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**Human Rights and Public Opinion: From Attitudes to Action**

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates American public opinion supporting human rights and willingness to engage in economic behavior consistent with such support. We look at three types of rights in particular: freedom of expression, freedom from torture, and the right to a guaranteed minimum standard of living. The current literature on human rights largely ignores public opinion, and vice versa. Based on our analysis of a 2006 national survey, we find that more Americans believe in a broader range of human rights (including economic rights) than has previously been assumed. We also find that most Americans report that they are willing to spend more on goods produced ethically and that those who are supportive of human rights may be more willing to pay for such goods. Our findings have implications for theories and practice of human rights, and for development of new markets for ethical consumption.

**Keywords:** : human rights, public opinion, sweatshops, fair trade

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**OVERVIEW.** Contrary to the notion that civil and political rights trump economic rights in American popular consciousness, this article demonstrates that Americans widely view the right to a minimum standard of living as a human right -- and say they are willing to pay more for ethically produced goods in order to promote such rights. For the first time, there is data to demonstrate the connection between what Americans think about human rights, and how they are willing to behave. The national public opinion poll conducted by the authors and discussed in this article is the first in a series aimed at exploring such connections.

Nearly two decades ago, scholar Kathleen Pritchard noted that: “There is very little research on the role played by mass public opinion, and perhaps even less, on factors that shape and influence that opinion in the field of human rights.”<sup>1</sup> Her appraisal remains accurate almost twenty years later. Our research seeks to fill this gap. We do so in a new context – one in which the Cold War has ended, global trade barriers have dropped, and economic competitiveness has increased. Interestingly, even in a situation in which their own economic futures are often less secure, we find that Americans are willing to spend *more* to consume ethically.

Our review of all available American national public opinion surveys<sup>2</sup> conducted since 1990 revealed that such polls have typically included *either* questions on human rights attitudes<sup>3</sup> *or* questions on various forms of ethical consumption<sup>4</sup> -- *but not both*. Additionally, no national surveys have simultaneously asked about three core rights protected in international treaties: the right not to be tortured, the right to freedom of thought and expression, and the right to a minimum guaranteed standard of living (itself a component of basic economic rights).<sup>5</sup> Our survey does both.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, surveys have not explicitly linked human rights attitudes to ethical consumption. We do so, by asking respondents to indicate their “willingness-to-pay-more”<sup>7</sup> for two ethically produced goods: “sweatshop-free”<sup>8</sup> clothing and “fair trade” coffee.<sup>9</sup> One question that is commonly raised about willingness-to-pay questions such as ours is whether the answers are simply “cheap talk”? Doesn’t market behavior prove this, since most people buy goods that are not ethically produced? These are valid criticisms -- but only up to a point. Ethically labeled products generally do have less than one percent market-share in many sectors, and are not widely available.<sup>10</sup> However, the problem with using market size as the gauge of “true” preferences is that the absence of a market for something does not imply that people do not value it. (For instance, the tiny market for carbon offsets does not imply that public concern about global warming is just cheap talk.) There is simply a limited market for ethically produced goods in most localities, and a very incomplete one. But overall sales of fair trade commodities in North America and the Pacific Rim rose by close to 40% in 2003,<sup>11</sup> totaling \$291.75 million -- with coffee representing 32% of those sales<sup>12</sup> -- so there is evidence of an emerging potential market.

Central to the quality of democracy is knowing what citizens think rights are, and ensuring that what citizens think about rights informs public policy formulation and outcomes.<sup>13</sup> Understanding what the public does -- and does not -- think about particular human rights can also promote democratic efforts to reconcile citizen attitudes and public policy. Of course, what people think about human rights cannot be fully captured in public opinion surveys alone. Nonetheless, more comprehensive public opinion data on human rights and on ethical consumption is important. Understanding public opinion on

human rights central to facilitating the implementation of legal norms. Understanding linkages between human rights, and particularly economic rights and ethical consumption, can fuel new and innovative citizen-led, market-led, and government-led strategies for protecting and promoting a fuller scope of rights more effectively. This article and the pilot survey it draws upon are our initial contribution to what we hope will become a dynamic new research area in both human rights and public opinion scholarship and policy analysis.

Our results contain at least three significant findings. *First, there is a much higher acceptance of a minimum standard of living as an inviolable right among Americans than is commonly assumed.* There is also a high willingness-to-pay for ethically produced goods. This implies that the relative neglect of economic rights in American public policy discourse is out of step with what the average American citizen believes about such rights. *Second, privileged groups are more likely to support some sorts of rights over others.* White males are much more likely to support a human right to freedom of thought and expression than to support freedom from torture and a right to minimum guaranteed standard of living. These findings contradict the notion that more privileged groups tend to be less enthusiastic about human rights overall.<sup>14</sup> Third, we find that there is a weak connection between support for economic rights and willingness-to-pay more for ethically produced goods.

**CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP.** There is a vast scholarly literature on human rights, spanning multiple disciplines.<sup>15</sup> However, little work in the human rights field engages the question of public opinion. There have been a handful of scholarly articles on the subject produced over the past two decades – divided among scholars who focus

principally on human rights attitudes in the United States<sup>16</sup> and those who focus on public opinion internationally.<sup>17</sup> This article focuses on American public opinion.

The existing public opinion literature on human rights has focused disproportionately on civil and political rights. Even when polls have taken up economic rights-related issues such as labor rights in “sweatshops” or child labor, they have tended to analyze the instrumental nature of such issues in foreign policy rather than respondents’ basic orientations about rights. Nor have they linked human rights attitudes to concrete expression in personal action – such as willingness to purchase ethically-produced goods. (This is true even in previous surveys on child labor, anti-sweatshop purchasing, and fair trade.) Previous surveys have also been hampered by a range of methodological weaknesses. Small or unrepresentative samples are the norm, often based on surveys of college students and/or faculty.<sup>18</sup> None of the prior polling data we reviewed addressed the complexity of the multiple human rights relevant in everyday life and codified in international law. Our survey was designed to address these shortfalls.

**METHODS AND DATA.** We integrated questions on human rights attitudes and ethical consumption within a larger, nationally representative telephone survey conducted from November 15 to November 27, 2006. The number of respondents was 508. Responses were weighted, with weights assigned based on standard demographics from the US Census Current Population Survey. Our questions on three types of human rights (i.e., protection from torture; freedom of thought and conscience; and right to a minimum guaranteed standard of living) all contained the following standard introduction:

Now I'm going to read you some possible human rights. For each one please tell me whether YOU think it is a right that should be guaranteed to every human being and never violated, a right that may be desirable but that can be violated under certain circumstances, or not really a right at all.<sup>19</sup>

One charge that might be leveled against these general questions is that they lead to over-reporting of support for human rights. They require little commitment by respondents beyond expressing support for different types of rights. This is a major reason why we utilized a sub-set of questions to probe in much greater depth whether those who express support for values are willing to trade-off something for such values. It is also important to note that the question wording was not phrased to inflate support. The questions state that support implies that the right be unconditional, and allows respondents to choose an “in-between” category that permits conditional violations of the prospective right.

We asked respondents how much extra they would be willing to pay for sweaters and coffee if those products were produced under conditions that better provided for a minimum standard of living. The items chosen comprise one product (i.e., textiles) in an import competing sector, and another (i.e., coffee) that is not domestically produced. We included questions on products from import- and non-import-competing sectors in an effort to test whether respondents’ beliefs about the right to human rights protection in the workplace differed depending upon whether or not the respondent perceived the protected workers to be competitors with those in the domestic workforce, or not. We also designed the questions to avoid prompting respondents to refer back to their previous statements about human rights.

***FINDINGS on HUMAN RIGHTS ATTITUDES.*** Figure 1 displays the aggregate responses to each of the questions we asked about the three different types of rights.

Support for the set of civil and political rights that have defined political liberalism for centuries is higher in the American population than support for economic rights.

Nevertheless, a substantial majority of Americans does believe in basic economic rights. Over 70% of Americans say freedom from torture and freedom of expression are guaranteed rights to all people, and 64.5% of respondents consider a guaranteed minimum standard of living to be an inviolable human right. About 80% of those who support guaranteed civil and political rights also support a guaranteed minimum standard of living. This basic support for economic human rights is, in fact, consistent with other US public opinion data. For example, the General Social Survey consistently finds that 65-70% of Americans support spending more on assistance to the poor.<sup>20</sup>

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Interesting differences among social groups emerge in respondents' level of support for the more traditional civil and political rights (i.e., freedom of speech and freedom from torture). More people say that protection from torture is "not really a right at all" than is the case with regard to freedom of expression. Since almost identical numbers report that both rights should be inviolable, it is tempting to argue that the differences are due to the fact that torture has become much more legitimized in the context of the United States current "war on terrorism."

Indeed, we have identified at least 29 public opinion polls that address the issue of torture, conducted nationally in the United States since 1990. Most of these have occurred since the beginning of the current Iraq War in 2002 – with the bulk conducted after the revelation that US government has engaged in actions that are widely interpreted as torture. Public knowledge of torture in the context of current American anti-terrorism



efforts may have altered public opinion on torture itself as a human rights issue. Richards and Anderson's preliminary survey of American college students offers some insight into the demographic variation in tolerance of torture.<sup>21</sup> However, the lack of detailed comparative survey data prevents us from answering this question more definitively.

### ***Correlates of Support for Human Rights***

Our survey included basic demographic and political identification information on respondents (along with the consumer behavior questions mentioned above). This survey design enabled us to analyze differences in expressed support for human rights, among several key groups, including race, gender, income, marital status, age, and political ideology. Table 1 displays the proportion of the population in these groups claiming that a particular human right "should be guaranteed to every human being and never violated." The independent variables are the groups defined as follows: the category "Non-white" includes all those not self-identifying as white. "Female" is self-explanatory. "Income less than \$50K" refers to those in households reporting annual income less than that amount. "Single" refers to respondents in single-member households. Age groups "over 60" and "under 30" are self-explanatory. Finally, "liberal" refers to those who identify as being either "somewhat liberal" or "very liberal" in their political ideology. For each type of right and each group, the table reports the percentage agreeing that the right is inviolable within the group and within the rest of the population. (Thus, the two percentages will *not* add up to 100.) Asterisks indicate when estimated differences fall outside of the survey's margin of error.<sup>22</sup>

Table 2 provides "odds-ratio" estimates for a multivariate logit model of individual support for each type of the three types of human right. An odds-ratio indicates

the relative likelihood that someone in the category considers the right to be inviolable, compared to someone not in the category. For example, the first entry in Table 2 suggests that non-whites are 2.28 times *more* likely than whites to say that torture is an inviolable human right -- holding all of the other variables constant. Odds-ratios less than one indicate that the group is less likely to say the right is inviolable compared to those not in that group.

INSERT TABLE 1 and Table 2 about HERE

Consistent with other research, political ideology exerts a considerable effect on support for all three types of human rights. More liberal respondents are much more likely to say that they support human rights. Our results corroborate other scholars' findings.<sup>23</sup>

One interesting pattern we identify is that politically more marginal demographic groups (women and non-whites) are more likely to support a human right to protection against torture and to a guaranteed minimum standard of living than are males and whites. In striking contrast, dominant social groups (white and males) are substantially more supportive of the absolute right to freedom of thought and expression: 80% of non-whites support an inviolable human right to protection from torture versus only 67% of whites. The respective proportions supporting a right to minimum income are 70% of non-whites and 62% of whites. Meanwhile, only 64% of non-whites support an absolute right to freedom of thought and expression versus 74% of whites. As the first row of results in Table 2 suggests, similar results obtain when controlling for potentially confounding influences, i.e., gender, income, age, marital status, education and ideology. Non-white respondents are about twice as likely as whites to say that freedom from

torture and a right to guaranteed minimum standard of living are unconditional rights, but they are only half as likely to support an unconditional right to freedom of thought and expression.

Gender is also an important factor differentiating support for particular human rights. While 78% of women, as opposed to 63% of men, support an absolute right to freedom from torture, men are substantially more likely to embrace an absolute right to freedom of thought and expression, by 77% to 65%. Both of these differences are larger than the survey margin of error. (Income differences, by contrast, play no role in differentiating support for freedom from torture as a human right.) All three of these findings are corroborated in our logistic regression results in Table 2. Controlling for other factors, women are more than twice as likely to support a fundamental right to protection from torture and less than half as likely to support freedom of thought and expression.

If we examine the interaction effects between race and gender, about 83% of nonwhite females support freedom from torture as an unconditional right, while only just over half (56%) of white males support this as an unconditional right. The corresponding percentages for freedom of thought and expression are a mirror image: 57% of non-white females support an unconditional right to freedom of thought and expression versus 80% of white males.

These findings on attitudes regarding torture are in keeping with theories on the particular vulnerability of women to varied forms of violence. As Charlotte Bunch has argued: “The most pervasive violation of females is violence against women in all its manifestations...These abuses occur in every country...They cross class, race, age, and

national lines.”<sup>24</sup> Our findings are also in line with theories on institutional racism invoked to explain the unique vulnerability of American minorities to violence at the hands of agents of the state, such as the police or staff of carceral institutions.<sup>25</sup>

The only other major difference that we find in the level of support for human rights is the correlation between lower levels of education and greater support for economic rights. Though not a complete explanation, simple self-interest may play a role. Those with low education face a considerable and growing wage gap in the United States, so one might imagine that they currently experience, and can expect to face, poor economic prospects.<sup>26</sup>

One might argue that the absence of a strong relationship between income and support for economic rights in our sample undermines this argument. Two additional factors support our argument. First, those with lower incomes are somewhat more likely to support a guaranteed standard of living. Second, the measure of income that we have used is current household income -- so it ignores future income prospects, differences in the size of households, and number of income earners. A family with one earner reporting an income of \$40,000 could be expected to have quite different economic prospects than one composed of two earners each making \$20,000 each.

To our knowledge, this kind of discrepancy in support for particular kinds of human rights has not been reported in the literature, even in psychology. Yet these findings are consistent with some psychological theories. Many explanations of human rights attitudes focus on the fact that human rights claims tend to demand greater egalitarianism, and represent “threats” to dominant social groups. This leads many

psychologists to predict that socially powerful groups would oppose human rights more or less across the board.<sup>27</sup>

Our findings are more nuanced. White males have historical social and economic dominance, which may explain their strong level of support in our sample for freedom of thought and expression.<sup>28</sup> Such findings are in line with feminist standpoint theory, which argues that hierarchical relationships between subordinated groups and dominant ones endorse the communication practices of the dominant group,<sup>29</sup> including, in this case, the power to define the realm of free speech.

When thinking about the structure of support within the American population for the international human rights regime more broadly (i.e., mapped across the three categories of rights covered in our survey), it is helpful to consider not only support for each of these rights individually but also joint support for *all three*. All three are codified in international human rights law, which the United States has signed.

Even on a generous counting, less than a majority of Americans (46%) answer that all three of rights are inviolable. (This count includes those respondents who replied that the right is unconditional to two of the three items, and replied “don’t know” to the third.) A more optimistic assessment of these results would point to widespread normative support for human rights. Two-thirds of Americans believe that two of three of these rights are guaranteed and the other is conditionally guaranteed. Moreover, only a minority (18%) of respondents maintain that one or more of the three human rights included in our survey is not really a right at all. Almost 75% of the public believes that at least one of the three is an inalienable human right.

The final columns in Tables 1 and 2 show individual support for *all three* human rights as unconditional. (Recall that based on our estimates, less than half of the American public as a whole considers all three rights inviolable.) We find large differences in support for only two groups of Americans: women versus men, and liberals versus non-liberals. Women are significantly more likely than men to support all three rights (51% versus 40%), though in our multivariate analysis, estimates for gender differences are only marginally statistically significant ( $p < .07$ ). Liberals are much more likely to consider all three rights inviolable (66% versus 40%). Controlling for demographic variation, liberals are about 3 times more likely than non-liberals to support all three.

***FINDINGS ON ETHICAL CONSUMPTION.*** Our questions about consumer willingness-to-pay for ethically produced goods focus on two classes of products: textiles produced under sweatshop-free conditions and coffee produced under the fair trade label. The textile question asked respondents how much more they would be willing to pay for a sweater that was guaranteed not to have been produced under sweatshop conditions. The fair trade coffee question asked respondents who regularly purchased coffee how much more they would be willing to pay for coffee with a fair trade label, which ensures that producers are paid a minimum price for their coffee. (Question wordings are provided in Appendix A.)

A popular conception of ethical consumption is that it has a limited potential market (concentrated among those with liberal political leanings and/or high disposable incomes). Our results, however, indicate that a large majority of Americans are willing to pay more for ethically produced goods. Upwards of 75% of our respondents reported that

they would pay significantly more for a sweater made under good working conditions. Such a high rate of expressed support for ethical consumption is similar to findings of previous polls. About 68% of our respondents were willing to pay something more for a \$20 “sweat-free” sweater. A sizeable majority (62%) report that they are willing to pay at least \$5 more, and more than one-third of Americans report that they would be willing to spend \$10 more. With respect to willingness-to-pay for fair trade coffee, our results suggest that more than 75% of coffee buyers would be willing to pay at least \$.50 more per pound for fair trade, while more than half would pay a premium of \$1 or more. (To put this amount in perspective, between 2001 to 2005, the average retail price of coffee in the United States was about \$3 per pound.) These result, too, are broadly consistent with previous surveys.<sup>30</sup>

INSERT TABLES 3 and 4 HERE

### ***Correlates of Support for Ethical Consumption***

Table 3 provides the proportion of people in key social groups who say they are willing to pay a \$5 or more premium for a sweat-free sweater, and those willing to pay at least \$1 more per pound for coffee with a Fair Trade label.<sup>31</sup> The first eight groups are the same ones we used previously in analyzing support for various human rights. We include one additional group: those who identify economic rights as inviolable human rights.

Consistent with our findings on the general level of support for economic rights, respondents with limited education (high school diploma or less) were more willing to pay more for sweatshop-free goods. Those with less education are on average also more

likely to say they will pay more for fair trade coffee, but the difference is small and not statistically significant. The largest difference in willingness-to-pay occurs between those over and under 60 years old. Older Americans are substantially *less* likely to say they are willing to pay more for ethically produced goods. While support for human rights is positively associated with willingness-to-pay for sweat-free clothing and fair-trade coffee, the estimated effects are within the survey margin of error.

It is notable that inter-group differences in willingness-to-pay are sometimes different from expressed support for a human right to a minimum living standard. First of all, non-whites are *less* likely than whites to express a willingness-to-pay more for sweat-free clothing or fair trade coffee, even when controlling for factors like education, income, and ideology. Second, gender differences in willingness-to-pay for sweat-free goods are small and within the margin of sampling error. Third, those with higher incomes are generally willing to pay more for ethically produced goods, though the differences are only statistically significant for sweat-free clothing.

The fact that those with higher incomes are more likely to be willing to pay for ethically produced goods is not terribly surprising. Insofar as individuals attach *some* positive value to ethically produced goods, we expect higher incomes to increase their expressed willingness-to-pay. A more counter-intuitive finding is that non-whites are less willing than whites to pay more for ethically produced goods, even though they were previously found to be much more likely to support an inviolable right to a minimum standard of living. Recall that earlier, we found that such groups were much more likely to support an inviolable right to a minimum standard of living. Since this effect persists



even when we control for things like income and education, it is not likely that this group's lower *willingness-to-pay* is actually a function of a lower *ability* to pay.

Significantly, willingness-to-pay more for one of the two ethically-produced goods was highly correlated with willingness-to-pay more for the other: 85% of those who say they would pay at least \$1 more for a pound of fair trade coffee also report a willingness-to-pay at least \$5 more for a sweatshop-free sweater. In logit regression analyses (available from the authors), willingness-to-pay for one item is associated with about a 10-fold increase in the willingness-to-pay for the other. Indeed, the estimates in Table 4 are similar regardless of which item (sweaters or coffee) is analyzed.

***THEORETICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.*** In the context of increasing global economic integration, some Americans have invoked protectionist rhetoric to justify creating trade barriers while others have pointed to the challenge of global competition as a justification for reluctance to markedly raise wages or improve working conditions. Our survey suggests that American consumers are more likely to “put their money where their values are” in progressive defense of economic rights than has heretofore been suggested. In order to accurately represent the public interest, policymakers need to a fuller sense of their constituents’ opinions about human rights. In order to risk innovation in developing “ethically produced” goods, entrepreneurs need evidence of market demand for this type of product. Our research has yielded both kinds of data. Equally important is experimental research involving field-level observation of actual consumer purchasing behavior; such work was beyond the scope of our study but would be a useful compliment to it.<sup>32</sup>

Our work also reveals a number of findings worthy of future study, particularly in terms of attitudes regarding “classic” liberal rights (such as protection from torture and freedom of thought and expression). For example, we find that more Americans believe protection from torture is “not really a right at all” than they do with regard to freedom of expression. Yet being in a politically more marginal group does indeed increase support for a human right to protection against torture. By contrast, traditionally more powerful social groups voice stronger support for freedom of thought and expression as an inviolable right. Another finding to explore is the greater willingness of non-whites to support a right to guaranteed living standard but their lower willingness to pay for products that would seem to support that human rights goal -- even after the lower average ability to pay is taken into account.

One of the main contributions of our study was to link willingness-to-pay data with respondents’ attitudes about rights. The demographic anomalies uncovered in our research merit exploration through additional survey work, which we plan to undertake in future survey work (beginning in 2008). Beyond its scholarly value, such data could have public policy significance if it led to broader social mobilization or government responsiveness to human rights – in particular, economic rights. Notably, the United States is alone among industrialized nations in not having ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, and is the only nation other than Somalia not to have ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a treaty with strong provisions on children’s economic rights. Might the reluctance of members of Congress to champion ratification change if these treaties were linked to a groundswell of popular support for such rights? Might organizations involved in promoting ethical

consumption enlarge their market base if they they had access to better data on why certain groups are (or are not) willing to pay more for “sweat-free” or “fair-trade” products? Without public opinion data, we cannot know. This research is but a first step in forging deeper analytical and practical links between public opinion on human rights and popular action.

## APPENDIX A

### *Question Wording about the inviolability of specific human rights*

Now I'm going to read you some possible human rights. For each one please tell me whether YOU think it is a right that should be guaranteed to every human being and never violated, a right that may be desirable but that can be violated under certain circumstances, or not really a right at all.

...Freedom from physical and mental torture

...A guaranteed minimum standard of living

...Freedom of thought and expression

### *Willingness to Pay for Sweatshop-free Goods*

Wording regarding sweatshop free goods consisted of two questions.

Some clothing producers in foreign countries make their employees work in unsafe conditions, often called sweat shops, to keep costs and prices low. Would you be willing to pay more for clothing that you knew was made under SAFE working conditions?

Only those responding “Yes” were asked the following follow up question

If you were considering buying a sweater priced around twenty dollars, how many MORE dollars would you be willing to pay for the sweater to get a guarantee that it was made under safe working conditions? (ENTER 2 DIGIT DOLLAR AMOUNT 0-96)(IF MORE THAN \$20 PROBE: Is that how much you would pay total or how much MORE you would pay?)

Responses were top coded at \$97, and don't know or refusals were coded 0.

### *Willingness to Pay for Fair Trade Coffee*

Questions about willingness to pay for Fair trade coffee involved several were only asked to those who regularly purchase coffee. The following two questions were initially asked

of all respondents:

Some products from developing countries carry a label saying "Fair Trade," that means the product was produced under fair and safe working conditions, and that the workers who produced it received a living wage. Have you ever seen this type of label?

and

How often do you purchase coffee or coffee beans from a grocery store or supermarket? Regularly, sometimes, rarely, or never?

Only those who claim to regularly purchase coffee were asked the following about what they would pay for "Fair Trade"

Given what you currently pay for coffee, how much more per pound, if anything, would you be willing to pay for coffee that carries the 'Fair Trade' label....fifty cents, one dollar, two dollars, more than two dollars, or nothing at all?

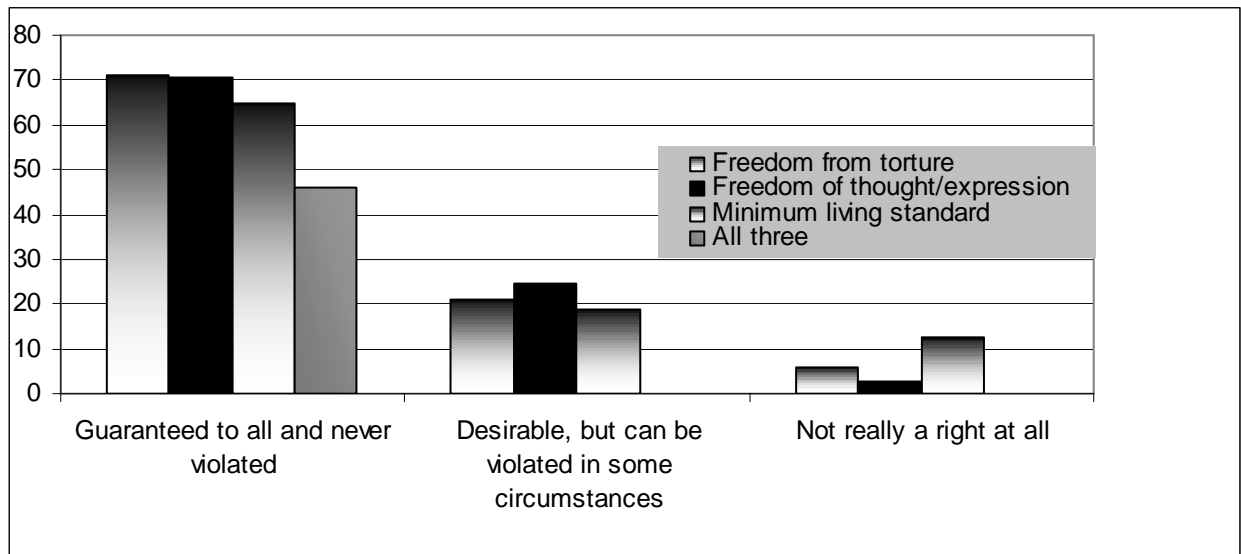


Figure 1: Beliefs about Human Rights

*Table 1: Support for the inviolability of selected human rights by demographic group*

	Freedom from Torture		Minimum Standard of Living		Freedom of Thought & Expression		Combined	
	<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>	<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>	<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>	<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>
Non-white (n=105)	80	67**	70	62	64	74	44	47
Female (n=276)	78	63**	65	64	65	77**	51	40*
Income less than 50K (n=172)	70	71	68	63	69	74	45	48
High School ed or less (n=132)	68	74	71	59**	69	71	46	45
Single (n=122)	79	70*	61	66	72	71	50	45
Over 60 (n=141)	67	72	62	66	73	71	50	45
Under 30 (n=48)	73	71	73	64	72	71	43	47
Liberal (n=120)	82	68**	77	61**	82	67**	66	40**

\* group difference significant at .10, \*\* group difference significant at .05

Note: The "in group" column is the percentage in the group responding that the right is inviolable; "in rest of population" is the percentage *not in the group* responding that the right is inviolable. N is the number of survey respondents for the "in group."

*Table 2: Logit estimates of support for inviolable human rights*


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	Freedom from Torture	Minimum standard of living	Freedom of Thought and Expression	Combined
Non-white	2.28 **	1.96 **	0.71	1.25
Female	2.28 **	1.28	0.49 **	1.66 *
Income less than 50K	0.79	0.98	0.84	0.99
High School ed or less	0.96	2.38 **	1.08	1.27
Single	1.79	1	1.29	1.14
Over 60	0.81	0.83	1.39	1.05
Under 30	0.95	1.33	1.28	0.83
Liberal	1.71	2.36 **	2.1 *	2.96 ***
n	459	459	459	459
pseudo R-2	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.05

\*p&lt;.10, \*\* p&lt;.05

Note: Coefficients are odds ratios from logit estimates



*Table 3 Willingness-to-pay for ethically produced goods*

	WTP \$5+ more for Sweat-free sweater			WTP \$1+ more for Fair Trade coffee	
	<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>		<i>in group</i>	<i>in rest of population</i>
Non-white (n=107)	53	65**	(n=53)	47	58
Female (n=284)	63	58	(n=165)	53	56
Income less than 50K (n=177)	58	67	(n=93)	53	57
High School ed or less (n=136)	68	56**	(n=80)	55	54
Single (n=126)	54	63	(n=59)	43	56
Over 60 (n=147)	48	66**	(n=94)	39	60**
Under 30 (n=48)	63	62	(n=17)	67	53
Liberal (n=94)	64	60	(n=68)	55	54
Human Right to Minimum Standard of Living (n=307)	65	54*	(n=187)	59	44*

\* group difference significant at .10, \*\* group difference significant at .05

Note: The "in group" column is the percentage in the group responding that the right is inviolable; "in rest of population" is the percentage *not in the group* responding that the right is inviolable. n is the number of survey respondents for the "in group" for willingness to pay for a) the sweater and b) coffee.

*Table 4: Logit Estimates for Determinants of Willingness to Pay for Ethical Consumption*

	WTP at least \$5+ more for Sweat-free sweater		WTP at least \$1 more for Fair Trade coffee	
Non-white	0.55 **	0.51 **	0.49	0.44 *
Female	1.57	1.54	0.76	0.78
Income less than 50K	0.54 **	0.54 **	0.93	0.95
High School ed or less	2.44 **	2.27 **	1.16	1.05
Single	1.01	1.02	0.82	0.78
Over 60	0.49 **	0.5 **	0.37 **	0.39 **
Under 30	0.88	0.85	1.44	1.43
Liberal	1.03	0.94	0.89	0.82
Human Right to Standard of Living	--	1.58 *	--	1.83 *
n	459	459	258	258
pseudo R-2	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.06

\*p&lt;.10, \*\* p&lt;.05

Note: Coefficients are odds ratios from logit estimates. The n in last two columns is lower because the question was only asked to coffee buyers.

**ENDNOTES**


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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Pritchard, "Human Rights: A Decent Respect for Public Opinion?" *Human Rights Quarterly* 13, 1 (1991): 123-142.

<sup>2</sup> Polling data was accessed through the iPOLL Databank and other resources provided by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, on June 19 and June 27, 2007. A full listing of all polls reviewed is available via:  
<http://sp.uconn.edu/~scruggs/nsflinks.htm> .

<sup>3</sup> Sam McFarland and Melissa Mathews, "Who Cares About Human Rights?" *Political Psychology* 26, 3 (2005a): 365-385; Sam McFarland and Melissa Mathews, "Do Americans Care About Human Rights?" *Journal of Human Rights* 4, 3 (2005b): 305-319; Jeannette Diaz-Veizades, Keith F. Widaman, Todd D. Little, and Katherine W. Gibbs, "The Measurement of Human Rights Attitudes," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 135, 3 (1995): 313-328.

<sup>4</sup> Marymount University, *The Consumer and Sweatshops* (Arlington, VA: Marymount University Center for Ethical Concerns, November 1999). Available online at: [www.marymount.edu/news/garmentstudy/overview.html](http://www.marymount.edu/news/garmentstudy/overview.html); Marymount University, *Garment Workers Study*, report available from Marymount University Center for Ethical Concerns (Arlington, VA: Marymount, 1996); Marymount University, *Garment Workers Study*, report available from Marymount University Center for Ethical Concerns (Arlington, VA: Marymount, 1995); University of Maryland Program on International Policy Attitudes, *Americans on Globalization: A Study of Public Attitudes* (College Park, MD: PIPA, March 2000). Available online at: [http://www.pipa.org/archives/us\\_opinion.php](http://www.pipa.org/archives/us_opinion.php); Kimberly Ann Elliott and Richard B.

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<sup>5</sup> See the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (CAT); the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR); and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR). The United States has signed and ratified both the CAT and the ICCPR; however, it has signed but not ratified the ICESCR.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for question wordings.

<sup>7</sup> Willingness-to-pay questions are a widely used contingent valuation tool in economics research on consumer preferences in incomplete and imperfect markets – both characteristics of the market for ethical consumption. For example, see Robert Cameron Mitchell and Richard T. Carson, *Using Surveys to Value Public Goods: The Contingent Valuation Method* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1989) and W. Michael Haneman, "Valuing the Environment Through Contingent Valuation," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, 4 (Fall 1994): 19-43.

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<sup>8</sup> The term “sweatshop” has traditionally been associated with the poor workplace conditions and low pay offered by individual firms. See Robert J.S Ross, *Slaves to Fashion: Poverty and Abuse in the New Sweatshops* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Robert J. Liubicic, “Corporate Codes of Conduct and Product Labeling Schemes: The Limits and Possibilities of Promoting International Labor Rights Through Private Initiatives,” *Law and International Business* 30, 1 (Fall 1998): 112-158; César A. Rodríguez-Garavito, “Global Governance and Labor Rights: Codes of Conduct and Anti-Sweatshop Struggles in Global Apparel Factories in Mexico and Guatemala,” *Politics and Society* 33, 2 (June 2005): 203-233.

<sup>9</sup> “Fair trade” encompasses a broader set of requirements related to mode of production and market prices, and may include both labor and environmental criteria (such as organic production). See Margaret Levi and April Linton, “Fair Trade: A Cup at a Time,” *Politics and Society* 31, 3 (September 2003): 407-432; Loureiro and Lotade, “Do fair trade and eco-labels in coffee wake up the consumer conscience?”; James A. Roberts, “Profiling Levels of Socially Responsible Consumer Behavior: A Cluster Analytic Approach and Its Implications for Marketing,” *Journal of Marketing* 3 (Fall 1995): 97-117.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick De Pelsmacker, Leisbeth Driesen, and Glenn Rayp, “Do Consumers Care about Ethics? Willingness to Pay for Fair-Trade Coffee,” *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 39, 2 (Winter 2005): 363-385.

<sup>11</sup> Loureiro and Lotade, “Do fair trade and eco-labels in coffee wake up the consumer conscience?”

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<sup>12</sup> Fair Trade Federation, *2005 Report: Fair Trade Trends in North America and the Pacific Rim* (Washington, DC: Fair Trade Federation, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell, Jorge Vargas Cullell, and Osvaldo M. Iazzetta, eds., *The Quality of Democracy: Theory & Applications* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> McFarland and Mathews, "Who Cares About Human Rights?"; McFarland and Mathews, "Do Americans Care About Human Rights?"; Jost Stellmacher, Gert Sommer, and Elmar Brähler, "The Cognitive Representation of Human Rights: Knowledge, Importance, and Commitment," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 11, 3 (2005): 267-292.

<sup>15</sup> Louis Henkin, Gerald L. Neuman, Diane F. Orentlicher, and David W. Leebron, *Human Rights* (New York: Foundation Press, 1999); Henry J. Steiner and Philip Alston, *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition); Richard P. Claude, *Comparative Human Rights* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Jack Donnelly, *International Human Rights* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007a, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition); David Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights: International norms and domestic change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Todd Landman, *Protecting Human Rights: A Comparative Study* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005); Zehra Arat, *Democracy and Human Rights in*

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Cingranelli and David L. Richards, "Measuring the level, pattern and sequence of government respect for physical integrity rights," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, 2 (June 1999): 407-417.

<sup>16</sup> Anne E. Geyer and Robert Y. Shapiro, "A Report: Human Rights," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 52, 3 (1988): 386-398; Kathleen Pritchard, "Human Rights: A Decent Respect for Public Opinion?" op cit.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Anderson, Patrick M. Regan, and Robert L. Ostergard, "Political Repression and Public Perceptions of Human Rights," *Political Research Quarterly* 55, 2 (June 2002): 439-456; Christopher Anderson, Aid Paskeviciute, Maria Sandovici, and Yuliya Tverdova, "In the Eye of the Beholder? The Foundations of Subjective Human Rights Conditions in East-Central Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 38, 7 (2005): 771-798; Matthew Carlson and Ola Listhaug, "Citizens' Perceptions of Human Rights Practices: An Analysis of 55 Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, 4 (2007): 465-483; Christopher J. Cohrs, Jürgen Maes, Barbara Moschner, Sven Kielmann, "Determinants of Human Rights Attitudes and Behavior: A Comparison and Integration of Psychological Perspectives," *Political Psychology* 28, 4 (2007): 441-470.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis Chong, "How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties," *American Journal of Political Science* 37, 3 (August 1993): 867-899; Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, and Kielmann, "Determinants of Human Rights Attitudes and Behavior: A Comparison and Integration of Psychological Perspectives"; McFarland and Mathews. "Who Cares About Human Rights?"; McFarland and Mathews. "Do Americans Care

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About Human Rights?"; Diaz-Veizades, Widaman, Little, and Gibbs, "The Measurement of Human Rights Attitudes."

<sup>19</sup> Full question wording are available in Appendix A.

<sup>20</sup> Tom W. Smith, "Trends in National Spending Priorities, 1973-2006," General Social Survey, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, 10 January 2007.

<sup>21</sup> David L. Richards and Mary Anderson, "What Do US Citizens Think About Torture, and Why?" Paper presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1 September 2007.

<sup>22</sup> The overall margin of error for the survey (n=508) is approximately +/- (4.5%). However, the margin of error for subgroups within the sample (e.g., non-whites) is larger.

<sup>23</sup> Michael H. Crowson, "Human Rights Attitudes: Dimensionality and Psychological Correlates," *Ethics and Behavior* 14, 3 (2004): 235-53; Fathali M. Moghaddam and Vuk Vuksanovic, "Attitudes and behavior toward human rights across different contexts: The role of right-wing authoritarianism, political ideology, and religiosity," *International Journal of Psychology* 25, 4 (1990): 455-474; McFarland and Mathews, "Who Cares About Human Rights?"; McFarland and Mathews. "Do Americans Care About Human Rights?"

<sup>24</sup> Charlotte Bunch, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 12 (1990): 486-498.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth J. Neubeck and Noel A. Cazenave, *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor* (New York: Routledge, 2001); William T Armaline, "(Re)Conceptualizing Adolescent Homelessness: Misdirection of the State and Child Welfare" in *Children and The State*, Volume 4 of the *Child Poverty in America Today*



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<sup>26</sup> David H. Autor, Lawrence F. Katz and Melissa S. Kearny, "Trends in US Wage Inequality: Re-assessing the Revisionists," National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper #11627 (September 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, and Kielmann, "Determinants of Human Rights Attitudes and Behavior: A Comparison and Integration of Psychological Perspectives."

<sup>28</sup> Joe Feagin, and Eileen O'Brien, *White Men on Race: Power, Privilege, and the Shaping of Cultural Consciousness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987); Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Working Women's Studies* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Centers for Women, 1988); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Margaret Gray and Shareen Hertel, "Immigrant Farmworker Advocacy: The Dynamics of Organizing," paper prepared for a panel on "Labor and Economic Rights Advocacy in the Americas: Mechanisms Central to Coalition-building, Protest and Political Mobilization" at the 2007 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, 8 September 2007 (Montreal, Canada).

<sup>30</sup> Comparable results are found in the Marymount polls (1995, 1996, 1999); Elliott and Freeman, "White Hats or Don Quixotes? Human Rights Vigilantes in the Global Economy"; Marsha A. Dickson, "Utility of No Sweat Labels for Apparel Consumers: Profiling Label Users and Predicting Their Purchases," *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*

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35, 1 (2001): 96-119; and Loureiro and Lotade, “Do fair trade and eco-labels in coffee wake up the consumer conscience?”

<sup>31</sup> International Coffee Organization, historical statistics, [www.ico.org](http://www.ico.org)).

<sup>32</sup> Michael J. Hiscox and Nicholas F.B. Smyth, “Is There Consumer Demand for Improved Labor Standards? Evidence from Field Experiments in Social Product Labeling,” unpublished working paper, Harvard University. Howard Kimeldorf, Rachel Meyer, Monica Prasad, and Ian Robinson. “Consumers with a Conscience: Will They Pay More?” *Contexts* 5, No. 1 (Winter 2006): 24-29. Monica Prasad, Howard Kimeldorf, Rachel Meyer, and Ian Robinson, “Consumers of the World Unite: A Market-based Response to Sweatshops,” *Labor Studies Journal* 29, 3 (Fall 2004): 57-80.