

Reciprocity and public support for the redistributive role of the State

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Can motivations characteristic of *homo reciprocans* account for the support for the redistributive role of the State (SRRS)?

2008 European Social Survey

2 OLS regression models

Variables associated with “*homo reciprocans*” are better predictors of SRRS than those associated with “self-interest”, including the traditional socioeconomic variables

Homo reciprocans vs Homo economicus

- More accurate picture of human motivation

Homo reciprocans

- Strong reciprocity
- Basic needs generosity

Basic traits of *homo reciprocans*, as they have been outlined in experimental economics, are:

- She favours the distribution of goods geared at meeting basic needs.
- She is generous but her generosity is conditional.
- She favours recipients of help who are considered to be “deserving”. What makes people deserving is: (a) previous contributions, especially effort and social valued work, (b) to be responsible of their own needy situation, and (c) their capacity to arouse a well-grounded expectancy on their kindness in future interactions.
- She cooperates with those who also cooperate. She reacts against those who violate cooperative norms.
- She is committed to a balance between burdens and rewards in social exchange, which leads her to meritocratism, but usually takes equal division as a reference point too.

SRRS two explanations:

- Self-interest
 - Virtue: clear mechanism, final explanation
 - Problem: significant predictor but small weight
- Complex of variables: values and principles, ideology and political preferences, beliefs and perceptions
 - Virtue: more predictive power
 - Problem: black-box

Homo reciprocans

- Interpretative frame that highlights the coherence of the ideological variables
- Deeply rooted in our human nature, final explanation

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

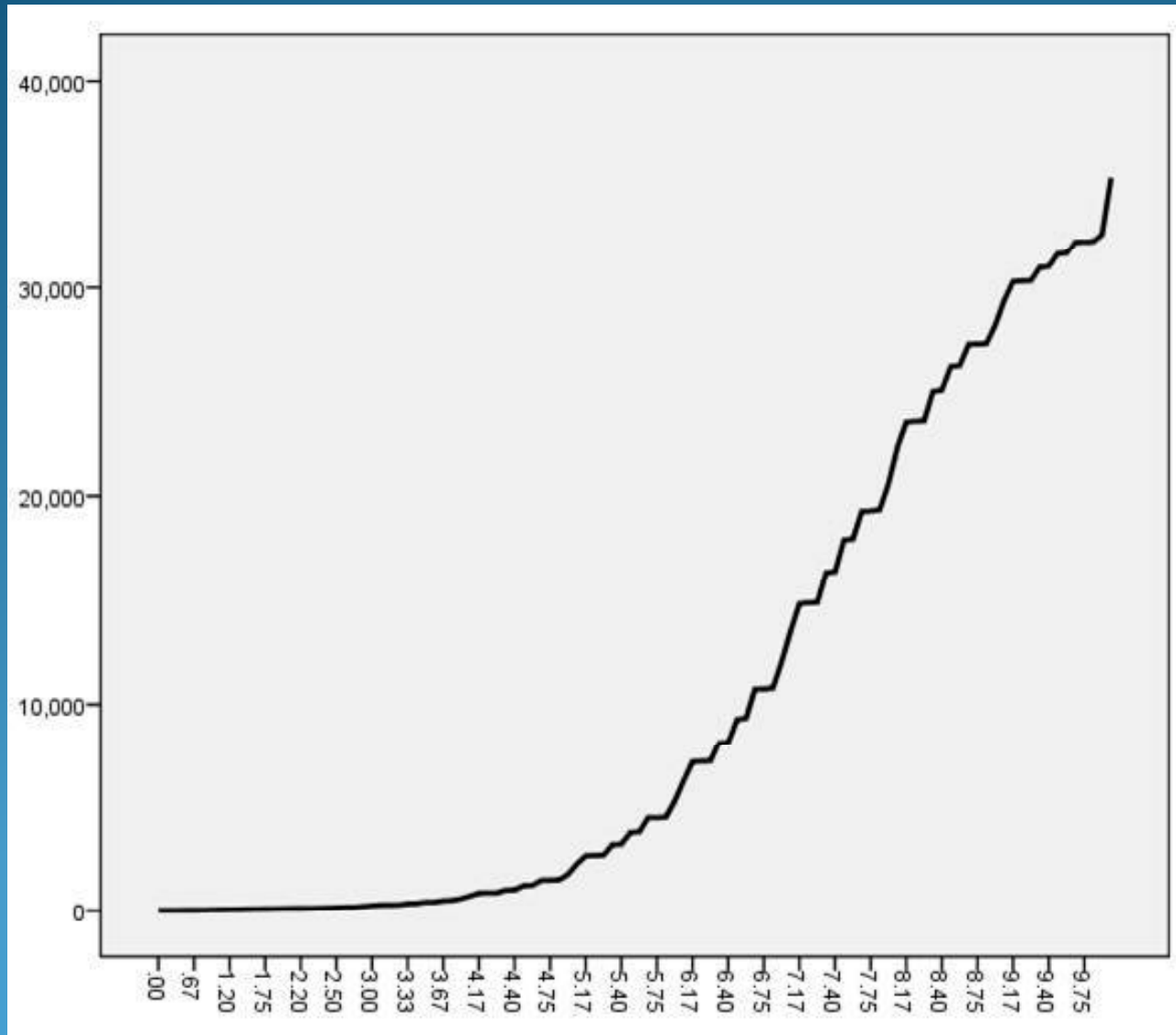
Level of support for the redistributing role of the State.

It is measured by a summative scale (0-10 scale) of six items:
should be government's responsibility ensure

- (a) a job for everyone who wants one,
- (b) adequate health care for the sick,
- (c) a reasonable standard of living for the old,
- (d) a reasonable standard of living for the unemployed,
- (e) sufficient child care services for working parents,
- (f) provide paid leave from work for people who temporarily have to care for sick family members)

(alpha reliability=.84).

Support for the redistributive role of the State (cumulative frequency)



N	35368
Mean	7.510
Median	7.500
Std. Deviation	1.549

	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	beta	Std. Error	B	beta	Std. Error
Constant	6.096***		.093	6.724***		.120
RECIPROCITY VARIABLES						
TRUST						
Social Trust	.001	.001	.006	.006	.007	.006
Trust in institutions	-.002	-.003	.006	.002	.002	.006
EGALITARIANISM						
Income levels	.229***	.166	.010	.212***	.153	.010
Standard of living	.219***	.150	.010	.204***	.140	.010
WELFARE EFFICACY	.072***	.036	.013	.074***	.037	.013
MERITOCRATISM	-.009	-.007	.009	.000	.000	.009
BASIC NEEDS DISSATISFACTION						
working age how many not money for basic necessities	.073***	.160	.003	.062***	.137	.003
Standard of living of pensioners and unemployed	-.096***	-.112	.006	-.092***	-.108	.006
WELFARE PATHOLOGICAL EFFECTS	-.215***	-.136	.011	-.166***	-.105	.012
FAIRNESS OF TAX AUTHORITIES	.022***	.034	.004	.021***	.033	.004
FRAUD SUSPICION						
Unemployed	-.055***	-.041	.009	-.061***	-.045	.009
Benefits not entitled to	.057***	.037	.011	.063***	.040	.010
SELF-INTEREST VARIABLES						
ECONOMIC STRAIN				-.133***	-.096	.009
SEX				.053**	.018	.018
AGE				-.003**	-.030	.001
GROUP DISCRIMINATED				-.067*	-.012	.034
MARRIED				.044*	.014	.022
CHILDREN				.052*	.016	.024
UNEMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE						
≥3<12 months				.016	.004	.025
≥12 months				.008	.002	.029
UNEMPLOYMENT RISK						
Likely unemployed next 12 months				-.025	-.007	.026
Unemployed and not looking for work				-.016	-.004	.028
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES RISK				.113***	.034	.023

HR variables dominate over self-interest variables, although the two types of variables are needed to properly understand why people support redistribution

If strong reciprocity is deeply rooted in our nature, and if reciprocity motivations are behind our judgements of what we consider fair, just, or acceptable, then the success of policy design is heavily dependent on its ability to tap into these predispositions

The OLS models presented here (as well as the statistical models in the literature) only account for a small part of the variability of SRRS. Other processes are at work but remain hidden