The intentional non-enforcement of laws, or forbearance, can be a way to redistribute resources. Under what circumstances do voters support forbearance? This chapter uses original survey and experimental data from Colombia, as well as surveys from across Latin America, to examine preferences toward redistribution by the state and informal redistribution through forbearance. I show, first, that income strongly predicts preferences for forbearance toward laws that benefit the poor (but not those that benefit rich, and less consistently for state redistribution), and second, that poor voters identify politicians who support forbearance as more likely to represent their interests, even compared to politicians who promise redistributive social expenditures. Combined, these findings suggest conventional models of redistributive preferences may be inappropriate for contexts where much downward redistribution happens by the state’s leave, rather than through the state’s hand.


* Junior Fellow, Society of Fellows, Harvard University, 78 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. aholland@fas.harvard.edu.
“Justice involves treating the equal equally and the unequal unequally in proportion to their inequality.”

—Aristotle

What do voters want from government? Especially in unequal democracies, many models assume the answer is redistribution. Voters try to advance their material interests. Poor voters therefore want their representatives to take more resources from the rich, and wealthy voters want to prevent this redistribution. Yet this theory of redistributive demands flops in Latin America, one of the most unequal regions of the world where it should operate most seamlessly. Yawning income disparities do not translate into sharp differences in preferences over redistribution. Quite the opposite, I demonstrate that the poor and nonpoor have near identical preferences over many standard redistributive instruments.

This chapter reorients the material interest framework. First, I suggest that the poor are ambivalent about tax and spend policies because they involve very little downward redistribution in Latin America. Many social-insurance policies are truncated to provide benefits to those above a certain level of income, rather than below it. Other policies benefit both poor and nonpoor groups, or offer such small-sized benefits that they constitute a weak source of social protection. Accordingly, the poor do not expect to benefit from social expenditures and the wealthy have little to fear in how welfare states are designed. There are exceptions, of course: some policies, such as cash transfer programs and progressive income taxes, and some welfare states, such as those countries with more inclusive and progressive coverage, have differential impacts on the public and generate the “expected” divisions between haves and have-nots. Second, I argue that the poor have shared material interests in how laws are enforced. Conversely, wealthy citizens dislike the disorder and property threats from legal violations by the poor, such as squatting, street vending, and basic service theft. Thus, forbearance—meaning intentional and revocable non-enforcement (Holland 2016)—toward property laws divides the electorate along income lines based on self-interest. As in
the context of redistribution, people also draw conclusions based on what they think is “fair” in terms of distributive justice. Even when individuals dislike legal violations, they also can view enforcement as unnecessarily harsh, especially when welfare states fail to guarantee basic goods and services.

Empirically, then, the thrust of the chapter is that models developed to understand redistribution apply to forbearance, and even more powerfully given that forbearance toward certain laws like those against squatting and street vending has been more targeted at the bottom tranches of the income distribution in Latin America. I examine three core hypotheses about how ordinary citizens view property law enforcement that underpin my theory: 1) poor individuals prefer less enforcement against certain property laws than nonpoor individuals, 2) popular support for enforcement is higher when individuals believe that social welfare substitutes exist for the poor’s distributive claims, and 3) voters identify politicians who enforce as acting against the poor’s broader distributive interests. I expect, in contrast, that voters are less divided in their opinions about state redistribution, and do not identify politicians who promise social expenditures as acting in the poor’s interests. Promises to increase social expenditures are not credible in contexts in which they historically have failed to come to fruition. Together, these observations provide evidence that the public understands and justifies forbearance as an informal means of redistribution.

This chapter moves from the macro to the micro level, and combines original observational and experimental data. I first provide some essential background on Latin American welfare states, emphasizing the limited economic progressivity of spending and historic exclusion of the informal sector poor. This context is necessary to develop my argument about how voters form their preferences, but it takes a broad brush and readers more familiar with the region’s welfare regimes may wish to proceed directly to the micro-level evidence. The second section describes how I operationalize attitudes and some descriptive statistics on the level of support for both forbearance
and redistribution. I then test my propositions about the determinants of attitudes with data
gathered from a face-to-face survey of 900 voters in Colombia, as well as drawn from the
AmericasBarometer for over 90,000 individuals across eighteen countries. The third section shows
that material interest models developed to study redistributive preferences apply to forbearance
attitudes. Income explains more of the variation in forbearance attitudes and more consistently than
redistributive attitudes. The fourth section then examines voters’ evaluations and preferences over
hypothetical mayoral candidates in a survey experiment. Strong evidence emerges for my claim that
citizens use enforcement positions as heuristics for politicians’ distributive commitments, whereas
promises of social expenditures are discounted as cheap talk.

1 Truncated Welfare States

I start with a very stylized overview of Latin American welfare states. A common
assumption in thinking about welfare states is that they begin with a commitment to the absolute
poorest and differ in how far they extend benefits up the income ladder. Pontusson (2005: 148)
captures the idea: “Means-tested social assistance constitutes the minimalist core of the modern
welfare state—even the least welfare-oriented societies must somehow take care of the indigent—
and it is the extent to which they have gone beyond the minimalist core that distinguishes the social
market economies from the liberal market economies.” Put otherwise, the “minimalist core
assumption” is that welfare states cover the poor and differ in their inclusion of the middle class.
Latin American welfare states reverse this intuition. They began as truncated welfare states, and
despite progress, countries still differ widely in how far down the income ladder and with what
generosity they provide benefits to the poor. Property law violations, such as squatting and street
vending, helped the urban poor establish a foothold in major cities and weather economic shocks.
These divergent trajectories lead to very different expectations about the connection between
individual income and preferences over redistribution and enforcement.
Much of the welfare state apparatus in Latin America dates back to the period of labor incorporation in the mid-twentieth century and the economic development model of import-substitution industrialization (ISI). A number of excellent studies link the push to industrialize through ISI to a unique logic of welfare expansion (Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Wibbels and Ahlquist 2011; Wibbels 2013). To briefly recap the argument, capitalists needed labor peace to accelerate industrial growth, and a stable consumer base to warrant production for an internal market. Workers wanted protections against the low wages in traditional sectors. Governments therefore provided substantial entitlements and introduced protective labor codes to shield the industrial working class as they endeavored to promote domestic industry. Most spending went to social-insurance programs—old-age pensions, health insurance, and disability benefits—for privileged segments of the workforce, such as state employees, the armed forces, and those working in favored industries. Protection from market competition allowed firms in the import-substituting sector to incorporate generous social entitlements, which contributed to labor market dualism and a bias against agriculture.

The origins of welfare states in protective schemes for public sector and organized workers are not unique to Latin America, but the small size of the industrial working class meant that these choices led to less inclusive welfare states (Huber and Stephens 2012: 22-24). Several European welfare states (most notably, Otto von Bismarck’s Germany) began as “corporatist” welfare regimes that linked welfare benefits to labor market status, and thus created stratifications akin to those produced in Latin America (Esping-Andersen 1990). While the working class never constituted a majority in Europe (Przeworski and Sprague 1986), it was a much smaller share of the workforce in late industrializers. For instance, Argentina and Brazil went the farthest with ISI due to their larger internal markets, yet manufacturing still employed less than a third of the urban labor force at its peak. Colombia, Chile, and Peru pursued more mixed development strategies, balancing traditional
exports and new manufacturing. Not even considering the large rural sector, the share of the urban labor force in industry was just 21 percent in Chile and Colombia, and 18 percent in Peru in the 1960s (Portes 1989: 26). Tying benefits to labor contracts thus left substantial tranches of the population in the informal sector—and, although less relevant for our purposes, the rural sector—without social protection. Significant variation in the extent of “popular” incorporation, meaning blue-collar workers (Collier and Collier 1991), was matched with more modest attempts to include those outside of the industrial workforce in burgeoning welfare states and political parties. Welfare states thus grew to be “deep but not wide” (Haggard and Kaufman 2008: 12).

Rural migration toward large capital cities also accelerated in the post-World War II period and resulted in dramatic expansions in squatter settlements and informal markets. Urban growth rates averaged over 4 percent per year in the 1950s through 1970s. Capital city populations doubled in the span of two decades. Unlike in Europe where urbanization reflected the pull of industrialization, urban growth evidenced the poor conditions in the Latin American countryside and unfavorable terms of trade under ISI. Urban industry could not absorb rural migrants. While squatter settlements and street vendors can be traced back to colonial times, they saw dramatic rates of expansion when Latin American governments made industrial pushes (Fischer 2008; Holston 2008; De Soto and Ghersi 1989). Roughly half of all informal land development in Bogotá, encompassing almost 15 square miles of land, occurred between 1960 and 1980 (Camargo and Hurtado: 84). Lima hit its apogee of informal construction in the same period. By 1980, 29 percent of Lima’s population (1.3 million people) lived in informal settlements, up from 10 percent in 1955

---

1 There are exceptions to this generalization and longer-standing democracies advanced further (Haggard and Kaufman 2008: ch. 2; Garay Forthcoming: ch 3).
2 Statistics from DEPUALC, 2009. Population Division of CEPAL.
3 Notably, the Colombian government, especially due to the land ownership structure in Bogotá, was one of the least tolerant of land invasions so most informal expansion occurred through informal sales or “pirate” urbanizations (Doebele 1977; Gilbert and Ward 1985; Torres Tovar 2009).
(Riofrío 2003: 4). In Santiago, the tumult of reform and revolution led 14 percent of the city’s population to seize land between 1967 and 1973 alone (Murphy 2015: 74). Substantial debate brewed on whether the poor conditions in squatter settlements presaged political radicalization and discontent. But most studies, such as Perlman’s (1974) decisive rejection of the “myth of marginality,” emphasize that migrants remained conservative and embedded in clientelistic networks, and that squatting itself was viewed as an important relief from the burden of rent and a chance for long-run economic mobility and property ownership (for an excellent summary of these debates, see Nelson 1970). While some governments made efforts to evict squatters, many politicians, lawyers, and even real estate brokers saw benefits in their permanence, including the fact that they avoided “real” redistribution. Moreover, governments retained the upper hand to revoke their choices if elite interests so dictated or industrialization took off (D. Collier 1976; Fischer 2008; Ray 1969).

Rather than industrial growth bringing an end to property law violations, however, most Latin American countries suffered deep economic crises in the 1980s. Debt crises and market liberalization forced many governments to gut welfare programs. Pushed in part through international financial institutions, many welfare states shrank in size and came to rely more heavily on private insurance. Temporary emergency assistance programs emerged to cushion the worse effects of market adjustments, but the challenges of running countercyclical social policy meant that many governments slashed spending on the poor and public services (Wibbels 2006). What government spending survived state cuts tended to be social-insurance payments, concentrated on formal sector workers with the capacity to organize to protect their benefits. As Díaz-Cayeros and Magaloni (2009: 37) summarize, Latin American social policy “has mostly worked backwards, making preexisting economic and social inequalities wider rather than narrower.” Meanwhile, exclusionary and increasingly privatized policies for the middle class and formal sector working class were complemented by a largely informal system of family support and individual labor for the poor.
Urban informal employment increased to cope with the crisis. By some estimates, the urban informal sector encompassed 46 percent of the region’s workforce by the 1990s, and union density plummeted to around 10 percent in most countries (Portes and Hoffman 2003). Given the state’s shrinking regulatory role and budgets, it was unclear that governments could have acted otherwise when confronted with legal violations.  

Transitions from authoritarian or semidemocratic rule fundamentally altered the political landscape in Latin America in the 1990s and 2000s. With the return of democracy and economic stability, many Latin American countries reformed and expanded welfare programs to extend a basic level of social protections to workers in the informal sector as growth recovered. There was a dramatic spread of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs and noncontributory social protection programs in the 2000s, although progress was uneven across country and sector (Carnes and Mares 2015; Garay 2015; Huber and Stephens 2012; De La O 2015; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2015). Yet the political legacies of previous social-policy commitments also remain clear. Labor unions succeeded in protecting restrictive labor legislation and social-insurance spending, despite deep state and market reforms (Carnes 2014; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Murillo 2001; Wibbels 2013). Progressive income taxes also remained largely off the political agenda (Corbacho, Cibils, and Lora 2013; Mahon Jr. 2013).

Despite growth, Latin American governments still spend less on social policy and, critically, less on the poor compared to advanced democracies. Social expenditures average 13 percent of GDP in Latin America compared to 20 percent in OECD countries. I compare Latin America to advanced industrial democracies, rather than other parts of the developing world, because most models of redistributive preferences have been derived in this context. The combination of high levels of inequality and low levels of redistribution in Latin America cuts against theoretical

---

4 In Peru, violent threats and killing of popular leaders by leftist insurgent groups posed one of the main obstacles to new settlement formation and informal markets during the 1980s.
expectations used to explain redistribution in advanced welfare states. Redistributive theories rooted in the Meltzer-Richard model assume that individuals define their redistributive preferences based on their position relative to average income. In more unequal democracies, poor majorities should make redistribution more generous. Empirically, however, redistribution seems least present in the unequal societies where it is most needed, or what Lindert (2004) calls the “Robin Hood paradox.” This paradox is stark in Latin America, as shown in Figure 2.1. The horizontal axis plots a standard measure of economic inequality, the Gini coefficient, in Latin America and advanced industrial democracies. Latin American countries are far more unequal, and therefore have higher Gini coefficients. The vertical axis shows a standard measure of fiscal progressivity, absolute redistribution, which measures the reduction in market inequality through taxes and transfers.  

While standard models assume that unequal countries do more redistribution, the opposite occurs. On average, taxes and transfers reduce the Gini coefficient by 18 points in the Europe and North America, but only by 3 points in Latin America (SWIID 2014). That is, the more unequal region, Latin America, does far less redistribution than societies in which inequality already is lower. Many Latin American governments leave inequality basically unchanged, including the countries that form the focus of this book, Chile, Colombia, and Peru.

---

5 I use absolute redistribution measure, which looks at the difference in market-income inequality minus net-income inequality. The Gini coefficient is on a log scale so other measures like relative redistribution exaggerate the comparison because it is harder to reduce inequality at higher levels of the Gini coefficient. Measures of absolute redistribution reflect both the size of the welfare state and the progressivity of spending.

6 These indicators confirm what other scholars have found in more detailed studies by sector. For instance, Rudra (2004) shows that only spending on education in less developed countries results in a more favorable distribution of income, while all types of expenditures do in more advanced industrialized economies. Lustig, Pessino, and Scott (2014) show that public services like health and education do the most to reduce inequality in the region. Skoufias, Lindert, and Shapiro (2010) study a range of social insurance and spending programs, documenting wide variation in redistributive impact. Colombia and Peru are among the worst performers in the region.
The limited progressivity of Latin American welfare states has a crucial implication for the structure of public opinion: it cannot be assumed that the poor think social spending helps them. This picture is changing. But the poor have good historical reason to be skeptical about the pace and durability of change. If this is the case, then income should only be weakly associated with redistribution preferences, especially in countries and policy areas that do less to assist the poor.

Second, property law violations have a long history in the region. Squatting and street vending have served as ways for the urban poor to cope with economic dislocations and crises. It therefore cannot be taken for granted that the law represents popular views. I expect the poor to be less supportive of enforcement of laws that they tend to violate. Knitting these issues together, my claim is that ordinary citizens understand forbearance as informal redistribution, and therefore are more supportive when they believe that the government does not offer other welfare alternatives.

Forbearance is a more credible social policy promise, and therefore can signal class representation.
and motivate electoral behavior in ways that spending promises do not. Before testing these claims, I elaborate on how to measure popular attitudes toward both forbearance and redistribution.

2 Measuring Forbearance Preferences

While a large literature exists on preferences toward redistribution, comparatively little work considers how ordinary citizens think about the law (c.f. Bergman 2009; Gibson 2008; Ryo 2013; Tsai 2015). In this section, I describe how I decompose legal attitudes into two distinct dimensions, attitudes toward compliance, meaning beliefs about individuals that break the law, and attitudes toward enforcement, meaning beliefs about how the state acts in response to a legal violation. These beliefs do not necessarily move together. Individuals often dislike legal violations and oppose enforcement when confronted with the need for concrete sanctions. This gap between abstract principles and concrete policies is not unique to forbearance. I show that attitudes toward redistribution have a similar disjuncture: most of the population prefers to reduce inequality, but voices far weaker support for the tax and spending policies commonly used to make incomes more equal. I thus underscore the need for caution in drawing conclusions about the level of support for forbearance and redistribution, and introduce the index-based measures of preferences that I will use to analyze how beliefs differ by income and social context in the next section.

Preexisting surveys rarely ask about enforcement or do so in very general ways. I therefore designed my own survey and administered it to 900 voters in Bogotá, Colombia. Appendix A provides additional details on the survey design and includes the translated questionnaire. The latitude to design my own survey instrument allowed me to ask a rich set of questions, but raises the concern that the findings may be unique to Bogotá, which I address through the regional survey in the next section. I measure two aspects of legal attitudes, support for compliance and support for sanctions. Questions about compliance ask whether a respondent “strongly disapproves” to “strongly approves” that people sell goods without a license in public spaces (Street Vending) or
invades land to build a house (Squatting). Enforcement items ask the degree to which respondents approve that the government implements the most common sanctions against these activities, the confiscation of merchandise from street vendors (Decommission) and eviction of squatters (Eviction).

I use these two dimensions to produce a four-fold typology of legal attitudes summarized in Figure 2.2. I include the frequency of response categories for street vending and squatting in Bogotá. The top row shows respondents that support sanctions. The top-right cell can be thought of as the maximum—and the conventionally expected—attitude toward law enforcement, state enforcement. These individuals both disapprove of violations and support state efforts to sanction them. If we think of the case of murder, for instance, we expect that the population widely condemns the action and clamors for sanctions. If state enforcement beliefs predominate, then enforcement enjoys robust societal support. In the case of street vending and squatting, this viewpoint is in the minority and, as I demonstrate below, it concentrates among upper-class groups.

The upper-left cell is a rare combination where individuals approve of offenses and state enforcement. Theoretically, this combination reflects an attitude of civil disobedience. Individuals find the law unjust in certain circumstances, which merit its violation, but they believe that the state retains the authority qua state to enforce the law. For instance, black Americans who staged sit-ins in segregated public spaces during the civil rights movement were willing to go to jail to show their opposition to the law. These individuals use violations of the law as a means to protest at risk of state sanction, or what Peñalver and Katyal (2010) call “property outlaws.” In the case of street

---

7 Formulating questions about legal violations requires caution to ensure the enumerator does not impose a legal judgment in labeling the activity illegal so people would either decline to respond or automatically give the legally correct answer. With these considerations in mind, I asked individuals about compliance and enforcement while describing activities as “without a license” or “without title to the land” so respondents could arrive at their own judgments.

8 Tsai (2015) similarly shows that some Chinese citizens justify legal violations as a way to provide feedback to the state on the appropriateness of laws. Although she does not analyze enforcement attitudes directly, it is plausible that these citizens nevertheless think that the state still has the right to enforce the law.
vending and squatting, the category of individuals with these demands is miniscule. Intuitively, most individuals who find legal violations to be justified also think that the state should not sanction them, particularly on a survey where no symbolic political statement is being made through open violations at the risk of punishment.

The bottom row contains the categories of individuals who oppose enforcement. The bottom-left produces the combination of beliefs of chief interest: individuals who both approve of offenses and eschew state sanctions. In the context of laws that benefit the poor if ignored, I consider this support for informal welfare. This attitude is quite different from a particularistic explanation of support for legal violations. Da Matta (1991) famously proposed that Latin Americans show limited support for law because they see their personal circumstances as meriting exceptions. Informal welfare attitudes, in contrast, suggest principled stances that legal violations and forbearance should be permitted when they can level preexisting inequalities, much along the lines of the Aristotelian maxim that opens this chapter (on this point in Brazilian law, see Holston 2008: 28). This view is widespread in reactions to street vending, making up about half of responses. As we will see in coming chapters, many bureaucrats and politicians emphasize that vendors are trying to work and therefore should not face sanctions. In cases where informal welfare beliefs are dominant, the question becomes why the law exists at all. A slim majority, for instance, seemingly would support the full legalization of street vending in Bogotá.
Lastly, the bottom-right cell captures both opposition to legal violations and enforcement. A disjuncture forms between the ideal level of compliance and the use of state force necessary to achieve that outcome. The prevalence of these attitudes, which I label a stance of social regulation, likely reflects the way in which enforcement is different from other areas of policy. Sanctions impose concentrated costs on individuals, and draw attention to the ways that the state actively can disrupt the lives of vulnerable groups (Ellermann 2009: 30). Three-quarters of respondents condemn land invasions, but more than half of this group also sees evictions as too harsh. I interpret this gap as a concern about the use of coercive force in part because opposition grows stronger as questions are framed as vignettes about a single case, where the contrast between individual vulnerability and state power grows. While 49 percent of respondents oppose evictions of squatters in general, a full 62 percent of respondents oppose the eviction of a family who invades land. Interestingly, middle-class respondents are most sensitive to these framing effects: support

9 This finding coincides with Gibson’s (2008: 707) work on South Africa, which shows general opposition to the redistribution of land through squatting but substantial rejection of evictions as unfair.

Figure 2.2. A Typology of Legal Attitudes
shoots up by almost 20 percent, while it barely changes among the poor. A group of what loosely might be considered “bleeding-heart liberals” is very sensitive to the way sanctions are presented, while the poor have far more stable attitudes. Notably, if this type of view of social regulation dominates, then unenforced laws make eminent sense: citizens both support the abstract legal standard and oppose its enforcement in concrete cases.

Table 2.1 summarizes my finding that most individuals reject legal violations but many also oppose enforcement. Drawing precise conclusions about whether the “median voter” supports a given law is thus tricky. Whereas at the legislative stage, regulations on street vending and squatting draw substantial support, opposition to the imposition of sanctions dominates at the enforcement stage. What we can conclude is that there are non-trivial costs to undertaking enforcement actions. Class divides in attitudes, as I return to below, mean that enforcement agents in majority-poor areas face a formidable challenge.

**TABLE 2.1. Levels of Support for Forbearance and Redistribution by Question Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>Concrete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forbearance</td>
<td>Supports legal violations</td>
<td>Opposes sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Vending</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squatting</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistribution</td>
<td>Supports general goal</td>
<td>Supports specific policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash transfers</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gap between abstract and concrete preferences is an oddity of enforcement studies, but also extends to work on redistributive preferences. Substantial cross-national work on redistributive preferences depends on one question about whether “governments should implement measures to
reduce inequality.” Levels of support tend to be extremely high: more than four-fifths of respondents across Latin America and in Bogotá support inequality reduction. But this question poses no fiscal trade-off or policies to achieve this general goal. Responses look quite different when respondents are asked whether governments should raise taxes or expand social spending to make incomes more equal. In Bogotá, I asked a series of questions about social expenditure to suggest fiscal trade-offs—individuals were asked whether they supported spending on specific areas bearing in mind that it might require increased taxes. Naturally, support drops substantially, as shown in the right column of Table 2.1: only half of respondents support additional expenditures on cash transfers, unemployment, and housing programs, and two-thirds support additional pension spending. I also probed whether individuals support the taxation of the wealthy to redistribute income in general, and compare these responses to regional questions that ask if they agree with progressive tax schedules. About three-quarters of respondents support “taxing the rich to redistribute to the poor,” but only two-thirds support tax schedules that exact higher rates from the rich than the poor.

Given the differences in levels of support across question specifications, I combine a range of measures to create a more stable dependent variable with which I can analyze the determinants of attitudes. To do so, I use principal component analysis (PCA) to capture an underlying dimension of forbearance attitudes (Forbearance), based on the questions about both offenses and enforcement, and redistributive attitudes (Redistribution). The advantage of combining survey items on broadly

---

10 The main alternative measure comes from the World Values Survey (WVS), which does not ask directly about redistribution. Rather, it asks whether “we need large income differences as incentives” or “incomes should be made more equal.” While this question invokes a tension in redistribution, it only indirectly implies that the government should be responsible for this process. Similar results have been found using this measure (Ansell and Samuels 2015: ch. 8; Blofield and Luna 2011).

11 This question on tax schedules was asked for federal countries on the 2010 AmericasBarometer. Responses ranged from paying a proportional tax (30 cents for the rich and poor on every dollar earned), and a progressive tax schedule (anywhere from rich paying 40 to 60 cents and the poor paying between 10 and 30 cents).
defined issue areas into a single dimension is that it captures more stable attitudes and reduces noise from measurement error on single-item survey questions (Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008). Indeed, a common dimension (the first component) loads positively on all questions and explains 37 and 45 percent of the variance in forbearance and redistributive beliefs, respectively. In other words, it is safe to assume that there is an underlying “stance” on forbearance and redistribution that underlies answers, even if individual questions elicit slightly different responses. The drawback of this strategy is that it does not allow for a natural interpretation of the dependent variable. The size of effects must be presented in terms of how different attributes situate an individual’s opinions relative to the sample at large. I therefore also analyze each separate question to give a sense of the substantive effects, the consistency of patterns, and the ways in which conceptual differences in the questions structure the distribution of responses.

Put otherwise, I suspect that a central dividing line in politics, or what I consider a distributive cleavage around informal welfare policies, can be captured through a combination of measures of attitudes toward compliance and enforcement. Returning to Figure 2.2, what I want to measure is the diagonal, which could be thought of as a scale that measures the intensity of public support for informal welfare policies. The key groups—individuals who consistently back state enforcement and those who strongly favor forbearance as informal welfare provision—are shaded in gray to indicate their centrality. Individuals who prefer social regulation can be understood as a swing group, which I suspect is sensitive to the social policy context and visibility of sanctions, and therefore receives more intermediate values on a combined index. My claim is that, while opinions about compliance and sanctions are not the same, they have an underlying basis, just as opinions about taxation and spending are not equivalent, but strong support for both suggest more robust support for redistribution. I now use these composite variables to analyze how attitudes vary with an individual’s economic position and assessments of the welfare state.
3 Material Interests and Preferences

The most basic assumption of redistributive politics is that the poor prefer social welfare spending and the rich resist it. If forbearance serves as a form of informal redistribution, then it should divide preferences by class groups in a similar way. My chief independent variables of interest in this section therefore are proxies for material interests, namely income (and related measures of wealth, education, and direct stakes in legal violations). There should be a negative relationship between income and forbearance support. Think of this test as the most basic probe that lower-income groups are more sympathetic to forbearance. In addition, due to the truncated nature of many social programs, I expect material interests to play a greater role in shaping preferences toward forbearance than standard social policy tools. I begin with the correlational evidence from Bogotá, and then replicate the tests on data from across Latin America.

3.1 Material Interests in Bogotá

I test the material interest hypothesis with regression analyses of forbearance and redistributive attitudes in which income is included as an independent variable along with controls for potential confounders. Self-reported income measures have a number of known problems. Even if accurately reported, current income reported on a survey does not reflect lifetime earnings and thus material interests. Measurement error can grow in developing countries where households do not receive regular paychecks and question nonresponse rates are high. In Bogotá, I try to surmount these issues by relying on the government’s socioeconomic stratifications, a variable that I loosely call Class. Colombia divides the population into six class strata that are established through a detailed household survey that accounts for current income levels, as well as the precariousness of that income level (due to education, type of work, household size, dwelling quality, and so on). Strata “1” is the lowest and “6” is the highest. Individuals are highly knowledgeable of their household’s stratum, given that they are used to determine tax rates and eligibility for a variety of
government programs. Citizens and politicians alike speak in terms of “low” and “high” strata. Strata measures thus come far closer to capturing a broad notion of economic position than straightforward income measures. Again, I expect the coefficient on class to be negative, given that upper-class groups prefer less forbearance. Because stratifications are made at the household level, I also include years of education (Education) to capture additional individual socioeconomic differences and lifetime earnings expectations.

Second, benefits secured through forbearance fit uncomfortably into traditional Left-Right ideological divisions because they are pro-poor, but provided outside state channels. I therefore do not expect a strong role for political ideology in predicting enforcement attitudes. But support for law and order often is associated with conservative political ideology, which in turn often is correlated with income. To make sure that political ideology, rather than income, does not drive the results, I asked respondents to place their political views on a scale that runs from the political left to right, “according to the meaning that these terms have for you” (Right).

Third, a related prediction of a material interest theory is that individuals who benefit directly should be the most supportive of forbearance. In particular, I expect that individuals who have worked as a street vendor (Vendor Past) or have occupied land illegally (Squatter Past) are more supportive of forbearance, given that they have a direct stake in the distributive benefits. Although a looser measure, individuals in the informal sector (Informal) also may be more likely to support forbearance due to their historic exclusion from formal welfare benefits and need for regulatory flexibility. I measure informality through a composite measure of whether an individual lacks a labor contract, has noncontributory health insurance, and does not make pension contributions. All three indicators should be associated with more support for forbearance.

\[\text{More specifically, I classify an individual’s labor contract as informal if she is a non-professional own-account worker, lacks a contract, or has a temporary or fixed-term contract. This measure combines both benefit and contract-based definitions of informality, offering the most robust sense}\]
In all models, I include a small number of demographic controls. I expect that older respondents (Age) are less supportive of forbearance, given a higher probability of owning property and concerns about disorder among younger generations. I also control for gender (Female), given that women may be less likely to own property and more reliant on flexible job opportunities like street vending. I rescale all categorical independent variables from 0 to 1 to aid in the interpretation of the results.

Table 2.2 presents the results of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model. All coefficients can be interpreted to mean that a change from the lowest to highest value of the independent variable is associated with a standard deviation change in the index of support for forbearance. For example, Model 1 shows the barebones model with class as the key explanatory variable. As predicted, upper-class individuals are less supportive of forbearance. The coefficient on class, which is close to negative one, means that an individual in the highest class is about a standard deviation less supportive than an individual in the lowest class on the index of forbearance attitudes (measures of class and wealth produce similar results). Model 2 adds the measure of political ideology. The coefficient on ideology is negative, but the effect of income barely changes. Individuals that identify with the political Right are about a quarter of a standard deviation less supportive of forbearance than those on the political Left. Model 3 adds the variables that affect expectations about the receipt of informal benefits. Past experiences as a street vendor, squatter, or work in the informal sector all are associated with more support for forbearance. Class remains a significant predictor of forbearance attitudes controlling for the direct violation of the law, of what it means to be an informal sector worker. Purely work-based definitions cannot capture the employment trajectory of an individual. The tenure of average formal sector labor contract is just three years in Latin America, and many workers rotate in and out of the informal sector (Perry 2007; Schneider 2013). But, solely benefit-based definitions can miss labor market status. I therefore prefer to use a composite indicator that allows informality to range from the most excluded individuals who lack both benefits and labor contracts to those with a mixture of informal characteristics.
suggesting that poor voters are more supportive of forbearance even when they do not benefit directly.

**Table 2.2. Comparing Forbearance and Redistributive Preferences in Bogotá**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Forbearance</th>
<th>Redistributive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class</strong></td>
<td>-1.010*</td>
<td>-1.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>-0.382*</td>
<td>-0.293*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>(0.146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-0.516*</td>
<td>-0.545*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right</strong></td>
<td>-0.235*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vendor Past</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.457*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Squatter Past</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.198*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.245*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>869</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R²</strong></td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p < 0.05; robust standard errors in parentheses; two-tailed tests. The dependent variable is the standardized first component of PCA analysis from a series of questions about forbearance (approval for squatting, street vending, evictions, and decommissions) and redistribution (approval for inequality reduction, taxation, cash transfers, housing, unemployment, and pension policies).

Models 4 through 6 replicate the analysis using the index of redistributive attitudes as the dependent variable. As theorized, class is negatively associated with support for redistributive attitudes, but it is a weaker predictor. The coefficient on income is about half the size. Another way to see the difference in explanatory power is through measures of model fit: despite using a battery of questions, demographic characteristics explain 4 percent of variation in redistributive attitudes compared to 21 percent for forbearance attitudes. Class on its own explains 14 percent of the variance in attitudes toward forbearance. These results are consistent with past work on
redistributive attitudes, which find that, even when income predicts redistributive attitudes, the explanatory power is less consistent and weaker in Latin America (Blofield and Luna 2011; Dion and Birchfield 2010). Interestingly, political ideology also is not predictive of redistributive attitudes, despite dominant definition of the political Left and Right as rooted in different orientations toward the state’s role in redressing economic inequalities (Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Luna and Kaltwasser Rovira 2014). There has been a Latin American trend toward clustering at the center of the political spectrum (Dosek 2011; Seligson 2007), and substantial question nonresponse suggests the weak salience of ideological definitions, but the relationship between ideology and forbearance hints that the result may be more than just measurement error.\textsuperscript{13}

As a robustness check, I also look at the results separately for each question specification. The loose idea is that economic interests are more important if they determine how citizens evaluate a range of questions. I therefore run separate regressions using survey items about approval for compliance, enforcement, social expenditures, and taxation as the dependent variables. Figure 2.3 plots the estimated coefficients and 95 percent confidence intervals on the horizontal axis from each of these regressions. I display the three main explanatory variables of interest, class, political ideology, and past violations of the law (socioeconomic control variables are included but not shown). By looking at how many coefficients lose significance, shown visually by when the confidence intervals cross the vertical line at zero, the figure reveals the consistency of the results. What stands out is that the class coefficients on the forbearance questions are the only ones that uniformly are significant. Having violated a law in the past also has a largely consistent positive effect on support for forbearance across questions. Only some of the coefficients on income are significant for redistribution, although they all have the correct negative sign.

\textsuperscript{13} Because I lose 15 percent of the data due to nonresponse, primarily among low-income respondents, I multiply impute ideology using socioeconomic characteristics and past vote choice in Appendix A. Adjusting for missing data does not change the results.
**Figure 2.3. Predicted Effects of Class, Ideology, and Legal Violations**

Notes: Horizontal bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals; controls for age, education, and gender not shown; the variable Past Violation takes on the value that matches the dependent variable specification (i.e. past history as a squatter for questions on squatting and evictions, etc.). Questions about sanctions are coded as opposition to the sanction so that a negative coefficient indicates that the wealthy are more likely to oppose forbearance/support enforcement.

Breaking down the results by types of policy instruments helps make sense of the weak effect of class and ideology on redistributive attitudes. Consistent with my theory, only the more economically progressive policies, such as taxing the rich or cash transfer programs, divide the electorate. Housing and unemployment policy tend to be less targeted to the poor in Colombia, as I return to in subsequent chapters, which may explain the weaker class divisions. From this perspective, the large and negative coefficients on the forbearance questions confirm the economic progressivity of these legal violations. Disaggregating the results by survey question also shows that most of the effect of political ideology comes through opposition to squatting, possibly because it represents a more direct threat to private property rights and political order. Political ideology comes closest to having the expected dampening effect on redistributive attitudes in the questions about taxation. Bogotá has a progressive system of property taxation that may explain this opposition.

The disaggregated questions also allow for a more substantive interpretation of the results. Each question was measured on a four-point scale running from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” rescaled from 0 to 1. So, an estimated coefficient of 0.25 means that a move from the lowest
to highest level of the independent variable is associated with a single ordinal category increase in approval, say from disagreement to agreement. Poor respondents are roughly one ordinal category less supportive of enforcement than nonpoor respondents. The magnitude of class differences for progressive social policies is on par with those observed for forbearance. Another way to put these results is in terms of the fraction of each class group that holds enforcement or informal welfare beliefs in the raw data. State enforcement against squatting garners support among 47 percent of nonpoor respondents and 31 percent of poor ones. Even more extreme, while 27 percent of nonpoor respondents support enforcement against street vendors, only 8 percent of poor respondents concur. Conversely, informal welfare beliefs concentrate among the poor. While 22 percent of poor respondents approve of informal welfare provision in the case of squatting, 6 percent of nonpoor respondents hold similar beliefs. Likewise, 63 percent of the poor hold informal welfare beliefs about street vending compared to 34 percent of nonpoor respondents.\footnote{For ease of communication, I refer to Strata 1 and 2 as the poor, Strata 3 as the lower-middle class, and Strata 4 and above as nonpoor (or middle and upper-class).}

In sum, I find strong evidence that income predicts attitudes toward legal violations. These effects are larger and more consistent than those observed for redistribution, in part because only progressive forms of redistribution like taxation and cash transfers divide the electorate. The ability to probe forbearance and redistributive attitudes in a variety of ways increases my confidence that the results are not a quirk of the survey design. Nevertheless, it is important to consider whether these results generalize beyond Bogotá.

\subsection*{3.2 \textit{Material Interests Across Latin America}}

The evidence that income shapes forbearance preferences is strong across Latin America, although it comes from a less precise set of survey questions. Operationalizing support for forbearance cross-nationally is not straightforward, given that widely administered surveys rarely ask about legal attitudes. Given these constraints, I make use of a novel indirect method to measure
attitudes toward squatting using public opinion data from the 2008, 2010, and 2012 waves of AmericasBarometer. The core questionnaire asks respondents whether they approve “that people invade private property or land to protest.” Response options range from “strongly disapprove” to “strongly approve” on a ten-point scale. This question thus probes compliance attitudes in a similar fashion to my survey in Bogotá. Levels of support for land invasions are low, but similar to the 21 percent approval rate for squatting observed in Bogotá: 16 percent of Colombians and 11 percent of the regional sample approve of property seizures.\textsuperscript{15} Across countries, the fraction of the population supportive of property invasions also tends to be higher in unequal countries, like Colombia (the correlation between inequality and invasion support is 0.55).

The catch is that the question asks about property invasions “to protest,” and forms part of a block of questions about contentious behaviors. Responses thus likely mix beliefs about the general appropriateness of protest, the “response style” of an individual (meaning the tendency to give extreme or moderate answers), and reactions to land invasions. My aim is to isolate this latter aspect, by essentially only using the variation unique to the question on land invasions. To do so, I create an index of general attitudes toward protest and then use this index in a first-stage regression on the question about property seizures.\textsuperscript{16} Controlling for the common component of views on protest, the remaining variation represent how individuals’ responses change when considering land invasions.

\textsuperscript{15} Levels of approval may be lower because the AmericasBarometer question explicitly asks about private property, whereas I did not specify whether the property at stake was public or private.

\textsuperscript{16} PCA is a superior technique to the addition of controls in an OLS style regression because it captures underlying attitudes toward protest behaviors and response styles, rather than opinions about any single type of contentious action. In constructing an index of general protest attitudes, I include questions about attitudes toward disruptive or illegal protest: seizing property, blocking roads, organizing to overthrow the government, and occupying factories. I also include three measures that capture approval of legal protests: past protest participation, legal protests, and legal protests by groups that criticize the government. All variables about protest load positively on the first component and explain roughly a third of the variation in the data. Appendix A provides additional details.
invasions. I standardize the residuals to use as my dependent variable, so a change in any covariate can be interpreted in terms of a standard deviation change in support for land invasions.

Across the region, only one question about redistributive attitudes has been used consistently. It asks whether individuals believe that the government should take concrete measures to reduce inequality, and elicits near uniform positive responses because the question poses no trade-offs. Nevertheless, I follow the same strategy as above and compare whether income predicts attitudes toward both forbearance and redistribution.

My main independent variable is income. Respondents self-report their household income range, *Income*, divided in ten categories (and sixteen categories in the 2012 wave). Given the change in categories, I take the log of the mid-point income in each category. Logged income is more normally distributed, and closer to our theoretical expectations that the same percentage change in income should produce similar changes in attitudes. I also test a wealth-based measure (*Wealth*) based on household assets, given that it tends to be measured with less error. Support for squatting and redistribution should decline with income and wealth, and therefore the coefficient on both measures should be negative.

All models include a similar set of control variables as used in Bogotá. I include the same set of core socioeconomic controls, *Age, Education, Female, and Right*. The question wordings are identical to my survey. Given that these are nationwide samples, I also include an indicator variable for whether the respondent lives in a rural area (*Rural*). Both urban and rural land invasions involve distributive claims by the poor so I do not expect substantial differences in attitudes. Nonetheless, I include rural residence to leave open the possibility that land seizures are perceived differently in the countryside. There are no questions on past history as a squatter or street vendor. Recent waves do include questions on whether an individual is self-employed, which I combine with information on education to create a category for self-employed unskilled workers (classified as having less than a
high school degree). This labor status definition of informality provides a very loose proxy for informal employment (*Self-Employed*), and thus possibly a greater material stake in forbearance. As above, I rescale all categorical independent variables from 0 to 1 so the coefficients can be interpreted as representing a change from the lowest to highest values.

Table 2.3 presents the regional results. I include country and time fixed effects (not shown) so the coefficient, say for wealth, represents how a move from the lowest to highest wealth level within a given country-year affects attitudes toward property seizures. Model 1 examines the determinants of attitudes toward forbearance. Consistent with the findings from Bogotá, I find that poor, less educated respondents are more tolerant of squatting across the region. This follows directly from my claim that property seizures constitute progressive transfers and thus gain greater support among the poor. Doubling one’s income is associated with about a standard deviation difference in the index of beliefs about property seizures. Being less educated, younger, and female also are associated with stronger disapproval for property seizures, perhaps because these groups are less likely to be property owners themselves. Wealth-based income measures produce substantively similar and significant results, as shown in Models 2 and 3. Identifying with the political Right is associated with less support for property seizures in the cross-national data, but does not change the coefficient on income. This result is consistent with my finding in the Bogotá data that political identification most significantly predicts attitudes toward threats to property ownership, while having a less significant association with other enforcement attitudes. Self-employment has the opposite sign, predicting less support for property seizures. It is possible that self-employment is too crude of a measure of an individual’s material interests in forbearance, and actually may capture small shop owners anxious about the potential seizure of property.
Models 4 through 6 compare the same specifications for redistributive preferences. Income does not predict less support for redistribution in the pooled data, but wealth measures do produce the correctly signed coefficients. Surprisingly, education, another common proxy for socioeconomic status, is associated with either equal or more support for redistribution in contrast to the predictions of standard material interest theories. It is possible that the inconsistent relationship between different socioeconomic measures and redistributive preferences at least in part reflects measurement error. However, a closer look at the countries where income (or wealth) most closely predicts preferences suggest that a more substantive explanation: income matters for redistributive preferences only in countries where the welfare state is a relevant force in the poor’s lives. The left
plot of Figure 2.4 makes this clear through a simple bivariate plot. The vertical axis plots the estimated coefficient on income and preferences toward inequality reduction. In other words, a more negative coefficient means that preferences come closer to theoretical expectations that the rich support less redistribution than the poor. The horizontal axis plots the size of the welfare state in each country, as measured by social expenditures as a percent of GDP. I use this measure because it is available for all countries in the region, and it is highly correlated with the extent of redistribution (the correlation with the absolute redistribution measure used in Figure 2.1 is 0.8). In a country like Colombia, where the welfare state is middling in size, economic status barely predicts redistributive preferences. As I return to below, this finding is consistent with micro-level evidence that the poor and nonpoor expect to benefit equally from social expenditures. In a country like Uruguay, where the welfare state is larger, income is strongly predictive of redistributive preferences. Of course, these correlations are merely suggestive, given that large welfare states also tend to be associated with other factors like Left parties, unions, and histories of democracy that make class more salient. I analyze whether these correlations hold in multilevel statistical models in separate work. But these patterns are consistent with my argument that public opinion is structured differently in truncated welfare states: the poor and nonpoor hold similar redistributive attitudes where the welfare state is weak. Meanwhile, forbearance more consistently divides the public across country.

In contrast to the inconsistent role of income, the right panel of Figure 2.4 emphasizes its uniform role in shaping attitudes toward land invasions. In almost every country, save Panama, the relationship between income and support for land invasions is negative, as seen by the fact that the coefficients are less than zero. Countries best known for a history of land invasions, such as Brazil

---

I use the 2012 LAPOP wave for both plots given that income was measured through the largest number of categories in an attempt to improve response rates and accuracy. Here, I use the correlations as the simplest statistic to show that the relationship holds in the raw data. Controlling for covariates like education, age, and so on produce similar results.
where the Landless Peasants’ Movement has politicized land invasions, but also Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru, have the strongest relationship between income and invasions. There is no clear relationship between the size of the welfare state and class divisions around land invasions, but I do not expect one given that a large welfare state does not guarantee substitutive housing policies to provide options for squatters.

Figure 2.4. The Predictive Power of Income and Welfare State Size in Latin America

Notes: The coefficients are measured through a basic regression of income on support for land invasions and inequality reduction for the 2012 LAPOP wave in which the number of income categories expanded to allow for more precise measurements. Controlling for education, female, age, and rural residency produce the same results. Social expenditures come from ECLAC (2011).

The central finding of this section is that material interests shape forbearance preferences, both in Bogotá and across Latin America. While most theories focus on the income divisions that form around redistribution, I demonstrate that cleavages are equally, and at least in the context of a survey, seemingly more powerful around forbearance. These income-based divisions will be at the heart of why elected officials make different enforcement choices depending on where they run for office in the remaining chapters. Of course, exposing a correlation between income and attitudes leaves open a number of possible reasons why attitudes toward forbearance differ. I now consider some competing hypotheses about why the poor support less enforcement, and also how features of the social context may matter.
4 Probing the Mechanisms and Contextual Differences

What explains the strong relationship between income and forbearance preferences? I suggest that forbearance gains support among the poor because it is seen as an informal welfare policy and a necessary one where welfare states are weak. But there are several plausible alternative or additional motives connecting income and preferences, including cultural norms, interest-group activities, and fairness beliefs. While not definitive tests, I consider the evidence in favor of these competing hypotheses and the role that judgments about the social context play in shaping attitudes.

First, scholars who take a socio-cultural approach stress that weak enforcement is rooted in Latin America’s familial and clientelistic traditions, and that the poor are less legalistic than the nonpoor due to their role as dependent clients (DaMatta 1991; García Villegas 2009). In contrast, if my material interest theory holds, only progressive forms of forbearance should divide the electorate by income. The poor’s support for legal violations should not extend more broadly to instances when the wealthy violate the law. The right panel of Figure 2.5 compares approval for different types of offenses across class groups in Bogotá. The solid lines show approval for legal violations that benefit the poor, squatting and street vending, along with the 95 percent confidence intervals. The level of support for these violations is substantial, and it declines with income. In contrast, the dotted lines show support for two common infractions with regressive effects, using business tax loopholes (Tax Loopholes) and paying less than registered on industrial electricity meters (Electricity). There is near universal condemnation of these legal violations by poor and nonpoor respondents alike. Thus, consistent with my theory, only legal violations with progressive benefits polarize voters along class lines.

Looking across offenses suggests that material interests may be rooted in both production and consumer-based motives. In the context of attitudes toward market reforms, Baker (2010) proposes a consumer-oriented theory of preferences in which individuals primarily think about how
policies affect prices. Applied to forbearance, this view predicts different preferences regarding street vending and squatting. Street vendors often escape value-added taxes and offer lower goods prices, while squatting has no clear effect on pocketbook issues. A consumer-oriented theory thus would predict stronger levels of support for street vending than squatting, and weaker class cleavages for street vending given both poor and nonpoor consumers benefit from cheaper tax-exempt goods. Figure 2.5 reveals a modicum of support for this explanation of material interests: the level of support for street vending is much higher than for squatting. But the class divisions are fairly similar across street vending and squatting, as seen in the parallel slopes. There are several possible explanations for why squatting attracts less support overall, such as the fact that land takings are harder to reverse, do not involve productive work, and strain social services. I therefore cannot rule out that consumer interests motivate popular support for street vending, but they cannot fully account for why important segments of the electorate support squatting and class divisions emerge toward both offenses.

Second, I asked if individuals have violated the law both as a test of my material interest theory, and as a way to separate my theory from a pure interest-group and consumer-based alternatives. Interest-group theories imply that only direct stakeholders support forbearance, and they impose their preferences on the majority that supports enforcement. An exclusive consumer-based theory predicts no role for direct legal violations. In contrast, I expect that individuals who violate the law have the strongest support for forbearance, but even poor individuals who do not violate the law support forbearance based on their group affinity. Thus, the negative relationship between income and forbearance attitudes should persist after accounting for whether an individual violates the law at hand. Returning to Table 2.2, we see that this is the case: the coefficient on class

---

18 Squatting can increase the housing stock and thus lower housing prices for non-squatters, but on the other hand, squatters occupy scarce land and often steal services in ways that raise housing and service prices for non-squatters.
drops by about a quarter when including measures of direct dependence on legal violations, but income remains an important predictor of attitudes.

![Figure 2.5. Support for Noncompliance By Class and Offense](image)

**Figure 2.5. Support for Noncompliance By Class and Offense**

A third way to probe whether expectations of benefits undergird both forbearance and redistributive attitudes is to compare the fraction of individuals who believe that their group benefits from social expenditures compared to forbearance. To do this, I asked individuals if they believe that social expenditures benefit “people like them” (*Benefits*). This question is meant to judge perceptions that an individual receives benefits, whether past or future, from the welfare state. The solid line in Figure 2.6 reveals that the fraction of respondents who believe that they benefit from social expenditures is amazingly constant across class groups. About a third of poor and nonpoor respondents believe that they benefit from state social policies. It is unsurprising that attitudes toward social policy differ little by class when the key mechanism that underpins material interest theories—differential benefits from the welfare state—does not vary at all based on class position.
Contrastingly, the dashed line plots the fraction of the population that has worked as a street vendor or lived in a squatter settlement as a proxy for those who benefit from forbearance. For the poorest class group, the fraction that has benefited from forbearance is larger than those who expect to benefit from social expenditures. This is an important difference given that the question scope (all social programs versus street vending and squatting) would lead us to think that social benefits should affect many more poor individuals. It is consistent with my contention that informal welfare provision often has been more important to the lives of the poor than the formal welfare state in Latin America. We also can see that the class difference across groups is very sharp for forbearance. Primarily the poor, and some lower-middle class, respondents say that they work as street vendors or live in informal settlements—and thus are likely to voice support for forbearance—while all class groups expect to capture some social policy expenditures in Colombia.

Lastly, the relevance of property law violations to how many poor households first found housing and work in the city, and cope with economic downturns means that squatting and street vending are issues likely to stimulate concerns about justice. As Gibson (2008) finds in the case of
squatting in South Africa, concerns about both procedural and distributive justice shape how individuals react to squatters. In the context of Latin America, my suspicion is that individuals judge forbearance in part based on whether they think the poor need to violate the law. If they think that the state provides other alternatives, then they will be more likely to see enforcement as warranted. To investigate this possibility, I included a few questions about housing programs in the survey, such as whether “the poor sometimes need to invade land to access housing” (Housing Needs). Assessments of housing alternatives are dismal: 81 percent of respondents believe that the poor sometimes need to invade land to access housing, and that the state offers few other options. The perceived need of those who violate the law is a particularly important source of opposition to evictions among nonpoor respondents. For instance, among nonpoor respondents who believe that squatters lack housing alternatives, 56 percent oppose evictions. Among those who believe that squatters have other housing options, only 40 percent oppose evictions. Of course, these results must be taken with a grain of salt, given that some underlying social attitude might explain both why individuals think housing alternatives are more limited and why evictions are unjustified.

It is also worth mentioning a competing explanation for how beliefs about social policy shape forbearance attitudes. Property law violations often are seen as a type of “self-help” aid. While I argue that the state plays a key role in allowing violations to occur, squatters and street vendors must use their labor and resources to make this property valuable. The sense that forbearance is not a handout may lead some to judge it as preferable to state alternatives. Collier (1976), for example, describes how Peruvian oligarchs provided initial support for squatter settlements because they were a way to allow the poor to help themselves. If this view holds, then support for forbearance may be concentrated among individuals who believe that state social programs promote dependency among the poor. I therefore asked respondents whether they agreed

---

19 I also find similar results using another question formulation that, “The right to dignified housing is a reality for the poor in Bogotá.”
that state welfare programs “teach the poor to become dependent on the government” (Dependency). Agreement actually predicts less support for forbearance, suggesting that perhaps it is capturing a general anti-poor orientation (Appendix A). Thus, I find limited support for the hypothesis that individuals support forbearance as a type of “self-help” measure to avoid the dependency of the poor.

To put these findings in context, studies of comparative welfare states tend to emphasize that preferences do not exist prior to actual experiences with the welfare state. Rather, past policies powerfully shape public preferences through their effects on material interests, information, and societal expectations (e.g. Gingrich and Ansell 2012; Iversen and Soskice Forthcoming; Jaeger 2009; Jordan 2010; Korpi and Palme 1998; Linos and West 2001). The strong role of income in shaping forbearance preferences, and less consistent role in redistributive preferences, can be understood in light of the history and progressivity of both policies in Latin America. Many formal welfare benefits in Colombia, as in many other Latin American countries, have accrued to formal sector workers. Squatting and street vending, in contrast, offer targeted benefits to the poor. Even the most barebones material interest model does not predict that income divides the public when all income groups expect to benefit equally from social expenditures, as shown in this section. The greater polarization of attitudes around forbearance toward street vendors and squatters thus makes sense when their role in helping the poor is considered. Welfare state failures and forbearance attitudes also seem to be intertwined: individuals, and especially the nonpoor, support forbearance when they think the poor have few other welfare options. These results are difficult to understand through purely cultural, consumer-based or interest group accounts of preferences.

4 Forbearance as a Distributive Signal

Even if citizens understand the distributive functions of forbearance, it does not necessarily follow that they hold politicians responsible or change their voting behavior in response to
enforcement choices. This section explores my final hypothesis: that politicians who propose forbearance are identified as sympathetic to the poor’s broader distributive interests, while those who run on enforcement platforms are viewed as anti-poor in contexts where welfare programs provide few options. More boldly, given the progressive and more credible nature of the benefits from forbearance, I expect that enforcement platforms provide a clearer cue about distributive commitments than traditional social policy platforms in a truncated welfare state like Colombia.

To understand what enforcement conveys about a politician to the public, I designed a survey experiment. I focused on street vendors in the experiment because they create common problems across urban space so all respondents are equally familiar with their legal violations. Each survey respondent heard two short statements about a hypothetical candidate considering a run for city mayor with a platform about street vending or employment policy. The combination and order in which they heard the candidates varied. All of the statements were loosely based on actual candidate proposals from past mayoral elections. Individuals heard one vignette about a candidate with a plan for pro-poor job creation (Pro-Redistribution) or pro-business investment (Pro-Business). My goal was to simulate a classic Left-Right division on employment issues. In addition, individuals evaluated a candidate with a plan for either forbearance (Forbearance) or enforcement (Enforcement) against unlicensed street vendors. The vignettes read as follows, where the italic type indicates wording that changed across vignettes:

*Pro-Redistribution/Pro-Business*: As a city councilor, the candidate criticized the lack of projects for vulnerable sectors of the population/to generate private sector investment. If he were mayor, he would promote social inclusion/economic development, and specifically, invest in government job programs to help employ unskilled workers/cut government bureaucracy to help businesses grow and generate jobs.

*Forbearance/Enforcement*: As a city councilor, the candidate criticized the abuses/the permissive attitude of previous mayors toward unlicensed street vendors. If he were mayor, he would respect the rights of workers in the informal economy until the government provides other job alternatives/work for greater order in the streets and clear out unlicensed vendors.
After hearing each candidate’s proposal, respondents assessed the candidates separately to avoid framing effects. They evaluated the candidates on a four-point scale running from “highly unlikely” to “highly likely” on three items: (1) How likely is it that the candidate promotes the interests of the poor? (2) How likely is it that the candidate promotes the interests of people like you? and (3) How likely is it that you would vote for this candidate for mayor? The first pair of questions was intended to tap into representation and expectations of benefits, whereas the last analyzed vote intention. Finally, respondents placed the candidate on a five-point ideological scale ranging from “Left” to “Right.”

The groups hearing each candidate prompt were balanced with respect to class and other pretreatment covariates. A simple comparison of means can therefore be interpreted as the effect of hearing one platform versus the other. There is no “control” condition because a candidate without any political stance is rather meaningless; instead, the effects are interpreted relative to each other so I can draw comparisons between and across candidate pairs. Figure 2.7 shows the perceived likelihood that the candidate will promote the interests of the poor, as well as the ideological placement. I plot the raw means and 95 percent confidence intervals for each experimental condition. The vertical line at 0.5 indicates the point of indifference where respondents are equally likely or unlikely to identify a candidate as representing the poor’s interests or the political Left. The results confirm my hypothesis that enforcement/forbearance messages send

---

20 A direct comparison of candidates might better approximate the theory that voters favor candidates who forbear over those who enforce or run on formal social policy platforms. Within the context of this survey, though, matched comparisons create problems of consistency bias. If respondents were to see both candidate pairs, they may attempt to make their answers consistent by preferring the perceived left-leaning candidate in both cases. By separating the candidates, a variety of comparisons can be drawn based on the overall evaluation of each candidate.

21 See Appendix A for significance tests for differences of means using standard t-tests, as well as p-values based on permutation tests. I also follow the convention of using difference-of-means tests to measure average treatment effects, and corroborate my results using regression analysis in which the experimental treatment condition is included as an independent variable with and without covariates, namely gender, age, education, and past history as a street vendor.
clearer anti/pro-poor cues than traditional social policy platforms. Provided with the enforcement message, 78 percent of respondents believed that the candidate is unlikely or very unlikely to favor the poor’s interests. Just 33 percent of respondents thought the same about the forbearance candidate. The difference between these conditions is statistically significant (the raw scores on a 1-point scale are 0.75 and 0.42, p < 0.001), suggesting that the information on a candidate’s enforcement positions efficiently communicates a politician’s affinities. In contrast, the traditional social policy candidates did little to signal pro-poor commitments: 57 percent of respondents viewed the pro-redistribution candidate as unlikely or very unlikely to favor the poor’s interests compared to 59 percent for the pro-business platform (raw scores of 0.55 and 0.56, respectively). In sum, learning that a candidate favors forbearance more effectively signals a politician’s affinity with poor voters relative to a pro-redistribution message. Crucially, politicians not only avoid a reputation as an “anti-poor” candidate by eschewing enforcement actions, they also seem to gain a reputation for representing the poor’s interests.

**FIGURE 2.7. Perceptions of Distributive Benefits and Ideological Placement by Candidate**

Note: Mean and 95% confidence interval by candidate statement. The vertical line shows the indifference point.

The findings are similar, although weaker, for the ideological placement of candidates. Both
the pro-redistribution and pro-forbearance candidates are perceived as representing the center-Left, and there is no distinguishable difference between them. The enforcement candidate is identified as significantly farther to the political right than the other candidates. The inability to place the candidates ideologically, other than the enforcement candidate, may be explained by the declining salience of Left-Right distinction in Colombian politics. Nonresponse on political ideology questions is a major problem particularly for low-income respondents (22 percent nonresponse, compared to 5 percent for the upper-income brackets). The key point is that, despite muddled opinions about a candidate’s ideology, the idea of whether a candidate “benefits the poor” evokes clear opinions across the income spectrum. It also leads voters to identify candidates with forbearance promises as supportive of the poor.

Consistent with my theoretical expectations, poor and nonpoor voters respond differently when asked whether a candidate supports “people like you” and whether they would vote for each candidate. The phrase “people like you” is left deliberately vague so individuals can interpret their own class position or identity. To see how responses differ by class group, Figure 2.8 reports the mean response and standard deviation by class strata (shown with local polynomial smoothing and simulated 95% confidence intervals). The upper left panel shows that poor respondents believe that the forbearance candidate is more likely to benefit them by a wide margin compared to the enforcement candidate. Among the bottom strata of the income distribution, 60 percent of the poor believe that the forbearance candidate is likely to benefit them, compared to just 25 percent who hold that belief about the enforcement candidate. The lower left panel shows similar in terms hypothetical electoral behavior: 57 percent of voters in the bottom quintile say they would vote for the forbearance candidate, compared to just 28 percent for the enforcement candidate. These are sizable proportions of the population, particularly for a competitive urban electoral context where margins of victory can be small.
The comparison of the right and left side of Figure 2.8 confirms that forbearance and enforcement platforms more effectively cue a politician’s distributive commitments than traditional social policy platforms. While the poor do distinguish the pro-redistribution candidate as more likely to represent their interests and win their vote than the pro-business candidate, the difference is not statistically significant (right panels). This is suggestive that social policy promises are less credible, and therefore do not convince the poor that politicians will serve their interests.

Figure 2.8. Perceptions that Candidate Will Benefit Respondent’s Group (Upper) and that Respondent Will Vote for Candidate (Lower) by Class

A surprising aspect of the survey results is that there are no significant differences in the likelihood that upper-income respondents view the candidates as serving their interests or in their vote intention. One possible explanation for this non-finding is that the nonpoor may not view street vending as an issue and thus disregard information about a candidates’ enforcement position.
However, nonpoor respondents are likely to care about the structure of business and redistributive policies, and therefore should have responded to the traditional social policy prompts. My suspicion is that the inability to budge perceptions indicates that nonpoor respondents tend to know more about politics, which makes their preferences harder to alter through skeletal candidate information in the context of a low-stakes survey experiment. Unfortunately the survey did not include questions to test a respondent’s knowledge or sophistication about politics so it is hard to disentangle whether more engaged respondents were less swayed by the information provided.

Finally, my model suggests that individuals with stronger material interests in forbearance should be the most responsive to informal welfare appeals, but that their responses should not entirely drive the effects. The survey included a post-treatment item on whether a respondent works or has worked as street vendor. As we saw above, a past history of working as a street vendor or squatter was associated with more support for legal violations. Likewise, I expect that individuals who once derived income from street vending have a direct stake in enforcement and are most sensitive to the candidate information. This is not a trivial fraction of the sample: among the lower and lower-middle class groups, 28 percent of respondents once have worked as street vendors.

To test whether these respondents are more sympathetic to candidates who promote forbearance—and check whether income remains important once accounting for direct benefits from forbearance—I estimate the causal effects separately for the different subgroups of respondents and analyze the variance. Figure 2.9 compares perceptions that a candidate benefits “people like them” and vote intention for lower and lower-middle class groups who have worked as vendors and those who have not. I report difference-of-proportions in the respondents that say they find it likely or highly likely that the forbearance candidate will favor their interests and that they will vote for that candidate compared to the enforcement candidate. The differences between the conditions are statistically significant for both subgroups, suggesting that a forbearance platform
has a positive effect on the poor's perception of a candidate, regardless of whether a respondent directly benefits from forbearance. The results are not consistent with a pure special interest group story in which only street vendors favor lax enforcement. But direct experience as a street vendor conditions the average treatment effect in the predicted direction. Previous work as a street vendor has no effect on responsiveness to traditional social policy appeals (not shown). Nonetheless, the small sample size means that these results are merely suggestive, and do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

![Graph: Estimated Difference Between Forbearance and Enforcement Platforms]

**Figure 2.9. Average Treatment Effects, Conditioned on Income from Street Vending**

In sum, the experimental results largely support the idea that enforcement signals the distributive positions of candidates, and that it does so more powerfully than traditional social policy platforms. The main drawback, as with all experimental work, lies in the generalizability of these claims. While hypothetical candidates, these vignettes invoke associations with real politicians. As I argued above, citizens draw on known-frames and experiences to answer even abstract survey questions (for a longer discussion of this idea, see Zaller and Feldman (1992)). As Chapter 4 illustrates, Bogotá has elected mayors with sharply divergent positions on street-vending issues that likely resonate with the vignettes. The mayor who pursued forbearance, Luis Garzón, is identified
with the poor, workers, and the labor-based Left. The mayor who enforced most decisively, Enrique Peñalosa, is an iconoclast, although many poor citizens associate him with traditional elites who less clearly defend their interests. Running the same experiment in Lima or Mexico City where mayors more identified with the Left (Susana Villáran and Marcelo Ebrard, respectively) evicted street vendors could attenuate the observed relationships between forbearance and pro-poor positions. In other words, the experiment may pick up the specific associations made by voters in Bogotá, rather than a more general trend of how enforcement attitudes motivate the poor’s political behavior. Given the absence of experimental data across countries, I draw on observational data to suggest the broader class alignment behind forbearance candidates.

Another potential concern is that quirks of language artificially induce the gap between social policy and enforcement candidates in an experimental setting. Enforcement positions may polarize politics because the hypothetical enforcement/forbearance candidates involved phrases like “order” and “abuses” that could induce strong reactions. However, these vignettes are drawn from candidate platforms from past elections and were actually deliberately toned down not to include even stronger phrases like “police force” and “social cleanup,” as some past candidates have done. It also was not clear a priori that phrases included in the social policy vignettes like “vulnerable sectors,” “unskilled workers,” and “private sector business” would not generate equally strong reactions. Overall, it is possible that semantic reasons inclined citizens to react more strongly to the enforcement/forbearance candidates. But attempts were made to use comparable language drawn from real-life campaigns. Moreover, the power of enforcement-related language is part of the reason that it may be an important electoral strategy. Further dilution would stray from my argument’s premise that enforcement requires the use of coercive force against the poor, and thus conveys a politician’s class commitments.

Finally, it is hardly true that most of the time individuals have a single piece of information
about a candidate, and use that information to assess candidate attributes. This experiment cannot
distinguish how enforcement combines with social policy information to alter candidate perceptions,
as in a conjoint analysis. Still, the goal of this experiment was to show that candidate information
can have the hypothesized effects on voters’ distributive perceptions and vote choice. If
enforcement positions were unable to communicate candidates’ distributive commitments,
particularly to poor voters who are at the core of my theory, it would have been disconfirming
evidence of a signaling mechanism. Studies of the natural world, as presented in the next chapters,
are necessary to understand when and how enforcement information actually serves this role in
political life.

5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the individual-level determinants of forbearance preferences. Original
and cross-national survey data, as well as an experiment, allowed me to show how enforcement
pressures vary with individual and contextual variables. The core finding is that the poor support
less enforcement than the nonpoor, but only for offenses that offer progressive distributive benefits.
Individuals also are less supportive of enforcement in contexts when they perceive the state to
provide inadequate welfare alternatives. Forbearance also tends to be favored by the poor as a
group, not just by those who directly violate the law and plausibly exert interest-association pressure.

Material interest theories imported from the study of redistributive preferences help to make
sense of popular pressures for informal modes of redistribution. At the same time, I shed new light
on why standard redistributive models are poor descriptions of politics in parts of Latin America.
These workhorse models have been applied to Latin American without attention to a key
assumption that underpins them: that social spending favors the poor. It is only in the economic
interests of the poor to support social expenditures when policies redistribute resources or risks in
their favor (or they can be expected to do so in the future if expanded). Yet, I show that the poor
and nonpoor have equal expectations that spending will benefit them. It is no surprise, then, that spending preferences are indistinguishable, even by the most barebones materialist logic. This view coincides with past analyses that stress how weak state capacity to tax the rich and run social policy may mute social demands (Ansell and Samuels 2015; Mares 2005; Mares and Carnes 2009; Soifer 2013). I push beyond these analyses in documenting an alternative political dividing line, at least in cities, based on how laws are enforced against the poor. To reiterate, forbearance toward laws that the poor violates divides the electorate not because it is the preferred way to redistribute resources, but because it is a credible way to aid the poor.

In addition, I showed that forbearance platforms convey a politician’s commitment to the poor and are more likely to win the support of poor voters in a survey experiment. Building from this micro-foundation, it follows that politicians’ incentives to enforce will vary depending on the demographic composition of the electoral district where they seek office and the centrality of poor voters to their winning electoral coalitions. Subsequent chapters explore how politicians make choices depending on their calculations about the electoral and reputational repercussions of enforcement in the real world.

It may seem unsurprising that the rich are more enthusiastic about property law enforcement and politicians who support it. But, this chapter also highlights that income does not fully account for enforcement attitudes. Beliefs about the functioning of the welfare state play a role in how citizens view squatting and street vending, and middle-income groups often want to find solutions to promote legal compliance without coercive actions against the poor. The next chapter on squatting dives further into how the availability of housing policy affects mass pressures and thus politicians’ enforcement choices.
References


Iversen, Torben, and David Soskice. 2015. “Information, Inequality, and Mass Polarization.” *Comparative Political Studies*.


