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PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF CLASS CONFLICT IN 21 NATIONS

In light of Marxian, Durkheimian, Modernization and reference group theories, this paper assesses the intensity of class conflict in twenty one nations across Eastern and Western Europe and the New World using ISSP data which provide large, representative, national samples. Despite some theorists' claims of the vanishing of the class cleavage, few respondents throughout the industrial world, even in the notoriously harmonious Scandinavian world deny the existence of class conflict. Regression analysis reveals that substantial differences among cultural-institutional groups of countries remain after controlling for individual-level differences in education, age, and sex. Americans perceive substantially the highest levels of conflict and Scandinavians perceive their societies as the least conflictual. The other Anglo-Celtic countries and the Communist and post-Communist societies are intermediate between these two. This ordering is particularly interesting because it does not follow the GNP gradient that has recently been discovered in feelings of fairness of pay and in subjective class self-placement.

"Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains!" was Marx's ringing war-cry, urging workers to revolt against the middle classes, the poor to rise against the rich, employees to revolt against their bosses. Marx raised his war-cry in the last century and ever since then, the middle classes, the rich, employers, and governments have lived in some apprehension, if not outright fear, of revolution from below. Durkheim, by contrast, saw the possibility of mutual respect and harmony

between the classes arising from their interdependence – the hope for organic solidarity.

Which view has history vindicated, and what is the prognosis for the future? In particular: (1) what remains from the industrial world's long, varied history of class conflict? Have ordinary people consigned class conflict to the rubbish-bin of history, together with the Communist regimes that espoused it? Or do conflicts between rich and poor, between middle and working class, between workers and managers still loom large in ordinary people's minds? (2) Does history matter – have the conciliatory policies of European welfare states in past generations shaped their citizens' present views? Consistent with Durkheim and with the view that history matters, at least to a modest extent, Kelley and Evans (1995) reported middling levels of perceived conflict in three Anglo-Celtic societies and somewhat lower levels in three Germanic Central-European societies in the late 1980s, but how general that pattern is remains to be seen.

This paper addresses these issues with extensive survey data on the public's perception of conflict: 34 surveys from 21 nations, with over 50,000 respondents. The surveys were conducted between 1987 and 1997, about a century after Marx and Durkheim first formulated their hypotheses. Two of the surveys show how much conflict there was in a type of society Marx ardently desired but never observed – Communist societies.

THEORY

How Much Conflict?

Traditional Marxist arguments hold that industrialization drives working class wages down to the smallest pittance on which one could survive, and that laboring in modern large-scale organizations would lead working class people to see that they share a common fate, to recognize their position at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and, under most conditions, to organize politically to try to improve their position. This produces a society with intense conflict between middle class and working class, between management and workers, and between the prosperous and the poor (table 1).

Table 1. Alternative theories

	Marx	Durkheim	Functionalism, modernization	Reference group
<i>Sources of differentiation:</i>	Class Employment Income & wealth	Employment Income & wealth	Employment Income & wealth	Class Employment Income & wealth
<i>Level of conflict:</i>	High	Moderate	Low	Low
<i>Differences between capitalist and communist nations:</i>	Capitalist high conflict; communist low conflict	(no specific prediction; history & policy matter)	No difference - similar technology in both	No differences - similar reference groups in both
<i>Differences among capitalist nations due to history and government policy:</i>	Growing conflict over time due to class polarization; no other differences.	Large history and policy differences.	No differences - similar technology in all	No differences - similar reference groups in all
<i>Individual differences in perceptions of conflict:</i>	Large class differences; no others	(no prediction)	(no prediction)	Project characteristics of own reference group ¹

1. So older, female and higher status respondents project the generally high consensus in their reference groups onto the world at large.

Like Marx, Durkheim thought that the trends towards city life, population increase, and economic growth would erode traditional norms and social ties. But, unlike Marx, Durkheim thought that the concentration of population would probably elicit a sense of common fate and appreciation of the contribution made by people in widely different occupations and tasks. The feelings of loyalty and shared destiny arising from these shared experiences he called organic solidarity. He foresaw a society with perhaps substantial conflict as the industrial system first developed but, as feelings of organic solidarity spread with the institutionalization of the industrial system, conflict declining to relatively low levels.

A third alternative, reference-group processes, suggest the virtual absence of conflict. Reference- group processes involve the vivid subjective images of equality and consensus that prevail among family, friends, and coworkers (Evans, Kelley, and Kolosi 1992; Lockwood 1966; Merton 1968, chaps. 9-10; Runciman [1966] 1972). These images are a special case of the "availability heuristic" -- a systematic perceptual bias whereby people base their perceptions on their immediate social milieu, thus overestimating the number of persons similar to themselves and their intimates (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982).

However, these arguments are not necessarily exclusive. More middling levels of conflict are suggested by the blending of reference group processes and the stubborn reality of materialist forces (Kelley and Evans 1995a).

Differences Among Nations

Factors Increasing Diversity.

Durkheim did not see the decline of conflict as inevitable, but as contingent upon the actions of governments, churches, and the institutionalized forms of co-operation and conflict between workers and management. And, in fact, despite the industrialized countries' broadly similar class structures, their citizenry's class awareness is much more central to political behavior in some countries than in others, and their governments have adopted a variety of strategies towards class conflict (Dalton 1988; Franklin et al. 1992a, 1992b; Kelley and Evans 1995; Lipset and Rokkhan 1967; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979; Steinmetz 1990; Wald 1983). These contrasting themes of conflict and consensus have played enduring, sometimes starring, roles in the politics of the 20th century, differing noticeably between Anglo- Celtic nations and European welfare states.

The nineteenth-century conflict between management and workers continued and became entrenched in party politics in some nations -- notably the United States, Australia, Britain and other Anglo-Celtic societies. Conservative governments resisted demands from below, but alternated in power with liberal regimes which implemented many redistributive policies.

By contrast, in other nations, most notably the German- speaking countries of Central Europe, conservative governments moved to pre-empt working class revolt by adopting redistributive and conciliatory policies. Bismarkian "enlightenment from above" welfare policies weakened left-wing appeals around the turn of the century and established more cooperative class relations (Steinmetz 1990; Haller 1990:18-19). In yet other European nations, notably in Scandinavia, left-leaning governments came to power for decades and adopted wide- ranging welfare and social support policies to ameliorate conditions in the lower classes. Thus, nineteenth century class conflicts are no longer fought with the same intensity in these countries as they are in Anglo-Celtic nations.

And of course Central-East had yet a different history. In Russia the revolution from below succeeded, with the Communist Party winning power in the name of the working class. It then imposed its rule by force on the nations of Central-East Europe a generation later, only to collapse utterly yet another generation later in 1989-1990.

Capitalist versus Communist.

By contrast, Marx would predict fewer historical contingencies than Durkheim, focusing narrowly on differences in economic organization. All capitalist industrial societies are similar in his view, with high levels of conflict. All communist industrial societies too would be cut from a

common pattern. But in them the abolition of private ownership of the means of production should eliminate class conflict.

Similarity among all Industrial Societies.

Most modernization theories, many structuralist theories and other arguments emphasizing technology, would narrow contingency even further. Since they have the same technology and organization of production, all industrial societies – communist as well as capitalist – will, on these arguments, have the same level of conflict.

Competing Hypotheses.

We thus have four competing views (table 1). (1) The Marxist approach, with its emphasis on the economy as a zero sum game, predicts high levels of conflict between management and workers, between middle class and working class, and between rich and poor in all capitalist societies, but no such conflicts in communist societies (table 1, column 1). There should be large class differences in perceptions of conflict, but no other individual-level differences. (2) The Durkheimian approach with its emphasis on the interplay of agency and structure would not anticipate much conflict between working class and middle class (since Durkheim would view the increasingly elaborate division of labor as militating against class solidarities), but would expect riches to be a continuing sore point (with traditional legitimations for inequality based on nobility tossed into the dustbin of history, and emerging legitimations based on role in the division of labor not yet felt to be fully compelling throughout the citizenry) and would expect that the nature of the management-worker relationship would involve moderate levels of conflict, but with considerable variation depending upon local successes in generating organic solidarity. (3) The technological-determinist approach would emphasize position in the division of labor and also income and wealth as sources of differentiation, but would expect this differentiation to generate little conflict since these differences would be felt to be “natural” or at least inevitable, springing from the technology. Class feelings would be unlikely to arise as workers would see themselves in terms of their specific tasks and the specific tools and machines they would use. The technological-determinist approach would predict that there would be no difference in perceptions of conflict between capitalist and communist nations, because all industrial nations use (broadly speaking) similar arrays of technology, and the differences in ownership arrangements are epiphenomenal. Similarly, technological determinists would predict no differences among the industrialized capitalist nations, because history and government policy have little or no impact compared to the technological juggernaut. (4) Reference group theory predicts differentiation of reference groups – and hence of social perceptions – based on class, employment position, and standard of living.

DATA, MEASUREMENT, AND METHODS

We report data on ordinary people's attitudes from 34 surveys conducted between 1987 and 1997 in 21 nations. All are large, representative national samples, giving a total of 50,022 individual respondents. The nations, broadly grouped, are: (1) The USA; (2) Other Anglo-Celtic lands (Australia, Britain, New Zealand, and Canada); (3) European Welfare States (West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Finland and Sweden); (4) Formerly Communist countries (Poland, Hungary, East Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Russia); and several diverse others (Netherlands, Italy and the Philippines).

The data were collected between 1987 and 1997 by participants in the International Social Survey Programme (Zentralarchiv 1989, 1994), the International Survey of Economic Attitudes (Kelley et al. 1993a; Robert et al. 1994; Zagorski et al. 1993), and the International Social Science Survey/Australia (Kelley, Bean and Evans 1995; Kelley and Evans 1995b).

In all surveys the wording of the questions, answer categories, and the sequencing of the class conflict questions were identical, producing one of the most cross-culturally comparable datasets on the topic ever collected. Each country also collects background data and demographic variables to a high standard of accuracy, using questions appropriate to local circumstances and institutions. The background and demographic data were recoded into comparable form by the Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung and by the authors.

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)

Most of the surveys are from the 1987-88 and 1992-93 "Social Inequality" module of the International Social Survey Programme. Most of these surveys began with interviews with a stratified random sample followed by a leave-behind self-completion questionnaire with the ISSP items. Several surveys were conducted entirely by mail and some entirely by interview (Austria). Australia's survey was a simple random sample but the other surveys involved various forms of clustering; we made no correction for the consequent loss in efficiency. Completion rates averaged around 60 percent (counting losses at the interview and the drop-off stages). These rates compare favorably with recent experiences in many industrial nations (e.g., the highly regarded 1989 International Crime Victim Survey averaged 41 percent over 14 nations [van Dijk, Mayhew, and Killias 1990]).

The ISSP participants for these modules were Australia (International Social Science Survey/Australia, Institute of Advanced Studies, the Australian National University [Kelley, Evans, and Bean 1989, Kelley, Evans, Bean, and Zagorski 1993]), Austria (Institut fuer Soziologie, Graz University [Haller and Raubal 1989; Haller and Hoellinger 1994]), Britain (British Social Attitudes Survey, Social and Community Planning

Research, London [Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook 1988; Jowell and Park 1992]), Bulgaria (Agency for Social Analysis [Dimova 1993]), Canada (Mass Communications Survey Center, Carleton University [Frizzell and Pyman 1993]), Czech Republic (Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic [Mateju and Ilner 1993]), Germany-East (ZUMA, Mannheim [Braun, Harkness, and Mohler 1993]), Germany-West (ZUMA, Mannheim [Mohler and Braun 1989; Mohler, Braun, and Harkness 1993]), Hungary (TARKI [Kolosi, Robert, and Sagi 1989; Robert, Kolosi, and Sagi 1993]), Italy (EURISKO [Guidorossi and Calvi 1993]), New Zealand (Department of Marketing, Massey University [Gendall 1993]), Norway (NSD: Norwegian Social Science Data Services [Skjak, Henrichsen, Knudsen, and Kvalheim 1993]), Philippines (Social Weather Stations [Mangahas, Abad, Guerrero, Miranda, Rood, and Abad 1993]), Poland (ISS: Institute for Social Studies [Cichomski and Morawski 1993]), Russia (The Center for Public Opinion and Market Research [Khakhulina and Zaslavskaya 1993]), Slovenia (Public Opinion and Mass Communications Research Centre [Tos and Malnar 1993]), Sweden (Department of Sociology, University of Umea [Svallfors and Edlund 1993]), and the United States (General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago [Davis and Smith 1988; Davis and Smith 1992]). Fortunately, although not members of the ISSP, Switzerland replicated the survey (Soziologisches Institut, University of Zurich [Hischier and Zwicky 1988]), as did the Interuniversity Consortium for Social Science Theory and Methodology in the Netherlands (Gijsberts and Ganzeboom 1997). At the time of the first round of the “Ideology of Inequality” survey, there was no ISSP member in Poland, but fortunately, a group of researchers conducting a wide-ranging survey on social mobility and many aspects of inequality and stratification were able to include most of the ISSP module (all of the questions we use here) in their survey (Slomczynski, Bialecki, Domanski, Janicka, Mach, Sawinski, Sikorska, and Zaborowski 1989). The Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung at the University of Koeln painstakingly cleaned the data and reformatted demographic and background variables to a common format (Scheuch and Uher 1989; Scheuch, Jagodinski, and Uher 1994).

Comparisons with the national census, where available, show the surveys to be representative of the populations sampled (Zentralarchiv 1989, 1994; Bean 1990; Sikora 1997). The samples and census are similar in age, education, occupation, and industry. However, women are over-represented in several surveys.

The International Survey of Economic Attitudes (ISEA)

The International Survey of Economic Attitudes (Kelley and Evans 1991; Kelley and Zagorski 1993) is a collaborative international project which conducts bi-annual surveys in half a dozen nations. The first round was in 1991-1993. The institutions involved are: (1) Australia: Australian National University and University of Melbourne (Kelley and Evans 1991, 1994, 1995; Kelley, Zagorski and Evans 1997); (2) Finland: Turku

University (Kangas, Ervasti, Zagorski, and Kelley 1995); (3) Hungary: Social Research Informatics Center (TARKI) and Eotvos University, Budapest (Robert, Kolosi, Evans and Kelley 1993; Robert and Kelley 1996); (4) Poland: Polish Academy of Sciences and Center for Public Opinion Research, Warsaw (Zagorski, Kelley, and Evans 1992; Zagorski, Kolaiska-Bobinska, and Kelley 1994); (5) Bulgaria: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Zlatkov and Zagorski 1997); and (6) the Netherlands, ICS: Interuniversity Consortium for Social Science Theory and Methodology (Gijsberts and Ganzeboom, 1997)].

The survey methodology is similar to that of the ISSP, in many cases conducted by the same survey organization. Comparison of Australian, Polish and Finnish surveys with the census (the only comparisons so far completed) show the surveys to be closely representative of the population (Sikora 1997).

Measurement

Education is in years, generally following ISSP definitions with some adjustments (e.g. for poor measurement in Britain; Zentralarchiv 1994).

Subjective social class is measured by a question (Smith 1986) which is particularly well suited to cross-national comparisons (Kelley and Evans 1995a):

In our society there are groups which tend to be towards the top and groups which tend to be towards the bottom. Below is a scale that runs from top to bottom. Where would you put yourself on this scale?

Top. | |
 | |
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 | |
 Bottom. . . . | |

In some countries, classes were labeled consecutively from "1" to "10". For clarity, we assigned scores so that high classes received high scores -- answers were scored from a low of 0 to a high of 100 with intermediate answers given scores at equal intervals in between (Evans, Kelley, and Kolosi 1992: 468-469). Any other scoring that preserves equal intervals between classes would produce identical standardized coefficients and metric coefficients that are a simple linear transformation of our coefficients.

Age is measured in years. **Gender** is scored male=1, female=0.

In the regression analysis, nations are grouped into broad culture areas (with separate indicator variables): (1) **USA** - omitted or reference category (so other coefficients indicate differences from the USA); (2) Other **Anglo-Celtic** nations (Australia, Britain, Canada, New-Zealand); (3) **European welfare states** (Austria, Finland, West Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland); (4) **Central-East European** nations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia); and (5) a varied group of **other nations** (Italy, Netherlands, the Philippines).

Methods

This paper uses a combination univariate, bivariate, and multivariate methods. (1) First we focus on the distributions of perceptions of class conflict and on the means summarizing the central tendency of these distributions for each of the 21 countries in the study. The technological determinist, Marxian, and cultural hypotheses all have clear implications on the shape and central tendency of these distributions, which we assess against the findings. (2) Secondly, we use ordinary least squares regression to simultaneously assess the impact of individual-level social characteristics and national level influences on perceptions of conflict (see appendix table A2). For this analysis, we pool the data from all the countries and estimate the size of differences between nations using regression standardization methods familiar from the study of group differences (Evans and Kelley 1991).

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

All countries combined: How much Conflict?

Speaking globally, people do not adopt the extreme view that there is great conflict, but neither do they see class relations as tranquil and consensual. The Marxian image of intense conflict between economic groups is clearly false: only small minorities see their societies riven by “very strong” conflicts (figure 1). But neither is the reference group image of widespread harmony true: perceptions of perfectly harmonious societies with “no conflicts” between these groups are held only by small minorities. Instead most people see a middling level of conflict: a large majority, more than 80%, see conflicts as either “strong” or “not very strong”.

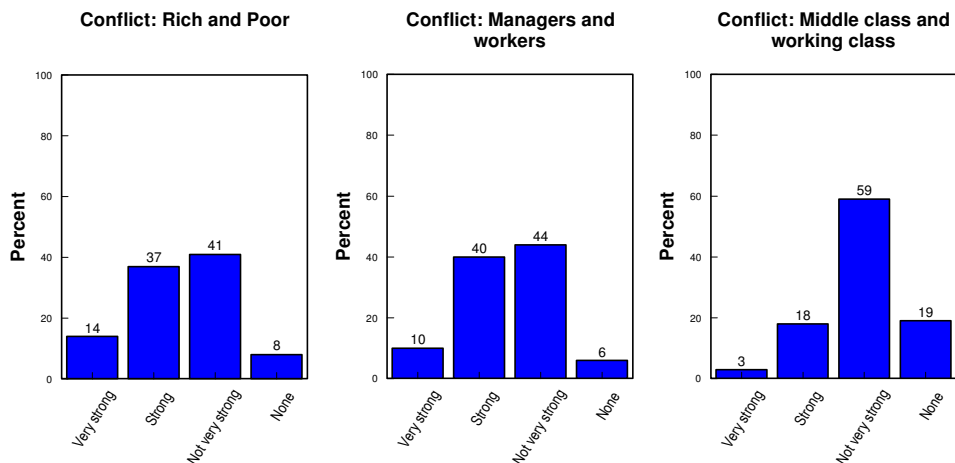


Figure 1: Perceptions of conflict in 21 nations. Percentages. N= 50,022.

Conflict between Rich and Poor.

We asked first about conflicts between “rich and poor” – a wording chosen for its strong emotive impact:

"In all countries, there are differences or even conflicts between different social groups. In your opinion, in [country] how much conflict is there between poor people and rich people?"

Very strong conflicts	14%	[100 points]
Strong conflicts	37%	[67 points]
Not very strong conflicts	41%	[33 points]
No conflicts"	8%	[0 points]
total:	100%	
cases:	44,508	
mean:	52 points	out of 100

Conflict is seen as “very strong” by just 14%, as “strong” by 37%, as “not very strong” by 41%, and entirely denied, as “No conflicts” by just 8%. Scoring these answers as points out of 100, the mean is very near the middle, 52 points.

Conflict between Management and Workers.

Conflicts between "management and workers" – the daily fare of workplace negotiations on wages and conditions – are also seen as of only middling intensity:

"... between management and workers?"

Very strong conflicts	10%	[100 points]
Strong conflicts	40%	[67 points]
Not very strong conflicts	44%	[33 points]
No conflicts"	6%	[0 points]
total:	100%	
cases:	44,141	
mean:	52 points out of 100	

Only 10% see "very strong conflicts" while fully 40% see "strong conflicts" and another 44% see "not very strong conflicts". Only 6% see no conflicts at all. The mean is again in the middle, 52 points out of 100.

Conflict between the Working Class and the Middle Class.

Even fewer see much conflict between classes:

"... between the working class and the middle class?"

Very strong conflicts	3%	[100 points]
Strong conflicts	18%	[67 points]
Not very strong conflicts	59%	[33 points]
No conflicts"	19%	[0 points]
total:	100%	
cases:	44,127	
mean:	35 points out of 100	

Only 3% see "very strong conflict" and 18% "strong conflicts". A large majority, 59% see only "not very strong conflicts" and 19% see no conflicts at all. The mean is only 35 points out of 100.

Differences Among Nations: Description

The intensity of conflict varies widely among nations, according to their citizens. To illustrate the diversity we will describe four nations spanning the range of governmental types and technological/economic development: the USA (the most conflictual of the Anglo-Celtic nations, and objectively one of the richest nations in the world); Norway (a prototypical European welfare state, not as rich as the US but still very prosperous); and Slovenia (one of the most developed for the formerly Communist nations of Central-East Europe, but still much poorer than Western capitalist nations with GNP per capita around 20% to 30% of US levels at parity purchasing power [World Bank 1996]).

Conflict between Rich and Poor.

Americans perceive more conflict between rich and poor than peoples of most other nations for which we have data (appendix table A1, panel 1). 21% see "very strong" conflicts; 48% see "strong conflicts"; 28% "not strong" and only 3% "no conflict". Thus, the modal perception is of "strong" conflict. The mean is 62 points out of 100; that is almost two-thirds of the way up the conflict spectrum. (It was a little less than that in 1987 and a little more in 1992; here we focus on the most recent surveys.) Some social

commentators may think that class is a dead issue, but it seems very much alive and kicking (or stinging) to ordinary people.

By contrast, Norwegians see much less conflict. Only 4% see “very strong” conflicts, and just 15% see “strong conflicts”. Most, 68% see “not strong” conflicts although just 14% say there are “no conflicts” between rich and poor. The mean is 36, only about one third of the way up the conflict spectrum. That is not much over half the level of conflict in America. Most other European welfare states see a little more conflict, around 45 points.

Slovenians are about mid-way between (conflictual) Americans and (unconflictual) Norwegians. Only 11% see “very strong” conflicts. 32% see “strong” conflicts and 40% “not strong”. 17% see “no conflicts”. Their mean is 46 points out of 100. In this they are similar to the Czechs, but other formerly Communist Central-East European nations see more conflict, around 55 or 60 points.

Conflict between Management and Workers.

Americans perceive somewhat more conflict between management and workers than do most other nations (appendix table A1, panel 2). Their mean is 59 points out of 100, the modal perception is of “strong” conflicts, and perceptions of extreme harmony or extreme conflict are rare. Other Anglo-Celtic nations have 5 to 10 points less conflict.

Norwegians, by contrast, see only two-thirds as much conflict between management and workers, 40 points. In this they are like the Swedes and Swiss, with the Germans and Austrians seeing only a little more, around 50 points. But even in these highly conciliatory societies conflict continues: only very small minorities declare there to be “no conflict” between management and workers.

Slovenes see relatively high levels of conflict between management and workers, 63 points. Hungarians and East Germans have similar views but Bulgarians, Czechs and Russians see rather less conflict. In a number of the formerly Communist countries around 1991-92, the extreme perception of worker management conflicts being “very strong” was more widely held than anywhere else in the world: up around 20%.

Class Conflict

Americans do not think there is a lot of class conflict, only 3% seeing “very strong” conflict and 24% “strong conflict (appendix table A1, panel 3). The majority American view is “not strong conflict”, 59%. Only 13% think there is no class conflict at all. The mean is 40 points. However, while this is an only modest level of conflict in absolute terms, it is rather higher than in most other nations. Other Anglo-Celtic nations see a little less, around 35 points. Even Britain, one of Marx’s favorite examples and the

stereotypical home of class, only just matches the supposedly egalitarian Americans.

Norwegians see very little class conflict, only 24 points – indeed 33% say there is “no conflict at all” between the middle class and the working class. Other European welfare states are not far behind.

Slovenes do not see much class conflict either, 32 points. Russians and Bulgarians feel themselves to be equally free of class conflict, but other formerly Communist Central-East European nations see a little more, around 35 to 40 points.

Implications

These results are contrary to the hypothesis that reference groups completely determine class perceptions; if that were true, then perceptions of conflict would be uniformly low in all countries. Moreover, the quite substantial diversity among the industrialized countries is preliminary evidence against the technological determinist thesis. And the diversity of views among the non-Communist developed nations speaks against the basic Marxist thesis that allowing private ownership of the means of production leads to identical class relations. However this descriptive evidence does favor Durkheim’s hypothesis of a historically contingent “organic solidarity”.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

The results we have seen so far take no account of differences in the kind of people who live in each nation: educational levels are high in some nations and low in others; some nations are heavily middle class and others less so; some nations have older populations and some younger. If educated people have different perceptions of conflict than the less educated, or if the middle class has different views than other classes, or older people have different views than younger, then these differences between individuals will confound comparisons between nations. The differences we see between nations then reflect some unknown mixture of differences between the kind of people who live in them and differences due to national history, economy, and culture. In the extreme, there might (as some functionalist and reference group arguments imply) be no real differences between nations once these individual-level differences are taken into account.

To adjust for these individual-level differences, we use regression standardization procedures that are familiar from the analysis of discrimination (Evans and Kelley 1991); details are in appendix 2. In particular, we adjust for education and subjective social class, which indicate important aspects of position in the social hierarchy, and hence

convey information about the differing class composition of these societies. We also adjust for differences in the age and gender composition of society.

Individual-Level Influences

In practice, individual-level differences in perceptions of conflict are small (appendix table A3). (1) Better educated people see a little less conflict. The difference is roughly half a point per year of education. So, for example, the difference between a high school graduate and someone who has a 4 year university degree is about 2 points (on the 100 point conflict scale). This difference is largest for class conflict and smallest for conflict between management and workers. (2) Those who identify with the higher classes see less somewhat less conflict than those who identify with lower classes. The difference between someone identifying with the bottom class and someone identifying with the top is roughly 10 points on the 100 point conflict scale. (3) Older people see less conflict than younger, although only by a small margin. (4) Men see a little less conflict than women, by about 2 points out of 100.

Differences between nations, to which we now turn, are larger.

Conflict between rich and poor

The multivariate analysis shows that substantial differences among groups of nations remain after controlling for individual-level differences in education, subjective social class, and age and sex (figure 2, first panel).

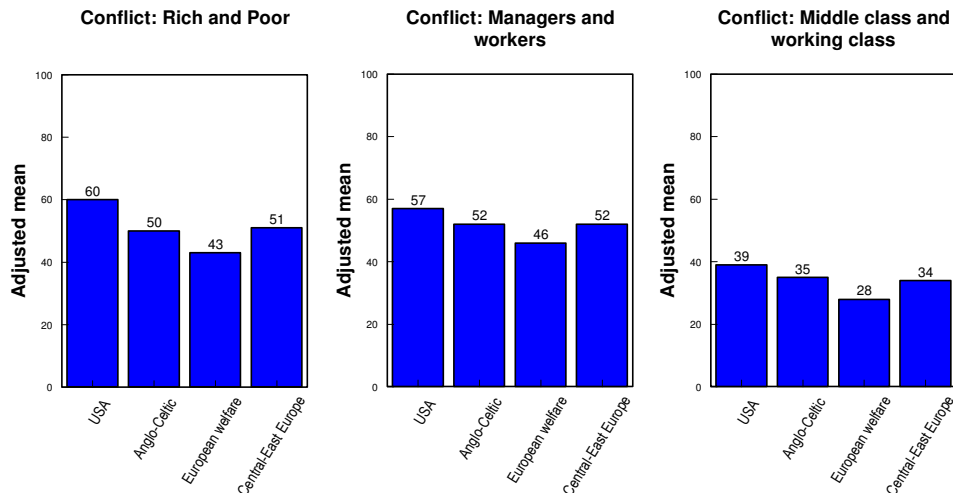


Figure 2: Perceptions of conflict in 21 nations adjusted by regression for individual-level differences in age, sex, education, and subjective class identification. Predicted means. N= 50,022.

Overall, Americans generally see the most conflict: 60 points out of 100, after adjusting for individual-level differences. That is substantially closer

to the halfway point than to the top, so Americans are not seeing all out class warfare. But they do see more conflict between rich and poor than do the citizens of other societies, by about 10 to 15 points out of 100.

The public in other Anglo- Celtic countries -- Australia, Britain, Canada, and New Zealand – see less conflict than Americans do. They average 50 points out of 100, after adjusting by regression for individual-level differences in age, education, and subjective class location.

Citizens of European welfare states see the least conflict, 43 points out of 100. Because we control for individual characteristics by regression, this difference is not due to differences in human capital endowments or in their age structures, but instead due to other social and cultural forces.

Formerly Communist nations, like the Anglo-Celtic nations, are intermediate between the low levels of conflict seen by European Welfare States and the high levels of conflict seen by Americans. On average they rate conflict between rich and poor in their societies about 51 points out of 100, after adjusting for individual-level differences.

Conflict between Management and Workers.

People's perceptions of conflict between workers and managers are very similar to their perceptions of conflicts between rich and poor (figure 2, middle panel). Here again Americans see the most conflict, averaging 57 points out of 100, after adjusting for individual-level differences. And here again it is noteworthy that the average for the most conflictual nation of all is closer to the midpoint than to maximum conflict.

The other Anglo-Celtic countries see a little less conflict between management and workers, 52 points out of 100, adjusting for differences in age, human capital endowments, and subjective class location.

The European welfare states see the least conflict, 46 points, after adjusting for individual-level differences. This is close to the midpoint. So even nations seeing the least conflict do not see a completely harmonious society.

Views of citizens of East European nations are very similar to those of citizens of Anglo-Celtic nations, both with 52 points after adjusting for individual-level differences.

Conflict between the Working Class and the Middle Class.

The picture for conflicts between working and middle class is broadly similar, although all see this as less conflictual than relations between rich and poor. or management and workers (figure 2, third panel). Class conflict is highest in the USA, 39 points out of 100 after adjusting for individual-level differences.

There is a little less class conflict in the other Anglo-Celtic nations, 35 points after adjusting for individual-level differences.

Again the least conflict is found in the European welfare states, 11 points less than in the USA after adjustment. That puts their average just below “not very strong conflicts”

Central-East has levels of conflict just at “not very strong conflicts” – so bit more conflict than European welfare states but less than the USA.

CONCLUSION

How much Conflict?

Marx’s view of strong conflicts (table 1, column 1) is contrary to the data (figure 1). But neither do the data support the functionalist or reference group predictions of little conflict (table 1, columns 3 and 4). Rather they are closer to Durkheim’s of moderate levels of conflict, or to Kelley and Evans’ (1995) model blending reference group processes and materialist forces.

Differences between Capitalist and Communist Nations

The classical Marxist prediction of high conflict in capitalist societies and low conflict in communist ones (table 1) is substantially untrue (figure 2). Instead we find middling levels in both groups nations, with the some capitalist nations experiencing more conflict and others experiencing less than the formerly communist countries. But the existence of country differences is also contrary to the predictions of uniformity derived from modernization theory and reference group theories. There was no specific prediction from Durkheimian theory, although the lower levels of conflict found in the European welfare states may support his general contention that institutions and political history matter. There are also differences between the USA, the other Anglo-Celtic nations, and European welfare states that remain to be explained.

Appendix Table A1. Perceptions of conflict between rich and poor (panel 1), management and workers (panel 2) and the working class and the middle class. Percentages and means.¹ 21 nations, 1987-1997.

	No conflict 0	Not strong 33	Strong 67	Very strong 100	Total	Mean	Cases
Panel 1: Rich & poor							
USA 87	4	35	46	16	100%	58	1196
USA 92	3	28	48	21	100%	62	1198
Austria 87	10	55	27	9	100%	44	883
Austria 92	18	51	25	6	100%	40	946
Finland 94	1	44	39	17	100%	57	1705
Germany-W 87	13	48	30	9	100%	45	1261
Germany-W 92	10	51	30	9	100%	46	2052
Norway 92	14	68	15	4	100%	36	1443
Sweden 92	7	63	24	6	100%	43	702
Switzerland 87	10	52	27	11	100%	46	892
Australia 87	6	49	37	9	100%	49	1584
Australia 92	6	58	30	5	100%	45	2090
Australia 94	4	49	33	14	100%	52	1481
Australia 95	3	54	37	6	100%	49	2359
Britain 87	5	42	39	14	100%	54	1147
Britain 92	2	38	46	14	100%	57	1017
Canada 92	7	46	33	14	100%	51	966
New-Zealand 92	4	41	43	12	100%	54	1189
Bulgaria 92	19	26	36	19	100%	52	1005
Bulgaria 97	12	27	38	23	100%	58	1076
Czech 92	17	51	25	7	100%	41	913
Germany-E 92	3	34	46	17	100%	59	991
Hungary 87	10	34	38	18	100%	55	2482
Hungary 92	3	26	44	27	100%	65	1222
Poland 87	13	37	42	9	100%	49	757
Poland 91	8	31	42	19	100%	58	1451
Poland 92	10	34	41	15	100%	54	1388
Poland 94	8	33	41	18	100%	56	1923
Poland 97	9	33	43	15	100%	54	1547
Russia 92	8	29	41	21	100%	58	1754
Slovenia 92	17	40	32	11	100%	46	944
Italy 92	11	31	36	21	100%	56	978
Netherlands 96	0	22	54	24	100%	67	768
Philippines 92	11	34	37	18	100%	54	1198
Total	8	41	37	14	100%	52	44508

(continued)

Appendix Table A1. (continued)

	No conflict 0	Not strong 33	Strong 67	Very strong 100	Total	Mean	Cases
Panel 2: worker- management							
USA 87	4	41	46	10	100%	54	1186
USA 92	2	32	51	14	100%	59	1190
Austria 87	11	51	30	7	100%	44	898
Austria 92	13	49	33	5	100%	43	934
Finland 94	1	55	32	11	100%	51	1701
Germany-W 87	9	36	44	11	100%	53	1277
Germany-W 92	7	44	40	10	100%	51	2068
Norway 92	5	72	21	2	100%	40	1415
Sweden 92	10	62	24	4	100%	40	681
Switzerland 87	8	70	19	3	100%	39	894
Australia 87	3	45	45	8	100%	52	1582
Australia 92	2	54	39	5	100%	49	2085
Australia 94	2	51	38	9	100%	51	1476
Australia 95	1	54	40	5	100%	50	2344
Britain 87	4	40	46	10	100%	54	1141
Britain 92	3	46	43	8	100%	52	1015
Canada 92	2	38	46	15	100%	57	963
New-Zealand 92	4	46	40	10	100%	52	1177
Bulgaria 92	15	32	40	13	100%	50	993
Bulgaria 97	7	40	43	10	100%	52	973
Czech 92	7	42	42	9	100%	51	999
Germany-E 92	2	27	53	18	100%	62	987
Hungary 87	11	46	34	9	100%	47	2444
Hungary 92	5	32	43	21	100%	60	1186
Poland 87	11	40	41	8	100%	49	708
Poland 91	4	26	51	19	100%	62	1436
Poland 92	8	47	37	8	100%	48	1366
Poland 94	5	41	42	12	100%	53	1879
Poland 97	5	37	48	11	100%	55	1479
Russia 92	13	39	34	14	100%	50	1764
Slovenia 92	5	21	54	20	100%	63	992
Italy 92	12	38	37	13	100%	50	968
Netherlands 96	1	32	53	15	100%	60	752
Philippines 92	10	38	38	15	100%	52	1188
Total	6	44	40	10	100%	52	44141

(continued)

Appendix Table A1. (continued)

	No conflict 0	Not strong 33	Strong 67	Very strong 100	Total	Mean	Cases
Panel 3: Class							
USA 87	13	66	19	3	100%	37	1192
USA 92	13	59	24	5	100%	40	1183
Austria 87	26	60	12	2	100%	30	899
Austria 92	36	53	10	1	100%	25	929
Finland 94	7	75	15	3	100%	38	1705
Germany-W 87	30	56	13	1	100%	28	1263
Germany-W 92	29	59	11	2	100%	28	2083
Norway 92	33	62	4	1	100%	24	1422
Sweden 92	21	71	8	1	100%	29	705
Switzerland 87	25	67	8	1	100%	28	875
Australia 87	15	66	17	1	100%	35	1590
Australia 92	15	73	12	1	100%	33	2093
Australia 94	13	65	19	3	100%	38	1476
Australia 95	7	75	16	2	100%	37	2352
Britain 87	14	66	16	4	100%	37	1143
Britain 92	9	65	22	4	100%	40	1013
Canada 92	20	65	12	2	100%	32	954
New-Zealand 92	19	68	11	2	100%	32	1170
Bulgaria 92	44	39	15	2	100%	25	959
Bulgaria 97	36	44	16	4	100%	30	990
Czech 92	31	57	11	2	100%	28	988
Germany-E 92	19	64	15	2	100%	33	967
Hungary 87	15	46	32	7	100%	44	2458
Hungary 92	15	56	24	5	100%	39	1202
Poland 87	16	47	32	6	100%	43	734
Poland 91	17	52	27	5	100%	40	1401
Poland 92	16	50	28	6	100%	41	1391
Poland 94	20	52	24	4	100%	37	1851
Poland 97	21	52	24	4	100%	37	1463
Russia 92	31	48	16	6	100%	32	1789
Slovenia 92	26	53	19	2	100%	32	960
Italy 92	15	41	33	11	100%	46	971
Netherlands 96	4	76	19	1	100%	39	762
Philippines 92	15	49	29	7	100%	43	1194
Total	19	59	18	3	100%	35	44127

1. Scoring shown in the stub ('no conflict' = 0 through 'strong conflicts'=100).

Appendix Table A3. Predicting conflict. OLS regression estimates. Panel A: Conflict between rich and poor. Panel B: Conflict between management and workers. Panel C: Conflict between middle class and working class. 21 nations, 1987-1997. N=50,022.

	b	s.e.	Beta	t
Panel A: Conflict between rich and poor (R² = .05)				
Subjective social class (0-100)	-0.15	0.01	-0.11	-21.18
Education (years)	-0.43	0.04	-0.05	-9.71
Age (years)	-0.04	0.01	-0.02	-4.5
Sex (male=1)	-3.1	0.26	-0.06	-11.86
Nation :				
USA (reference)	0	0	0	--
European welfare states	-16.23	0.64	-0.24	-25.55
Anglo-Celtic NEC	-9.99	0.62	-0.16	-16.05
Central-Eastern Europe	-8.76	0.61	-0.15	-14.28
Other nations	-4.34	0.78	-0.04	-5.57
(Constant)	76.75	0.98	-	77.95
Panel B. Conflict between management and workers (R² = .03)				
Subjective social class (0-100)	-0.10	0.01	-0.08	-15.83
Education (years)	-0.19	0.04	-0.02	-4.59
Age (years)	-0.10	0.01	-0.06	-12.76
Sex (male=1)	-1.02	0.24	-0.02	-4.19
Nation :				
USA (reference)	0	0	0	0
European welfare states	-10.73	0.59	-0.18	-18.18
Anglo-Celtic NEC	-4.81	0.58	-0.08	-8.31
Central-Eastern Europe	-5.03	0.57	-0.1	-8.83
Other nations	-4.38	0.72	-0.04	-6.05
(Constant)	69.28	0.91	-	75.72
Panel C. Conflict between middle class and working class (R² = .03)				
Subjective social class (0-100)	-0.07	0.01	-0.06	-10.98
Education (years)	-0.53	0.04	-0.07	-13.72
Age (years)	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	-5.85
Sex (male=1)	-1.86	0.23	-0.04	-8.24
Nation :				
USA (reference)	0	0	0	0
European welfare states	-11.00	0.55	-0.19	-20.06
Anglo-Celtic NEC	-3.93	0.54	-0.07	-7.31
Central-Eastern Europe	-4.9	0.53	-0.1	-9.25
Other nations	2.36	0.67	0.02	3.5
(Constant)	51.93	0.85	-	61.06

* Predicted values in figure 2 are for a male, age 40, 12 years of education, and social class of 50 (half way between top and bottom).

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