

**INDIVIDUALIZATION AND THE WELFARE STATE: INSIGHTS FROM
POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL VALUES DISCOURSES INTO
HOW INDIVIDUALISM SHAPES PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HEALTH-
RELATED WELFARE POLICIES**

OLIVIA TARR

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Dennis Raphael

Advisor's Name: Dr. Michaela Hynie

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Date Approved: _____ August 23, 2022

Advisor's Signature: _____

Date Approved: _____ August 23, 2022

**A Research Paper submitted to the Graduate Program in Health in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Health

York University Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3

AUGUST 2020

Table of Contents	2
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Overview of the Welfare States	6
Individualism	9
The Importance of Welfare States	12
Social Protection Differences in Welfare States	13
Sources of Individualism	16
Theoretical Framework and Methodology	22
Literature Search Methodology	23
Selection Criteria	23
Search Strategy	24
Data Management and Charting	25
Analysis: Individualism and Public Support for Welfare Policies	25
Self-Responsibility and Work Ethic	27
Deservingness	33
Empathy	40
Victim Blaming	44
Comparison: Welfare Assistance from the State versus Charities	48
Implications for Health and Social Protection	49
Strengths, Limitations, and Research Gaps	52
Conclusion	54

Acknowledgements	57
References	58
Appendix A	70

Abstract

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be a considerable threat to the public health of nations across the globe, and Canada is no exception. Compared to other liberal welfare states, Canada falls in the middle of the pack with respect to overall COVID-19 cases and mortality, doing better than countries like the United States of America but much worse than Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea (Bejan & Nikolova, 2021).

Crises such as pandemics often stir up thoughts about how the welfare state could improve the social safety nets in place to protect the wellbeing of its citizens. However, public support for the welfare state varies greatly for a number of reasons, one of which being socio-cultural values (Bisin & Verdier, 2001).

Using primarily a political economy lens alongside critical psychology perspectives, this paper aims to investigate the potential relationship between the cultural value of individualism and public support for the welfare state and its policy initiatives, by conducting a comprehensive literature search. This has important health equity implications because the welfare state serves as a way to protect the health, economic and social security of its citizens (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). I hypothesize that individualism will indeed have a relationship with public support for welfare programs, due to the impacts of cultural values on personal values.

Introduction

“Ideas, like seeds being planted, have to find fertile ground and the right conditions before they will thrive. There may be many good reasons for having social housing or a national health care or national health insurance system, but unless these ideas are supported by groups with enough resources to transform them into actual action, they will remain simply ideas.” -- David Coburn, 2010, p. 66

Welfare states exist to secure the economic and social security of citizens (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). Differences, both major and minor, in the policy strategies used to achieve such goals have been noted across the welfare states (Bryant, 2016) such that three major clusters have been identified (Esping-Andersen, 1990). These differences may also extend to the ideologies promoted as the “norm” within society, termed cultural values (Schwartz, 1999). One of the more interesting sets of ideological beliefs is that of individualism, which is associated with values such as self-responsibilization, empathy, and victim-blaming.

In this paper, I first expand on the different forms of the welfare state identified by Esping-Andersen and assert the importance of a strong welfare state. I then go on to identify some of the ideological beliefs that are associated with each form of the welfare state, discussing how social protection is achieved in each. With special attention given to cultural values, the focus of this paper is on how individualism, along with its related values and beliefs, influence public support for strong welfare state policies. This has important implications in health equity because the reservoir of cultural values that exist

within a society could potentially hamper progress towards a more encompassing welfare state, should such a shift by governing authorities occur.

Overview of the Welfare States

Academics have tried throughout history to pinpoint the essence of what defines the welfare state, with many conceding that this is not possible given the sheer variation seen in its composition, goals, and methods through which its goals are delivered (Barr, 2012; Kersbergen & Vis, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, the welfare state is defined as:

“to enhance the welfare of people who (a) are weak and vulnerable, largely by providing social care, (b) are poor, largely through redistributive income transfers, or (c) are neither vulnerable nor poor, by organizing cash benefits to provide insurance and consumption smoothing, and by providing medical insurance and school education.” (Barr, 2012, p. 8)

Based on the above definition, it becomes apparent that the welfare state serves as a means to provide social protection to citizens and reduce inequities between social classes. Furthermore, it is an essential component of a nation which serves to disperse risk factors across levels of society (Bryant, 2016). There are various approaches to how these goals can be achieved, such as redistributing economic resources, providing social assistance, and ensuring equitable access to the nation’s healthcare system among the

population (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). Two primary ways through which the welfare state acts are by way of providing cash benefits (such as unemployment benefits, sickness/disability benefits, old age pensions, family allowance, and income-tested benefits), and benefits in kind (like health care and education) (Barr, 2012).

Esping-Andersen is well known for describing the three welfare-state regime types: liberal, conservative, and social democratic (Esping-Andersen, 1990). These three distinct clusters have emerged due to patterns of de commodification, social stratification, and public-private roles (Bergqvist et al., 2013). Kersbergen and Vis (2013) state that it was the index of de commodification which primarily guided Esping-Andersen's regime classification, with de commodification referring to "the degree to which individuals can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market" (p. 55). However, it is important to note that while Esping-Andersen indeed classifies nations into regime-types based on characteristics of their welfare state, no country falls perfectly into a single category on all matters (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Liberal welfare states value liberty, with the free market functioning as the dominant institution (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). The role of the state is minimized in these regimes (Bamba, 2007), and as such, state intervention in market affairs is discouraged. Their benefits policies tend to be more reactive rather than proactive, targeting the lower-income classes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Moreover, liberal regimes commonly use means-tested assistance programs (Bamba, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 1990). These types of programs are designed to limit who can receive the benefits, which are typically meager and only provided once an individual meets the eligibility criteria

(often based on their income status and assets) (University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.). Means-tests are also believed to lead to the stigmatization of recipients (Bamba, 2007, Esping-Andersen, 1990). Canada, the USA, and Australia are all examples of liberal welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Conservative welfare states function primarily through the use of social insurance programs provided by employers (Bryant, 2016). These programs are designed to ensure social security across the lifespan, however there is little attempt made to reduce the gaps between social classes (Bamba, 2007; Bryant, 2016). A potential reason conservative welfare states do not prioritize minimizing income inequalities is perhaps due to the value it places on maintaining differences in social status (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Given the emphasis this regime places on solidarity and its roots in the Catholic Church, it is intuitive that these states apply a paternalistic approach in their emphasis on family benefits to “encourage motherhood” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 112). Examples of nations with conservative regimes include France, Austria, and Germany (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Finally, social democratic welfare states are unique in the sense that it strongly prioritizes equality within the population, with the state functioning as the dominant institution (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). Social protection is achieved through strong redistributive systems (Bamba, 2007), aiming for “an equality of the highest standards, rather than an equality of minimal needs” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 112). Unlike liberal regimes, welfare policies in social democratic regimes are often universal in nature as opposed to targeting specific groups (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The Scandinavian

countries such as Norway and Sweden are examples of social democratic welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Another way in which these welfare state regimes differ is in the cultural values upheld by each. Welfare arrangement, as described by Pfau-Effinger, states that “welfare state policies are embedded in the societal context of the welfare culture (the relevant values and ideas in a given society surrounding the welfare state)” along with other factors such as institutions and social structures (Pfau-Effinger, 2004, p. 4-5). One specific cultural value of interest that may influence welfare state directives is individualism, which will be explored at length in this paper.

Individualism

Depending on the time period and academic field, there are many different ways to define the term individualism. Lukes posits that it is only by defining the ideas foundational to the type of individualism being described that a clear definition of the term can be found (Lukes, 2006).

There are believed to be five basic ideas of individualism: 1) the dignity of (hu)man; 2) autonomy; 3) privacy; 4) self-development; and 5) the abstract individual (Lukes, 2006). The dignity of (hu)man refers to the belief that human beings have intrinsic worth. Autonomy is the idea that all humans have the right to self-determination, and to have the autonomy to make choices freely without undue external influence. Privacy refers to the ability to exist independently of the larger public sphere. It is believed to be a characteristic of modern individualism specifically, because in historical

times privacy was seen as an indicator of deprivation. Self-development is believed to be the “ultimate value” of individualism (Lukes, 2006, p. 48), and describes the idea that people strive for uniqueness and individuality in order to continually better themselves. The final building-block is the social conception of abstract individuals as being made up of various objectives (needs, desires, etc.). Lukes states that “Social and political rules and institutions are [seen as] a means of fulfilling independently given individual objectives” (Lukes, 2006, p. 50).

While individualism is both a philosophy and practice (Hofrichter, 2003), the main focus of this paper is its application as a cultural value. As such, individualism is defined as “assign[ing] a higher moral value to the individual than to the community or society, and which consequently advocates leaving individuals free to act as they think most conducive to their self-interest” (Macpherson, 1989, p. 149).

Individualism-Collectivism has been proposed by Geert Hofstede as one of the six cultural dimensions that can be used to evaluate how cultures differ across nations (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). The Individualism-Collectivism dimension specifically refers to the degree of “interconnectedness” within a society (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). Individualism is built upon the principles of individual autonomy, self-responsibility, and uniqueness (Realo et al., 2002) and prioritizes personal achievement (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). Alternatively, collectivism prioritizes the interests of the larger group over individual goals (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). While these two concepts were historically seen as opposite ends of a continuum by Hofstede, many academics view individualism and collectivism as independent of each

other (Realo et al., 2002). That being said, much of the literature reviewed for this research paper presents individualism as the “opposite” of collectivism.

There are several reasons why individualism was selected as the cultural value of choice in this paper. Firstly, the cultural dimension of individualism is believed to be one of the “central elements of world culture” (Boli & Thomas, 1997, p. 171). Moreover, it also appears to be increasing. This can be observed from a study by Santos et al. that examined 78 countries over the course of 51 years, highlighting increases in various individualistic practices and values (Santos et al., 2017). From this study they concluded that individualism appears to have increased by 12% in the last 60 years globally (Santos et al., 2017). This could potentially be because individualism is a central ideology promoted by both neoliberalism and capitalism, and thus has subsequently become entrenched into Western societies as these two ideologies were taken up globally (Greene, 2008; Hofrichter, 2003; Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020). In fact, Lynch and Kalaitzake (2020) posit that the “constraints of neoliberal globalization have been central to undermining the willingness of nation states to advance universalistic welfare regimes” (p. 250). Social psychology also suggests through the voluntary settlement hypothesis that people who are more individualistic are more likely to migrate, as it costs less personally for them to leave their existing social networks (Beck Knudsen, 2019). Therefore, it is possible that individualistic beliefs have also spread through immigration practices. Additional perspectives and details on the possible sources of individualism within a society will be explored later in the paper.

Finally, understanding the mechanisms through which individualism becomes

embedded into the cultural values of a society is important because population beliefs are ultimately reflected in the nation's policy initiatives (Greene, 2008; Pfau-Effinger, 2004). The goal of this paper is to investigate how the cultural value of individualism impacts the public's opinion on social policies objectives pursued or implemented by the welfare state.

The Importance of Welfare States

Historically, the welfare state rose in prominence in Canada first after the Great Depression and then following World War II. This period is called the "Interventionist Phase" due to public demand that the government better address the societal needs of its citizens (Moskovitch, 2015). One major objective of the welfare state is to redistribute financial resources from the wealthy to the poor to reduce income inequality, also known as vertical equity (Barr, 2012). While research shows that the poor typically benefit the most from social welfare programs (Bryant, 2016), benefits associated with reducing income inequality can be seen across all social classes for a variety of health and social problems (Wilkinson, 2011) including the important indicator of population health, infant mortality (Leon, Vågerö, & Olausson, 1992). While not absolute, a distinct trend between welfare states has been observed in infant mortality rates and life expectancy, widely recognized as very efficient indicators of population health. Social democratic welfare state have better health outcomes compared to liberal regimes (Bryant, 2016). This can potentially be explained by differences in social protection levels seen between the welfare state regimes as robust social protection policies are recognized to be one of the

most effective strategies to improve health equity (World Health Organization [WHO] Regional Office for Europe, 2015).

Social Protection Differences in Welfare States

Social protection refers to the strategies implemented by the state, such as social assistance, social insurance, and labour market protections, designed to minimize the socioeconomic risks faced by members of the population (Food and Agriculture Organization, n.d.). Welfare services are an essential conduit for the provision of social protection to the most vulnerable. Countries that have more robust social protection programs typically have lower levels of poverty, which in turn reduces morbidity and mortality rate for children and adults alike (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017). According to Ruckert and Labonté (2017), even though a decrease in overall population health is not seen at the aggregate level when welfare programs are cut, inequities in morbidity and mortality are clearly widened.

The main mechanism through which conservative welfare states like France provide social protection for its citizens is through mandated social insurance (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). This is somewhat problematic though because social protection is subsequently dependent on participation in the workforce, and has historically left women behind in favour of the “male breadwinner logic” (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). The state in social democratic welfare regimes arguably provides the most holistic protection for its citizens due to its emphasis on universal coverage (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). While it appears counterintuitive, the lack

of targeted interventions is actually associated with improved equity across the population (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). The “paradox of redistribution”, originally described by Korpi and Palme (1998), refers to the trend where universal social benefits are more effective at improving health outcomes across the population compared to policies that target the most disadvantaged (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). This is because targeted policies are typically less generous, can create stigma (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011), and ignore the social needs of groups right above the most disadvantaged.

Alternatively, the generous benefits provided by universal policies address the needs of all social classes and are more likely to reach the disadvantaged without stigma since these policies are universal (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). This paradox is supported by trends in social protection seen in social democratic welfare states and liberal welfare states. As previously discussed, liberal welfare states favour targeted, meager interventions delivered through means-tested programs as opposed to providing robust universal social protection, due to the preference for a limited state. As such, only “basic social safety nets” are provided by the welfare state (Bryant, 2016, p. 277) since it is assumed that citizens are able to attain the resources necessary to achieve good welfare from the market (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011). Consequently, vulnerable populations often suffer from high rates of poverty (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2011).

The degree of social protection provided by the welfare state regime type can be seen by what percentage a nation spends of their gross domestic product (GDP) on policies and programs implemented by the state, termed social expenditure. Studies have

shown that liberal welfare nations on average have lower social expenditure than other welfare states, with Canada having the fourth lowest overall expenditure out of all the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations reliably identified by form of the welfare state (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). Gross public social expenditure as a percentage of a nation's GDP is recognized as a good indicator of the amount of social protection citizens of that nation are receiving by the welfare state (Beer & Koster, 2009). However it is important to note though that social expenditure is not a perfect measure for the degree of protection citizens of a society are receiving. The relationship between social expenditure and population health has been identified to be curvilinear, meaning after a certain point only diminishing health returns are achieved (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017). Moreover, health policies and programs currently implemented are not always effective, therefore improving the efficiency and robustness of existing social protection mechanisms has been identified as a key recommendation by the World Health Organization (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2017).

This paper suggests that the values held by a society can shape the public's acceptance or rejection of policies, ergo these values should be considered when examining the provision of social protection by the welfare state. Therefore one potential explanation for why Canada and other liberal welfare states have such low social expenditure is a lack of public support for the welfare state, which may be influenced by differing cultural dimensions. According to Hofstede, there are six cultural dimensions which exist: power distance, identity (individualism/collectivism), sex

(masculinity/femininity), uncertainty avoidance index, normative orientation (long term/short term), and indulgence level (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Out of all these dimensions presented by Hofstede's theory this paper is focusing on the cultural value of individualism within the identity dimension because as aforementioned, the value of individualism within societies appears to be increasing globally. While this article is not limited to Canada specifically, the majority of studies in this review examined liberal welfare states because this regime type arguably best illustrates how individualism can shape public policy.

Sources of Individualism

Individualism, like other cultural values, springs from the organization of society and the economic and political structures that create, organize and distribute resources. As such, it is important to consider the forces and systems which promote it in the first place, especially given the rising rates of individualism observed globally. This article will use political economy and critical psychology theories alongside historical materialism and Marxist perspectives to demonstrate how capitalism, cultural hegemony, and class consciousness all work closely together to reinforce individualism as a cultural value. However before the sources of individualism as a national cultural value can be considered, we must start with a discussion about cultural values themselves.

To start, cultural values refer to the various abstract ideas shared by a society that guide beliefs about what is "good, right, and desirable" (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). While

cultural values do not always represent an individual's values, there are national-level factors which are believed to transmit cultural values to become shared (Schwartz, 1999).

Some ways in which this dissemination occurs include through the “everyday exposure to customs, laws, norms, scripts, and organizational practices that are shaped by and express the prevailing cultural values” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). For example, as an individual adapts and participates in societal institutions like the schooling system, they are more likely to adopt the values and beliefs upheld by these institutions (Schwartz, 1999). There has been debate as to the usefulness of evaluating cultural values at the national level, given that some studies have suggested that values vary more significantly within than between nations (Schwartz, 2014). It is important to note that while heterogeneous culture clusters can exist within a society, national culture is still seen to be a meaningful concept as the majority of these clusters still fall along national cultural value lines (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). Moreover, the practice of averaging the values held by individual members of a society is commonly used in cultural research as it is believed to be reflective of the cultural values most prominently upheld by that society (Schwartz, 2014)

Finally, Schwartz attests that while cultural values are certainly impacted when power relations shift between groups within a society, this happens very slowly (Schwartz, 2006). Therefore, overarching values orientations are considered “relatively stable”, with some researchers believing that certain cultural elements have lasted for hundreds of years (Schwartz, 2006, p. 139). However despite the change being gradual, it is still

nonetheless important to consider external factors which could lead to a shift in values orientation (Schwartz, 2006)

Historical materialism typically views culture to be a reflection of societal formation (Oorschot et al., 2008) and highlights the influence modes of production have on said formation (Coburn 2010). Karl Marx takes a materialist approach in his understanding of society, stating that the structures which comprise society can be divided into two major groups: base and superstructures (Cole, 2020a). Base refers to the overarching organization of economic and political systems that are directly related to the means of production (Cole, 2020a). Superstructure captures the other edifices of society not directly related to production, including the values and beliefs held by the population (Cole, 2020a). Initially Marx believed that the relationship between these two concepts was causal, meaning that base influenced superstructure. However over time this relationship was adjusted to acknowledge that both concepts interact and influence each other, though base is still typically regarded as dominant (Cole, 2020a). This is important in discussions surrounding the sources of cultural values as it shows that societal organization such as means of production can influence the “culture, ideology, norms and identities people inhabit” within the superstructure (Cole, 2020a).

Coburn combines materialism with critical political economy perspectives, which refers to the critical theory that is concerned with how social, political, and economic factors influence society (Bryant & Raphael, 2020). He asserts that the society one lives in shapes their ideas as opposed to personal beliefs shaping society (Coburn 2010). This cycle reinforces itself as individuals end up reproducing these values (Coburn 2010),

therefore certain values can become entrenched over time. Subsequently, different societies have the capacity to produce slightly different people depending on the time and social structure of society at that point (Coburn 2010). This historical materialism perspective is relevant to discussions surrounding individualism because societies with capitalist modes of production will usually reinforce the values and beliefs that support capitalism (Coburn 2010). Using this materialist stream of political economy, we can subsequently evaluate the values held by the population as an offshoot of the social formation of society. As we will discuss next, individualism and capitalism are closely related, thus one can reasonably postulate that capitalism is indeed a source of individualism.

As capitalist economic systems and means of production were taken up by nations globally, the belief systems of said societies also became increasingly individualistic (Greene, 2008). When a political economy perspective is applied, clear parallels between the tenets of individualism and those of laissez-faire capitalism can be seen (Greene, 2008). Materialist capitalism benefits greatly from the beliefs in self-reliance and “self-willed wealth” that are promoted by individualism, so much so that Green states “individualism supports capitalism directly” (Greene, 2008, p. 120-134). Moreover from a health equity perspective, the attribution of social success or failure as an individual’s responsibility deflects attention away from the inequities generated under capitalism (Greene, 2008). Marxism posits that capitalist societies are made up of two social classes: the ruling class, who have power over the production systems within society, and the working class, who are typically exploited by the ruling class for their

manual labour (Oxford Cambridge and RSA, n.d.). Gramsci builds upon this class theory in his theory of cultural hegemony.

Cultural hegemony refers to the dominance of one social class “maintained though ideological or cultural means” (Cole, 2020b), meaning that cultural ideologies are subtly reinforced over time such that they become accepted as truth across society (Patil, 2018). This adoption of cultural values as personal ones occurs through interactions with societal institutions, henceforth “the group that controls these institutions controls the rest of society” (Cole, 2020b). This can lead to snowballing individualism, which describes the effect where societies that value individualism subsequently instill these same beliefs within its citizens (Devine, 2000). Ultimately, a positive feedback loop between individualism values at the cultural level and the personal level created.

When examined from a political economy perspective, we see that cultural hegemony is used by the ruling class to replace society’s views with those that benefit the dominant bourgeoisie (Patil, 2018). Through the subtle reinforcement described above, said views and beliefs are ultimately accepted by the majority as a truth (Bryant & Raphael, 2020), allowing the ruling class to dominate “peacefully” within a society as opposed to ruling by force (Cole, 2020b). This can also be seen on a global scale, where hegemonic psychology discourses from the dominant WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic) cultures are assimilated by non-WEIRD societies (Adams et al., 2019). This can lead to the repression of indigenous and place-relative knowledge (Adams et al., 2019).

Cultural hegemony is related closely to the Marxist philosophy of false consciousness, which refers to a person's "inability to recognize inequality, oppression, and exploitation in a capitalist society because of the prevalence within it of views that naturalize and legitimize the existence of social classes." (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). Essentially, the systematically disadvantaged working class are unlikely to question the hegemonic beliefs they suffer under as these beliefs have been instilled in them as well, and instead accept the inequities they experience at the hands of the ruling class (Oxford Cambridge and RSA, n.d.). This is especially true in strongly capitalist societies where the lower classes prioritize attaining material wealth to meet capitalist-endorsed living standards (Greene, 2008).

Critical psychology discussions also demonstrate the strong connection between neoliberalism, individualism, and culture. According to Adams et al. (2019), "Neoliberal systems build on and reinforce characteristic psychological tendencies of liberal individualism [...] that increasingly inform dominant conceptions of mind-in-general." (p. 190). Neoliberalism promotes the laissez-faire idea that society should accept whatever outcomes are produced by the market, and therefore are unconcerned with issues such as inequities (Bryant, 2016). From a health perspective, laissez-faire policies advocate against using government funds for vulnerable groups like the elderly, instead opting for the "decrease in, and eventual elimination of, state intervention, including welfare spending" (Bonanno & Calasanti, 1988, p. 245). Liberal welfare states like Canada, in which neoliberalism has a massive influence and where the market is regarded as the dominant actor, have adopted this laissez-faire ideology (Bryant, 2016). Relating back to

false consciousness, improved class and social awareness may urge society to re-evaluate the idea that health inequalities produced by the market are inevitable, rather it is simply a worldview that has been pushed upon the lower classes. This also relates to Marx's concepts of base and superstructure, because Marx believed that the working class could achieve significant change in base society and modes of production should they revolt against their exploitation (Schwartz, 1999).

Based on these theories, I posit that the cultural values which support the dominant systems within society come to have an existence of their own – independent of their material sources -- further entrenching their place within the population and subsequently making change difficult to achieve.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The framework which was used to guide this paper is the political economy perspective. This perspective considers “the links between health and the economic, political, and social life of different people, regions, or societies” (Coburn, 2010, p. 59). Some examples of the societal contexts which this perspective considers include how historical decisions shaped the modern-day nation, what the main economic drivers are, what policy priorities the government has, and which cultural values are upheld (McCartney et al., 2019).

The political economy of health framework in relation to welfare states has been around since the 1970s, and is believed to have initially emerged from Friedrich Engels' work on the social production of disease in England presented in his 1845 volume *The*

Condition of the Working Class in England (Harvey, 2021). Political economy perspectives are useful within a public health setting due to the insights it provides on the many complex and interconnected pathways through which individual and population health are impacted (Minkler et al., 1994). In fact, Harvey (2021) posits that applying a political economy of health perspective is “necessary for explaining and addressing persistent health inequalities and emerging public health crises under global capitalism, a political–economic system that shapes nearly all aspects of our lives but that attracts relatively little attention in the field of public health.” (p. 298). Given that capitalism was earlier established to be a source of individualism, the political economy paradigm is thus aptly suited to guide this research paper.

Selection Criteria

In order for articles to be included in the literature review, the following criteria must have been met: examines the social theory of individualism, investigates the publics’ opinions or attitudes towards welfare policies/programs/recipients, and is available in English to students at York University at the time of writing. While the research topic is on public attitudes towards welfare policies, articles discussing attitudes towards the welfare state and redistributive policies were included as they are considered to be representative of social policies for this review.

Search Strategy

Articles for this literature review were identified using the electronic database Google Scholar. Martín-Martín and colleagues (2018) show that Google ScholarTM yields significantly more citations than ScopusTM, WoS Core CollectionTM and Web of ScienceTM in the coverage of academic literature in humanities and social sciences. The following search string was used to search the electronic database: *intitle:"individualism" "opinion OR attitude OR support" "empathy" "welfare" "social policy"*, which yielded 29 results. An abstract review was conducted on all 29 identified articles to determine eligibility, after which fifteen articles were excluded. The remaining fourteen articles underwent a full-text review. Of these, five were excluded as two did not discuss public attitudes or opinions, two were not about the welfare state/policies, and one did not link its discussion on attitudes towards welfare policies directly to individualism. The remaining nine articles were selected for inclusion in the literature review, along with an additional six articles that were identified through a review of the reference list of the included articles. This brought the total number of articles included in this review to fifteen. The selection process described above is depicted visually in Figure 1 below.

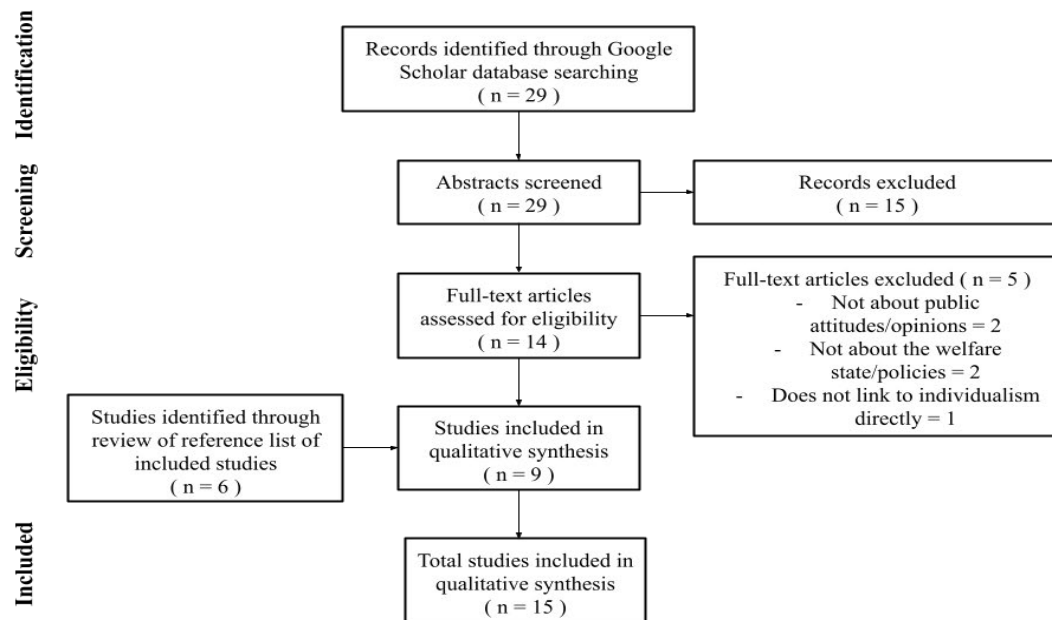


Figure 1. Databases and numbers of studies screened, assessed for eligibility, and selected according to the inclusion criteria.

Data Management and Charting

Microsoft Excel was used to chart data on all of the articles reviewed for inclusion. Key information was noted from each article including its source, the authors, and whether it was included or excluded from the review after screening the abstract or after a full-text review. This chart titled Table 1 can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis: Individualism and Public Support for Welfare Policies

In the landmark 1972 study, Joe Feagin systematically investigated how the American public perceived the causal attributions of poverty, finding individualistic beliefs to be one of three main categories of beliefs (Law & Shek, 2014; Lepinaka et al., 2009). Building upon this connection, this literature review aims to establish whether

individualism shares a relationship with public support for welfare policies. The vast majority of the studies reviewed for this research assert that this relationship does exist, with most articles contending that they are negatively related (Feldman, 1988; Feldman et al., 2020; Lefebvre, 2017; Shen & Edwards, 2005; Toikko & Rantanen, 2020). When evaluating potential indicators of anti-welfare spending preferences, Lefebvre (2017) established that “individualism indicators and racial prejudice indicators proved to be the best predictors of anti-welfare spending preferences.” (p. 34). As such this article will examine the relationship between individualism and public support for welfare policies.

As aforementioned, self-responsibility is one of the fundamental pillars of individualism, and is a key component of neoliberalism (Woolford & Nelund, 2013). It is the promotion of this value that arguably influences public support for welfare programs the most. Several themes emerged from the literature review with respect to how the impacts of self-responsibility on public support for welfare programs manifest, such as judging a person’s deservingness of welfare assistance, and blaming individuals for getting into a situation where they need support. These ideas will be further explored in this paper through the nuanced avenues of deservingness, empathy and victim blaming. The intricacies of these relationships as hypothesized by this article are depicted visually in Figure 2 below.

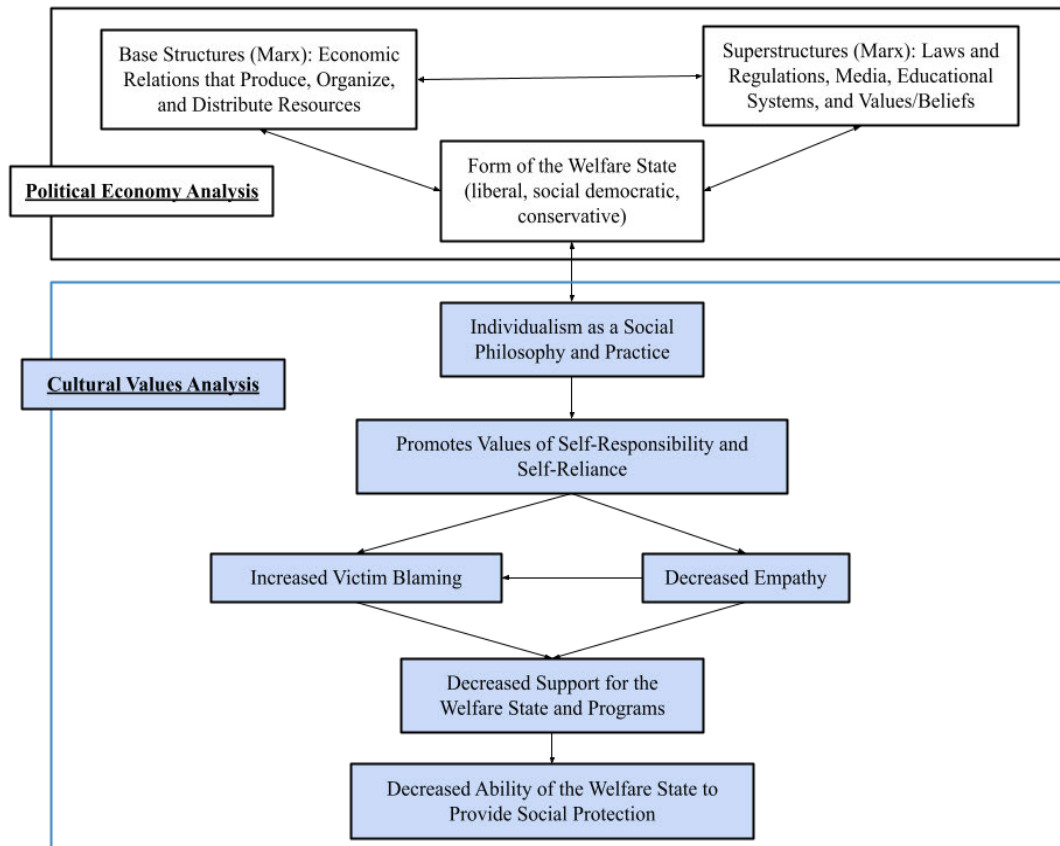


Figure 2. Schematic of the relationships between individualism, support for welfare policies, and social protection as posited by this paper.

Self-Responsibility and Work Ethic

The value of self-responsibility is frequently cited in the literature as one of the major mechanisms through which individualism impacts public support for welfare policies (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020; Greene, 2008; Lefebvre, 2017; Feldman, 1983). Simply put, self-responsibility holds that a person is accountable for themselves, their actions and any subsequent consequences (Realo et al., 2002).

This relationship between self-responsibility and individualism can be seen throughout history and applied to present day effects. For example, Christianity's

reformation identifying individuals as responsible for their own salvations has interesting parallels to the individualistic characteristics seen in modern Western nations (Macpherson, 1989; Watt, 1989). According to Weber, this reformation brought a moral aspect to mundane life where “Diligence, punctuality, frugality, were elevated to the status of religious virtues rather than being seen as having merely a degree of pragmatic value.” (Watt, 1989, p. 12). These virtues echo those of individualism’s self-responsibility, as it touts that people have a moral obligation to work hard in order to sustain themselves (Watt, 1989). Watt posits that these values which arose from Christianity’s reformation have undermined the social welfare system’s ability to provide for the poor by promoting the “public provision of relief for the poor [...] as often misguided practices rather than Christian duties” (Watt, 1989, p. 12). Individualistic theologies continued to become increasingly prevalent through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and started to become integrated into British politics (Watt, 1989). During this time period, individualism in England generally referred to “the absence or minimum of state intervention in the economic and other spheres” (Lukes, 2006, p. 26). Watt stated,

“It is not love [...] but individual ambition, self-seeking effort, which makes the world go around, and the fewer restrictions placed on the gains to be made by it, the better. Taxing the rich to support the poor is doubly misguided, because it discourages production by removing some of the rewards to be gained by it, and it encourages sloth and dependence. Individuals should be left with the

responsibility to fend for themselves and the freedom to enjoy whatever advantage their self-seeking initiative and hard work earn.” (Watt, 1989, p. 16).

From this excerpt, it is clear to see that the individualistic value of self-responsibility began to impact attitudes towards redistributive policies long ago, a trend which can still be seen in many current studies. Another individualistic value mentioned in the excerpt that is inherently intertwined with self-responsibility is the importance of hard work. Given that self-responsibility has promoted the belief that one’s social position is the result of their life successes or failures (Feldman, 1983; Throop, 2009), it is believed that social mobility can be achieved through good work ethic (Feldman, 1983; Throop, 2009, p. 5). Indeed, belief in work ethic has been identified as an important feature of individualism (Feldman, 1983), and has even been used as a measure of a person's support for economic individualism (Feldman, 1988).

With the relationship between the individualistic values of self-responsibility and work ethic, their impacts on attitudes towards the welfare state can be examined. Lynch and Kalaitzake describe how the value of “responsibilized individualism” has become ingrained within the cultures of many nations across Western Europe, and has played a part in shaping the state of their welfare systems (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020). Nations across Western Europe have experienced cutbacks to their welfare states since the late 1970s, leading to their reduced ability to provide social protection for citizens (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020). Lynch and Kalaitzake argue that individualism’s promotion of self-responsibilization has directly allowed for these cutbacks to occur, because it holds that

support should not be provided to citizens since they are ultimately accountable and responsible for their own wellbeing (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020).

In a uniquely American context, many studies attest that individualism and work ethic are critical features of America's culture (Feldman, 1983 ; Shen & Edwards, 2005; Throop, 2009). Work ethic is seen by some to be one of the major components of economic individualism that can decrease public support for welfare programs (Feldman, 1983). Economic individualism is negatively associated with support for social welfare programs, and people who highly value economic individualism are more likely to believe that welfare recipients should have to meet strict work requirements (Shen & Edwards, 2005).

It is also possible that perspectives on self-responsibility and work ethic differ between generations. To evaluate this hypothesis, Watson & Pederson conducted a mixed methods analysis into American millennial attitudes towards welfare redistribution policies and poverty (Watson & Pederson, 2018). The sample population were all students from the same university in Virginia, USA (Watson & Pederson, 2018). While the quantitative results were not very revealing, the qualitative interviews allowed researchers to categorize participants' views into three categories: individualistic, egalitarian, and structural individualist (Watson & Pederson, 2018).

The individualist respondents believed that the government should not provide welfare assistance to those in need because said individuals are responsible for the poor choices which led them to poverty (Watson & Pederson, 2018). Egalitarian respondents alternatively were highly in favour of welfare assistance being provided by the

government to those living in poverty in various forms such as a basic guaranteed income (Watson & Pederson, 2018). Structural individualists differed in the way that they display both individualist and egalitarian views (Watson & Pederson, 2018). When interviewed, participants with this view understood that some causes of poverty are structural and beyond a person's control, yet ultimately proposed very individualistic solutions to these inequalities (Watson & Pederson, 2018). For example, some solutions this group provided to help individuals in poverty generally revolved around helping them find a job or delaying retirement (Watson & Pederson, 2018).

In sum, it appears that many individualists and structural individualists interviewed in this study promote the values of self-responsibility, believing that people are responsible for their own fates and therefore should bear the consequences alone. The diversity in responses may seem unexpected given that cultural values like individualism are believed to arise from the customs and economic/political structures prevalent in society. Unfortunately the authors did not present the demographic information for the ten students with which they conducted qualitative interviews with, nor did they provide any speculation as to the potential causes of the variation in answers given from this seemingly homogeneous group. However while cultural values do not always represent an individual's values, from a research perspective authors have found "substantive similarity of value structures that do not justify treating the two levels of individual and country as separate structures" (Fischer & Poortinga, 2012, p. 167). While these results are not generalizable given the small sample size of interviews which took place and the narrow population of Millennial college students in America, it nonetheless sheds some

light on the sort of attitudes individualists may hold towards welfare policy and recipients.

Many of these beliefs have tangible implications in the health equity realm. Self-responsibility is becoming more prevalent at the grassroots level where welfare assistance is being delivered, with Woolford and Nelund (2013) stating that, “Social service providers are increasingly accepting of the dominant logics of neoliberalism, such as the need to foster responsibility among their clients” (p. 301-302). This can negatively influence health outcomes as it restricts the ability of social service providers to adequately offer aid (Woolford & Nelund, 2013). The impacts of individualism’s self-responsibility also extend to the policy level and to broader society. Building upon the ideas discussed in Lynch & Kalaitzake, Throop states that “Partly because Americans believe that success and failure are individually based, we reject cultural and systemic explanations for poverty as socialist, or, worse, communist” (Throop, 2009, p. 41). By attributing poverty to be the result solely of one’s actions, the state is able to avoid taking responsibility for or addressing the structural and systemic causes of inequalities which also exist. Instead, governments opt to “fix” those living in poverty by promoting hyper-individualistic public policy “solutions” (Throop, 2009), which more often than not does not help at all.

In sum, individualism says that hard work by the individual is the solution to poverty because people who work hard will naturally be rewarded (Feldman, 1983), and consequently welfare assistance should not be provided to those in need since it interferes with the “natural order” of life (Lefebvre, 2017). This can unfortunately lead to judging

whether a person of lower social status deserves assistance, as poor work ethic is perceived to be the root cause of their issues.

Deservingness

The idea of an individual's deservingness of assistance is closely related to the concept of self-responsibility. An interesting duality in perceptions identified in the literature surrounding deservingness is the "lucky versus lazy" debate. When members of the general public were asked to judge the character of a person requiring welfare assistance, there tends to be two strains of thought: either the individual has gotten themselves into this situation because of a lack of hard work and now need the state to rescue them out of poverty (lazy), or it was simply a series of unfortunate events (unlucky). For example, more than ½ of Americans believe personal laziness is the cause of poverty compared to ¼ of Mexicans and ⅓ of Swedes, who identify social injustice as the root cause (Greene, 2008).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, individualism appears to promote the view that laziness is the primary cause of poverty (Greene, 2008). Greene (2008) postulates that this attribution of poverty to personal laziness is likely related to individualism's inhibition of class consciousness. One study found that more than half of Americans who attribute poverty to laziness are of lower class status (Greene, 2008). A Marxist perspective would ascertain that this is because individuals belonging to lower social classes have "internalized [their society's] cultural beliefs" (Greene, 2008, p. 118) and subsequently in

an American context still believe that success can be achieved with hard work (Greene, 2008).

Psychology discourses posit the rhetoric that poverty is the result of laziness is dominant because of “fundamental attribution error” or “actor-observer bias” (Law & Shek, 2014). This theory describes a scenario where individuals believe their life successes result from internal factors like diligence and hard work, yet their failures are the result of external circumstances beyond their control or simply bad luck (Lumen Candela, n.d.). However when asked to explain the circumstances of others, individuals will overemphasize internal factors while under-emphasizing the external (Lumen Candela, n.d.). This attribution error is believed to be more prevalent in individualistic cultures due to their emphasis on the individual (Lumen Candela, n.d.). Moreover, this higher prevalence may also be explained through the value individualism places on autonomy. As previously discussed, autonomy is one of the key components of individualism (Lukes, 2006), and with autonomy comes a sense of perceived control over one’s actions (Fix, 2020). Therefore, it is possible that attribution error is more widespread in individualistic societies because people believe that everyone has control over their situations, and therefore the poor are at fault for their financial hardships. Indeed, some academics believe that this fundamental attribution error is used to rationalize systemic health inequities (Szalavitz, 2017).

Another potential explanation for how individualism impacts perceptions of deservingness is through the value of work ethic. As previously mentioned, economic individualism appears to be closely associated with support for strict work requirements

(Shen & Edwards, 2005). Beer and Koster (2009) posit that the state may impose these requirements on individuals seeking unemployment benefits so the public is reassured that recipients are not lazy, just unlucky. The commitment to seek employment sets these recipients apart from the “undeserving poor” (Beer & Koster, 2009, p. 213), and is likely mandated in order to foster support from the taxpaying general public for these types of welfare assistance programs (Beer & Koster, 2009). From a psychology perspective, this could serve as a way for the poor to distance themselves from the stigmatized image of a lazy, unmotivated individual dependent on welfare assistance from the government. Indeed, Walker (2014) discusses how “being in work, even if poorly paid, gave people a sense of pride and made them feel better about themselves.” (p. 122-123).

Studies have also examined if public perceptions of deservingness differ between welfare state types, and have found interesting results. In a study of sixteen nation-states across Western Europe and North America, van Elteren (1998) found that citizens of “advanced welfare states [like] Denmark, France, Sweden, Norway” (p. 47) were less likely to attribute laziness as the cause of poverty than their North American counterparts, with 40% and 32% of respondents from the USA and Canada respectively citing laziness as the reason why someone lives in poverty. However, this study's definition of an advanced welfare state was not explicitly stated (van Elteren, 1998). Beer and Koster support these findings, stating that Americans are more likely to attribute social differences to be the result of hard work whereas Europeans believe it is just chance (Beer & Koster, 2009). This is believed to be a reflection of how societal perceptions

towards issues like inequality innately differ between the American and European welfare states (Beer & Koster, 2009).

This idea was further explored in Aarøe and Petersen (2014) who found that liberal welfare states and social democratic welfare states have different default perceptions specifically on welfare recipients which impacts public support for social welfare programs. The USA and Denmark were selected to represent a liberal and social democratic welfare state respectively because they are very culturally different, with one relevant difference being that America displays high levels of individualism compared to the more collective Denmark (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). Aarøe and Petersen conducted two online surveys, where respondents were asked to write down words that came to mind about welfare recipients generally (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). These responses were then coded based on whether they promoted a “lazy” or “unlucky” stereotype (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). Participants were then given a description of a specific welfare recipient, and then asked whether they are in support of providing welfare assistance for that person (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). In Model 1, no cues on the deservingness of the recipient was given, Model 2 framed the recipient as unlucky but hard working, and Model 3 framed the recipient as lazy (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014).

When no information on the recipient’s deservingness was divulged (Model 1), Danish citizens largely believed that this person is simply unlucky, whereas American citizens were 4.6 times more likely to view that same person as lazy (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). This aligns with the findings reported by van Elteren (1998), and Beer and Koster (2009), supporting the conclusion that perceptions on welfare recipients indeed differ

between liberal and social democratic welfare states (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). However it is important to note that in Model 2 and Model 3 when contextual cues were given about why the individual needs welfare assistance (i.e., whether the person is unlucky or lazy), both Americans and Danes tended to respond similarly in their support of welfare assistance for said individual (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). This shows that the general public's base perspective on welfare recipient's deservingness and their subsequent support for social programs is related to the type of welfare state in which they reside, though attitudes can change when given information about the recipient (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014).

When individualism is considered, this relationship between public opinions on the deservingness of individuals requiring welfare assistance and the welfare state regime in which they reside makes a bit more sense. Liberal welfare states promote the principles and individualism more than the other two welfare state regimes, with liberal ideology believing that "social protection cause(s) moral corruption, thriftlessness, idleness, and drunkenness" (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 42). As previously stated, work ethic is perceived by individualists to be tied to a person's success as a way to prove their worth, therefore it is logical that those requiring welfare assistance are likely to be seen as lazy in the more individualistic liberal welfare states.

The "lucky versus lazy" debate can also be examined with respect to a nation's social expenditure. Using data collected by the General Social Survey in 1998 from nineteen countries that have a per capita GDP of over \$15,000, Alesina and Glaeser (2004) found that there is a 61% correlation between the belief that luck determines

income and the nation's level of redistribution welfare spending. When these values were plotted on a chart, the fitted line seen in Figure 3 below displays this relationship clearly (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004).

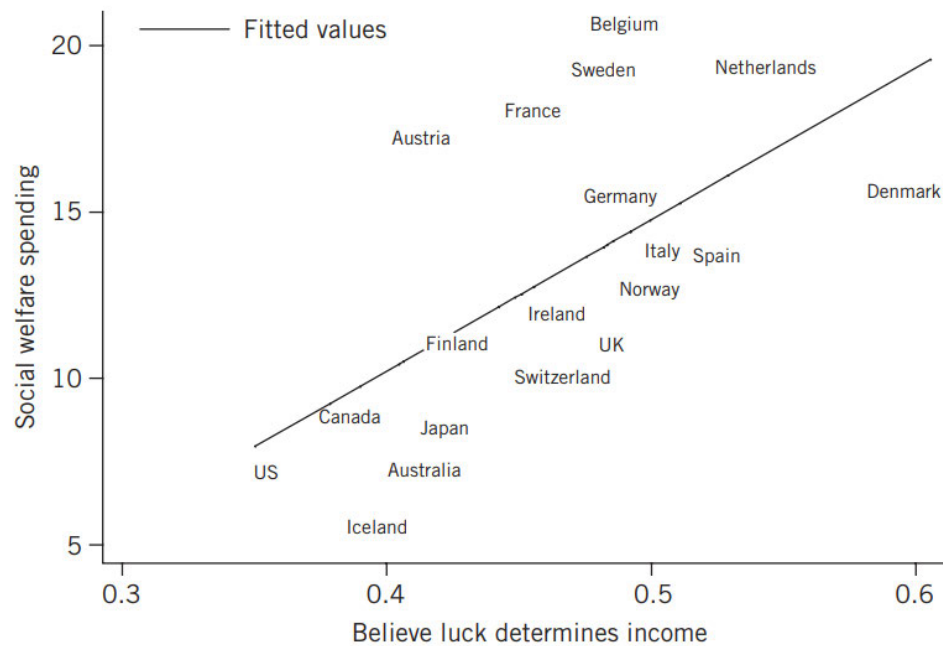


Figure 3. Comparison of the Belief that Luck Determines Income and Social Welfare Spending (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004, p. 187).

In democracies specifically, citizens from nations who spend more on social programs are more likely to believe poverty is caused by poor luck (Beer & Koster, 2009). However among the countries sampled, this positive association was only seen in nations who had been democratic for a longer period of time like Australia (Beer & Koster, 2009). The authors posit that this is likely because in newer democracies such as Slovakia, the values promoted by this form of government have not yet been fully adopted by the general public (Beer & Koster, 2009).

These findings are supported by Aarøe and Petersen, as social democratic welfare states spend more on average on social expenditure than liberal welfare states (Bryant & Raphael, 2020, p. 16). Beer and Koster also showed that a nation's social expenditure is correlated with the public's belief that the government has a role in reducing income inequality, indicating a potential relationship between the social expenditure, deservingness and public support for welfare programs (Beer & Koster, 2009). While Toikko and Rantanen did not find an association between social expenditure and the public's attitudes towards the welfare state, they believe this could simply indicate that the opinions of citizens from highly individualistic nations are less influenced by socio-political actions (Toikko & Rantanen, 2020).

Perceptions of deservingness as seen in the “lucky versus lazy” debate have notable implications on attitudes towards welfare spending preferences. According to Lefebvre:

“individualism—as widespread as it is—weakens support for social welfare policies because the perception is that hardworking individuals are financially rewarded while lazy and unmotivated individuals are financially punished, any attempt to intervene with this perceived natural order will be met with disapproval” (Lefebvre, 2017, p. 16).

In fact, Schneider and Jacoby (2005) believe that it is only natural for people who believe that welfare recipients are lazy to feel a sense of hostility towards the broader

welfare system. To conclude, individualism seems to promote the idea that the majority of welfare recipients are lazy and lack work ethic, and therefore are undeserving of welfare assistance.

Empathy

Greene (2008) discussed how excessive individualism within a society could increase attitudes of selfishness and egoism, “with self-concerns becoming overdeveloped and social consciousness staying underdeveloped” (p. 119). Therefore it is possible that another way through which individualism could influence public support of welfare assistance is by acting on feelings of empathy. Lynch and Kalaitzake (2020) posit that it is difficult to foster empathy in cultures which highly emphasize “a strict normative ideology of self-responsibility” (p. 248), with normativity being defined as something which involves passing judgements on the morality or “goodness/badness” of events (Wikimedia Foundation, n.d.). While broad in nature, this paper will define empathy as consisting of the following three components:

“(1) The ability to recognize emotions in oneself and others via different communicative cues such as facial expressions, speech, or behavior; (2) a cognitive component, also referred to as perspective taking or theory of mind, describing the competency to take over the perspective of another person, though maintaining the essential distinction between self and other; and (3) an affective

component, that is, sharing of emotional states with others or the ability to experience similar emotions as others.” (Derntl & Regenbogen, 2014, p. 70).

It is believed that an individual’s level of empathy towards a person or situation can be up-regulated (increased) or down-regulated (decreased) depending on context (Feldman et al., 2020). Some examples of such include whether the person belongs to the same in- or out-group as the observer, and whether the observer can foresee any negative emotions by showing empathy (Feldman et al., 2020). Feldman et al. (2020) investigated how empathy and individualism interacted with a person’s attitudes towards social welfare policies through conducting two survey experiments online. A person’s level of individualism was determined using a self-reported survey, where participants were asked if they agree or disagree with statements related to values individualism promotes (Feldman et al., 2020). Moreover, facial expressions were used to determine one’s level of empathy because self-reports are often inaccurate and biased in such instances (Feldman et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, the context given for why an individual requires welfare assistance can impact the amount of empathy an observer feels towards them. The importance of context was also seen when discussing cues on a welfare recipient’s deservingness of aid. In this specific study, a white man named Mark lost his job during the 2008 financial recession and required welfare assistance to provide for his wife and two kids despite having taken steps to regain his footing (ie: found occasional part-time

employment and has been actively looking for permanent work with an updated resume) (Feldman et al., 2020).

The study found that amongst participants who scored low for individualism, concern for Mark's wellbeing rose as their empathy scores increased. This demonstrates that participants were more sympathetic and compassionate towards Mark as their reported empathy levels increased, so long as they scored low on individualism. Alternatively in participants who scored high for individualism, concern for Mark's wellbeing decreased significantly as their empathy scores increased. In the instance that feelings of empathy in highly individualistic respondents are simply being disregarded rather than suppressed, one would expect to see no relationship between empathy and concern for Mark's wellbeing, which is not seen here. As such, the authors believe that this result is an indicator of empathy down-regulation in highly individualistic respondents.

Secondly, the authors found that individualism was very good at predicting levels of support for unemployment benefits in highly empathic respondents (Feldman et al., 2020). Similar to the results reported above, highly empathic respondents who scored low in individualism were more likely to support unemployment benefits for Mark, whereas highly empathic and individualistic respondents showed very low levels of support for this type of welfare assistance.

Interestingly, the way the type of assistance Mark needed was framed impacted empathy levels elicited in respondents. In some scenarios the researchers described Mark as requiring charity (nongovernmental) assistance whereas others described him needing

welfare assistance from a government program. Highly individualistic respondents were much more willing to support charity assistance for Mark contrasted with the strong denial shown for government assistance.

From these scenarios Feldman et al. (2020) were able to draw a conclusion on the effects of empathy and individualism on a broader scale to attitudes towards general government social welfare policies. Similar to previous results, the authors found that non-individualistic respondents displayed higher levels of support for welfare policies as their empathy levels increased. However in individualistic respondents, the lowest levels of support for welfare policies were seen in those with high empathic ability. Therefore, these studies demonstrated that individualism can act through empathy to decrease a person's support for welfare programs.

This study shows just how impactful a person's beliefs can be on their attitudes towards welfare policy and recipients, specifically in cases when their individualistic and empathic values collide. When examining a potential explanation for the low levels of sympathy seen in highly empathic individualists, the authors point to the phenomenon known as the "collapse of compassion". According to Cameron and Payne (2011), "the collapse of compassion describes a general phenomenon of diminished affective sensitivity toward groups of people in need of help" (p. 2), particularly in scenarios when there are multiple victims over just one. Interestingly, higher empathic ability and emotional regulation are associated with a stronger collapse in compassion in such scenarios (Cameron & Payne, 2011; Feldman et al., 2020), potentially as a way to avoid the overwhelming emotion associated with mass suffering. Another driver of compassion

collapse includes avoiding the financial costs anticipated with such an event (Cameron & Payne, 2011), though recent research has argued against this being the only driver (Hagman et al., 2022).

As aforementioned the stereotype that welfare recipients are lazy is more prevalent in individualistic societies, in large part because individualism promotes the self-responsibility of social status and assigns judgement to the deservingness of welfare recipients.

Therefore it is hypothesized that individualism could decrease the level of empathy a person feels towards those who require welfare assistance and subsequently decrease support for welfare policies, because self-responsibility and moral judgement leave little room for empathy and compassion.

Victim Blaming

When the self-responsibilization promoted by individualism is combined with judging a person's deservingness of assistance, victim blaming is a common outcome as "those who are unable to help themselves are held accountable for their own failure" (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020, p. 248). Moreover, increased victim blaming and decreased empathy are both observed when social outcomes are viewed as the result of individual choices (Bor & Simonovits, 2021), relating back to individualism's pillar of self-responsibility.

Victim blaming behaviours can be seen arising from individualistic theologies throughout history. In the late nineteenth century, the phrase "survival of the fittest" was

coined by Herbert Spencer, a famous English philosopher who occupied space in both the individualist and organicist schools of thought (Falk, 2020; Gray, 1985). Spencer also inspired the doctrine of Social Darwinism, which believes that some people are inherently better suited to thrive within society, and evolution will naturally select for these genetically superior individuals (Falk, 2020). Spencer stated,

“Partly by weeding out those of lowest development, and partly by subjecting those who remain to the never-ceasing discipline of experience, Nature secures the growth of a race who shall both understand the conditions of existence and be able to act up to them” (Watt, 1989, p. 22)

He strongly advocated against welfare provision or state involvement in public health because it would allow the inferior to evade natural selection, which is needed for society collectively to advance (Falk, 2020; Watt, 1989). Essentially, those who do not excel in life are deficient in some way and therefore should be left to suffer in their failures (Watt, 1989). This rhetoric was used to pave the way for the eugenicist social movement which swept over America from the early- to mid-1900s, which aimed to “eliminat[e] undesirable traits from the population” primarily by “preventing “unfit” individuals from having children” (History.com Editors, 2018). One infamous example of the eugenicist movement is Nazi Germany (History.com Editors, 2018).

These victim blaming tendencies can also be seen in modern society. To recall, individualism emphasizes self-responsibility as a normative ideology (Lynch &

Kalaitzake, 2020). This self-responsibilized individualism has very tangible impacts on behaviours of victim blaming targeted towards welfare recipients. According to Lynch and Kalaitzake (2020), “the individualization of nation state welfare [promotes the idea that] those who are unable to help themselves are held accountable for their own failure.” (p. 248). As such, individuals requiring welfare assistance are often left to suffer the consequences since people are deemed ultimately accountable for whatever life circumstances they encounter.

As previously mentioned, van Elteren (1998) investigated how levels of individualism differ between sixteen nation-states across Western Europe and North America, discovering that the USA ranked highest in utilitarian individualism. With respect to victim blaming specifically, van Elteren found that North American countries (the USA and Canada) were much more likely to blame the individual for being poor, whereas respondents from Western European countries offered more structural explanations for why an individual may be poor (van Elteren, 1998). The author’s reasoning for this trend relates back to the “lucky versus lazy” viewpoints previously discussed, saying that poverty in Europe is commonly seen as a result of socioeconomic and structural factors whereas North Americans typically blame personal factors like laziness (van Elteren, 1998).

Moreover, individualistic societies are inclined to automatically place blame on the individual for needing social assistance if the cause of their poverty is not apparent (Lefebvre, 2017). Wilson (1996) conducted a survey in Maryland, USA to investigate how causal beliefs vary for three types of poverty; welfare dependency, homelessness,

and poor immigrant labourers. This study found that respondents were more likely to cite individualistic explanations such as poor work ethic for welfare dependency than the other two forms of poverty (Wilson, 1996). The author attests that this may in-part be due to concentrated efforts made in the public arena to highlight the structural causes of homelessness and impoverished migrant workers specifically, which “served to mute traditional individualistic beliefs about poverty” (Wilson, 1996, p. 419). However, no such attention was paid to welfare dependency (Wilson, 1996), leading to survey respondents to increasingly believe this form of poverty is individually caused. Consequentially, Lefebvre (2017) states that individuals receiving welfare assistance may be more likely to be viewed negatively and experience more prejudice than other forms of poverty since they are deemed more responsible for their situation (Lefebvre, 2017). As a result, welfare recipients may experience harsher stigmatization than homeless individuals or migrant workers given that their dependency is believed to be the product of an individual deficiency (Lefebvre, 2017). Lefebvre goes on to discuss how this harsh stigma welfare recipients face could potentially limit their social mobility and ability to improve their situation (Lefebvre, 2017), in a sense creating a negative feedback loop.

In summary, individualism has promoted the idea that people alone are responsible for their own success, therefore those who require social welfare assistance are often blamed for their “failures”. This is supported by Walker (2014), who states that people in individualistic or market-oriented societies will likely experience higher levels of shame related to their poverty, as these cultures see “individual economic success” (p. 2) as indicators of “social status and personal identity” (p. 2). This has impacted the

general public's support for welfare programs, as recipients are often labelled as lazy and subsequently undeserving of help. Claiming that poor social status is a result of personal dysfunction (Hofrichter, 2003) is problematic as it reinforces, or at least turns a blind eye, towards the systems that perpetuate inequity (Bor & Simonovits, 2021). Consequently, the level of social protection within the population may be hindered.

Comparison: Welfare Assistance from the State versus Charities

While the main focus of this paper was investigating individualism's potential impacts on attitudes towards welfare assistance provided by the state, an interesting duality arose surrounding charity as a vehicle for aiding the poor.

Some literature asserts that the method through which welfare assistance is delivered is irrelevant, as individualism promotes similar views regardless of whether this assistance is provided via the state or through a charity. As aforementioned, Watt connects Max Weber's ideas on Christianity's reformation to modern day individualism (Watt, 1989). He states that the virtues of "diligence, punctuality [and] frugality" (Watt, 1989, p. 12) which were promoted during this period led to the decreased desire and effort to provide for the poor, since people have a "central earthly duty, to fend for themselves and stand on their own feet" (Watt, 1989, p. 12). This impact extended not only to welfare provision by the state, but also private charity (Watt, 1989).

However, other scholars believe that individualism views charity aid in a more positive light than state assistance. According to Feldman et al. (2020), individualism targets welfare policies more vigorously than charities as welfare programs are believed

to “erode[s] self-reliance and create[s] dependency” (p. 344). This is because charities have several key characteristics which do not create the same dependency as government programs, including a) they are shorter in duration, b) they provide limited, targeted support, c) are delivered by the community for the community (Feldman et al., 2020). This view is supported in part by Alesina and Glaeser (2004), who report that Americans donate more to private charities than Europeans do. However, the authors posit that this could potentially be because a certain amount of control over who receives the financial assistance is granted when a person is choosing which charity or cause to donate to (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004).

This comparison demonstrates that individualism may impact the public’s support for economic or social assistance provided not only from the state, but also potentially from private charities. This can serve as an additional barrier for people in need accessing the supports they require.

Implications for Social Protection

The threat individualism poses to the health of a society is not novel. Alexis de Tocqueville, a 19th century French political theorist well known for being one of the first people to discuss individualism (History.com Editors, 2009), warned long ago about the potential dangers, saying that individualism will “dry up ‘the source of public virtues... and will finally be absorbed in selfishness,’” (Greene, 2008, p.118). Given the increasing rates of individualism seen across the globe, this is becoming an even more pressing topic to research.

The interactions between the pathways and concepts described thus far have very significant implications for population social protection. As discussed throughout this article, individualism impacts the public's opinions on welfare policies and programs by promoting the idea that people are solely responsible for their situation. This emphasis on self-responsibilization is problematic since it can lead to decreased empathy (Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020) and victim blaming, saying that it is because of individual failures that a person requires welfare assistance. Most critically, political economy perspectives demonstrate how the hyperfocus on individual deficiency as the cause of social inequities can lead to broader structural factors like class, gender, and race to be ignored (Greene, 2008; Kaplan, 1987). According to Hofrichter (2003), "individualism limits the ability to evaluate the social and historical dynamics of health and illness and leads to a greater emphasis on increasing social capital, social cohesion, and other psychosocial approaches, distorting connections to politics and power." (p. 29) At the policy level, solutions will subsequently focus on addressing proximal determinants of health like behavioural and lifestyle factors while disregarding the "causes of the causes". For example, many strategies will attempt to "fix the individual" with therapy since the problem is seen as an individual deficiency (Lefebvre, 2017; Throop, 2009). However, without dedicated action, the unhealthy systems and structures in power that perpetuated these inequities will remain unchanged. To provide a rudimentary analogy, it is like putting a band-aid on an infected wound.

Furthermore, the hyperfocus on health as an individual's responsibility allows the state to shirk its duty to provide social protection for its citizens in the first place.

According to Foucauldian thought,

“Neoliberal governmentality is a particular form of post-welfare state politics in which the state essentially outsources the responsibility for ensuring the 'well-being' of the population. The primary recipient of this responsibility is derived from a strengthened notion of the subject, as a rational individual. Indeed, these new subjectivities are expected to 'look after themselves'.” (Stunlaw, 2012).

Moreover even if the state indeed sought to fulfill its duty to protect the social security of its citizens, without public support it will be extremely difficult for the welfare state to implement policies and programs. The idea of self-responsibility can reduce public support for welfare programs, as individualism promotes the belief that social mobility is attainable for all with enough hard work. If these beliefs are upheld by the public, then austerity cutbacks made to social protection expenditures at the expense of the population's health are less likely to be questioned (Greene, 2008). Additionally, the actors and systems that benefit the most from societal inequities are able to conduct their “questionable business practices and environmental destruction” without scrutiny (Greene, 2008, p. 119).

In sum, individualism has the ability to undermine the welfare state's ability to provide social protection for its citizens, allowing for the broader structural factors that create unhealthy societies to continue unabated.

Strengths, Limitations and Research Gaps

This research paper aimed to identify pathways through which individualism could act upon public support for welfare programs. It provided an interdisciplinary view on the topic, considering both political economy and critical psychology perspectives on how the cultural value of individualism and opinions towards welfare policies interact. This interdisciplinary lens allowed for value-laden topics like victim blaming to be examined not just from a high-level system view, but also at the personal psychology level. This review led to the creation of a figure which displays potential interactions between individualism, support for welfare policies, and social protection as posited by this paper (Figure 2).

However there are some potential limitations to this review. First, it is always possible that relevant articles were missed during the literature search. This could have occurred for a few reasons; perhaps the search phrase was not comprehensive enough, or that the Google Scholar database does not cover all journals. Moreover, articles had to be in English and accessible through York University in order to be included, which could have led to some relevant articles being excluded.

Second, there is significant variation in how the term individualism and its subsets (economic individualism, rugged individualism, utilitarian individualism, expressive

individualism, etc.) are defined. While this topic was discussed and a working definition for how individualism is being defined for this paper specifically was provided, not every article included in this review used the same definition. This can make synthesizing information across articles difficult, as different studies use different definitions of individualism.

Third, it is important to note that individualism is not a concrete or static ideology within a population, as studies have shown that it does vary topic to topic (van Elteren, 1998). Therefore, it is misleading to say that all liberal welfare states or nations like the USA and Canada hold individualistic views on all subjects. This can make studying individualism challenging from a research perspective.

From the findings presented throughout this report, two research gaps have been identified as the path forward. To start, the lack of research on this topic relating to the Canadian context specifically should be addressed, as the majority of the literature is situated in an American or broader Western context. While Canadian and American cultures do have their similarities, there are also important historical, political and cultural differences that distinguish them. It would be interesting to see if similar results would be found in a uniquely Canadian context.

Finally, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of the societal structures and processes that maintain individualism, their impacts on social production, and means of modifying these processes should they prove to be a threat. This step will be the most essential to transform this research interest into concrete theories applicable in the public policy process.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear that the social philosophy and practice of individualism does have an impact on the general public's opinions on the welfare state and its programs. Many of the pathways through which individualism acts upon this public support can also be seen in a Canadian context. The Angus Reid Institute (ARI), a Canadian non-profit institute, has also conducted independent research on poverty in Canada (Angus Reid Institute [ARI], 2018). In 2018, they conducted an online survey of 2542 people to investigate how Canadian adults perceive the causes of poverty, what their attitudes towards the poor themselves are, and whether they believe the government is doing enough to support this population (ARI, 2018). The ARI used the online market research platform (Maru Voice Canada, n.d.) called Maru Voice Canada to conduct their survey (ARI, 2018). It is important to note that because only members of Maru Voice Canada can participate in the survey, it is possible that this online research platform attracts a certain type of individual which could lead to results not being generalizable to the wider Canadian population.

When examining the lucky versus lazy debate, the ARI found that approximately 75% of respondents disagree with the idea that people end up poor because of personal laziness, while more than 70% stated that they believe poverty is most often caused by extraneous circumstances beyond an individual's reasonable control (ARI, 2018). While these findings may appear to differ from what we would expect to see from a liberal welfare state, they do not necessarily contradict previously presented arguments. To recall, van Elteren (1998) found that 32% of Canadian respondents cite laziness as the

reason why someone lives in poverty. Twenty years later this belief only appears to have decreased slightly, with the ARI reporting that 25% of Canadians agree with the statement that “people are poor because they are lazy” (ARI, 2018, p. 4). While 25% is nowhere near close to the majority, it is still possible that Aarøe and Petersen’s findings that liberal welfare states are more likely to hold a default “lazy” perception compared to social democratic welfare states “unlucky” default remains true (Aarøe & Petersen, 2014). This could potentially indicate a shift that is taking place in the younger population’s attitudes towards poverty.

When the ARI investigated whether Canadians believe that the welfare support provided by the government is sufficient, results were divided almost equally down the middle (ARI, 2018). 52% of respondents agreed with the statement that “Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don't go far enough to help them live with dignity” (ARI, 2018, p. 5), promoting the idea that welfare assistance currently being provided by the state is inadequate. Alternatively, 47% of respondents believe that “A good work ethic is all you need to escape poverty” (ARI, 2018, p. 5), clearly displaying the individualistic belief that work ethic is directly tied with a person’s success and worth. The ARI noted that this division in beliefs mainly arose from differences in political orientation and household income, with wealthier and conservative respondents more likely to believe that with improved work ethic one can escape poverty (ARI, 2018). This is likely explained in-part by the theory of fundamental attribution error, which to recall is where an individual commonly cites internal factors like personality or character when explaining others’ actions yet provides external explanations for their

own circumstances (Healy, 2017). A study conducted on the attitudes of American adults towards poverty in 2001 supports this hypothesis, findings that poorer individuals were more likely to cite external circumstances as the cause of their financial struggles (Population Reference Bureau, 2002).

While many Canadians still commonly believe that poverty results from individual responsibility rather than more systemic forces (Raphael, 2020), the ARI study reports that approximately 66% of respondents feel that their federal and provincial governments do not do enough to address the issue of poverty (ARI, 2018). With over 80% of Canadians reporting that “the growing gap between the rich and everyone else is unacceptable,” (ARI, 2018, p. 2), it is possible that public support for welfare assistance provided by the state is being strengthened within the Canadian population. From a health policy and equity perspective, this provides a glimpse of hope that the problematic attribution of poverty solely as an individual's failures or lack of discipline may be waning.

Acknowledgements

To say that I have never attempted an undertaking quite as taxing as this research paper would be a gross understatement. This paper is the culmination not only of 12 months worth of learning and research, but also the support I have received from those closest to me.

First and foremost, I need to offer my sincerest thanks to my research committee. Dr Raphael, you have offered me an incredible amount of support and guidance not only in this paper, but also in furthering my academic career. I am beyond grateful to have the opportunity to keep working with you throughout my PhD! Dr Hynie, you helped me bring my research interests to the next level, pushing me to consider the topic of individualism and welfare from a psychology perspective. Your feedback was truly invaluable.

Finally, to the two people who have read even the most minute iterations of this paper at every stage. To my twin sister Ocean, thank you for helping me find the words I was looking for when they evaded me, and for knowing that a half-pint of brownie cheesecake ice-cream was the obvious solution to my mental blocks. To my partner Aadyota, thank you for helping me focus my jumbled scatterbrain when I have a new idea, and for sitting patiently by my side through many sleepless nights. I know I can count on you both no matter what!

References

- Aarøe, L., & Petersen, M. B. (2014). Crowding Out Culture: Scandinavians and Americans Agree on Social Welfare in the Face of Deservingness Cues. *The Journal of Politics*, 76(3), 684–697. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002238161400019X>
- Adams, G., Estrada-Villalta, S., Sullivan, D., & Markus, H. R. (2019). The Psychology of Neoliberalism and the neoliberalism of psychology. *Journal of Social Issues*, 75(1), 189–216. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12305>
- Alesina, A., & Glaeser, E. L. (2004). *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe A World of Difference*. Oxford University Press.
- Angus Reid Institute. (2018). Poverty in Canada: Most say governments are doing too little, but disagree on what should be done. Angus Reid Institute. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://angusreid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018.07.04-poverty-part-2.pdf>
- Bambra C. (2007). Going beyond The three worlds of welfare capitalism: regime theory and public health research. *Journal of epidemiology and community health*, 61(12), 1098–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2007.064295>
- Barr, N. A. (2012). *Economics of the welfare state* (Fifth edition). Oxford University Press.
- Beck Knudsen, A. S. (2019). Those Who Stayed: Individualism, Self-Selection and Cultural Change during the Age of Mass Migration. IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc.

- Beer, P., & Koster, F. (2009). *Sticking together or falling apart? : Solidarity in an era of individualization and globalization* . Amsterdam University Press.
- Bejan, R., & Nikolova, K. (2021). How Canada compares to welfare states in COVID-19 cases and deaths. *Dalhousie News*. Retrieved August 7, 2022, from <https://www.dal.ca/news/2021/10/12/how-canada-compares-to-welfare-states-in-covid-19-cases-and-deat.html>
- Bergqvist, K., Yngwe, M. Å., & Lundberg, O. (2013). Understanding the role of welfare state characteristics for health and inequalities – an analytical review. *BMC Public Health*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-1234>
- Bisin, A., & Verdier, T. (2001). Public Policies and the Dynamics of Cultural Values in the Welfare State. *Annales d'Économie et de Statistique*, 63/64, 215–231. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20076303>
- Boli, J., & Thomas, G. M. (1997). World Culture in the World Polity: A Century of International Non-Governmental Organization. *American Sociological Review*, 62(2), 171–190. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657298>
- Bonanno, A., & Calasanti, T. M. (1988). Laissez-faire strategies and the crisis of the Welfare State: A comparative analysis of the status of the elderly in Italy and in the United States. *Sociological Focus*, 21(3), 245–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.1988.10570982>
- Bor, A., & Simonovits, G. (2021). Empathy, deservingness, and preferences for welfare assistance: A large-scale online perspective-taking experiment. *Political Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09728-4>

- Bryant, T. (2016). *Health policy in Canada* (Second edition.). Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Bryant, T., & Raphael, D. (2020). *The Politics of Health in the Canadian Welfare State*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Cameron, C. D., & Payne, B. K. (2011). Escaping Affect: How Motivated Emotion Regulation Creates Insensitivity to Mass Suffering. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021643>
- Coburn, D. (2010). Health and health care: A political economy perspective. In D. Raphael, T. Bryant and M. Rioux (eds.) *Staying Alive: Critical Perspectives on Health, Illness, and Health Care*, 2nd edition. Toronto, Canadian Scholars Press.
- Cole, N. L. (2020a). Definition of Base and Superstructure Core Concepts of Marxist Theory. ThoughtCo. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/definition-of-base-and-superstructure-3026372>
- Cole, N. L. (2020b). What Is Cultural Hegemony? ThoughtCo. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121#:~:text=In%20sum%2C%20cultural%20hegemony%2C%20or,D.>
- Corporate Finance Institute. (2020). Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Corporate Finance Institute. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory>
- Derntl, B., & Regenbogen, C. (2014). Empathy. *Social Cognition and Metacognition in Schizophrenia*, 69–81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-405172-0.00004-1>

Devine. (2000). The Positive Political Economy of Individualism and Collectivism:

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. *Politics & Society*, 28(2), 265–304.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329200028002006>

Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). False consciousness. Encyclopædia

Britannica. Retrieved November 11, 2021, from

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/false-consciousness>.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton,

Princeton University Press.

Esping-Andersen, G., & Myles, J. (2011). Economic inequality and the Welfare State.

Oxford Handbooks Online.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199606061.013.0025>

Falk, D. (2020). The complicated legacy of Herbert Spencer, the man who coined

'survival of the fittest'. *Smithsonian Magazine*. Retrieved July 29, 2022, from

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/herbert-spencer-survival-of-the-fittest-180974756/>

FELDMAN, S. (1983). ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM AND AMERICAN PUBLIC

OPINION. *American Politics Research*, 11(1), 3–29.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/004478083011001001>

Feldman, S. (1988). Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core

Beliefs and Values. *American Journal of Political Science*, 32(2), 416–440.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2111130>

- Feldman, S., Huddy, L., Wronski, J., & Lown, P. (2020). The Interplay of Empathy and Individualism in Support for Social Welfare Policies. *Political Psychology*, 41(2), 343–362. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12620>
- Fischer, R., & Poortinga, Y. H. (2012). Are cultural values the same as the values of individuals? an examination of similarities in personal, social and cultural value structures. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 12(2), 157–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595812439867>
- Food and Agriculture Organization. (n.d.). *What is social protection?* Social Protection . Retrieved November 12, 2021, from <https://www.fao.org/social-protection/overview/whatissp/en/>.
- Gray, T. S. (1985). Herbert Spencer: Individualist or Organicist? *Political Studies*, 33(2), 236–253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1985.tb01572.x>
- Greene, T. W. (2008). Three ideologies of individualism: Toward assimilating a theory of individualisms and their consequences. *Critical Sociology*, 34(1), 117–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920507084628>
- Hagman, W., Tinghög, G., Dickert, S., Slovic, P., & Västfjäll, D. (2022). Motivated down-regulation of emotion and compassion collapse revisited. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.801150>
- Harvey M. (2021). The Political Economy of Health: Revisiting Its Marxian Origins to Address 21st-Century Health Inequalities. *American journal of public health*, 111(2), 293–300. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305996>

- Healy, P. (2017). Fundamental attribution error: What it is & how to avoid it. Business Insights Blog. Retrieved August 19, 2022, from <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/the-fundamental-attribution-error>
- History.com Editors. (2009). Alexis de Tocqueville. History.com. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.history.com/topics/france/alexis-de-tocqueville>.
- History.com Editors. (2018). Social Darwinism. History.com. Retrieved August 19, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/social-darwinism>
- Hofrichter, R. (2003). The politics of health inequities: Contested terrain. In Health and Social Justice: A Reader on Ideology, and Inequity in the Distribution of Disease (pp. 1-56). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Hofstede Insights. (n.d.). National Culture. Hofstede Insights. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/>.
- Kaplan, M. S. (1987). Implications of individualism in public health policy. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 21(1), 349–356.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.1987.11504615>
- Kersbergen, K., & Vis, B. (2013). Comparative Welfare State Politics: Development, Opportunities, and Reform. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[doi:10.1017/CBO9781139021852](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139021852)
- Korpi, W., & Palme, J. (1998). The paradox of redistribution and strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, inequality, and poverty in the Western countries. *American Sociological Review*, 63(5), 661. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657333>

- Law, B., & Shek, D. T. L. (2014). Beliefs about poverty. *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, 353–359. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_166
- Lefebvre, K. (2017). *Racial Prejudice, Individualism, and Political Identity: Understanding the Forty-Year Trend of Anti-Welfare Spending Preferences*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Leon, D. A., Vågerö, D., & Olausson, P. O. (1992). Social class differences in infant mortality in Sweden: comparison with England and Wales. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 305(6855), 687–691. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.305.6855.687>
- Lukes, S. (2006). *Individualism*. ECPR Press.
- Lumen Candela. (n.d.). What Is Social Psychology? Introduction to Psychology – Brown-Weinstock. Retrieved August 19, 2022, from [https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-intropsychmaster/chapter/what-is-social-psychology/#:~:text=These%20dispositional%20explanations%20are%20clear,poverty%20\(%5Blink%5D\).](https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-intropsychmaster/chapter/what-is-social-psychology/#:~:text=These%20dispositional%20explanations%20are%20clear,poverty%20(%5Blink%5D).)
- Lynch, K., & Kalaitzake, M. (2020). Affective and calculative solidarity: The impact of individualism and neoliberal capitalism. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 23(2), 238–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431018786379>
- Macpherson, C. B. (1989) Individualism. In: Eatwell J., Milgate M., Newman P. (eds) *The Invisible Hand*. The New Palgrave. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-20313-0_18

- Martín-Martín, A., Costas, R., van Leeuwen, T., & López-Cózar, E. D. (2018). Evidence of open access of scientific publications in google scholar: A large-scale analysis. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/k54uv>
- Maru Voice Canada. (n.d.). About Us. Maru Voice Canada. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://www.maruvoice.ca/static/about>
- McCartney, G., Hearty, W., Arnot, J., Popham, F., Cumbers, A., & McMaster, R. (2019). Impact of Political Economy on Population Health: A Systematic Review of Reviews. *American journal of public health*, 109(6), e1–e12. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305001>
- Minkler, M., Wallace, S. P., & McDonald, M. (1994). The Political Economy of Health: A Useful Theoretical Tool for Health Education Practice. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 15(2), 111–125. <https://doi.org/10.2190/T1Y0-8ARU-RL96-LPDU>
- Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. (2012). Is National Culture a Meaningful Concept?: Cultural Values Delineate Homogeneous National Clusters of In-Country Regions. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 46(2), 133–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397111427262>
- Moskovitch, A. (2015). *Welfare state*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/welfare-state>.
- Oorschot, W., Opielka, M., & Pfau-Effinger, B. (2008). *Culture and welfare state : values and social policy in comparative perspective* . Edward Elgar.

- Oxford Cambridge and RSA. (n.d.). A Level Topic Exploration Pack: Sociology
Marxism. Oxford Cambridge and RSA. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from
<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/170204-marxism.pdf>.
- Patil, K. B. (2018). Understanding the Concept of Cultural Hegemony with Examples.
Sciencestruck. Retrieved from <https://sciencestruck.com/cultural-hegemony>
- Pfau-Effinger, B. (2004). Culture and welfare state policies: Reflections on a complex
interrelation. *Journal of Social Policy*, 34(1), 3–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047279404008232>
- Population Reference Bureau. (2002). American attitudes about poverty and the poor.
Retrieved August 20, 2022, from <https://www.prb.org/resources/american-attitudes-about-poverty-and-the-poor/>
- Raphael, D. (2020). Poverty in Canada : implications for health and quality of life (Third
edition.). Canadian Scholars.
- Realo, A., Koido, K., Ceulemans, E., & Allik, J. (2002). Three components of
individualism. *European Journal of Personality*, 16(3), 163–184.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/per.437>
- Ruckert, A., & Labonté, R. (2017). Health inequities in the age of austerity: The need for
Social Protection Policies. *Social Science & Medicine*, 187, 306–311.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.03.029>
- Santos, H. C., Varnum, M. E. W., & Grossmann, I. (2017). Global Increases in
Individualism. *Psychological Science*, 28(9), 1228–1239.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617700622>

- Schneider, S. K., & Jacoby, W. G. (2005). Elite Discourse and American Public Opinion: The Case of Welfare Spending. *Political Research Quarterly*, 58(3), 367–379.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3595608>
- Schwartz, S. H. (1999). A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work. *Applied Psychology*, 48(1), 23–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1999.tb00047.x>
- Schwartz, S. H. (2006). A Theory of Cultural Value Orientations: Explication and Applications, *Comparative Sociology*, 5(2-3), 137-182. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1163/156913306778667357>
- Schwartz, S. H. (2014). Rethinking the Concept and Measurement of Societal Culture in Light of Empirical Findings. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 45(1), 5–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022113490830>
- Shen, F., & Edwards, H. H. (2005). Economic Individualism, Humanitarianism, and Welfare Reform: A Value-Based Account of Framing Effects. *Journal of Communication*, 55(4), 795–809. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2005.tb03023.x>
- StunLaw. (2012). Code, Foucault and Neoliberal Governmentality. Retrieved August 19, 2022, from <http://stunlaw.blogspot.com/2012/03/code-foucault-and-neoliberal.html#:~:text=For%20Foucault%2C%20Neoliberal%20governmentality%20is,%2Dbeing'%20of%20the%20population.>

Szalavitz, M. (2017). Why do we think poor people are poor because of their own bad choices? The Guardian. Retrieved August 19, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/05/us-inequality-poor-people-bad-choices-wealthy-bias>

Throop, E. A. (2009). *Psychotherapy, American culture, and Social Policy: Immoral individualism* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Toikko, T., & Rantanen, T. (2020). Association between individualism and welfare attitudes: An analysis of citizens' attitudes towards the state's welfare responsibility. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 8(1), 132–150. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v8i1.1162>

University of Wisconsin-Madison. (n.d.). Means-tested programs. INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON POVERTY. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/research/economic-support/means-tested-programs/>

van Elteren, M. (1998). The Riddles of Individualism and Community in American and Dutch Society. *Journal of American Culture*, 21(1), 43–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.1998.2101_43.x

Walker, R. (2014). *The shame of poverty*. Oxford University Press.

Watt, J. (1989). *Individualism and Educational Theory* (1st ed., Ser. Philosophy and Education). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

- WHO Regional Office for Europe . (2017). *Social Protection, income and health inequities. Final report of the task group on GDP, taxes, income and Welfare (2016)*. World Health Organization. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/social-determinants/publications/2016/social-protection,-income-and-health-inequities.-final-report-of-the-task-group-on-gdp,-taxes,-income-and-welfare-2016>.
- Wikimedia Foundation. (2022). Normativity. Wikipedia. Retrieved July 30, 2022, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normativity#:~:text=In%20philosophy%2C%20normative%20theory%20aims,has%20its%20origins%20in%20Greece>
- Wilkinson, R. (2011). How economic inequality harms societies [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_wilkinson_how_economic_inequality_harms_societies
- Wilson, G. (1996). Toward A Revised Framework for Examining Beliefs About the Causes of Poverty. *Sociological Quarterly*, 37(3), 413–428. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1996.tb00746.x>
- World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. (2015). Health 2020: Social Protection and health. Sector Brief on Social Protection. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/324631/Health-2020-Social-protection-and-health-en.pdf.

Appendix A

Table 1: Initial Abstract Screening and Final Inclusion/Exclusion Decisions

Abstract #	Article Name	Author	Source	Decision after Abstract Review	Decision after Full-Text Review
1	The Interplay of Empathy and Individualism in Support for Social Welfare Policies	Feldman, S., Huddy, L., Wronski, J., & Lown, P.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
2	Association between individualism and welfare attitudes: An analysis of citizens' attitudes towards the state's welfare responsibility	Toikko, T., & Rantanen, T.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
3	The rise of structural individualism: Millennial attitudes toward welfare and poverty	Watson, J. E., & Pederson, J. G.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	<u>Include</u>
4	Beyond individualism: Social work and social identity	Houston, S.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	Exclude
5	Psychotherapy, American culture, and social policy: Immoral individualism	Throop, E. A.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
6	Affective and calculative solidarity: The impact of individualism and neoliberal capitalism	Lynch, K., & Kalaitzake, M.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
7	Relational autonomy, liberal individualism, and the social constitution of selves	Christman, J.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
8	Racial Prejudice, Individualism, and Political Identity: Understanding the Forty-Year Trend of Anti-Welfare Spending Preferences	Lefebvre, K	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
9	Contemporary feminism between individualism and community	Bussemaker, J.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
10	Failed individualism in community care: an example from elder abuse	Biggs, S.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude

11	Individualism and inequality: The future of work and politics	Fevre, R.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	Exclude
12	[CITATION] Social Policy, 1830-1914. Individualism, Collectivism and the Origins of the Welfare State	Checkland, S. G.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
13	Three ideologies of individualism: Toward assimilating a theory of individualisms and their consequences	Greene, T. W.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
14	How to Provide Sexual Education: Lessons from a Pandemic on Masculinity, Individualism, and the Neoliberal Agenda	Lamb, S., Pagan-Ortiz, M., & Bonilla, S.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
15	Reframing facemasks as tools to balance individualism and social responsibility	Lee, O. E.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
16	Personal communities: Responsible individualism or another fall for public [man]?	Wilkinson, J.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
17	Who is Neoliberal? Durkheimian Individualism and Support for Market Mechanisms	Landier, A., & Thesmar, D.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	Exclude
18	“That's How Family Is: We Take, Give, and Give Back”: Low-Income Mothers'(In) ability to Rely on Kin at the Intersection of Familism and Individualism	Offer, S.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
19	COVID-19 and public masking compliance in Korea: We-ness and individualism-collectivism at the individual level	Mo, Y., & Park, H. S.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
20	Rape crisis counseling and the culture of individualism	Andresen, M. L., & Renzetti, C.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
21	Saving marriage culture “one marriage at a time”: Relationship education and the reinstitutionalization of marriage in an era of individualism	Randles, J., & Avishai, O.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude

22	The riddles of individualism and community in American and Dutch society	van Elteren, M.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
23	Individualism before multiculturalism	Loury, G. C.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	Exclude
24	Hate, individualism, and the social bond	Frost, K. M., & Richardson, F. C.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
25	Featured Article: Hate, Individualism, and the Social Bond	Frost, K. M., & Richardson, F. C.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
26	Individualism before multiculturalism	Watt, J.	Google Scholar	Include	<u>Include</u>
27	Attention, individualism, and humility: Using the theories of Simone Weil to disrupt neoliberal discourses in early childhood education.	Delaune, A.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
28	Modern Self-Making: individualism and the construction of the Neoliberal self in modern self-help literature/vorgelegt von Daniela Lippe	Lippe, D. F.	Google Scholar	Exclude	Exclude
29	Mind Playing Tricks: Individualism, Upward Mobility, and the Commitment to Self-Determination Among the Urban Poor	Bryerton, W.	Google Scholar	Review full-text	
30	ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION	Feldman, S.	Reference from Toikko, T., & Rantanen, T.	Include	<u>Include</u>
31	Sticking together or falling apart? : Solidarity in an era of individualization and globalization	Beer, P., & Koster, F.	Reference from Lynch, K., & Kalaitzake, M.	Include	<u>Include</u>

32	Crowding Out Culture: Scandinavians and Americans Agree on Social Welfare in the Face of Deservingness Cues	Aarøe, L., & Petersen, M. B.	Reference from Feldman, S., Huddy, L., Wronski, J., & Lown, P.	Include	<u>Include</u>
33	Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values.	Feldman, S.	Reference from Feldman, S., Huddy, L., Wronski, J., & Lown, P.	Include	<u>Include</u>
34	Economic Individualism, Humanitarianism, and Welfare Reform: A Value-Based Account of Framing Effects.	Shen, F., & Edwards, H. H.	Reference from Toikko, T., & Rantanen, T.	Include	<u>Include</u>
35	Elite Discourse and American Public Opinion: The Case of Welfare Spending	Schneider, S. K., & Jacoby, W. G.	Reference from Lefebvre, K.	Include	<u>Include</u>