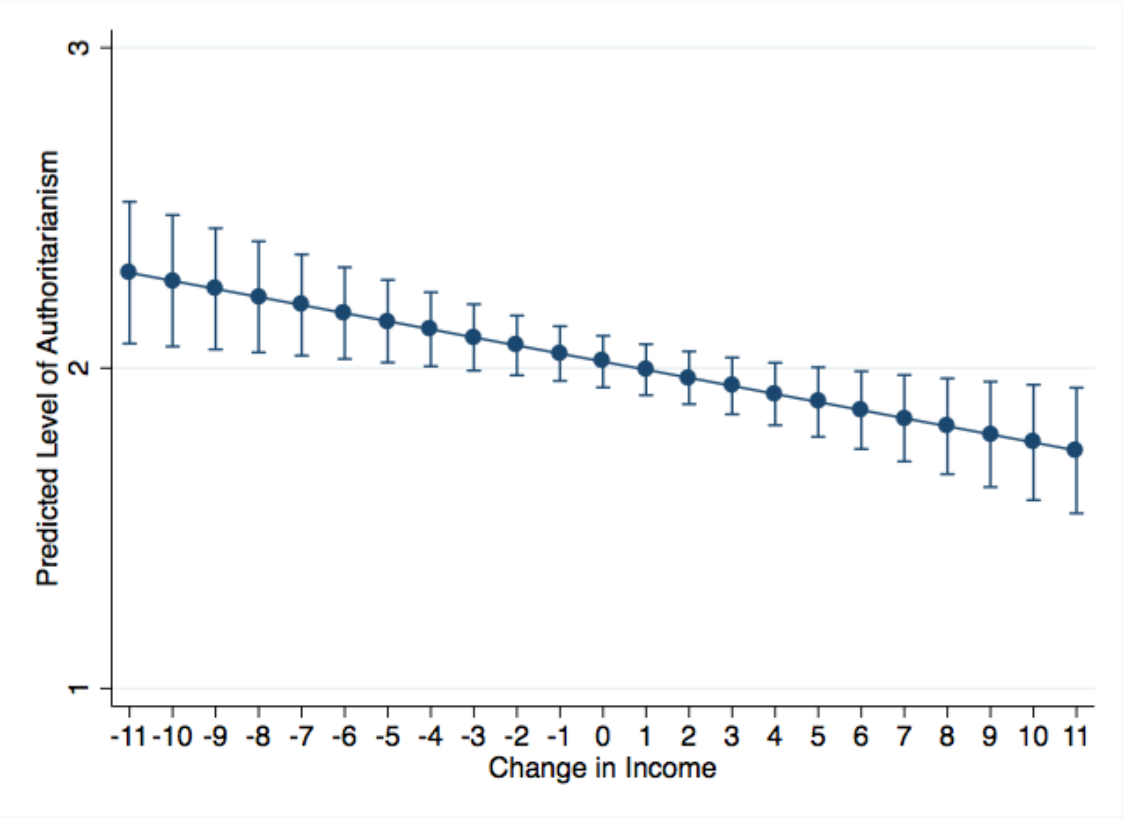

Figure 2: Rightwing Authoritarianism & Changes in Income, The American Panel Survey 2015-2016

associated with higher levels of social conservatism and Trump support.

In a next step, we bolster the external validity of our findings by examining how being adversely affected by the 2008-2009 financial crisis and global recession is associated with higher levels of RWA in 28 countries in the post-Soviet region. Performing this external validity check, even though it is not based on panel data, is important as the previous findings that economic hardship translates into higher levels of RWA and more support for socially conservative policies could be unique to the US case where both a more socially conservative and authoritarian outlook is generally associated with being on the right of the political spectrum (see for example Hetherington & Weiler 2009). Table 3 provides both the results from an OLS regression model including country fixed effects and standard errors clustered at the household level as well as those from a NN-matching analysis. Both sets of results suggest that being adversely affected by the 2008-2009 crisis coincides with higher

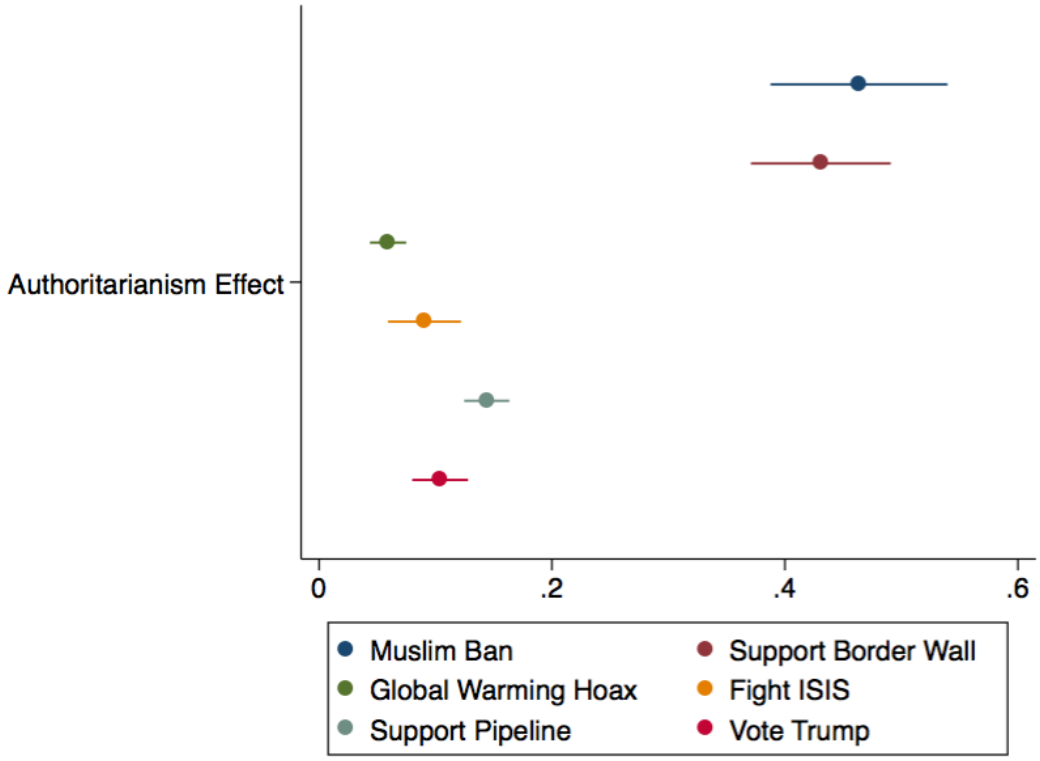

Figure 3: Rightwing Authoritarianism & Social Conservative Policy Preferences, The American Panel Survey 2016

levels of RWA. Moreover, Figure 4 suggest that like in the US case presented earlier such increases in RWA coincide with more socially conservative preferences.

In a last step, we provide some first insights into the mechanism linking economic hardship to RWA based on the TAPS data from the US. Recall, that we expect that economic hardship is mentally taxing, and decreases people's bandwidth. This in turn should make those who experience it more susceptible to RWA thinking. In addition, we expect the effect of economic hardship on RWA to be conditional on people's perceived level of social threat. When people perceive that the social world is a threatening and dangerous place, economic hardship is unlikely to increase their level of RWA as they are already susceptible to a more authoritarian mindset. Yet, for those who view the world as less threatening, economic hardship will increase RWA. We aim to explore this latter expectation by examining the interaction between economic hardship and perceived levels of social threat. Figure 5

Table 2: Rightwing Authoritarianism & Economic Hardship, Life in Transition Survey 2010

Predictors	**OLS Results**	**Matching Results**
Crisis Effect	.152***	.123***
	(.035)	(.039)
Gender	-.022	
	(.033)	
Age	-.123***	
	(.011)	
Home Ownership	-.114**	
	(.052)	
Employment	-.070**	
	(.036)	
Married	-.052	
	(.035)	
Education	-.049***	
	(.013)	
Wealth	.024**	
	(.023)	
Orthodox	-.098	
	(.076)	
Catholic	-.150**	
	(.073)	
Protestant	-.087	
	(.102)	
Muslim	.084	
	(.092)	
Other Religion	.042	
	(.141)	
Constant	4.625***	
	(.150)	
R-sq	.05	
Obs.	29657	29657

Notes: Table entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors clustered at the household level in parentheses. The analysis also includes country dummies which are suppressed in this table. *** significant at $p \leq 0.01$; ** significant at $p \leq 0.05$; * significant at $p \leq 0.10$ (two-tailed).

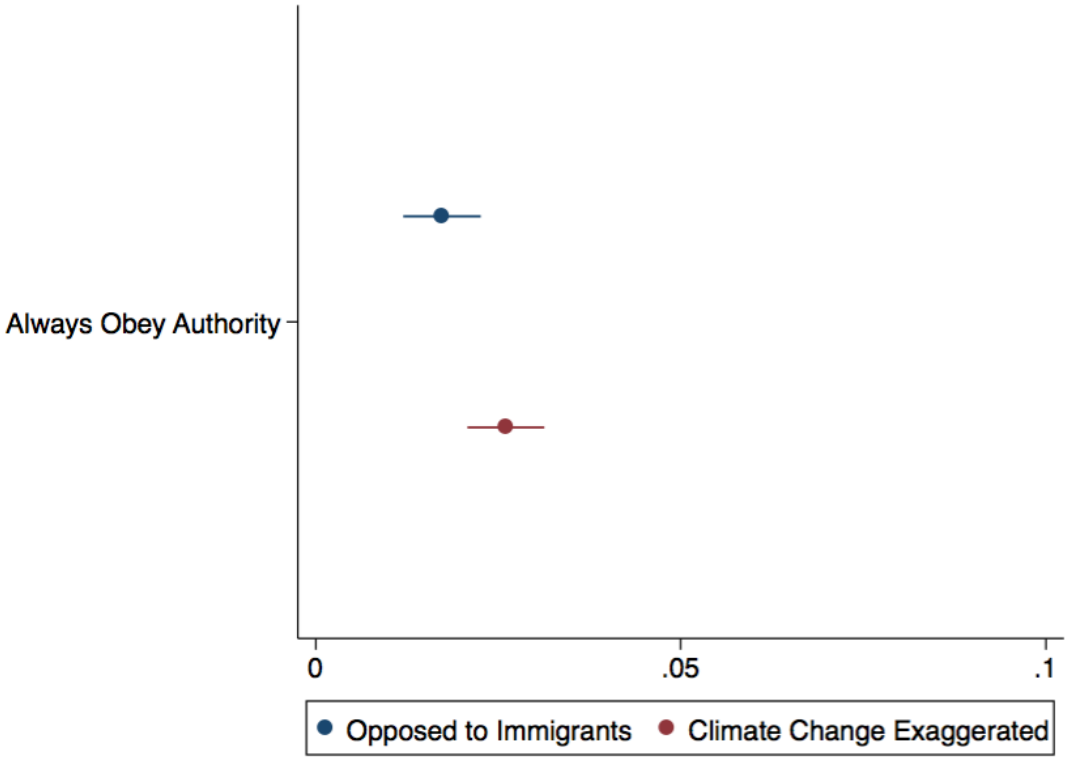

Figure 4: Rightwing Authoritarianism & Social Conservative Preferences, The Life in Transition Survey 2010

displays the interaction between changes in income and people's perception of social threat. Specifically, it suggests that while for those who are already susceptible to RWA because they think the social world is dangerous, experiencing economic hardship matters very little for RWA. Yet, for those respondents who do feel that the social world is threatening being exposed to economic hardship especially considerable loss in income raises their RWA levels. We find the same effects for the interaction between loss of employment and social threat perception. While for those who think the world is a dangerous place, loss of employment does not make significantly more authoritarian, those who think the world is not threatening are very much affected by their loss of paid work. Specifically, they become .39-points (p-value 0.01) more authoritarian on the five-point RWA scale.

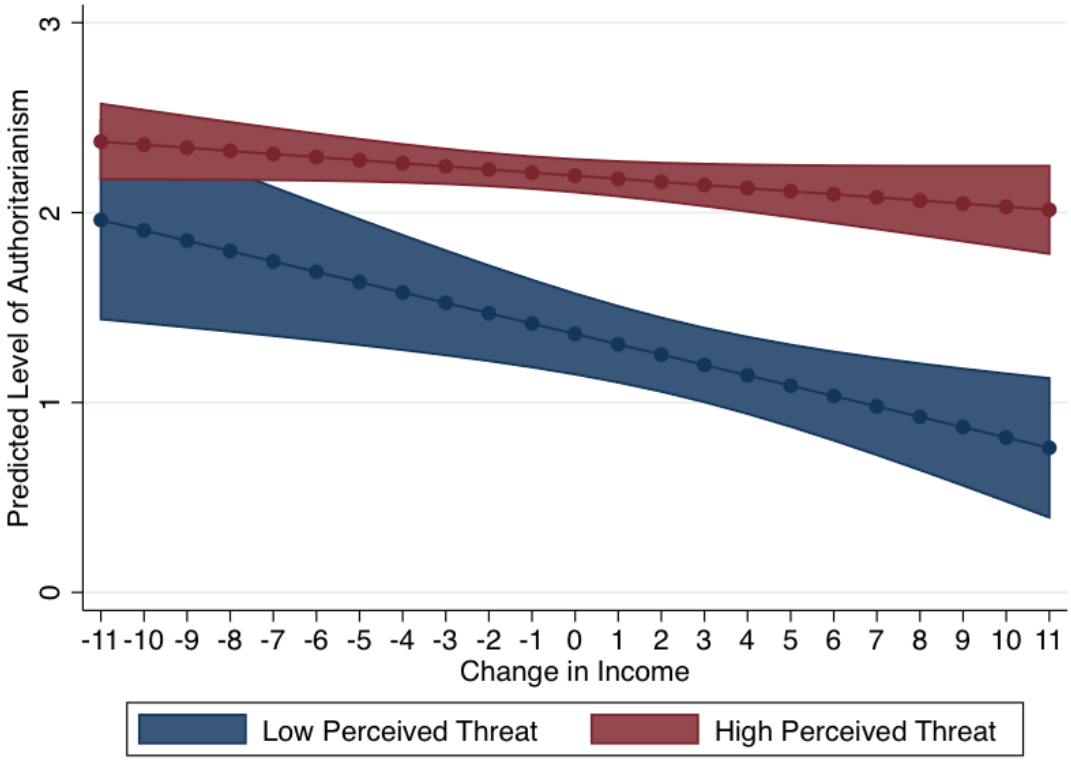

Figure 5: Income Loss, Rightwing Authoritarianism & Social Threat, The American Panel Survey 2015-2016

Discussion

This paper provides novel evidence concerning the relationship between economic hardship, people's levels of RWA and public demand for socially conservative policies. In line with recent work studying the effect of economic threat on individuals' authoritarian values (Ballard-Rosa et al. 2017), we aim to provide insights into the question whether and how economic hardship increases RWA. While many studies to date have linked expansion in social conservative policy and party platform to the activities of strategic politicians that aim to shrink responsibility for bad economic outcomes, this study suggests that economic hardship itself may shift the demand for social conservatism. We provide some first evidence for this intuition and suggest some ways in which economic hardship, RWA and social conservatism might be linked. Understanding the origins of RWA is important because they have the potential to fundamentally alter the political cleavages in advanced industrial democracies

(Inglehart and Norris 2016, Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Yet, many studies to date argue the cultural aspect of authoritarian values and how they are shaped by processes of socialization or leaning. Not only do we here expand the focus to include people's experiences with economic hardship, we also suggest that these experiences interact with more long-term factors, such as people's worldviews. Our study suggests that economic changes may be one important source of the growth in authoritarian values, but the degree to which they can is dependent on people's susceptibility to an authoritarian worldview to begin with. The evidence presented seems to support our idea that RWA, and in turn more socially conservative policy preferences, is a product of both deteriorations of objective economic conditions as well as subjective perceptions of how threatening the world is.

Note that this evidence is very preliminary, and does not allow us to test our ideas about how reduced bandwidth affects the development of RWA. We hope to complement the preliminary evidence presented here with other panel surveys, and we would really appreciate it if you could help us think about more data sources, especially panels, that we could use to test our intuition that economic hardship increases RWA which in turn is linked to an increased demand for socially conservative policies in other contexts. In future work, we will conduct laboratory experimental methods to test the robustness of our findings and distill the causal mechanisms underlying them.

References

Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford, R. N. 1950. The authoritarian personality. New York: Harper & Row.

Altemeyer B. 1981. Right-Wing Authoritarianism.Winnipeg: University Manitoba Press.

Altemeyer B. 1996. The Authoritarian Specter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Arzheimer, Kai & Elisabeth Carter. 2006. Political opportunity structures and right-wing extremist party success. European Journal of Political Research 45(3):419-443.

Ballard-Rosa, Cameron, Malik Mashail, Kenneth Scheve & Stephanie Rickard. 2017. The Economic Origins of Authoritarian Values: Evidence from Local Trade Shocks in the United Kingdom. Working Paper.

Bonanno, G. A., & Jost, J. T. 2006. Conservative shift among high-exposure survivors of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 28(4): 311-323.

De Vries, Catherine E. & Hector Solaz. 2017. Sweeping It Under The Rug: How Government Parties Deal With Deteriorating Economic Conditions. Working Paper.

Doty, R. M., B. E. Peterson & D. G. Winter. 1991. Threat and Authoritarianism in the United States, 1978-1987. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 61(4):629-40.

Feldman, Stanley. 2003. Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism. Political Psychology 24(1): 41?74.

Feldman, S., & Stenner, K. 1997. Perceived threat and authoritarianism. Political Psychology, 18, 741-770.

Fromm, Erich. 1994, Escape from Freedom. Owl Book ed edition. New York: Holt Paperbacks.

Funke, Manuel, Moritz Schularick & Christoph Trebesch. 2016. Going to Extremes: Politics After Financial Crises,1870-2014. European Economic Review 88:227-260.

Golder, Matt. 2003. Explaining variation in the electoral success of extreme right parties in western Europe. Comparative Political Studies 36(4):432-466.

Hetherington, Marc & Elizabeth Suhay. 2011. Authoritarianism, Threat, and Americans Support for the War on Terror. American Journal of Political Science 55, no. 3: 54-66.

Hetherington, M. J., & Weiler, J. D. (2009). Authoritarianism and polarization in American politics. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R. and Norris, P. 2016. Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash. Faculty Research Working Paper Series (RWP16-026).

Jackman, Robert & Karin Volpert. 1996. Conditions favouring parties of the extreme right in western Europe. British Journal of Political Science 26(4):501-521.

Jost, John T., Jack Glaser, Arie W. Kruglanski & Frank J. Sulloway. 2003. Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition." Psychological Bulletin 129(3).

Kahneman, D. 2011. Thinking, fast and slow. Macmillan.

Knigge, Pia. 1998. The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe. European Journal of Political Research 34:249-279.

Landau, Mark J., Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, Florette Cohen, Tom Pyszczynski, Jamie Arndt, Claude H. Miller, Daniel M. Ogilvie, and Alison Cook. 2004. Deliver Us from Evil: The Effects of Mortality Salience and Reminders of 9/11 on Support for President George W. Bush. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 30: 1136?50.

Lavine,Howard, Milton Lodge, and Kate Freitas. 2005. Threat, Authoritarianism, and Selective Exposure to Information. Political Psychology 26(2): 219?44.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism. American Sociological Review 24: 482?501.

Ludeke S.G., Krueger RF. 2013. Authoritarianism as a personality trait: evidence from a longitudinal behavior genetic study. Personal. Individ. Differ. 55:480?84

McCourt, K., Bouchard, T. J., Jr., Lykken, D. T., Tellegen, A., & Keyes, M. 1999. Authoritarianism revisited: Genetic and environmental influences examined in twins reared apart and together. Personality and Individual Differences, 27, 985-1014.

Meguid, B. 2008. Party Competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Mullainathan, Sendhil & and Eldar Shafir. 2013. Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much, New York: Henry Holt.

Pettigrew, T. F. (2016). In pursuit of three theories: Authoritarianism, relative deprivation, and intergroup contact. Annual Review of Psychology, 67, 1-21.

Pardos-Prado, S., & Sagarzazu, I. (2017). Economic Stress and Nationalism: A Longitudinal Test of Diversionary Theory. Working Paper.

Rickert, Edward J. 1998. Authoritarianism and Economic Threat: Implications for Political Behavior. Political Psychology 19 (Dec.): 707?20.

Rokeach, Milton. 2015. The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations Into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems. Martino Fine Books.

Sales, S. M. 1973. Threat as a Factor in Authoritarianism: An Analysis of Archival Data. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 28(1): 44-57.

Schillbach, Frank, Heather Schofield, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2016. The Psychological Lives of the Poor. American Economic Review Papers & Proceedings, 106 (5): 435?440.

Stenner, K. 2005. The authoritarian dynamic. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tavits, M., & Potter, J. D. (2015). The effect of inequality and social identity on party strategies. American Journal of Political Science, 59(3): 744-758.

Willer, Robb. 2004. The Effects of Government-Issued Terror Warnings on Presidential Approval Ratings. Current Research in Social Psychology 10(1): 1?12.

Supplementary Appendix

Table 3: Replicating Results from Table 2 Excluding Remittances, Life in Transition Survey 2010

Predictors	**OLS Results**	**Matching Results**
Crisis Effect	.152***	.124***
	(.035)	(.039)
Gender	-.022	
	(.033)	
Age	-.123***	
	(.011)	
Home Ownership	-.114**	
	(.052)	
Employment	-.070**	
	(.036)	
Married	-.052	
	(.035)	
Education	-.049***	
	(.013)	
Wealth	.024**	
	(.023)	
Orthodox	-.098	
	(.076)	
Catholic	-.150**	
	(.073)	
Protestant	-.087	
	(.102)	
Muslim	.084	
	(.092)	
Other Religion	.042	
	(.141)	
Constant	4.625***	
	(.150)	
R-sq	.05	
Obs.	29657	29657

Notes: Table entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors clustered at the household level in parentheses. The analysis also includes country dummies which are suppressed in this table. *** significant at $p \leq 0.01$; ** significant at $p \leq 0.05$; * significant at $p \leq 0.10$ (two-tailed).