

Two Decades of Value Change: The Crystallization of Meritocratic and Egalitarian Beliefs in the Czech Republic

Michael L. Smith · Petr Matějů

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Abstract Two decades ago, scholars predicted that the economic and political transformations underway in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe would be accompanied by fundamental shifts in societal values and norms. Unlike political reforms, changes in societal norms were believed to take place gradually, as individuals became increasingly socialized by new institutions and conditions. In this article, we analyze change in a core set of societal norms—beliefs in distributive justice—in the Czech Republic over the last two decades, and locate those trends in regional perspective. What we find is that, over time, the negative association between egalitarian and meritocratic norms has increasingly strengthened, suggesting a crystallization of those norms as opposing value sets. In addition, attachments to those norms are increasingly structured by respondents' socio-economic status. In other words, the research confirms that subjective norms in the Czech Republic are increasingly shaped by objective social status in ways common in advanced democracies, and that we can speak not only of a crystallization of the value system, but of a corresponding “re-stratification” of justice beliefs in relation to social position.

Keywords Meritocracy · Egalitarianism · Distributive justice · Value change · Social stratification · Czech Republic

M. L. Smith (✉)
Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic,
Jilská 1, Praha 1 11000, Czech Republic
e-mail: michael.smith@soc.cas.cz

P. Matějů
University of Finance and Administration, Estonská 500,
Prague 10 10100, Czech Republic

Introduction

Beliefs about distributive justice can shape political life in a variety of fundamental ways. They shape commitments to public welfare systems, influence the public acceptance of economic and social inequalities, and contribute to the legitimacy of systems of social stratification. During the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, numerous scholars predicted that the transition to democracy and capitalism would be accompanied by a shift in the dominance of egalitarian beliefs propagated by state socialism in favor of meritocratic, market-based principles (Arts & Gijsberts, 1998; Gijsberts, 2002; Kelley & Zagorski, 2004; Kaltenhaler, Ceccoli, and Gelleny 2008; Loveless & Whitefield, 2011). But such a value change could not come quickly: the high social costs of the economic transition, such as in terms of the rapid rise in unemployment and high rates of inflation in many CEE countries in the 1990s, sharpened perceptions of the unfairness of market reforms, thus undermining the reform effort (Mason & Kluegel, 2000). This societal response of the “losers” of transition was not unexpected, but rather predicted by many scholars (Dahrendorf, 1990; Przeworski, 1991; Balcerowitz, 1991). Those predictions were ultimately realized in the form of increasing perceptions of economic inequality, a sharp rise in perceived corruption, and the apparent ability of communist-era nomenklatura elites to transform their political capital into economic capital (Eyal, Széleányi, and Townsley, 1998; Možný, 2009; Matějů & Lim, 1995). In many countries, this disillusionment led to the resurgence of populists and ex-communist parties, and to the phenomenon of what many authorities called a “return to the left” (Matějů, 1996; Matějů & Řeháková, 1997).

The economic, social, and political transitions in Eastern Europe were thus accompanied by a surge in academic interest in the nature of distributive justice beliefs in the region, as well as how post-communist citizens justify inequality. The main source of data for that research was the International Social Justice Project (hereinafter ISJP), which brought together an accomplished team of researchers led by David Mason, James Kluegel, and Bernd Wegener to study beliefs about inequality and social justice across Western and post-communist societies during the tumultuous 1990s, which culminated in hundreds of research papers examining those topics (e.g., Jasso, 1998; Kluegel, Mason, & Wegener, 1999; Orkeny, 2000; Wegener & Liebig, 1992, 2000; Liebig, 2001; Kluegel & Mason, 2004; Gerlitz et al., 2012). Those and other empirical studies increasingly led to the recognition that the dominant theories of distributive justice at the time were insufficiently rooted in the way people think about justice (Miller, 2001; Scott et al., 2001). That in turn ushered in a wide array of empirically grounded justice theories, whether in distributive, procedural or global terms.

Given the significant scholarly interest in distributive justice beliefs cross-nationally, it is surprising that one of the most important questions spawned by that literature has yet to be answered: in the two decades since the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, how have distributive justice beliefs changed? We ask whether and to what degree distributive justice beliefs have crystallized into two latent ideologies—meritocracy and egalitarianism—and how commitments to those ideologies are linked to the social position of respondents

This article seeks to take a step forward in addressing these issues using comparable ISJP data for the Czech Republic in 1992, 1996, 2006, as well as Czech ISSP (International Social Survey Program) data in 2009. We focus on the Czech Republic because it is the only post-communist country besides Germany to have participated in the ISJP project from the first survey in 1992 to the latest one. While the Czech case is of general relevance given the lack of analyses of change in distributive justice beliefs in post-communist countries, the diversity of post-communist regimes suggests that we should be cautious against generalizing our results too far.

This article is organized as follows. The next section overviews the literature on distributive justice beliefs, particularly the relationship between the two major conceptions of distributive justice: meritocratic and egalitarian conceptions. On the basis of that literature, the subsequent section discusses the hypotheses, methods and survey items used in the analysis, and highlight the importance of establishing a theoretically informed measurement model of justice beliefs. The analytical part of the article then tests that measurement model cross-nationally through a multi-sample analysis, presents descriptive data on change and continuity in justice beliefs, and then presents the results of a structural model of the determinants of justice beliefs, particularly the role of age, gender, education and other stratification variables.

Distributive Justice Beliefs: Theory and Literature

The theoretical literature in political science has long identified a number of different allocation principles that people use in evaluating distributive justice claims. For example, the *principle of equity* refers to the belief that societal outcomes should be proportional to the input each individual contributes, and is a dominant principle of justice in contexts where economic productivity is the primary goal (Deutsch, 1975), such as in the wage policies of corporations. In this view, if an investment banker contributes a large share of a corporation's revenues and profits, he or she should also be allocated a large share of overall wages, which in turn can motivate other workers to also increase their relative contributions. Thus, the principle of equity is closely related to the *principle of efficiency*, which seeks to distribute rewards across society as a whole in a system of utility maximization (Rawls, 1971; Nozick, 1974; Okun, 1975). But since the principle is normally conceived as concerning society-wide distributions, as opposed to micro-justice claims at the level of an individual's rewards (Brickman, Folger, Goode, & Schul, 1981), social surveys focusing on micro-justice beliefs tend to not include efficiency as an allocation principle.

While the equity principle is based on the direct evaluation of relative inputs and outputs to a collective enterprise, the *principle of merit* or desert refers to the belief that outcomes (such as the outcome of a university job search) should be allocated according to a person's "merits" that are regarded as entitling or deserving reward, such as education, credentials, and intelligence. Unlike "inputs" in the principle of equity, an individual's "merits" can refer to one's potential or past performance

elsewhere, rather than to the direct contributions in achieving the goals of a collective enterprise (which are difficult to quantify in government and non-profit sectors of an economy). The principle of merit can be legitimated in terms of the specific abilities and skills an individual brings to a community, regardless of whether such contributions are arbitrary or based on luck (Rawls, 1971), or whether they are inherited characteristics of family background (Smith, 2010). Despite debate and a fair degree of ambiguity in public opinion in these allocation principles, merit is generally regarded as a dominant principle of distribution in advanced capitalist societies.

Like merit, the *principle of equality* is also subject to debate over what its allocation principles are (Dahl, 1989; Sen, 1992). In many social surveys, such as the ISJP survey, the term is defined as equality in outcome (as opposed to e.g., equality of conditions) because equal outcomes were a predominant feature of communist societies in Eastern Europe (e.g., wage leveling, equal and free access to public goods). Such outcomes can be further enshrined as rights that accrue on the basis of one's status as a human being or citizen. The *principle of need* refers to the idea that resources should be distributed according an individual's needs (however defined), such as the minimum resources needed to care for a family or to lead a respectable life. While the principle of need is also subject to debate about its allocation principles, particularly the problem of who decides what one's needs are (Fraser, 1990), the principle has played a major role in justifying both means-tested and minimum income policies in many democratic states.

Such principles of distributive justice may, in different societies, boil down into broader ideologies of justice. For examples, principles of merit, equity, and other beliefs that entitlements (e.g., income, wealth, inheritance) should accrue to those who have worked hard to achieve them, can all be seen as affirming individualism and share an inegalitarian ideological orientation in that they can be used to justify existing economic inequalities, and thus also a lack of a need for governments to intervene in the re-distribution of those entitlements. By contrast, the principles of need and equality are similar in their *egalitarian* belief in the equal worth of each individual, and similarly call for a re-distribution of entitlements to insure for the well-being of the neediest or to provide a basket of public goods that would be equally accessible to all. To be sure, there are many forms of both egalitarian and inegalitarian ideologies, as well as other ideologies relating to distributive justice beliefs. For example, Wegener and Liebig (1995) utilize Mary Douglas' grid-group theory to differentiate four different ideological orientations (fatalism, economic liberalism, ascriptivism, egalitarianism) based on the strength of grid (individuation) and group (socialization) ties within each person. Kluegel and Matějů (1995), by contrast, measured a set of distributive justice beliefs and found that they load, though not perfectly, into two broad ideological constructs, egalitarianism and inegalitarianism (which for the sake of better terms, can also be called market justice or *meritocracy*). In this article, we also seek to see whether or not distributive justice beliefs load onto these two ideological orientations, and how the association between those orientations has changed over time.

One of the key questions that scholars working with ISJP data have posed is whether public support for different ideological frameworks vary by the social and political orientation of society. Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, (1980) previously

put forward the *dominant ideology* thesis, according to which a society is seen as having a main, consistent ideology for evaluating distributive justice questions that is internalized by its members, but ultimately tends to serve the interests of those in power. In times of a legitimation crisis, *challenging ideologies* may be evoked and supported by those in the least advantageous positions in the stratification system (Huber & Form, 1973; Walster & Walster, 1975; Kluegel & Smith, 1981; Shepelak, 1987; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). In the context of communism in Eastern Europe, egalitarianism was the dominant ideology, which in turn was challenged by individualistic ideologies of meritocracy and personal freedom. These ideologies can also be called primary (ideologies held by the majority of society) and secondary (ideologies held only by members of certain, likely disadvantaged groups (Wegener & Liebig, 1995). One way to confirm the presence of these primary or secondary ideologies is to measure, for example, whether the most popular principles of justice in a country are evenly distributed by socio-economic standing.

One of the problems with the older conception of dominant and challenging ideologies is the fact that social justice researches have found that justice beliefs overlap and complement each other in complex ways, such as depending on how one views the nature of the human relationships to which those principles apply. Using the metaphors of “spheres of justice” (Walzer, 1984) and “communities of justice” (Miller, 2001), scholars have not only suggested that people’s beliefs in justice principles vary by the relevant context—whether in a family, a firm, or a political community—but people may have a so-called “split-consciousness”—i.e., hold seemingly contradictory views about how justice principles should be applied in the same setting (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Kluegel & Matějů, 1995). Split-consciousness theory challenges the assumption of value consistency: those citizens are either egalitarian or meritocratic, liberal or conservative, often embracing both worldviews at the same time.

Comparing across societies, scholars have shown that East Europeans have more less consistent views about justice claims compared to their Western counterparts (see the collected volumes Kluegel, Mason, & Wegener, 1995; Mason & Kluegel, 2000). That is, East Europeans in the early 1990s exhibited much less internal value consistency than respondents in the West (Kluegel & Matějů, 1995; Mason, 1995; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000), desiring *both* the prosperity that a capitalist market brings (i.e., strong commitments to meritocratic beliefs) without wanting to abandon the economic security of socialist welfare (i.e., maintaining strong commitments to egalitarian beliefs at the same time). The correlations between each of these ideologies and their underlying justice principles are also stronger and more consistent in the West than the East.

One explanation for the lack of value consistency (or crystallization) in the early 1990s is that the emerging political and economic system in post-communist countries lacked societal legitimacy. Because of corruption scandals and other problems associated with market reforms, citizens were slow to abandon egalitarian beliefs, since those beliefs that could serve to challenge the unfair ways existing economic wealth was being distributed. Della Fave’s self-evaluation theory (Della Fave, 1980, 1986a, 1986b) suggests, for example, that when a new market society

faces a crisis of legitimacy, this would be accompanied by the presence of particularly strong egalitarian “counternorms” that assess existing distributive practices as unjust. As the political and economic system becomes consolidated—which undoubtedly has taken place in Central Europe—it would be expected that individuals’ beliefs in meritocracy and egalitarianism would also become more distinct and crystallized. This also means that meritocracy would gain the position of a dominant ideology (Abercrombie et al., 1980), whereas egalitarianism would become a challenging ideology, drawing support from the “losers” of the transition process. Using Czech data, have these long-standing empirical predictions been realized?

Hypotheses, Data, and Methods

The theoretical frameworks of primary versus secondary ideologies, as well as split-consciousness theory, lend themselves to the postulation of a number of hypotheses that can be empirically tested with ISJP data. First, following Kluegel and Matějů (1995), we hypothesize that distributive justice beliefs can be differentiated into two ideological dimensions, meritocracy, and egalitarianism, which can be confirmed via factor analysis. As discussed below, we do not expect justice beliefs to load onto the two ideologies perfectly, as there are complex conceptual relationships between different principles. Second, we expect that over the course of the 1990s the association between meritocracy and egalitarianism would become increasingly negative, suggesting a lack of split-consciousness among the Czech population. Third, in line with the distinction between primary (dominant) and secondary (challenging) ideologies, we hypothesize that meritocracy should express itself as the primary ideology over the last two decades, which can be tested in terms of the lack of association between socio-economic features of the respondent and his or her commitment to meritocracy. Similarly, we hypothesize that egalitarianism has taken the place of a challenging ideology, and thus expect significant associations between low social status and egalitarian commitments.

Beliefs in distributive justice were measured using an identical set of items in the ISJP surveys from 1992, 1996, and 2006. In order to extend the time comparison, the same items were fielded in the 2009 ISSP survey, which also focused on social inequality. These items are:

- (1) Keep earnings: “People are entitled to keep what they have earned – even if this means some people will be wealthier than others.”
- (2) Work hard: “People who work hard deserve to earn more than those who do not.”
- (3) Pass on wealth: “People are entitled to pass on their wealth to their children.”
- (4) Equal shares: “The fairest way of distributing wealth and income would be to give everyone equal shares.”
- (5) Needs: “The most important thing is that people get what they need, even if this means allocating money from those who have earned more than they need.”

- (6) Luck: “It is just luck if some people are more intelligent or skillful than others, so they don’t deserve to earn more money.”

All of the questions have the same five response categories ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For the purposes of this analysis, the response categories were reversed so that higher values indicate a greater degree of agreement with the posed question. The appendix contains the descriptive statistics for these six justice items. As can be observed, commitments to the more “individualistic” or “meritocratic beliefs” are very strong throughout the two decades examined, indicating that such a ideological orientation has been “primary,” while the items associated more with egalitarian beliefs are certainly “secondary.” These statistics do not tell us, however, whether the commitment to such meritocratic and egalitarian beliefs is even spread across status groups, or if they are supported more strongly by those with low or high social status.

If our first hypothesis is correct, then these variables should load onto distinct latent ideologies. The first three items should measure commitment to meritocracy, since they involve the principle of equity (#2) and different forms of the principle of individual entitlement (#1 and #3). The egalitarian items measure the principle of equality of outcomes (#4), the principle of need (#5), and the Aristotelian notion that social outcomes are often caused by fortune or luck (#6) and thus undeserving, which can also be another perspective for arguing that incomes or wealth should be re-distributed in a fairer way. Another reason the luck question was part of the original ISJP battery is that scholars (e.g., Vallentyne, 2003) have argued that luck is a core dimension of egalitarianism, since one of the main goals of equality-based theories of justice is to equalize the advantages from brute luck.

Because the six items above might be associated with each other in complex ways—especially because they do not focus on a single issue, such as just pay—we must take care in how we construct a measurement model of the two justice ideologies. We should assume that some of these variables may exhibit associations with each other in addition to the factor weights that they have with their underlying latent variables (meritocracy and egalitarianism). In a structural equation model—which we deem to be the most appropriate method of analysis for this article—those associations can be taken into account through the assumption of covariance among specific error terms associated with individual items. The significance of that covariance should be closely observed just as one would observe historical change in the correlations between the two latent variables—the main focus of this article.

We would like to emphasize that the authors are aware of the possibility of using the opposite approach—to not allow measurement error between the justice items (or to fix them to a common value), and interpret changes in the coefficients representing the “factor weights” and the correlations between the two latent variables. However, ruling out such error terms leads to a simpler model, but we would have to also ignore whether model fits well with political theory. The disadvantage of that approach is that in a situation of weak model fit, it would be difficult to interpret the model parameters well. We believe it is a grave error to separate the core of a tested theory from deviations that might be caused by various aspects of historical or social context, as well as complex relationships between

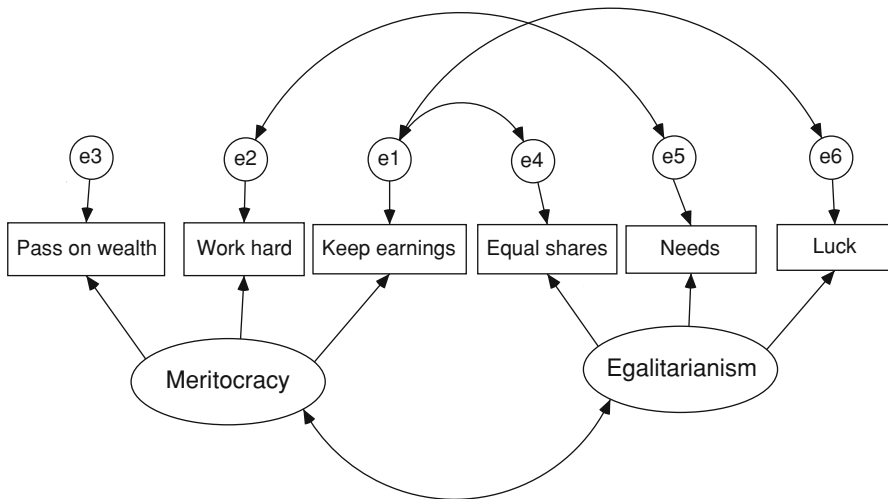
justice beliefs discussed at length in the literature. Suffice it to say that we decided on our chosen strategy quite knowledgeably and for theoretical reasons.

There may be at least three hypothesized associations between the items that should be taken into account. First, we expect a negative association between “keeping earnings” and “luck.” In contemporary political theory, one of the greatest challenges to desert as a principle of justice is how to distinguish factors that shape performance that the individual controls, versus factors outside of his or her control (the so-called “control principle”—see Arneson, 2007). According to advocates of luck egalitarianism (Arneson, 2006; Dworkin, 2000; Rakowski, 1991; Roemer, 1998), justice demands that variations in how well off people be due to factors that individuals can control, or conversely, that it is unjust for people to be worse off for no reason of their own. Luck egalitarians in post-communist countries might be those who believe that wealth gained through property restitution or certain forms of privatization is simply a matter of luck, and thus undeserving. The fact that the many Czechs believe that “to get to the top of society you have to be corrupt” (Smith, 2010) suggests that people believe inequalities are due to undeserving behaviors far removed from any recognizable principle of desert. We would expect that those same respondents would disagree with the view that people should be able to keep their earnings, regardless of the causes or consequences of those earnings. Thus we can assume that, from the point of view of some respondents, the variables relating to luck and keeping earnings should exhibit negative associations above and beyond the negative association between the two justice ideologies.

Second, Sen’s work (1979) on the importance of “basic capabilities” in considerations of justice suggests that there might be a positive association between “hard work” and the principle of “need.” The theoretical assumption here is that an individual’s opportunity for achieving life success, such as by working hard, presumes the presence of basic capabilities to function fully in the society. When people lack basic needs, such as a living minimum, they will not have the basic capabilities needed for pursuing a good life. In that sense, respondents who strongly believe in rewards based on hard work may also believe strongly that people’s basic needs ought to be met, so that they too can develop a capacity to work.

Last, prior work by Matějů (1997) has indicated that a strong negative association exists between “keeping earnings” and receiving “equal shares.” Since his work was conducted on the same dataset for 1995 as the current article, we should assume that the association exists, even if the overall model is different. The theoretical justification for those two questions is that they are diametrically opposed as distributive and anti-distributive policies toward personal income. Since the justice ideologies of meritocracy and egalitarianism encompass broader concepts than just income inequality itself, the association between those variables will show up in terms of their covariance in addition to their relationship via the latent variables.

Because the validity and theoretical justification of these associations may vary across time and space, and in some countries or time periods their theoretical relevance is empirically confirmed, they should be for the sake of comparison included in a cross-national analysis, even if they may not be significant in all countries or years. Therefore, an appropriate model measuring the two core



Graph 1 Measurement model of meritocracy and egalitarianism

principles of justice in different systems and/or in systems experiencing fundamental changes should not be purified from associations between errors of measurement that may represent theoretically relevant relationships. We are of course aware of the opposite strategy—i.e., to not allow correlations between measurement errors (or to fix them at a common value)—and only interpret changes in relationships between latent variables. The advantage of that approach would be to avoid the criticism that “manipulations” with correlations between measurements errors can be used to achieve primarily better model fit. The disadvantage, however, is that we would have to ignore important theories of justice postulating such associations, as well as give up on the analysis of possible associations caused by historical or societal context. Needless to say, we believe it is more appropriate to model all associations that have (or may have) theoretical value.

On the basis of the above variables and associations, our measurement model is depicted in Graph 1.

To reiterate, our second hypothesis is that, over time, the association between egalitarianism and meritocracy in the Czech Republic should become increasingly negative, ultimately achieving a degree of value crystallization common in Western market economies. We further assume specific associations between “keeping earnings” and “luck,” between “working hard” and “need,” as well as between “keeping earnings” and receiving “equal shares.” However, we also expect that coefficients for these associations should also become increasingly similar to the coefficients found in Western countries. In other words, our overall analytical perspective is that the crystallization of distributive justice norms in the Czech Republic have reached typical “Western” levels over time, i.e., after its transition to a market economy reached completion.

If our third and fourth hypotheses are correct, then we should expect that, in a structural model with the two ideologies as dependent variables, socio-economic

features of respondents should not influence their commitments to meritocracy (since the ideology would be widely held across respondents of different backgrounds), but should have a significant negative association with egalitarianism. To test for this, we included in the structural model six stratification variables that were measured identically for all time periods:

- Female: a binary variable with 2 = female, 1 = male
- College: a dummy variable measuring highest education attained, with 1 = if the respondent has received at least some tertiary education, and 0 = if he or she did not.
- Retired: a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent is retired = 1, if not = 0.
- Lower Class: a dummy variable indicating the respondent's perceived social class; if lower class or lower middle class = 1, if not = 0.
- Self-employed: a dummy variable indicating if the respondent is at least partly self-employed or owns his or her business = 1, and 0 = if not; and lastly,
- Unemployed: a dummy variable (= 1) indicating if the respondent is unemployed, including working less than part-time, being a student, keeping house, and being on maternity leave (but not retired). Otherwise, the respondent is coded as 0.

While we initially examined the paths between each of the variables and both of the ideologies, we found that some of the paths were insignificant for both ideologies and in all of the individual surveys. As a result, we dropped those paths from the model.

Results

The measurement model depicted in Graph 1 was applied to all 12 countries (splitting Germany into East and West) in the 1991 ISJP dataset. The main results and statistics of fit for each country are depicted in Table 1 and are intended to serve as a baseline for placing Czech data in historical and cross-national perspective.

As can be observed from the table, the Western countries examined exhibit a much higher degree of value crystallization—as measured by the size of the negative association between meritocracy and egalitarianism—compared to the post-communist countries. The only post-communist case to come close to the Western pattern is the set of respondents residing in the former East Germany, an area that obviously has deep roots in Western Europe and experienced intensive German re-unification and economic integration policies at the time of the 1991 survey. In other post-communist countries, the coefficients are noticeably weaker, and in the case of Russia and the Czech Republic, do not even reach statistical significance.

We should also note that the degree of value crystallization in the West seems to be accompanied by relatively weak correlations between error terms among the observed variables. In West Germany, “working hard” and the “needs” variables are strongly associated, whereas in the USA the hypothesized negative association

Table 1 The crystallization of meritocratic and egalitarian norms in Eastern and Western countries in 1991 (as specified in the measurement model in Graph 1)

	Standardized coefficients				Measures of fit		
	Meritocracy- egalitarianism	e3–e4	e2–e5	e3–e6	CMIN/ DF	AGFI	RMSEA
All countries	−0.29***	−0.11***	0.12***	−0.09***	15.58	0.99	0.031
Western countries							
Germany (West)	−0.44***	−0.11	0.20***	−0.08*	5.92	0.98	0.033
Great Britain	−0.49***	−0.08*	0.02	0.00	9.04	0.95	0.081
Netherlands	−0.45***	−0.10	0.06*	−0.03	2.96	0.99	0.033
USA	−0.34***	−0.16***	0.07*	−0.06	5.25	0.97	0.056
Post-communist countries							
Bulgaria	−0.15*	0.02	0.01	0.00	1.05	0.99	0.007
Czech Rep.	−0.16*	−0.16**	0.13**	−0.28***	4.07	0.96	0.063
Germany (East)	−0.33***	−0.05	0.11**	−0.07	4.37	0.97	0.059
Hungary	−0.22**	−0.05	0.02	−0.06	2.99	0.98	0.047
Poland	−0.19**	−0.01	0.16***	0.01	7.55	0.96	0.072
Russia	−0.08	−0.17***	0.12***	−0.20***	4.89	0.97	0.055
Slovenia	−0.16*	−0.06	0.09**	−0.13**	1.83	0.99	0.026

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, and * $p < 0.1$

Source: ISJP 1991

between “keeping earnings” and “equal shares” was confirmed. Besides these cases, the coefficients between the error terms are low and usually insignificant. This suggests that as the more egalitarianism and meritocracy are ideologically opposed, the more they also explain variation among distributive justice beliefs. In that sense, *value crystallization refers not only to the degree of opposition of the two main justice ideologies, but their ability to organize the diverse and often complex set of justice beliefs into coherent belief systems.*

The measures of fit, particularly for the model incorporating data for all countries, reveals that the theoretical model provides a good representation of the structure of and associations within the underlying data. While the error terms are larger in some countries (especially Russia and the Czech Republic), their inclusion in the measurement model provides a common framework for cross-national comparison. We can further apply that model to compare value change in the Czech Republic and the former West Germany—the only post-communist and Western country, respectively, for which there are data from 1991 to 2006.

Table 2 reports the results of that historical comparison. The German data reflects remarkable consistency in value crystallization over the 15-year time period under study, which may be due to the degree of social, economic, and political stability the country witnessed during that time. By contrast, and most importantly

Table 2 The historical change in the crystallization of meritocratic and egalitarian norms in the Czech Republic and Western Germany, 1991–2009 (as specified in the measurement model in Graph 1)

	Standardized coefficients			Measures of fit			Cases	
	Meritocracy-egalitarianism	e3–e4	e2–e5	e3–e6	CMIN/DF	AGFI		RMSEA
Czech Republic								
1991	–0.16*	–0.16**	0.13**	–0.28***	4.07	0.96	0.063	810
1995	–0.34***	–0.22***	0.05	–0.25***	6.57	0.96	0.071	1246
2006	–0.39***	–0.21***	0.15***	–0.22***	18.40	0.91	0.115	1482
2009	–0.45***	0.13***	–0.02	0.09	15.83	0.91	0.114	1143
Germany (West only)								
1991	–0.44***	–0.11	0.20***	–0.08*	5.92	0.98	0.033	1732
1995	–0.48***	–0.04	0.10*	0.00	6.15	0.95	0.074	932
2006	–0.40***	–0.03	0.12***	0.02	2.88	0.99	0.029	2185

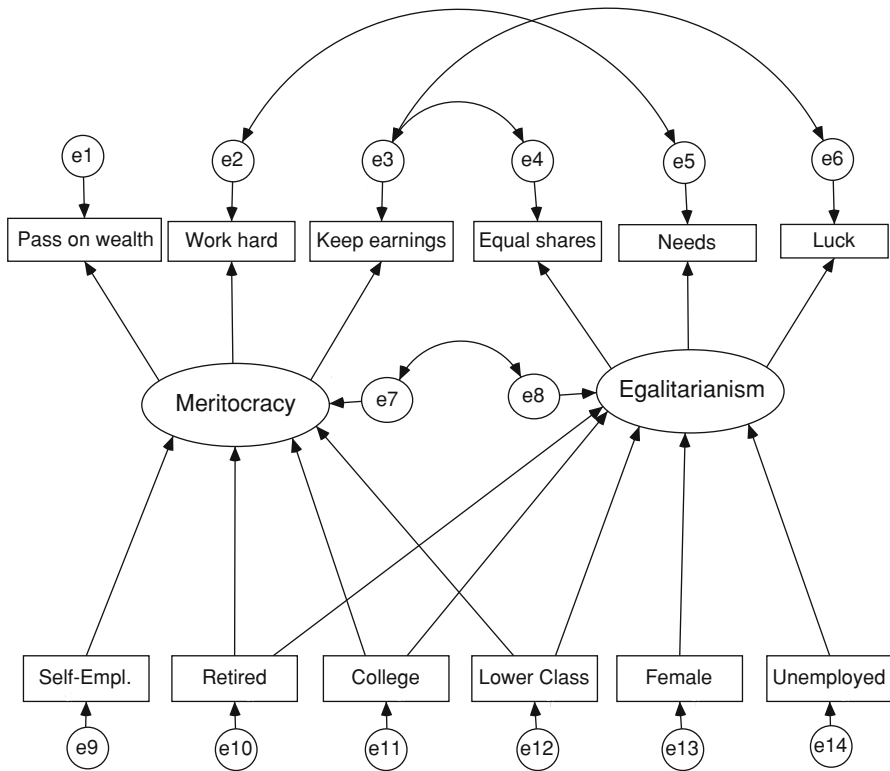
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, and * $p < 0.1$

Source: ISJP 1991, 1995, 2006; ISSP 2009 (Czech dataset)

for the purposes of this article, the Czech Republic witnessed a gradual process of value crystallization, reaching the West German level by 2009. Furthermore, in the most recent data, the size of the coefficients between error terms declined considerably, further attesting to the ability of the meritocratic and egalitarian ideologies to explain variance among the diverse set of justice beliefs.

The above data has provided support to the idea that Czech beliefs in distributive justice have considerably crystallized during the period of democratic development into two ideologies that are increasingly distinct, and have now reached a value structure similar to that of the Western countries examined. However, as value systems become crystallized, we would also expect that those value systems would become increasingly shaped by the respondent's relative position in society, particularly in terms of his or her location in the stratification system. This is because as justice ideologies become more coherent and distinct, it is also more likely that societal positions that reflect or benefit from those ideologies would become more strongly associated with them. In other words, we would expect that higher status respondents—such as those who are more educated, and have more prestigious occupations—would gravitate toward meritocratic values, whereas respondents with lower status, and perhaps those who would benefit the most from welfare programs, would gravitate toward egalitarian values. Is it indeed the case that the determination of justice ideologies by stratification variables has evolved over time?

To answer that question, we compared standardized coefficients between explanatory variables and the latent variables of egalitarian and meritocracy, and conducted a multi-sample analysis across different surveys to determine whether changes in coefficients between years are statistically significant. The structural model incorporating these variables is depicted in Graph 2. The model was specified



Graph 2 Structural model of the role of social stratification on justice ideologies.

as quasi-recursive, i.e., as allowing correlations between the residual variances between the two justice ideologies.

The results of the analysis, reported in Tables 3 and 4, provide partial confirmation for our hypothesis. As expected, the dummy variable for low perceived class has a strong positive relationship with egalitarianism. In comparing coefficients across years, however, we find in Table 4 that no significant change in the effect of low social status on egalitarianism took place across the surveys. As expected, low perceived status in the years 1991–2005 does not have a significant effect on meritocracy, suggesting a “dominant ideology;” however, we should note that in 2009 lower status respondents were significantly less likely to adhere to meritocratic values, calling somewhat into question the dominant ideology view.

Similarly, college educated respondents were significantly less likely to be egalitarians, while that status had only a modest, positive effect on meritocracy. While we expected that the role of features like educational status would have an increasingly strong role on egalitarianism, our multi-sample comparison suggests

Table 3 A comparison of the role of stratification variables on meritocracy and egalitarianism, 1991–2009

	1991	1995	2005	2009
<i>Measurement model</i>				
Meritocracy → Work hard	0.383 ^{***}	0.400 ^{***}	0.642 ^{***}	0.699 ^{***}
Meritocracy → Pass on wealth	0.470 ^{***}	0.489 ^{***}	0.726 ^{***}	0.667 ^{***}
Egalitarianism → Equal shares	0.683 ^{***}	0.576 ^{***}	0.621 ^{***}	0.666 ^{***}
Egalitarianism → Luck	0.447 ^{***}	0.480 ^{***}	0.596 ^{***}	0.671 ^{***}
Meritocracy → Keep earnings	0.518 ^{***}	0.472 ^{***}	0.635 ^{***}	0.513 ^{***}
Egalitarianism → Needs	0.229 ^{***}	0.216 ^{***}	0.343 ^{***}	0.499 ^{***}
Meritocracy ↔ Egalitarianism	−0.095	−0.373 ^{***}	−0.359 ^{***}	−0.419 ^{***}
e3 ↔ e4	−0.179 ^{**}	−0.190 ^{***}	−0.177 ^{***}	0.157 ^{***}
e2 ↔ e5	0.122 ^{**}	0.059	0.165 ^{***}	−0.028
e3 ↔ e6	—	—	0.177 ^{***}	0.089
<i>Structural model</i>				
Self-employed → Meritocracy	0.051	0.149 ^{***}	0.070 [*]	0.036
Low subjective status → Meritocracy	−0.002	−0.048	−0.019	−0.099 ^{**}
Retired → Meritocracy	−0.015	−0.003	−0.030 ^{**}	−0.010
Education: college → Meritocracy	0.087 [*]	0.014 [*]	0.066 [*]	0.079 [*]
Sempl → Egalitarianism	−0.108 [*]	−0.144 ^{***}	−0.040	−0.039
Unemployed → Egalitarianism	0.071 ^{**}	0.017 ^{**}	0.085 ^{**}	0.005
Female → Egalitarianism	0.116 ^{**}	0.019	0.040	0.017
Low subjective status → Egalitarianism	0.060	0.173 ^{***}	0.173 ^{***}	0.160 ^{***}
Retired → Egalitarianism	0.088	0.049	0.082	0.038
Education: college → Egalitarianism	−0.241 ^{***}	−0.230 ^{***}	−0.123 ^{***}	−0.220 ^{***}
<i>Multi-sample model fit</i>				
CMIN	1915			
df	184			
GFI	937			

Standardized coefficients of paths specified in the structural model in Graph 2

that in fact that the effect of college on the two ideologies is in fact stable across time, except for the comparison between surveys in 1991 and in 2005. As Table 3 indicates, very few path coefficients changed significantly from one year to the next, suggesting stability in the relationship between social structure and ideological orientations.

Overall, Table 2 reveals that the explanatory variables examined have little, if any, effect on respondents' commitments to meritocracy (and that this lack of association is consistent over time), while those social groups most strongly viewed as “losers” of the economic transition—especially the unemployed, less educated, and respondents of lower perceived class—identify more strongly with egalitarianism. The lack of major changes over time suggest to the distributive justice

Table 4 Pairwise comparisons of regressions coefficients across years (critical ratios for differences between two parameters)*

	1991/ 95	1991/ 05	1991/ 09	1995/ 05	1995/ 09	2005/ 09
b ₁₁ Self-employed → Meritocracy	1.292	1.027	0.173	−0.087	−0.957	−0.771
b ₁₄ Lower class → Meritocracy	−0.74	−0.505	−2.329	0.051	−1.798	−1.528
b ₁₂ Retired → Meritocracy	0.165	−0.655	−0.087	−0.797	−0.213	0.476
b ₁₃ Education: college → Meritocracy	−1.043	1.080	1.01	1.818	1.834	−0.143
b ₂₆ Unemployed → Egalitarianism	−1.136	−0.362	−1.347	1.26	−0.241	−1.691
b ₂₅ Female → Egalitarianism	−1.678	−1.341	−1.674	0.457	0.002	−1.691
b ₂₄ Lower class → Egalitarianism	1.262	1.447	1.370	0.174	0.109	−0.063
b ₂₂ Retired → Egalitarianism	−0.94	−0.42	−0.982	0.73	−0.062	−0.786
b ₂₃ Education: college → Egalitarianism	1.483	2.208	0.790	1.007	−0.878	−1.815
b ₂₁ Self-employed → Egalitarianism	0.411	1.703	1.56	2.039	1.74	−0.142

* Values higher than 1.96 indicate statistically significant difference between two parameters at the level 0.05

ideologies were modestly structured by the system of social stratification already by the mid 1990s, and that little change in those relationships have ensued since then.

It is also important to note that the relatively stable effects of stratification variables on justice ideologies take place in the context of the increasing crystallization of those justice ideologies. That is, as meritocracy and egalitarianism become more distinct value systems from the point of view of respondents, the role of respondent's location in the stratification system has remained more or less consistent in its importance. The increasing negative correlation between the two ideologies, especially between 1991 and 1995, confirms that these two ideologies not only became more opposed, but also increasingly competitive (though not mutually exclusive) in attracting individuals according to their social status. This evidence supports the view that beliefs about distributive justice from 1995 forward became somewhat more enmeshed with, and structured by, the Czech stratification system compared to 1991. We can therefore speak not only of a crystallization of the value system, but also a corresponding re-stratification of social positions in relation to those values.

Conclusion

In this article, we built on the work or prior analyses to seek to answer the question of whether the process of the crystallization of beliefs of distributive justice, whose beginnings could already be observed in the 1990s, continued also in more recent years. We also posed the question of how the two main principles (ideologies) of distributive justice were associated with important attributes of respondents' social

standing, and whether meritocracy has become a dominant ideology of distributive justice, with egalitarianism remaining in the role of a “challenging ideology.”

Our analyses have confirmed that the process of the crystallization of norms of distributive justice—meritocracy and egalitarianism—have indeed continued, which was expressed not only in the strong negative association between the latent variables, but also in the overall weakness of the associations in the relevant model in the early 1990s. Over time, meritocratic norms became a dominant ideology of distributive justice, while egalitarian principles have increasingly become associated with the views of respondents of lower social standing. We should take it as a caveat, however, that some of the social stratification variables examined seems to have a modest association with meritocracy, as well as that there appears to be little change in the strength of those associations over time. This may suggest that even if meritocracy is a dominant or primary ideology, 20 years after the collapse of communism, the support to egalitarian (redistributive) ideology is more “universal” than we hypothesized, possibly due to widespread perceptions of injustice in the existing economic order.

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Appendix

See Table 5

Table 5 Descriptive statistics for the six justice beliefs examined

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N
Keep earnings: “People are entitled to keep what they have earned—even if this means some people will be wealthier than others.”	1991	53.9	34.7	6.0	4.6	0.8	798
	1995	43.0	42.9	9.9	3.4	0.8	1,204
	2006	36.0	41.1	13.1	7.2	2.5	1,432
	2009	27.5	40.2	22.3	7.6	2.5	1,190
Work hard: “People who work hard deserve to earn more than those who do not.”	1991	61.9	26.9	7.5	3.1	0.6	804
	1995	52.7	35.0	9.3	3.2	0.8	1,233
	2006	48.7	37.8	9.3	3.1	1.2	1,461
	2009	44.8	39.9	10.8	3.8	0.7	1,199
Pass on wealth: “People are entitled to pass on their wealth to their children.”	1991	87.5	9.7	2.2	0.5	0.1	807
	1995	84.6	12.7	1.8	0.6	0.3	1,238
	2006	72.5	17.9	5.5	2.9	1.2	1,456
	2009	67.7	23.2	6.1	2.2	0.8	1,194

Table 5 continued

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N
Equal shares: “The fairest way of distributing wealth and income would be to give everyone equal shares.”	1991	10.2	7.2	9.7	33.0	40.0	797
	1995	5.0	8.0	14.0	31.3	41.7	1,214
	2006	5.1	8.1	11.8	31.2	43.7	1,438
	2009	4.5	12.0	20.7	30.6	31.5	1,191
Needs: “The most important thing is that people get what they need, even if this means allocating money from those who have earned more than they need.”	1991	16.1	29.8	21.6	22.8	9.6	788
	1995	12.0	29.2	28.6	21.6	8.6	1,173
	2006	10.7	24.6	28.9	22.1	13.7	1,410
	2009	7.9	25.5	35.8	21.2	9.6	1,178
Luck: “It is just luck if some people are more intelligent or skillful than others, so they don’t deserve to earn more money.”	1991	3.4	7.2	9.2	32.5	47.7	794
	1995	1.7	6.7	14.1	35.4	42.2	1,179
	2006	3.7	7.7	17.2	32.1	39.4	1,419
	2009	4.5	10.0	22.1	31.2	32.2	1,187

Valid percentages reported. Note that in the analysis response categories were reversed so that higher values indicate a greater degree of agreement with the posed question

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