

NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PREFERENCES

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Working Paper 33786
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w33786>

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH
1050 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
May 2025

Prepared for the Handbook of Culture and Economic Behavior. We would like to thank Avidit Acharya, Benjamin Enke, Hector Paredes, Aakaash Rao, Roxanne Rahnema and Alain Schläpfer for useful comments on the manuscript. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

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Culture and Contemporary Political Preferences
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NBER Working Paper No. 33786
May 2025
JEL No. D72, N30, P0, Z1

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the literature on the relationship between culture and political preferences. We distinguish conceptually between the direct cultural transmission of political ideology and the transmission of more primitive preferences and beliefs that influence preferences over policies, parties, and forms of government. While there is substantial evidence that political preferences persist across generations and within communities, the literature often does not specify which primitive values and beliefs drive this persistence. A growing body of work points to a multifaceted mapping from underlying preferences and beliefs over the material world and social relations to political ideology. In this chapter, we summarize these studies, organize their findings in a coherent framework, and suggest possible directions for future research.

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1 Introduction

Political preferences – preferences over policies, candidates, parties or forms of government – are either taken as primitives in canonical models of politics (e.g. Downs, 1957) or result as optimal choices, for given primitive preferences and beliefs, in models of political economy. As a typical example of the latter case, individual preferences over redistributive policies are determined by voters’ post-tax labor income and government transfers as part of a consumption maximization problem (Meltzer and Richard, 1981). Voters who stand to gain from redistribution, either in the present day or in the future (Benabou and Ok, 2001), vote for higher taxes. However, voters’ utilities may involve additional preference parameters, such as fairness considerations or inequality aversion, and equilibrium policy choices may depend on social beliefs about the role of luck in determining income (Alesina and Angeletos, 2005). Such preferences and beliefs have been shown to vary across societies (Alesina and Giuliano, 2011). We will define as *culture* any preferences and beliefs that are socially transmitted within groups. Variation in culturally transmitted primitives can then generate variation in political preferences beyond that driven by economic factors.

A large and growing literature in economics, which is the focus of this Handbook, measures cultural variation and examines its origins and dynamics. In this chapter, we conduct a comprehensive survey of theoretical and empirical studies that link some of this work on culture to its implications for political preferences and other aspects of political behavior, such as turnout.¹ To guide our review, we rely on the conceptualization introduced in the above example on preferences over redistribution. Political preferences are generated from a set of primitive pref-

¹We exhaustively survey studies in economics that provide some link between culture and political preferences. We complement this survey with a select sample of the most relevant studies from other disciplines, primarily political science. A list of studies is provided in Table 1.

erences over outcomes and beliefs over what produces those outcomes. Culture influences political preferences in two ways. One is direct, when political ideology itself—for instance, partisan preferences—is socially transmitted. The other is indirect, when the objects of social transmission are the primitive preferences and beliefs that generate choices over policies or parties.

Following this conceptualization, we classify studies into three broad groups. The first one, with origins in political science, focuses on the direct within-family cultural transmission of political preferences, measured as preferences for parties or left-right orientation.

The second group of studies is agnostic on the object of transmission. This literature documents long-term persistence or change in political preferences, consistent with family and community transmission. While these studies establish a role for culture, they generally offer limited evidence on whether what is culturally transmitted is political preferences themselves or the underlying preferences and beliefs that shape them.

The third group of studies undertakes this task more explicitly. This literature demonstrates, theoretically and empirically, how underlying primitives are shaped by culture and manifest in political behavior. To help navigate this extensive body of work, we categorize studies based on the type of preference or belief they examine. These preferences and beliefs are related to fundamental domains of human life: beliefs about returns to various actions, norms regulating social behavior within groups, group identities and group preferences. The mapping we uncover between these primitive preferences and beliefs and political behavior is complex: the same underlying preference may influence a wide range of policy preferences, and a single policy preference may be driven by multiple underlying values and beliefs, often in conflicting directions.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 provides our working definitions of culture and political preferences and a more thorough ex-

planation of the link between them. We also consider the role of culture in affecting other forms of political behavior, though, with the exception of turnout, we do not cover those extensively in this chapter. Section 3 reviews studies that examine the direct transmission of political preferences, with an emphasis on the within-family transmission of partisanship. Section 4 covers studies that document the transmission of political preferences without taking a strong stance on or fully disentangling whether that transmission occurs directly or is partly mediated by the transmission of underlying preferences and beliefs. Section 5 surveys the literature on the role of culture in shaping primitive preferences and beliefs that have implications for political behavior. Section 6 concludes by identifying challenges and opportunities for future research.

2 Concepts and background

2.1 Culture

Depending on disciplinary background, there are many ways to define and understand culture. The papers we review in this chapter, which link culture to political preferences, tend to rely on one of two conceptualizations—one rooted in biology and one in game theory. Both frameworks see culture as a group-level phenomenon, responsible for variation in behavior across societies, and both emphasize the role of shared beliefs in driving this variation.² The two frameworks differ in the way they think about beliefs, which is a result of the assumptions they make about people’s behavior, in turn partly driven by a difference in the time scales they focus on.

In evolutionary biology and anthropology, the term culture refers to almost any

²Chapters by Desmet and Wacziarg and Becker et al. in this chapter discuss approaches to quantifying such variation.

information that is transmitted across humans through some form of social learning (Richerson and Boyd, 2008, p.5). Unlike individual learning—whereby individuals update their beliefs and behaviors in response to signals from the environment—social learning involves imitating the behavior of role models in society. Given that what can be transmitted in this way is anything that is not genetically encoded, the content of culture by this definition is very broad and encompasses elements as diverse as “practices, techniques, heuristics, tools, motivations, values, and beliefs” (Henrich, 2016). According to the theory of gene-culture coevolution (Boyd and Richerson, 1988; Richerson and Boyd, 2008), humans have genetically evolved the capacity to be cultural learners, through adaptations that enable them to learn from their social environments and even learn selectively, as evidenced by their hard-coded tendency to copy common behaviors or prestigious individuals (Henrich and Boyd, 1998; Henrich and Gil-White, 2001). Cultural learning or transmission is therefore an evolved characteristic of the entire human species, while the specific content of culture varies across human societies.

Much of the work in economics linking culture and political preferences either draws directly from or is broadly in alignment with this biological and evolutionary conceptualization of culture. Economists emphasize the element of transmission across generations (see e.g. Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2011; Fernández, 2011) and even model it explicitly, extending biological models beyond adaptive rules of imitation to include endogenous socialization choices that are the result of individual optimization (Bisin and Verdier, 2000b, 2001).³ In terms of what is being transmitted, the literature generally tries to map culturally transmitted information onto the primitives of economic models, such as preferences and beliefs. The distinction between the two, however, is not always clear. Because the emphasis is on social transmission, individuals are thought to inherit beliefs from their parents,

³See the relevant chapter by Bisin and Verdier in this Handbook.

or copy ones from others in society, without necessarily updating them later on in a fully rational way. Many of these beliefs are then better thought of as rather fixed cognitive frameworks, heuristics of decision-making, “gut feelings” or other objects that change only slowly—or not at all—in response to feedback from the environment. Many studies—particularly empirical (see also Alesina and Giuliano, 2015)—end up either not differentiating between such fixed beliefs and values, or explicitly modeling them as preferences (e.g. Tabellini, 2008), in order to capture their inertia within an individual’s lifetime.⁴

A different conceptualization of culture with roots in game theory is that of culture as an equilibrium sustained by a set of beliefs common to individuals in a group. Cultural variation can then be understood as the product of societies finding themselves in one of multiple equilibria all of which may constitute solutions to the same social problem. Pioneering in this is the work of Greif (1994), who defined cultural beliefs as expectations about others’ behavior on or off the equilibrium path. In Greif (1994), Maghribi and Genoese traders both solved the same principal-agent problem in different ways, relying on different beliefs about the group’s behavior in situations in which an agent cheated. These led to different roles for reputation and different equilibria for these two groups. An approach that is similar in spirit is sometimes employed by theoretical models to explain societal variation in political behavior. An example of this, discussed later in this chapter is Alesina and Angeletos (2005).⁵

The difference of this view of culture from that rooted in biology is that the

⁴In this chapter, we use the terms *preferences* and *values* interchangeably to denote fixed parameters of the utility function. In line with the inconsistent use of the term in the literature, and depending on the study considered, we will use *beliefs* to denote either subjective probabilities over actions, events and states of the world, or fixed cognitive frameworks that would be modeled as preferences. In the latter case, we may also refer to such beliefs as *heuristics*.

⁵This definition resonates with the definition of one important manifestation of cultural variation, social norms, provided by Bicchieri, Muldoon, and Sontuoso (2011). According to that definition, social norms vary across societies because of variation in the self-fulfilling expectations that sustain the norm.

beliefs that sustain cross-societal variation in behavior in the form of multiple equilibria are rational.⁶ Behavior is stable over time because people have no incentives to change their beliefs and behavior as long as others don't do so.⁷ Focusing on the rational, rather than adaptive, element of human decision-making makes sense for an intellectual tradition that is not focused on explaining human behavior over the very long run. Yet even in this framework, there might be an implicit role for social learning. Game theoretic models do not scrutinize the origin of different beliefs, but various scholars have hinted at culture as a selection mechanism for beliefs across multiple equilibria (Sugden, 1989; Schelling, 1960). When faced with a novel social interaction, people draw from a pool of past beliefs regarding similar situations in order to coordinate their actions. Though this process is not explicitly modeled, transmission and learning within the group likely plays a role in it. In the words of Greif (1994), cultural beliefs are "not empirically discovered or analytically proved," but "become identical and commonly known through the socialization process by which culture is unified, maintained, and communicated."

2.2 Political preferences

2.2.1 Definitions

In traditional spatial models of voting (Hotelling, 1929; Downs, 1957), political preferences are conceptualized as preferences over policies arranged along a continuum or line, with spatial distance capturing the extent of disagreement along some policy dimension that ranges between two extremes. In his original model, Downs (1957)

⁶A more thorough discussion of differences between economic and cultural evolution models is provided in the chapter by Boyd in this handbook.

⁷Maladaptive beliefs and "bad" equilibria can be sustained even with full rationality, as is evidenced by theoretical and empirical research on superstitions (Fudenberg and Levine, 2006) or inefficient social norms (Bicchieri, 2016). Nunn and de la Sierra (2017) discuss how lack of opportunities to rationally update can work together with evolutionary mechanisms such as cultural group selection to sustain false magical beliefs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

focused on a single economic policy dimension measuring disagreement in terms of the appropriate extent of government intervention in the economy. Clearly, this dimension—termed Left-Right—may be collapsing various related policy debates, so that preferences defined over a set of policies can still be represented as a single point on a line. The left-right dimension has been a major focal point of political debates throughout the 20th century, but does not exhaustively capture the policies over which voters have preferences. Policy preferences over topics such as race, gender, immigration and other social issues may be better captured by other dimensions, orthogonal to the economic one, whose importance and salience for voting is increasing in recent years (Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini, 2021). Regardless of the number of policies or dimensions under consideration, voting choice is determined by the spatial distance between voters' preferred policy and the policy announced by the party or candidate.

The shorthand for preferences defined over policies is *ideology*. Yet ideology is a more complex object than its abstract formalization in traditional voting models indicates, and various definitions and frameworks have tried to unpack it further. Roemer (1994) conceptualizes ideology as “a theory of the economy,” namely a mapping between policies and economic outcomes. Voters have preferences over economic outcomes and a prior distribution on how various policies achieve those outcomes, which parties can update through their ideological proclamations. This is a richer formalization of ideology which incorporates both preferences—in this case over economic outcomes—and beliefs about how those outcomes can be achieved. Though Roemer (1994) defines ideology as a theory of the economy, focusing on beliefs rather than preferences, other definitions in the social sciences include the element of preferences or values in the definition. For example, Downs defined ideology as “verbal images of the good society and of the chief means of construct-

ing such a society” (Downs, 1957, p.96).⁸ In keeping with the literature, we will use the term ideology to mean preferences over policies, but think of them as being generated by an underlying set of primitive beliefs and preferences over other outcomes.

Given the above conceptualization of ideology, one can see how political preferences may include not only preferences over policies, but also preferences over institutional arrangements or regime types. The literature has focused primarily on preferences for democracy versus autocracy, or over a free market versus a planned economy. Similarly to placement on a left-right ideological axis, political preferences over forms of government and the role of the state can be thought of as unidimensional representations of multidimensional political preferences. Voters’ preferences over outcomes, such as inequality, and their beliefs about the effectiveness of different institutional arrangements in achieving these outcomes combine to shape this category of political preferences.

2.2.2 Measurement

In practice, economists and political scientists usually measure political preferences in one of two ways:

1. **Voting behavior.** Political preferences are commonly inferred from vote choices for parties or candidates. Because vote choices are usually not observed at the individual level, most studies rely on aggregate vote shares to infer political ideology at some local unit of analysis. In rare cases, voting in referenda or ballot propositions provides a more direct measure of preferences over specific policies.

⁸Bisin and Verdier (2000a) also summarize various other definitions, all of which agree that ideology encapsulates both what a “good society” looks like—a value or preference component—and how it can be achieved—a belief-based component.

Some studies aim at measuring the ideology of legislators rather than that of voters, either because they are directly interested in legislators' political preferences or because they use legislators' behavior as a reflection of demand for particular ideologies by voters. In these cases, studies rely on the literature of ideal point estimation in political science (based on Poole and Rosenthal, 1985), which uses voting on bills to scale legislators' preferences, usually into one or two dimensions (for instance economic and social).

2. **Survey-based measures.** To circumvent problems of ecological inference and obtain individual-level data on voters, but also as an attempt to directly get at preferences rather than choices, the majority of studies relies on self-reported ideology and policy preferences in surveys. The most commonly employed survey measures of political preferences are direct questions on ideological placement on a left-right (or conservative-liberal) scale and questions on party identification or candidate support. In addition, surveys are usually rich enough to also allow researchers to separately analyze questions on various policy attitudes, such as redistribution, immigration or foreign policy.

Such measures are not direct measures of preferences, and are best understood as political *attitudes*, which capture a mix of preferences, beliefs, as well as affective and situational factors. It is for this reason that their stability and meaningfulness is sometimes debated (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2001). They nonetheless provide an alternative way to access information on political ideology and the preferences and beliefs that give rise to it and can be illuminating, especially when combined with other measurement approaches, such as behavioral measures. Many studies do not even distinguish between political preferences and survey-based attitudes, but use the terms interchangeably.

2.2.3 Link to culture

Linking political preferences to culture requires an investigation into the origins of ideological differences across individuals and groups. The canonical understanding of variation in political preferences in political science and political economy focuses on individual-level heterogeneity. One such source of heterogeneity lies in voters' economic preferences and economic characteristics. For instance, in traditional models of redistribution (Meltzer and Richard, 1981), voters care about their income and differ in terms of their economic characteristics, such as their skill or wage. Preferences over redistributive policies are then determined purely by one's standing in the wage distribution. Other approaches, drawing more directly from psychology, consider individual personality differences as deep sources of heterogeneity in ideology and political preferences. This line of research has considered various traits such as authoritarianism (Adorno, 2019; Altemeyer, 1981) or social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994) as drivers of political preferences. These personality traits in turn are a mix of preferences, predispositions and cognitive frameworks which are considered to be relatively fixed over the life course and determined by both genetic factors and social influences during an individual's upbringing. Though closely linked to the types of heuristics of affect and evaluation that are the object of cultural transmission, political psychology has viewed these traits as varying at the level of the individual and not that of a group.

Two major contributions by political scientists shifted the focus to group-level variation in political preferences. Almond and Verba (1963) in *The Civic Culture* argued that democratic systems of governance are supported by shared values, which they conceptualized as stable and internalized through socialization. They attempted to measure these values in a cross-national survey of political attitudes in five countries. Later work by Robert Putnam examined country and local-level variation in social capital (Putnam, 1994), the definition of which as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them," (Putnam,

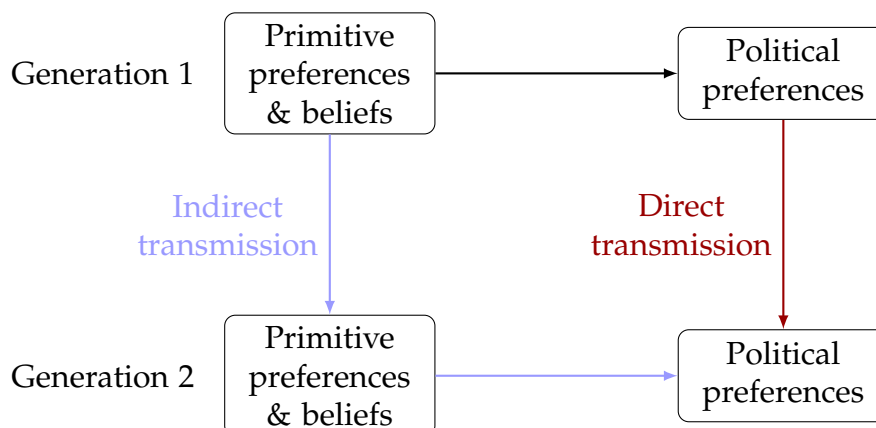
2000) encompassed the notion of beliefs shared within a group. These works set the foundation for understanding group-level heterogeneity in political preferences based on social learning and shared beliefs.

To make this connection clearer, we return to the conceptualization of political preferences as generated by a combination of latent preferences over outcomes and beliefs about what produces those outcomes. Figure 1 provides an illustration. Since culture refers to preferences and beliefs that are socially transmitted within human groups, some of the variation across societies in terms of political preferences can be cultural in origin. Cultural transmission may act directly on political preferences and political ideology, such as when children inherit their partisan attachments from their parents (direct transmission); or it may act on other primitive preferences and beliefs—such as group identities, gender norms or beliefs about the return to effort—that then map onto preferences over policies (indirect transmission). Cultural transmission, direct or indirect, can occur within the same family from parents to children (vertical transmission), between individuals belonging to different families within the same generation (horizontal transmission) or across generations (oblique transmission).⁹ In practice, preferences can be socialized both inside and outside the same family and within and between generations. We discuss studies claiming evidence of direct vertical transmission of political preferences in Section 3. A large number of studies documenting some form of transmission of political preferences do not take a strong stance or provide adequate evidence on what is being transmitted—and are unable to distinguish between direct and indirect transmission—but occasionally provide evidence on how transmission occurs, in terms of vertical, horizontal or oblique channels. We review these studies in Section 4. Finally, we discuss studies documenting indirect transmission through

⁹Chapters by Bisin and Verdier and Bowles in this handbook provide theoretical background on cultural transmission and endogenous preferences.

a variety of primitive preferences and beliefs in Section 5.

Figure 1: Cultural transmission of political preferences



Notes: This figure summarizes our framework of culture and political preferences. Political preferences are preferences over policies, parties or forms of government that are downstream of other primitive preferences and beliefs (black arrow). Direct transmission (red arrow) refers to the cultural transmission of political preferences across generations either through parents (vertical transmission) or role models (oblique transmission). Political preferences may also be directly transmitted horizontally across peers within Generation 2 (not displayed). Indirect transmission (blue arrows) refers to the cultural transmission of primitive preferences and beliefs that map onto political preferences. Political preferences may be culturally transmitted either by being passed down directly (red) or indirectly through the socialization of primitive preferences and beliefs (blue).

2.3 Other types of political behavior

Besides preferences over policies, other types of political behavior can be thought of as choices motivated by political preferences. For instance, the choice to turn out to vote follows directly from political preferences, as individuals who care more about a policy being implemented will be more likely to cast a vote. Turnout is also influenced by individuals' costs of voting and the probability that their vote is pivotal (Downs, 1957). A longstanding debate in the literature addressed the puzzle of why people would turn out to vote even in large elections where their vote is unlikely to make a difference (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1974; Ledyard et al., 1981; Palfrey and Rosenthal, 1983, 1985), with some approaches relying on the assumption of private benefits from the act of voting to explain political participation (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968).

There are at least two ways in which the decision to vote can be influenced by

culture. First, to the extent that individuals do vote motivated by a private benefit, scholars understand that benefit to be a deeply held value on the importance of voting as a civic duty of citizens (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Blais, 2000), socialized into individuals since a young age. Second, culture may affect the perceived probability of a vote being influential. For instance, historically marginalized groups who experienced exclusion from the political process, may hold the socialized belief that their vote is unlikely to matter. To the extent that such beliefs are hardwired, their effect may be equivalent, from a modeling approach, to a lower perceived benefit of voting for members of such groups.

A similar line of reasoning could be extended to other forms of political behavior, such as protest participation, joining an armed group, or other types of activism. This chapter primarily focuses on political preferences defined as preferences over policies and expressed through voting. While some of the studies we examine consider turnout as an outcome, we do not extensively review other forms of political behavior that may be driven by political preferences, to maintain tractability.

3 Direct transmission: Partisanship

The limited set of studies that provide some evidence on the direct transmission of political preferences focuses on the transmission of partisan identities within the family. This research, influential in political science, builds on the seminal study by Hyman (1959) who first introduced the notion of political socialization. Since then, scholars in political psychology have sought to disentangle the various ways in which such socialization process works (see Bender, 1967, and Neundorff and Smets, 2015, for more detailed reviews of this literature).

Evidence of vertical transmission of political preferences has been documented in a series of papers by Kent Jennings and coauthors. In pioneering work, Jennings and Niemi (1968) relied on longitudinal survey data to measure the political preferences of parents and their children, who at the time were attending secondary

school in their senior year. Building on Campbell (1960), Jennings and Niemi (1968) focused on party identification and documented a strong correlation between the answers of the parents and those of their children. As evidence that what is transmitted from parents to children is partisanship and not other preferences, Jennings and Niemi (1968) showed that the intergenerational correlation weakens for other dimensions of ideology, such as importance of specific issues (e.g., racial integration of schools or free speech) and attitudes towards specific groups (e.g., Catholics, Jews, Black Americans, big businesses). These results, including the weaker correlation of values that are less directly linked to party preference or right-left political identification, have been replicated in a series of subsequent studies, both in the US and in many other countries, from France to the UK to Germany to Spain (Percheron and Jennings, 1981; Jennings, 1984; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers, 2009; Rico and Jennings, 2016).¹⁰

The robustness of the estimates to the inclusion of controls and the fact that the intergenerational correlation of preferences is stronger for variables such as party identification than for other values, such as attitudes towards school segregation, jointly provide evidence to support the interpretation of direct parent-child socialization of political preferences. Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) hypothesize that party identification is a relatively concrete, affect-laden object, and may become part of a family's identity more easily than other attitudes. More abstract views, such as those on diversity, are more likely to be influenced by the contextual environment or people outside the family an individual interacts with.

Revisiting the initial study by Jennings and Niemi (1968), Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) confirm the finding that political preferences are vertically transmit-

¹⁰The intergenerational transmission of political preferences has been documented also in multi-party systems, such as the Netherlands, where party identification is weak and electoral volatility is high (Durmuşoğlu et al., 2023), and over far-right parties (Avdeenko and Siedler, 2017). Interestingly, though, the parent-child correlation of support for far-right parties only holds for sons, but not for daughters.

ted from parents to children, using more recent data and following families for up to three generations. Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) also expand previous work by showing that the intergenerational transmission of political preferences is stronger when the two parents hold similar political views, when the preferences of the parents are stable over time, and when the family is highly interested in politics. Intuitively, when parents hold similar, stable political preferences and when the family is “politicized”, it is easier for the child to learn about (political) culture—in line with predictions from social learning models and with recent evidence that cultural transmission is more likely to happen in stable and predictable environments (Giuliano and Nunn, 2021).¹¹

The aforementioned studies provide some evidence that preferences over other policies and outcomes do not fully drive the transmission of partisanship. This supports an interpretation of direct vertical socialization of political preferences. However, given that many underlying preferences remain unmeasured, it is impossible to rule out that the persistence of political preferences reflects the socialization of other primitives.

A second challenge to the interpretation of these results is that the persistence of political preferences may not be due to cultural transmission, but may instead reflect the persistence of contextual factors surrounding both parents and children. For example, if lower income parents, who can benefit from higher redistribution, are more likely to vote for the Democratic Party, and if economic status persists across generations, one may be attributing to culture the effect of the environment. Though the aforementioned studies control for some family and individual characteristics, such as parental education or family income, they cannot account for all

¹¹The heterogeneity of results across values documented in the literature also suggests that the intergenerational transmission of political preferences is unlikely to be fully explained by genetic transmission (Fowler, Baker, and Dawes, 2008; Hatemi et al., 2009). See also Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) for a longer discussion.

possible confounders.

Even if one accepts these results as evidence of direct transmission of political preferences, other interesting questions remain open. One such question is how parental traits and beliefs, including moral values, influence the vertical socialization of political preferences. Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009) document that some contextual factors and other forces (e.g., peer pressure and social environments) may interfere with the vertical transmission of political preferences. However, parental identities and other social factors may complement the vertical socialization of political preferences. These are intriguing avenues for future research.

4 Unspecified transmission: Political preferences or other primitives?

In this section, we review studies that document the persistence and transmission of political preferences. Most of these studies provide at least some evidence that political preferences are passed directly through social learning, but cannot rule out the transmission of other latent cultural traits that shape political preferences and influence their persistence or change. We distinguish three groups of studies in terms of the empirical design they use to establish transmission of political preferences: studies documenting persistence in such preferences, studies that identify the persistent effects of shocks to preferences, and studies that focus on the diffusion of preferences, primarily through migration but also other forms of cross-group contact.

4.1 Persistence of political preferences

The papers reviewed in Section 3 seek to isolate the vertical transmission of political preferences within the family by comparing the survey answers of the parents

to those of their children. Most studies, however, either due to lack of detailed intergenerational data, or because they are interested in documenting additional transmission mechanisms, rely on electoral outcomes, such as the number of votes received by a given party, which tend to be widely available for longer periods of time. Persistence in community-level voting behavior is then interpreted as consistent with the transmission of political preferences through family and community channels.

Using this approach, Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott (2019) document a strong correlation between the 1933 vote share of the Nazi party (NSDAP) and the 2017 vote share of the far-right party “Alternative for Germany” (AfD). The AfD was founded in 2012 to oppose policies pursued by the German government to contain the Euro crisis, but suddenly changed its platform after the 2015 surge in inflows of Syrian refugees, embracing an openly xenophobic and nationalist rhetoric. Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott (2019) interpret their results through the lens of a cultural persistence framework, where support for the far-right (measured with the 1933 NSDAP vote share) remained dormant for several decades, and was reactivated when a new party catering to voters’ latent preferences entered the stage. Because the AfD started out as a fiscally conservative, but socially moderate party, it avoided the legal scrutiny and public stigma that newly founded right-wing parties tend to be subject to in Germany. From a social image point of view, it may thus have represented a non-costly option to express latent political preferences that were transmitted across generations.

An important question that remains unanswered in Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott (2019) is whether culture sustains a right-wing ideology directly, or through other primitives that find expression in the platform of the NSDAP and the AfD. The authors provide some evidence for the latter possibility, by documenting that historic support for the NSDAP does not correlate with right-left orientation, but rather with proxies of xenophobia (though not anti-Semitism).

Studies have also documented the persistence of institutions and forms of government as evidence for persistence of the underlying preferences that support them. Giuliano and Nunn (2013) examine the notion of a village-level democratic tradition persisting across generations. The authors derive a measure of historical tradition of democracy at the local level by combining information on ethnicity-level characteristics of pre-industrial societies from the *Demographic Atlas* with information on languages and dialects spoken by current populations from the *Ethnologue* and the *Landscan* 2000 dataset. Using these data, Giuliano and Nunn (2013) calculate the proportion of citizens whose ancestors appointed local political leaders through either formal or informal consensus—a proxy for the prevalence of a local tradition of democracy. They then rely on the World Values Survey (WVS) to measure individuals’ support for democracy across countries since 1981.

Estimating individual-level regressions that control for a vector of individual and country characteristics as well as for survey wave fixed effects, Giuliano and Nunn (2013) find a positive correlation between ancestral local-level democracy and contemporary democratic support. They conjecture that a tradition of village-level democracy, transmitted across generations and persisting at the community level, led people to view democratic institutions at the national level as appropriate and legitimate. In line with this hypothesis, they show that the local-level tradition of democracy is positively correlated with democratic institutions at the country level today.

Results in Giuliano and Nunn (2013) resonate with those in Persson and Tabellini (2009), who estimate cross-country regressions and show that the historical experience of a country with its own democracy—also referred to as “democratic capital”—is associated with stronger democratic institutions and with higher support for democracy among its citizens. Neither Persson and Tabellini (2009) nor Giuliano and Nunn (2013) fully establish the mechanism behind the documented persistence in democracy. An alternative or complementary interpretation for the

patterns documented in these studies is that the persistence of institutions—rather than of democratic culture—is driving the positive association between historical and modern democracy (or democratic values). Another possibility is that, if democracy is conducive to economic growth, individual learning increases support for democracy among citizens, and thus the stability of democracy.¹² As discussed in Persson and Tabellini (2009), the three channels just described are likely to be complementary and mutually reinforcing, such that a tradition of democracy is more likely to emerge and persist across generations when democracy does well.

4.2 Persistent effects of shocks to preferences and beliefs

One challenge faced by studies of persistence is distinguishing between preferences transmitted over time and other persistent contextual factors that influence individuals' behavior. This is similar to the problem faced by studies on vertical transmission: preferences may persist because they are transmitted across generations through social learning, or because the conditions supporting those preferences (e.g., the state of the economy or climate conditions) persist.

One way to overcome this is to exploit a one-time shock to preferences—political or other—that is plausibly exogenous to the underlying conditions of a given location and that affects some places and not others. Examining the evolution of outcomes in treated and non-treated communities allows one to test whether political preferences—or underlying primitives that drive them—are culturally transmitted. For this strategy to be valid, the shock cannot permanently change local conditions. If that were the case and if agents in each generation engage in individual

¹²Exploiting individual-level variation across countries, Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln (2015) document that exposure to democratic institutions increases support for democracy. Similar results are obtained in Acemoglu et al. (2024), who show that these effects hold only when democracies are economically and socially successful. Buera, Monge-Naranjo, and Primiceri (2011) present a formal model where country leaders choose (democratic or non-democratic) institutions based on the past economic performance of their country and its neighbors.

learning, researchers may be incorrectly attributing to social learning the effects of contemporary conditions, mediated by individual learning rather than by cultural transmission.

Studying the persistent effects of exogenous shocks to preferences provides evidence for cultural transmission but, as with studies in Section 4.1, cannot alone identify which preferences are being transmitted. In addition, parsing channels of transmission is also rarely an easy task. The effects of the shock may persist within a community both because parents transmit values to children and because the community develops a form of “collective memory” that socializes the preferences into members of the group. Peer effects and other forms of horizontal socialization can further reinforce the persistence of preferences and norms within communities over time. For these reasons, most papers that examine the persistence of local shocks on political preferences reviewed in this section cannot fully separate either the object or the mechanisms of persistence, even though they often provide at least some evidence on the relative importance of specific channels.

Fontana, Nannicini, and Tabellini (2023) follow the aforementioned strategy to study the long-run effects of the Italian Civil War and the Nazi Occupation (1943-1945) on political preferences. Estimating a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) around the Gothic Line—where the battlefield between the Germans and the Allies remained stuck for more than six months—Fontana, Nannicini, and Tabellini (2023) find that areas that were more heavily exposed to the Nazi occupation (i.e., those above the Gothic line) experienced a stronger surge in the Communist Party vote share. These effects are highly persistent over time, and last until the end of the “First Republic” in the early 1990s.¹³

The preferred interpretation of the authors is that the longer and more violent

¹³Fontana, Nannicini, and Tabellini (2023) show that the gains of the Communist Party came at the expenses of the Christian Democrats, which had supported Mussolini in 1924 and had remained relatively neutral during the civil war.

German occupation (just north of the line) raised the salience of the civil conflict, leading voters to identify with the Communist Party, which was more active in the war and was probably perceived as contributing to victory. This could be interpreted as direct transmission of a preference for the Communists or of the belief in the efficacy of communism as a system. The change in political preferences then persisted over time. This is consistent with collective memory and oblique transmission (e.g., through schooling or local commemorations), but also vertical transmission within families.

The persistence of the political effects of events related to the Nazi occupation in northern Italy between 1943 and 1945 is also studied in Cannella, Makarin, and Pique (2024). In September 1943, Germany forcibly annexed selected areas within northern Italy, also known as “operational zones” (OZ), taking de facto control of them. These areas were subject to deportations, mass killings, and other means of alienating the local population. The other parts of northern Italy remained under the control of the fascist regime and did not experience such intense foreign state repression. Cannella, Makarin, and Pique (2024) implement a RDD exploiting plausibly exogenous variation in the OZ borders, and document that support for extremist parties—both on the right and on the left—was higher in national elections from 1946 to 1987. This study cannot rule out direct transmission of political preferences for both left- and right-wing parties. However, the fact that support for extremism at both ends of the political spectrum increases is consistent with indirect transmission of distrust in the state and political disenchantment, which subsequently drives party preference.

Another relevant study in the Italian context is that by Carillo (2022). Exploiting the construction of 147 new towns in swampland during the fascist years (1922-1947), Carillo (2022) finds that support for the Fascist Party surged right after the new towns were founded, and the vote share of neo-fascist parties remained higher throughout the rest of the twentieth century. Carillo (2022) provides a wide range

of evidence, including nationalistic names chosen by parents in the new towns for their children, to document the intergenerational transmission of fascist ideology. As with other studies in this section, parents may have directly transmitted their political preferences to their children, or they may have transmitted their beliefs about the (economic and social) effectiveness of a fascist regime.

Persistent historical shocks have also been exploited to demonstrate cultural transmission of patterns of turnout. Williams (2022) studies the effects of lynchings, used historically by whites in the US to intimidate Blacks and discourage both their economic progress and political participation (Price, Darity Jr, and Headen Jr, 2008; Cook, Logan, and Parman, 2018). She compares present-day registration rates of Black Americans across US counties that differ in the number of lynchings committed by whites between 1882 and 1930. She uncovers a strong, negative correlation between historical lynchings and Black political participation, which cannot be explained by other county-level factors such as income, education, incarceration rates or the presence of polling stations. Instead, she finds no such relationship for whites.

Williams (2022) interprets her results as evidence of the transmission of a heuristic regarding the costs of voting, as lynchings and racial violence could have implied death for Black people who traveled to election polls. An alternative explanation is that the perceived returns to voting are reduced for Black voters in an environment of intimidation, either because lynchings were correlated with more political suppression and a lower efficacy of Black voters historically, or because Black people in such locations lost trust in a state which was unable to protect them and became politically disengaged (Komisarchik, Sen, and Velez, 2022). These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, and may reinforce each other. Data limitations prevent Williams (2022) from testing their relative importance. She finds that Black (but not white) individuals who reside in areas with more historical lynchings are less likely to say that their parents thought it was important for them to be patriotic,

an answer which may be consistent both with a discouragement effect and with individuals' concerns about their safety and that of their families.

Another open question is whether community-level norms are at least partly responsible for the persistence of the negative correlation between violence and political participation. For instance, a norm of not turning out to vote may be enforced by the local community, rather than be instilled by the parents, as a mechanism to protect the entire group from indiscriminate violence and retaliation. Exploring the relative importance of community-level voting norms and disentangling the contribution of this mechanism from that of vertical transmission in this context is an important avenue for future research.

4.3 Preference change through migration and economic integration

Some studies use a more direct strategy to shed light on the process of horizontal political socialization by following the same individuals over time, as they move across places characterized by different levels of political participation and ideologies. One can then test whether the preferences and behavior of the migrants converge to those prevailing in the new place. This strategy suffers from non-trivial challenges. First, researchers rarely observe the same individual and their preferences multiple times, and when this happens, the samples tend to be small and non-representative. Second, where and when people decide to move is non-random. That is, people may sort based on political preferences, so that the observed converge of migrants' preferences to those of receiving places may merely capture a selection effect. Third, if migrants engage in individual learning, changes in preferences after the move may reflect adaptation to a new environment or the effect of institutions rather than horizontal transmission of preferences across peers.

Cantoni and Pons (2022) make progress on these issues, using panel data on political behavior and preferences of more than 250 million US voting-age individ-

uals between 2008 and 2018. Restricting attention to US domestic migrants, they estimate a value-added model that regresses individual participation or party identification against voter, state, and election fixed effects. They find that, after the move, both turnout and party identification converge towards those prevailing in the state of destination. This is consistent with the literature on the “impressionable years” hypothesis, which posits that adolescence and early adulthood are crucial for the development of political preferences and behavior (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991). Cantoni and Pons (2022) also show that turnout jumps immediately after the move, whereas partisan preferences evolve more gradually. These patterns are consistent with institutions (or other forces such as the legal framework) being more important for participation and peer effects or horizontal socialization of preferences having a larger influence on partisanship.

Results from Brown et al. (2023) corroborate this interpretation. The authors implement a “mover-design” strategy (Chetty and Hendren, 2018), comparing the political preferences and behavior of individuals who moved from the same origin county to the same destination county at different ages during childhood.¹⁴ Similar to Cantoni and Pons (2022), Brown et al. (2023) find that the place where people grow up in explains at least 40 to 50% of the variation in their political participation and partisanship later in life. Comparing the impact of within vs between state moves as well as that of within vs between county (in the same state) moves, Brown et al. (2023) find that place effects persist even for individuals relocating within the same county. The authors argue that this evidence supports the notion that peer effects (e.g., through schools and other daily interactions) are important for the development of individuals’ political preferences.

Both in Cantoni and Pons (2022) and in Brown et al. (2023), the evidence on the

¹⁴As in Chetty and Hendren (2018) and the subsequent literature, the main underlying assumption is that the potential outcomes of children do not depend on the timing of parents’ move (but, they can depend on the parental decision to move or not).

mechanisms behind the horizontal socialization of political preferences is somewhat indirect. Moreover, neither paper can distinguish pure horizontal transmission, such as through peer effects, from other forms of community-based socialization. Future work may build on the methodological insights from both these papers to study the specific agents that favor the horizontal socialization of political preferences.

Another way to test for horizontal socialization is to examine the evolution of political preferences, comparing two otherwise identical locations before and after the inflow of migrants with distinct political traits. If the preferences in the place that received migrants with distinct culture converged towards those of the migrants, while those in the place that did not receive migrants did not, one would conclude that horizontal socialization is at play. In spirit, this is the reverse thought experiment from the one considered in Cantoni and Pons (2022).

The main challenge to this strategy is that migrants are rarely randomly allocated across places. For one, migrants might move to places where preferences are becoming (or, were already) more similar to theirs. Moreover, local shocks may change locals' preferences and simultaneously attract migrants, thereby introducing a spurious correlation between immigration and the observed changes in political ideology. A separate concern is that, since political preferences are not easily observable and are correlated with many other traits, one may be incorrectly attributing to migrants' political preferences the effects of other migrants' characteristics (e.g., education, religion, etc.). Note that this remains an issue even when migrants are randomly assigned across destinations.

Giuliano and Tabellini (2020) engage with these ideas, and study the effects of historical European immigration between 1910 and 1930 on the political ideology of US born individuals. Several European countries began introducing social welfare reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century (Flora, 1983), implying that individuals moving to the US after 1900 had been exposed to the nascent welfare

state back in their country of origin. Instead, individuals living in the US had little exposure to left-leaning ideologies or to social welfare policies during this same time period (Skocpol, 1995). Since no systematic survey exists for the early twentieth century US at the local level, Giuliano and Tabellini (2020) rely on post-2005 data from the Cooperative Election Study (CES). They find that US born respondents living in counties that received more historical European immigrants have stronger preferences for redistribution, hold a more liberal ideology, and are more likely to vote for the Democratic Party. Giuliano and Tabellini (2020) provide additional evidence in support of a transmission mechanism by showing that results are driven by immigrants from countries that had introduced welfare reforms sooner. These findings may reflect the direct transmission of political preferences or the indirect transmission of other beliefs shaped by a generous welfare state.

Does cultural transmission also occur when migrants possess right-wing preferences? Ochsner and Roesel (2020) study this question, examining the effects of the influx of Nazi extremists in parts of Austria in 1945. In the summer of that year, a sudden and unexpected reallocation of occupational zones in Austria induced Nazis living in areas that were reallocated to the Soviet Union to move quickly to places controlled by the US, in order to escape potential retaliation and violence from the Red Army. Ochsner and Roesel (2020) document that, even 70 years after Nazi in-migration, support for the far right is higher on the US side of former occupation zone borders.

As in Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott (2019), the relationship between Nazi in-migration and support for the far-right identified by Ochsner and Roesel (2020) is non-linear: it lasts until the end of the 1960s, and disappears during the 1970s and 1980s, when the far-right moved towards more liberal positions. Starting from the mid-1980s, the far-right embraced again a populist rhetoric, and Ochsner and Roesel (2020) find that the relationship between Nazi in-migration and the far-right vote share becomes positive again. The interpretation advanced by the authors is that

the within-family transmission of political preferences—or of the primitives that drive support for particular political platforms—kept the far-right ideology alive even when there was no political supply of it. When the supply of parties with far-right ideology re-emerged, such latent, dormant preferences were reactivated.

Preferences and values can travel not only through migration, but also through trade and other forms of economic integration. Tabellini and Magistretti (2024) study whether economic integration with democratic partners can promote the diffusion of democracy across countries. To identify the causal effect of economic integration, Tabellini and Magistretti (2024) follow Feyrer (2019) and construct an instrument that exploits the rise in the importance of air, relative to sea, transportation since 1960. Estimating cross-country panel regressions from 1960 to 2015 and including year and country fixed effects, they find that increasing economic integration with democratic partners by 80% (or, its inter-quartile range) raises the *Polity2* score by around 4 points (similar to the gap between Malaysia and Canada in 2010). Interestingly, Tabellini and Magistretti (2024) find no effect of economic integration with non-democracies. In a longer version of the paper (Tabellini and Magistretti, 2022), the authors further corroborate their cultural transmission interpretation using survey data. Leveraging within-country, cross-cohort exposure to integration with democratic partners during individuals' impressionable years, Tabellini and Magistretti (2022) show that individuals growing up when their country was more integrated with democracies are, at the time of the survey, more supportive of democracy.

5 Indirect transmission: Mapping primitives onto political preferences

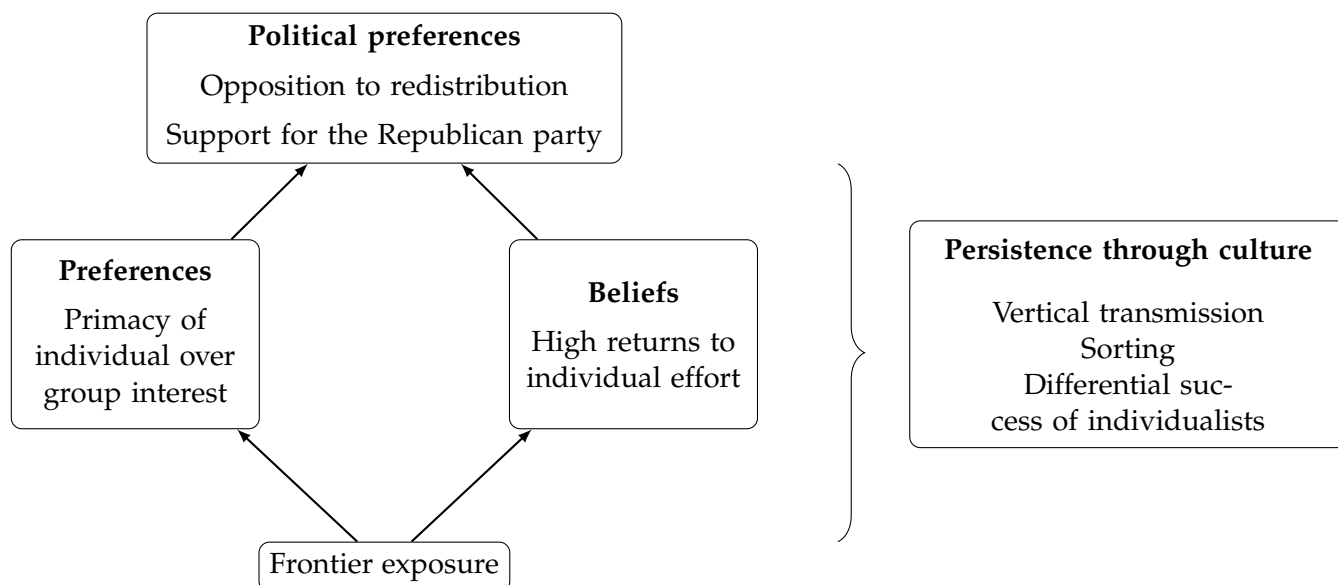
The vast majority of studies on culture and political preferences identify a role for culture in shaping primitive (non-political) preferences or beliefs, which then

end up having implications for political behavior, such as ideology or turnout. The effects of culture on political preferences are thus downstream of its effects on those primitive preferences or beliefs. Figure 2 illustrates this with a particular example: the study of Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) on the legacy of the American frontier on “rugged individualism.” Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) test the hypothesis of historian Frederick Jackson Turner that the settlement of the frontier cultivated a “pioneer” culture, which favored self-reliance and independence from the social group (Turner, 1893). In this example, exposure to the frontier shaped a host of interrelated preferences and beliefs, such as higher emphasis on self-interest rather than the interest of the group and a belief that returns to individual effort are high. These primitives were culturally transmitted across generations and in the long run shaped specific political preferences—such as opposition to government intervention—which led residents of counties with a longer frontier exposure to favor less redistributive policies and vote at higher rates for the Republican Party.¹⁵

Consistent with the idea that culture evolved due to its adaptive advantages, we would expect culturally transmitted preferences and beliefs, including the ones with implications for political behavior, to pertain to domains that are central for humans’ survival and reproduction. We identify three such domains under which we group the studies we review. The first one relates to beliefs about returns to individual actions. These studies focus on the political implications of the culturally determined perceptions people have about the nature of the payoffs they face when deciding over actions such as effort or investment. The second one concerns values and beliefs that regulate social life. We group under this category studies that

¹⁵Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) document that rugged individualism persisted over time through two complementary mechanisms. First, consistent with cultural transmission, they find that parents living on the frontier for longer chose rarer names—a proxy for individualism—for their children. Second, in line with cultural selection, Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) show that people who possessed more individualistic traits (again as proxied by their name) were more likely to move to the frontier.

Figure 2: Mapping between culturally transmitted primitive traits and political preferences



Notes: An example from Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020).

examine the influence on political preferences of norms that developed to regulate social relations or resolve social problems of cooperation and coordination within a society.¹⁶ While this set of studies takes the social group and its relevance for the individual as given, the third and final category of papers we examine considers variation in cultural preferences around the definition and boundaries of the ingroup. This research studies how culture shapes group identity and group preferences and how those map onto political behavior.

Our goal is not to provide a definitive taxonomy, but rather to offer a way to organize the literature. We therefore acknowledge the conceptual overlap across some categories and the fact that this taxonomy may change as research continues to uncover additional connections between cultural traits and political preferences.

¹⁶The term *norms* is used in the literature to denote both equilibria sustained by expectations of social sanctions and internalized preferences (Bicchieri, Muldoon, and Sontuoso, 2011).

5.1 Beliefs about returns to actions

The literature we review in this section adopts two views of beliefs. Consistent with an evolutionary approach, the majority of studies considers beliefs as relatively fixed heuristics persisting through cultural transmission due to their adaptive advantages. Such beliefs are not optimally updated and can be understood as biasing the priors of individuals on the expected costs and benefits of their actions. A smaller number of studies considers rational beliefs. Consistent with a multiple-equilibria-view of culture, such beliefs are optimal within a society given the actions and beliefs of others, but can vary across societies that happen to be in different equilibria.

5.1.1 Traditionalism

As a central example of fixed beliefs, as identified by a long line of research in psychology and political science (Federico, 2022), are those related to conservatism and the importance of tradition. Several distinct theoretical approaches have emphasized the importance of this cluster of values and heuristics, each focusing on different aspects of it and using different terminology to describe it. A non-exhaustive list of terms includes *conservation values* (tradition, conformity and security) in Schwartz (1992) and *Openness to Experience* in the Big Five Personality model as well as *authority/respect* in Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt and Graham, 2007). A common element in all these sets of traits is the desire for safety and stability, which individuals achieve by following tradition and being deferential to authority. Such cognitive frameworks and psychological orientations, in turn, are robustly correlated with right-wing political preferences.

Giuliano and Nunn (2021) study the conditions that make societies more or less likely to follow tradition. Building on models from evolutionary biology (Rogers, 1988), they show that “traditionalism” is a trait that can evolve when the environment is sufficiently stable and the returns to copying actions of the earlier genera-

tion exceed those of (costly) individual learning. They then demonstrate empirically that societies coming from parts of the world with higher historical climatic variability place less emphasis on tradition and display higher rates of cultural change, measured as changes over time in female labor force participation and traditional practices such as polygamy and cousin marriage.

Though Giuliano and Nunn (2021) do not examine political behavior and do not draw a link to traditional values as those have been studied by the literature in political science, their study offers a conceptual connection between the evolutionary origins of traditionalism and its mapping onto political preferences. For instance, political scientists have observed that the rapid economic transformations experienced by many Western countries during the modernization period of the 19th and early 20th century went hand in hand with a decline in values that emphasized tradition and authority, which was in turn associated with increasingly progressive political ideology (Inglehart, 1977, 2018; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Instability during a period of rapid economic change would have reduced the benefits of reliance on tradition, consistent with the mechanism in Giuliano and Nunn (2021).

5.1.2 Beliefs about returns to effort

A set of beliefs that has received extensive attention concerns returns to individual effort. A large literature has identified such beliefs as crucial in determining political preferences on redistributive policies and state intervention, the two core components of the traditional left-right ideological continuum as initially conceptualized by Downs (1957). This literature originated in the observation that there are large differences in the support for redistribution across Western democracies and especially between the United States and Europe. Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote (2005) concluded that none of the economic factors traditionally thought to drive variation in the size of the welfare state—such as expected income mobility of the median voter, the volatility of income or the shape of the pre-tax income

distribution—could fully explain why the United States engages in less redistribution than European countries. Instead, they sought the difference in social and political factors, such as the higher degree of ethnic and racial heterogeneity in the US, which limits solidarity with the working poor.

Alesina and Glaeser (2004) considered an additional explanation: the prevalent belief in the United States is that poverty is the result of lack of effort. In Europe instead, people believe that the poor are trapped in poverty due to reasons beyond their control and are thus more likely to support state intervention to address income disparities. This connection is shown more directly in Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) who find that beliefs that income is determined by luck increase support for redistributive policies. Alesina and Glaeser (2004) trace the origins of these differences in beliefs between US and Europe to differences in political indoctrination across the two continents. While the educational system in the US was shaped by middle and upper class reformers who emphasized income mobility and the “American Dream,” indoctrination in Europe was dominated by left-wing and Marxist rhetoric which emphasized class consciousness. As a result, Americans believe that their society provides ample opportunities for social mobility, while Europeans tend to believe that poverty is almost impossible to escape. According to evidence cited in Alesina and Glaeser (2004), neither of these beliefs reflects each continent’s reality, as the degree of mobility both historically and in the present day is comparable between the US and Europe.

Two studies analyze theoretically the connection between beliefs about individual effort and preferences for redistribution. Alesina and Angeletos (2005) assume that voters have preferences for socially fair outcomes, understood as a view that “people should get what they deserve and deserve what they get.” Social injustice is measured as deviation from a “fair” level of utility, which is generated only by agents’ talent and effort. A higher tax is desirable in order to correct deviations from this fair level. Under this assumption, when the tax rate is set according to

the preferences of the median voter, the equilibrium tax rate is decreasing in the ratio of justifiable (generated by effort) and unjustifiable (generated by luck) variance of pre-tax income. Importantly, because of distortionary effects of taxation, this “signal-to-noise” ratio is also decreasing in the tax rate. This gives rise to multiple equilibria. If agents anticipate a high tax rate, they exert little effort, and income heterogeneity is mainly due to luck (the signal-to-noise ratio is low). Ex post, this makes a high tax rate optimal. If instead the expected tax rate is low, income heterogeneity is mainly due to talent and effort, sustaining optimally low redistribution ex-post. Alesina and Angeletos (2005) show that these intuitions transfer to a dynamic model with dynastic transfers. Multiple steady-states can exist if the preference for fairness is sufficiently high and if societies start from different initial conditions. In this model, different “cultures” of redistribution are sustained by different, optimal in equilibrium, beliefs generated by different historical shocks.

An alternative mechanism generating variation in beliefs about the role of effort and associated welfare equilibria is proposed by Benabou and Tirole (2006). In their model, similarly to Alesina and Angeletos (2005), agents decide how much effort to exert in the first period of their lives, prior to the realization of income and tax rates. Agents are characterized by “imperfect willpower,” discounting the importance of early effort for later success. Given signals they receive about returns to effort, agents can choose to manipulate their level of recall of those signals prior to their effort investment. Unlike Alesina and Angeletos (2005) then, concerns about fairness are not embedded in agents’ preferences; instead, people can manipulate their own beliefs so as to get desirable outcomes, for instance by deciding to ignore signals of low returns to effort in order to remain motivated. This mechanism can also generate multiple equilibria conforming to the US-Europe comparison. When the recall rate is high, enough pessimistic voters will form a block and impose high tax rates. When recall rates are low—and low signals about returns to effort are ignored—optimistic voters can become pivotal and impose a low tax rate. These

different equilibria correspond to different beliefs about the return to effort, generated by differences in signal transmission across periods.

The model by Benabou and Tirole (2006) has an intergenerational interpretation, in which parents may deliberately try to obscure signals about return to effort when transmitting them to their children. This interpretation of the model provides a behavioral microfoundation for the transmission and persistence of different redistributive cultures. What is common between Alesina and Angeletos (2005) and Benabou and Tirole (2006) is that cross-societal variation in preferences for redistribution is sustained by equilibrium beliefs about returns to effort, even though the origins of these divergent beliefs stem from different mechanisms in each of the two models.

Several empirical studies have built on these insights. Luttmer and Singhal (2011) show that preferences for redistribution have a sticky component by demonstrating that average support for redistribution in the country of origin robustly predicts support for redistribution among second-generation immigrants in the European Social Survey. Origin country support for redistribution also predicts immigrants' party choice, with those from more redistribution-friendly countries voting for parties with a more redistributive platform. Luttmer and Singhal (2011) do not examine which intergenerationally transmitted belief lies behind preferences for redistribution. Their findings are consistent with the transmission of beliefs about returns to effort as in Alesina and Angeletos (2005), though the lack of adaptation of those beliefs to a new redistribution equilibrium in the destination country suggests that the updating process is not fully rational and that some component of those beliefs remains fixed.

Other studies focus more directly on the link between beliefs about returns to effort and variation in preferences for redistribution. Corneo and Grüner (2002) show that there is heterogeneity in the support for redistribution across countries, which is significantly predicted by people's views about the role of hard work in driving

success in life. Alesina, Stantcheva, and Teso (2018) conduct survey experiments in five countries and demonstrate more generally that perceptions of mobility have a causal effect on support for redistribution. This study builds on the documented variation of beliefs between the US and Europe and adds further evidence that variation in beliefs is causally driving different political preferences which may in turn translate into different welfare equilibria. In related work, Alesina, Ferroni, and Stantcheva (2021) document similar patterns for views towards racial inequalities within the United States, showing that there is large variation in both perceived racial gaps in income and mobility and in the causes that people attach to the persistence of such gaps. According to findings in Alesina, Ferroni, and Stantcheva (2021), white Democratic and Black individuals tend to attribute racial inequities to systemic factors and support race-targeted and general redistribution policies. Instead, white Republicans view racial gaps as driven by individual-based factors (e.g., effort). Alesina, Ferroni, and Stantcheva (2021) show that these perceptions are already ingrained in the teenage years and are among the strongest predictors of support for redistribution. Findings in these papers are consistent with the hypotheses in Alesina and Glaeser (2004) and the theoretical models of Alesina and Angeletos (2005) and Benabou and Tirole (2006).

Whether beliefs about returns to effort are rational or adaptive heuristics, the studies discussed so far only speculate as to their origins. A different set of studies completes this piece of the puzzle by providing evidence on historical experiences, environments or socialization processes that shaped such beliefs in the past. Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln (2007) compare survey responses between East and West Germans after the German reunification and document robust differences in support for state intervention to address unemployment, sickness and old age. They rule out several possible explanations for these patterns, including selective migration, income differences, and differential reliance on state transfers across German regions. Instead, they point to differences in perceptions of the role of luck in determining

one's position in life. East German respondents are more likely than their western counterparts to believe that social conditions define one's possibilities and that life achievements are determined by luck. In turn, these attitudes have predictive power for preferences on the role of the state.

Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln (2007) perform simple comparisons and are unable to either demonstrate a causal effect of East Germany's socialist regime on preferences over the role of the state or pin down the components of living under socialism that may drive such preferences. Nonetheless, their findings are consistent with a role for state propaganda and socialization through education—both forms of horizontal and oblique cultural transmission—in shaping beliefs and contributing to their persistence. Hennighausen (2015) makes progress in isolating the effect of horizontal transmission of beliefs through television in East Germany. Hennighausen (2015) takes advantage of the fact that West German television broadcasts inadvertently reached some parts of East Germany even prior to reunification. Comparing survey responses of residents of Dresden—who had access to West German television—and other regions, she finds exposure to have predictive power for the belief that effort pays off and that success in life is primarily due to luck. This correlation is robust to controls for other differences between Dresden and other East German regions that could have independently affected local attitudes. Taken together, Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln (2007) and Hennighausen (2015) trace one of the possible origins of beliefs about returns to effort to be the legacy of socialism.

Beliefs about returns to effort are not only shaped by the state, but also by the environment. Couttenier and Sangnier (2015) show that residents of US states with access to mineral resources are less supportive of redistribution. This result is conditional on several individual and state-level controls and does not appear to be driven by selection into such states of immigrants from countries with a higher preference for redistribution. Though they are not able to entirely rule out an income effect, Couttenier and Sangnier (2015) show that only a small part of the correlation

they uncover is driven by people exposed to the discovery of mineral resources in their state during their lifetime; the bulk of the variation is driven by people who were born or arrived after the discovery of mineral resources. They attribute this latter part to transmission of preferences across peers. In a different setting, but driven by a conceptually related mechanism, the study by Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) mentioned earlier (Figure 2) constructs an index of total frontier exposure (TFE), calculated as the total number of years a county had been on the frontier, and finds persistent opposition to redistribution in counties with longer TFE. Land abundance on the frontier may have generated perceptions of upward mobility and higher returns to effort. Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) do not demonstrate the frontier's effects on economic mobility directly. Nonetheless, their indirect findings provide empirical justification for the hypotheses initially proposed by Alesina and Glaeser (2004). Land abundance on the frontier may have contributed to the divergent historical experience of the US from that Europe, still shaping contemporary political preferences.

5.1.3 Zero-sum beliefs

A different set of beliefs, which influences but also extends beyond beliefs about returns to effort, is zero-sum thinking. Zero-sum thinking refers to a cognitive mindset that sees the world as a zero-sum game, in which one individual's benefit implies another's loss. Cross-cultural psychologists documented variation in the generalized belief that the nature of social relations is zero-sum using surveys (Różycka-Tran, Boski, and Wojciszke, 2015). Later literature connected zero-sum thinking to people's attitudes on cross-party cooperation, commitment to equal voting rights and tolerance of political violence (Andrews Fearon et al., 2021). A theoretical framework by Carvalho et al. (2023) links more directly the concept of zero-sum thinking to the literature on returns to individual effort. Carvalho et al. (2023) consider an evolutionary model in which agents have types corresponding to

belief systems, with some having pessimistic beliefs about the returns to individual effort. When the environment is sufficiently zero-sum in nature—understood as a larger fraction of output produced by an individual’s effort coming at the cost of one’s partner—and there is positive assortative matching among partners, zero-sum beliefs can propagate. Despite the individual cost to holding demotivating beliefs, matching with others of similar beliefs can reduce competition and yield an even higher benefit in zero-sum environments.

In a companion paper, Chinoy et al. (2023) show that zero-sum beliefs are strongly predictive of political preferences in the United States. They develop a survey instrument to elicit zero-sum perceptions, by asking people whether they think that gains to some come at the expense of others along a number of dimensions, including immigration, trade and wealth distribution. People with stronger zero-sum beliefs measured in this way are more supportive of policies of redistribution, such as taxation and universal healthcare, and affirmative action for disadvantaged groups. At the same time, they are also more likely to support restrictive immigration policies, which suggests that zero-sum mindsets capture more than just left-right orientation or other determinants of partisanship. Indeed, the authors show that zero-sum beliefs, though on average predictive of alignment with the Democratic party, predict policy preferences also within parties. The study by Chinoy et al. (2023) also offers evidence on the likely roots of zero-sum thinking, by exploiting individual characteristics elicited in the survey. Greater intergenerational mobility and a history of immigration are correlated with less zero-sum thinking, while enslavement of one’s ancestors, or growing up in a county with more slavery are associated with more. Using data from the World Values Survey, Chinoy et al. (2023) also show that economic growth—which creates an environment of less antagonism over resources—experienced in the first 20 years of an individual’s life strongly affects their zero-sum beliefs and political preferences later in life. What this evidence collectively shows is consistent with the insights of the model in Car-

valho et al. (2023): the zero-sum nature of the historical environment experienced by earlier generations is a determinant of beliefs about returns to effort and the nature of social relations which then persist through cultural evolution.

5.2 Norms regulating within-group social behavior

In this section, we review work mapping political preferences onto culturally transmitted norms developed to regulate social relations within groups. We focus on two aspects that have been shown to have implications for political behavior: social problems of cooperation and coordination, and gender norms.

With respect to the first category, even the simplest human societies have developed a wide range of social norms to regulate group behavior and resolve social problems. One broad class of problems concerns dilemmas of cooperation. Those can be formalized as a prisoner's dilemma or public goods game, in which the socially efficient outcome is not individually optimal and is undermined by incentives for defection or free-riding. Direct or third-party punishment of free-riders is one of the solutions that has emerged to address such problems. A second major class of social problems relates to social coordination, which does not involve a trade-off between individual and societal gains, but where society members may still have trouble attaining the desirable outcome due to multiple equilibria. Societies achieve coordination through various rules of behavior that support conventions. Wide variation in both the content and the strength of norms exists across societies, either because different groups respond to different environmental challenges, or because many alternative adaptations to the same environment are possible (Boyd and Richerson, 2008). This variation in norms maps onto contemporary variation in political preferences.

With respect to the second category, the social roles of the sexes and sex-based differentiation in behavior is another central feature of the organization of human groups. A more extensive review of the literature on gender and family norms is

provided by Anderson in this Handbook. We focus our attention to the subset of that literature that explicitly links gender norms to political preferences.

5.2.1 Norms of cooperation

Norms of cooperation may initially develop as equilibria sustained by expectations of punishment, but can, over time or across generations, transform into internalized values or heuristics of behavior (Bicchieri, Muldoon, and Sontuoso, 2011). Prosociality is often treated as a preference that varies across groups and is transmitted across generations (Tabellini, 2008; Lowes et al., 2017; Enke, 2019; Lowes and Montero, 2021). Yet variation in cooperation across societies can also be due to variation in norms of enforcement and expectations regarding others' willingness to punish deviant behavior (Henrich et al., 2006).

Norms of cooperation have been linked to political behavior primarily through their influence on the quality of governance and strength of democracy. Beginning with the seminal work of Putnam (1994), the concept of social capital became a widespread shorthand for norms of cooperation within a community that translate into successful political outcomes, measured as government effectiveness and responsiveness of local politicians to voters.¹⁷ These norms encompass reciprocity, trust and trustworthiness, and their emergence may have been a response to needs generated by specific types of environments or historical experiences. For example, Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2016) test the hypothesis in Putnam (1994) and find a persistent link between historical experiences of self-governance in Northern Italian cities and social capital in the present day. Buggle and Durante (2021) show that higher climatic variability in pre-industrial times is linked to higher social trust and

¹⁷Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales (2011) define social capital precisely as “those persistent and shared beliefs and values that help a group overcome the free rider problem in the pursuit of socially valuable activities” and emphasize that “social capital is not about networks or just about values, but about values and beliefs, which are shared by a community and persist over time, often passed on to its members through intergenerational transmissions, formal education, or socialization.”

institutional quality in European regions today, presumably because regions with high climatic risk had to develop insurance mechanisms reliant on cooperation with community members beyond their own family. Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) examine instead the erosion of social trust in Africa as a result of the Transatlantic slave trade.

The literature on social capital (reviewed more thoroughly in Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, 2011) tends to emphasize institutional and economic performance and generally does not focus on political preferences, as we have defined them in this chapter. There are a few notable exceptions. Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth (2017) find a relationship between local social capital in Germany—defined as the density of civic associations—and membership in the Nazi party. Local party membership in turn predicts the party’s electoral success. To address the fact that the same factors may have driven the rise of the Nazis and local associational life, Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth (2017) control for a number of observable drivers of Nazi success, such as city size, religion and share of industrial workers, and instrument the density of associations in the 1920s with historical association density in 1860, assumed to be driven by factors unrelated to later Nazi success. Relying on the historical record, the authors interpret their results as the outcome of facilitated spread of the party’s message through local network ties.

In a contemporaneous setting, two studies find a different, this time negative, link between social capital and support for populism. Boeri et al. (2021) examine individual-level data from the European Social Study and estimate a negative association between individual membership in civil associations and support for populist parties. Giuliano and Wacziarg (2020) find a negative correlation between a composite measure of social capital—including organizational density, turnout and the number of non-profit organizations—at the county level and votes for Trump in the 2016 US election.

Empirical challenges in identifying the causal effect of social capital on politi-

cal behavior notwithstanding, none of the three studies unpacks the precise nature of the link between social capital and voting for far-right or populist parties and leaders. In addition, social capital in these studies is measured as associational membership or density and not directly as community values or beliefs. This begs the question of whether and how the two are related. One possible channel is that associational life involves stronger pressures to conform to any local norm. This would explain why social capital is positively associated with far-right and populist voting in some cases (20th century Germany), but negatively in others (contemporary US and Europe). In other words, the mapping in this research is not between cultural norms of cooperation and *specific* political preferences. Instead, whatever broader shock influences political preferences with heterogeneous effects across locations is amplified in places with higher social capital. More research is needed to identify the effects, if any, of norms of cooperation on political preferences, and to distinguish them from the effects of conformity.

5.2.2 Norm tightness

More directly focused on conformity—namely not on the content, but the strength of social norms—is the literature on cultural “tightness.” Tight, as opposed to loose, cultures have a high degree of conformity and a low tolerance for deviance. Gelfand et al. (2011) unpack this concept into different components. On the one hand, tightness refers to social norms understood as social equilibria, whereby conformity is sustained by expectations about the sanctioning one might experience when deviating from the norm. Cross-cultural variation in tightness can thus be understood as variation in (rational) beliefs, so that tightness conforms to the game-theoretic view of culture as a game of multiple equilibria. On the other hand, tightness is also a set of psychological traits, such as dutifulness and self-regulation, which can be better understood as adaptive heuristics, compatible with an evolutionary view of culture.

Gelfand et al. (2011) measure tightness using self-reported tolerance of different types of behaviors in various social situations. Based on this measure, they document large variation in tightness across countries. Tightness in turn has implications for political preferences. Aktas, Gelfand, and Hanges (2016) show that individuals in tighter countries have a preference for more autonomous and less team-oriented leaders and Stamkou et al. (2019) find that participants from tighter countries who were presented with norm violations expressed a stronger preference for norm-following leaders. Though not expressly linked to political leadership, these findings could suggest a link between tightness and preferences for specific styles of political posturing or rhetoric. More directly, Harrington and Gelfand (2014) find a positive correlation between tightness and voting for the Republican party across states in the US, though it should be noted that the study does not measure tightness as directly as in Gelfand et al. (2011), but rather as a composite index consisting of items such as religiosity and features of the legal framework and state institutions, which could themselves be the outcomes of political preferences and party choice. Extending similar evidence to pre-industrial societies, Jackson, Gelfand, and Ember (2020) measure tightness relying on descriptions of the frequency and expectation of punishment for norm violations in the ethnographic record of 86 groups from the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. They find that tightness is positively correlated with authoritarian leadership.

Though the evidence for a connection between tightness and political preferences related to authoritarian and conservative leaders presented by these studies is correlational, it seems relatively straightforward to test this argument in a more causal manner. Existing research on the origins of tightness provides some guidance on this. The framework in Gelfand et al. (2011) suggests that tightness may be a response to situations that necessitated stricter norms to deal with environmental demands or natural and manmade threats. In support of this hypothesis, Talhelm and English (2020) find that higher suitability for rice cultivation within China is

correlated to higher tightness. Winkler (2021) goes a step further and shows in a time-varying analysis that tightness increases in the aftermath of natural disasters, as well as after the occurrence of conflicts and epidemics. This study also provides a more portable way to measure tightness, based on a measure of variance in responses which can be applied to any survey. Taken together, the studies of Talhelm and English (2020) and Winkler (2021) suggest that tightness may develop in response to problems of social cooperation—such as labor exchange in rice farming societies with high labor demands—as well as social coordination—such as quick and effective responses to natural disasters. Leveraging variation in the importance of such problems for different societies may be a way to more directly link tightness to contemporary political behavior.

5.2.3 Gender norms

Several studies have examined the mapping onto political preferences of persistent cultural norms surrounding sex and gender. One set of papers investigates the long-run effects of biased sex ratios. In humans, as in other animal species, the presence of more males than females in a group generates competition among males which leads to more aggression and violence (Kappeler et al., 2023). Baranov, De Haas, and Grosjean (2023) investigate the consequences of male-biased sex ratios for norms of masculinity in Australia. Building on work in evolutionary biology and evolutionary economics, they hypothesize that male-biased sex ratios will increase male competition in the short-run, which in turn will manifest in long-run evolutionary dynamics as more competitive males will have more offspring. In this setting, a component of transmission of competitive and violent norms may thus be genetic as well as cultural. Empirically, they take advantage of the fact that during the 18th and 19th century, thousands of male and female convicts were transported from Britain to Australia and sent to locations based on labor needs, generating variation in sex ratios. Exploiting the lack of choice of convicts for their settlement,

and accounting for local characteristics that could have affected their assignment, Baranov, De Haas, and Grosjean (2023) find that male-biased sex ratios in the 19th century predict a variety of later behaviors and beliefs reflective of norms of masculinity, such as gender-based occupational segregation, more assaults and sexual offenses and higher rates of male suicide. These norms of masculinity map onto political behavior. Locations that historically had more males registered lower support for same-sex marriage in a nationwide referendum that took place in 2017.

Grosjean and Khattar (2019) rely on the same natural experiment to examine an additional implication of biased sex ratios, namely inter-sexual bargaining. A relative abundance of men may improve the bargaining position of women in the household, leading to them enjoying more leisure and participating less in the labor market. Grosjean and Khattar (2019) find this to be the case in locations in Australia where historical convict settlement generated more biased sex ratios. Even after sex ratios returned to their natural rates, women in those locations work less and are more likely to be married. Both men and women in turn hold less progressive attitudes on female labor force and political participation today.

Bazzi et al. (2023a) reach similar conclusions on the effect of biased sex ratios in a different setting. They study the legacy of the American frontier on contemporary gender norms. The relative abundance of men on the frontier generated similar effects to male-biased sex ratios in Australia, with women being more likely to marry and less likely to work for pay. Frontier exposure had effects beyond those generated by biased sex ratios. Land abundance on the frontier increased fertility rates and the domestic labor burden of women, which was further exacerbated by the high degree of isolation. Together, these forces led to women being less likely to be gainfully employed and having more children, which, in turn, shaped gender norms in the long run. Using a strategy similar to that in Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) described earlier, Bazzi et al. (2023a) find that higher TFE affected a host of political preferences related to women's rights and political participation.

Counties with longer TFE displayed lower support for female suffrage in the early 20th century and had lower increases in turnout after suffrage was introduced. These counties also had lower female political representation, measured both as the share of women in Congress between 1917-2020 and the share of women holding any political office between 1900 and 2000. At least two, mutually reinforcing channels could explain these effects: a lower likelihood of women to run for office and political preferences biased against women leaders. Survey evidence provides direct support for the second channel: respondents in counties with higher TFE report being less likely to vote for a female president and believing that women should run the home and not the country.

In the settings discussed above, a central element of what is being transmitted culturally across generations is a heuristic that women's proper position is inside the home. This in turn affects preferences for female political participation and representation.¹⁸ Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2013) find similar political implications of cultural norms around gender in their study of the long-run effects of plough agriculture. The plough required physical strength to operate and gave men a comparative advantage in agricultural labor. Societies historically reliant on the plough—those living in ecologies more suitable for “plough-positive” crops—developed a sexual division of labor and associated heuristics about female labor force participation. In this case the nature of a society's main mode of subsistence, rather than unbalanced sex-ratios, led to the emergence of specific gender roles and

¹⁸Fernández, Fogli, and Olivetti (2004) provide an explanation for how social learning could lead to the persistence—and change—of low female labor force participation. They use variation in female labor force participation generated by the male draft in the US during WWII to show that sons who grew up with working mothers were more likely to have working wives themselves, likely through a channel of changed preferences. Growing up in an environment in which women work outside the home shapes the heuristics one employs for assessing the appropriateness and benefits of female labor force participation later in life. Relatedly, Finseraas, Kotsadam, and Polavieja (2022) show that, while norms of traditionalism in the home country influence first generation immigrants' rates of turnout, this effect disappears for the second generation. This suggests the centrality of horizontal transmission—likely through peers and socialization in the school—of values and heuristics about the benefits and importance of political participation.

associated beliefs. Because such beliefs were adaptive in plough-reliant societies, they may have been selected and persisted for generations. Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2013) find that countries with a larger proportion of modern-day residents descending from ethnicities that used the plough in pre-industrial times have a lower proportion of female elected representatives. Survey respondents in those countries are also more likely to believe that men make better political leaders than women.

5.3 Group identities and group preferences

The last set of studies we consider examines how culture affects political preferences through preferences and beliefs related to group identification. Identification with social groups and the division of the world into insiders and outsiders is a fundamental element of human cognition and psychology (Sapolsky, 2018) and may be closely related to culture. Cultural evolution theory has proposed that symbolic markers of belonging, such as dialect or dress, which delineate social groups, have evolved because they allow for more effective social learning from people who share similar norms (McElreath, Boyd, and Richerson, 2003). Such markers have coevolved with the human propensity to rapidly identify them and pay preferential attention to ingroup members.¹⁹

A large literature that spans disciplines documents two features of group identification, which serve as a way to organize the studies of this section. First, the groups that people divide themselves into are fluid and change depending on the context (Barth, 1998; Sapolsky, 2018). This fluidity is partly due to the fact that people choose their identities based on a variety of factors related to perceived similarity or perceived value of groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Shayo, 2009). Culture

¹⁹On the connection between identity and culture see also the chapter by Akerlof and Kranton in this handbook.

enters this framework either because identity choices and political preferences are chosen as part of the same equilibrium or because group identities are culturally transmitted preferences. Section 5.3.1 reviews the literature on group identities and their mapping onto political preferences.

Second, people behave in ways consistent with “groupiness,” by considering the ingroup’s benefit as if it were their own and privileging ingroups over outgroups (Bernhard, Fischbacher, and Fehr, 2006; Chen and Li, 2009; Shayo, 2020). The weight that individuals place on the ingroup vs the self has been conceptualized as *individualism*, while the weights they place on the ingroup vs different outgroups correspond to the concept of *universalism*. Both types of weights can be transmitted culturally with implications for political preferences. We review the evidence on this link in Section 5.3.2.

5.3.1 Group identities

One mapping of group identity to political preferences follows the equilibrium view of culture: different societies are characterized by different identities and associated political preferences, with both identities and political preferences chosen optimally given those of others. Shayo (2009) explores the implications of this approach for redistribution. In his model, people are divided into rich and poor based on their income and can choose whether to identify with their class or the nation. Identity choice is driven by perceived similarity to each group and the group’s status, which is a function of average group post-tax income. Agents also face the choice of a tax rate, in a political economy framework where the equilibrium tax rate is determined by the median voter. Given this setup, multiple equilibria are possible. Identification with the nation rather than with class means that the poor vote for lower redistribution, which in turn lowers the status of the working class, rendering their identification optimal in equilibrium. Instead, identification with the working class increases support for redistribution and the status of the working class in the

high class identity-high redistribution equilibrium.

The model of Shayo (2009) provides an alternative framework to those of Alesina and Angeletos (2005) and Benabou and Tirole (2006), delivering similar cross-societal variation in preferences for redistribution, though driven not by beliefs about returns to effort but by national vs. class identification. The model's predictions are consistent with the broad patterns in the data and the observed differences between the US and European countries: lower-income Americans are more likely to identify with the nation, and less likely to support redistribution than their counterparts in Europe. As in other models of multiple equilibria, factors outside the model can be invoked to make sense of why different societies end up with different identities and political preferences. In the case of Shayo (2009), factors such as racial and ethnic heterogeneity among the poor—which reduces perceived distance from the working class—may have contributed to the American nationalist equilibrium.

The framework of Shayo (2009) generates cultural variation in preferences for redistribution as part of multiple equilibria of identity and political preferences. This approach is an exception in the literature. By far the most common way in which culture has been theorized to affect group identification in most studies is via transmitted preferences and heuristics about in- and outgroups. In this more evolutionary view of culture, group identities are not chosen optimally, but socialized into individuals by parents and communities. By internalizing the well-being of their transmitted ingroups, individuals then adopt political preferences that either reflect their ingroup norms or benefit their ingroups, sometimes by explicitly hurting their—also socially transmitted—outgroups.

One application of this approach is the socialization of place-based identities. Rico and Jennings (2012) and Rico and Jennings (2016) examine pairs of parents and children in Catalonia, where a strong center-periphery cleavage influenced the structure of political life. They find that the intergenerational correlation of Catalan (as opposed to Spanish) identification is stronger than the correlations for right-left

orientation or party identification. This correlation remains strong after controlling for contextual characteristics, such as the percentage of native Catalan population in the neighborhood. They conclude that regional Catalan identity is transmitted to children by their parents, and only to a lesser extent by the local social context. Correlates of parental identity, such as Catalan language use, have high predictive power not only for the child's place identification, but also for their left-right and party affiliation, suggesting that place identities play a role in shaping political preferences. Moreover, Rico and Jennings (2016) find that place identity might partly crowd out political (left-right) ideology: parents who express more extreme positions in the place (Spanish vs Catalan) dimension are less successful in transmitting their political (left-right) position to their children. This may be because the parents are themselves less interested in socializing the children according to the left-right dimension, or because the children pay more attention to the place identity.

Dewitte (2024) demonstrates the importance of place-based identities for political preferences in a more causal way in the context of US communities that developed around fossil fuel extraction. Using data on gas wells drilled between 1859 and 2022, Dewitte (2024) finds that individuals living in communities with a longer history of fossil fuel extraction are less likely to believe in climate change and more likely to oppose environmental policies in favor of policies that create local jobs. A history of fossil fuel extraction does not affect other political preferences, suggesting that place-based identities operate through internalization of the very specific benefit conferred to communities by their local economy. Dewitte (2024) documents in detail the development of local identities and the methods of socialization that likely contributed to their transmission across generations. Using a difference-in-differences design and comparing places with successful vs unsuccessful oil exploration, Dewitte (2024) shows that oiling communities created local sports teams with names referring to oil and held more social events sponsored by oil companies. These community-level horizontal socialization mechanisms in-

creased and persisted over time contributing to the formation of local identities.

Most studies examine the political implications of culturally transmitted identities by focusing not on ingroup preference but on outgroup bias. One such set of studies traces the legacy of racism in the United States. Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016) show that whites in Southern US counties that had a higher proportion of enslaved people in 1860 have more negative attitudes toward Blacks and higher levels of racial resentment in the present day. These attitudes translate into political preferences. The proportion of enslaved people in 1860 predicts less support for affirmative action and maps directly onto support for the political party that is less pro-Black in each historical context: the Democrats prior to the racial realignment of the 1960s and the Republicans since then. Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016) propose that racism in southern counties reliant on slavery emerged in response to emancipation and the political and economic threat that a free Black population posed to whites in those locations. Racist beliefs were useful in supporting oppression against Blacks in order to reverse the new status quo. Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016) show a positive correlation in racist attitudes between parents and children in the South, in evidence of intergenerational transmission of such beliefs.

Bazzi et al. (2023c) offer more detailed documentation of the cultural transmission of racist norms tied to particular identities. Focusing on whites who migrated out of the South between 1870 and 1900 and using a shift-share instrument to identify their locations of settlement, Bazzi et al. (2023c) show that the “Confederate Diaspora” brought with it and perpetuated a white confederate identity that involved a strong element of anti-Black racism. Destinations of white southern migrants had more Confederate memorials and more chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a white supremacist organization; they also had a higher number of chapters of the KKK and more lynchings of Black people. Local infrastructural investment and organizations such as the UDC would have served as means to transmit identities horizontally in destination communities. Bazzi et al. (2023c)

document the process of transmission further by using individual-level membership information for a chapter of the KKK in Denver. They find both vertical and horizontal transmission to be important. White Southern migrants of both the first and the second generation were over-represented among KKK Denver members. As evidence of the transmission of identities and norms to local communities, Bazzi et al. (2023c) find that next-door neighbors of first- or second-generation Southern whites were more likely to join the KKK. One of the reasons why the horizontal transmission of Confederate identity by migrants to their destinations was so successful is that Southern whites sorted differentially into occupations such as clergy, judges or police, whose high prestige may have boosted their social influence and enabled them to act as role models.

Bazzi et al. (2023c) do not directly document the political implications of the Confederate identity, but their companion study shows that Southern white migration in the early 20th century led to increased conservative voting in later years and up until 2020 (Bazzi et al., 2023b). White migrants spearheaded the party realignment process by being more likely than their non-Southern counterparts in the same county to move away from the Democratic Party after the mid-1960s. Bazzi et al. (2023b) show that Southern whites' electoral impact was discontinuously larger in counties where they reached a critical mass and where their residential mixing and intermarriage rates with non-Southerners were higher, both indicative of cultural transmission of identities and associated political preferences. As further evidence of horizontal identity transmission, they track families across census years and show that exposure to white Southern families at the neighborhood level increased their neighbors' likelihood to give their children Biblical names, which were common among Southern whites.²⁰

²⁰Southern whites were more likely to identify as evangelical and their evangelical churches played a crucial role in transmitting their identity and values in their destinations. The conservative political ideology of this population therefore reflects not only white and Southern identification,

The studies by Bazzi et al. (2023c) and Bazzi et al. (2023b) jointly document how a persistent Confederate white Southern identity influenced political preferences in the US until the present day. They also show how group identification and outgroup bias are two sides of the same coin, both mapping directly onto political preferences. Additional studies in the US context confirm this interpretation. Ang (2023) and Esposito et al. (2023) provide complementary causal evidence that screenings of the blockbuster film *The Birth of a Nation*—a revisionist and racist retelling of the American Civil War—triggered both racism against Blacks and a stronger sense of national identity among whites, measured by public discourse in the media, volunteering rates in WWI and naming patterns of children. The film can be understood to have transmitted a white identity, which cast Black Americans as the outgroup that defined the white ingroup. Though these two papers do not examine whether *The Birth of a Nation* had any effect on political preferences, the link to the results by Bazzi et al. (2023b) is a rather obvious one.

It is worth mentioning that, while the results of all the aforementioned studies are consistent with intergenerationally transmitted sticky identities, they are also partly consistent with the perpetuation of local equilibria of social norms, in which racism and conservative voting are sustained via expectations of social sanctioning by neighbors and communities. For instance, Rahnema (2025) finds that after Confederate memorials were removed in the South, individuals in close proximity to removals reported lower racial resentment and hate crimes against Black people dropped significantly. The rapid nature of this change in attitudes suggests an equilibrium shift rather than changes in internalized values, consistent with an equilibrium view of culture and social norms (Bicchieri, 2016). Also consistent with this view, Bazzi et al. (2023c) find stronger effects of the Confederate dias-

but also religious values. A related study by Reisinger (2021) confirms this interpretation and the findings of Bazzi et al. (2023b).

pora in communities on the frontier, where no pre-existing local norms existed and where Southern migrants could create a new local equilibrium. It is likely that both internalized identities and belief-sustained racist social norms contributed to the patterns we described. Differentiating the relative contribution of the two is an interesting question for future research, especially as the two mechanisms have different implications for determining how pernicious outgroup violence can be averted.

One final strand of literature examining political orientations via the transmission of group identities concerns the legacies of conflict.²¹ Historical conflict between groups shapes group identification and views of outgroups and several studies find these preferences to be persistent and to influence people's political behavior. Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov (2017) and Rozenas and Zhukov (2019) find that communities that experienced different types of Stalinist repression in Ukraine, measured either as intensity of deportations (Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov, 2017) or as famine caused by collectivist agricultural policies (Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019), were less likely to vote for pro-Russian parties in elections between 2002 and 2014. Lupu and Peisakhin (2017) study more directly the mechanism of vertical transmission of group identities that may mediate this type of effect. They conduct a survey of three generations of Crimean Tatars, a minority ethnic group that was deported from their homeland to Central Asia by the Soviet Union in 1944. They find that descendants of ancestors who were more intensely victimized report higher attachment to their ethnic group and a set of associated political preferences (opposition to the annexation of Crimea in a referendum, vote choice in 2014 election) that reflected higher hostility against Russia, the successor country to the perpetrator of their group's victimization. The intensity of ancestor victimization also

²¹For a more detailed review of this literature we refer the reader to Charnysh, Finkel, and Gehlbach (2023).

positively predicts turnout in the Crimea annexation referendum and higher expressed willingness to participate in political activities in the future. As suggestive evidence of the role of identity transmission within the family, Lupu and Peisakhin (2017) show that the effect of ancestor victimization on contemporary preferences is higher for respondents that discussed their deportation experiences more often with their families.

Group identities and preferences toward outgroups may also be transmitted horizontally by communities and by the state. Fouka and Voth (2023) find that Greek localities that experienced reprisals by the German occupying forces during WWII expressed higher hostility toward Germany during the Greek debt crisis of the early 2010s, which generated tension in Greek-German political relations. This hostility manifested through both economic behavior, measured as the market share of German-manufactured cars, and political preferences, measured as votes for parties with a more anti-German rhetoric in Parliament. When examining the mechanisms of transmission of anti-German attitudes, Fouka and Voth (2023) find institutionalization of collective memory by the state to matter. The effect of German reprisals on voting behavior is mainly driven by communities that received an official “martyr” status, which was discontinuously more likely to be granted if they experienced destruction in more than 50% of their housing stock during WWII. The difference between martyr towns and other locations is not driven by people native to a town. Natives’ self-reported views of Germany in martyr towns are similarly negative to those of non-natives, indicating that horizontal channels may have played a stronger role than vertical ones in the transmission of identities and associated political preferences.

5.3.2 Group preferences

Regardless of which groups they identify with, individuals and entire societies may vary in the degree to which they identify with any group, or their “groupiness.”

The extent to which people prioritize individual versus group preferences and goals corresponds to the concept of individualism, first introduced by social psychologist Harry Triandis. Triandis (1995) defined individualists as individuals driven by their own preferences, needs, and rights and who prioritize personal goals over group objectives. Conversely, collectivists are primarily motivated by the norms and duties prescribed by the collective entity. In his framework of social identity, Shayo (2020) captures this continuum by distinguishing between two types of individualism: the extent to which people care about reducing perceived similarity to their social group (for instance by conforming to ingroup behavior) and the extent to which they internalize their group's status (and are therefore motivated to engage in behaviors that raise that status in society).

Economists have studied cultural variation in individualism and its origins, often turning to historical ecological conditions that shaped individualist preferences (Olsson and Paik, 2016; Buggle, 2020; Fiszbein, Jung, and Vollrath, 2022). Most of the existing research has focused on the implications of individualism for institutional variation, quality and performance (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2017, 2021).²² Though the choice of institutions is likely mediated by political preferences, few studies examine that connection directly. In one exception, Pitlik and Rode (2017) use the World Values Survey and find that higher individualism correlates negatively with preferences for state intervention and state ownership of business. The most direct and thorough investigation of the political implications of individualism to date comes from the study of Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020). Rugged individualism associated with frontier exposure shapes preferences for less government intervention, opposition to redistribution and votes for the Republican Party in the US. Even though frontier culture entails more elements than

²²An application of this is comparative institutional development in individualist Europe and collectivist China, discussed in the chapter by Greif, Mokyr and Tabellini in this handbook.

just lower “groupiness,” the findings of Pitlik and Rode (2017) and Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilas (2020) taken together suggest a link between individualism and political preferences on state intervention and the degree of government control. Whether this link extends to other political preferences or political participation remains an open question.

Individualism, understood as a preference parameter that weighs the ingroup’s benefit relative to that of the individual, does not allow for variation in weights placed on different groups an individual may identify with to different extents. Groupiness implies that people care more about their ingroup as compared to outgroups. Yet, the degree to which people discount outgroups’ welfare may vary both across individuals and across societies. This element of groupiness, termed universalism, has been linked to political ideology by several recent studies. Universalism is formalized as altruism expressed as a function of social distance (Tabellini, 2008; Enke, Rodriguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann, 2022). Given an ordering of groups from most proximate (e.g., family) to most distant (e.g., unrelated individual from a distant society), higher universalism implies a flatter gradient of altruism.²³ Universalism is thus a more fully specified version of parochial altruism that contains information on how fast altruism decays as one considers more distant groups.

Universalism can be understood as a one-dimensional representation of a potentially larger set of clusters of human moral values, collapsed to reflect the continuum between universal altruism and a primacy of community. Moral foundations theory (Haidt, Joseph et al., 2007) identified five such clusters, three of which can be mapped onto communal considerations (ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, purity/sanctity) and two onto more “individualizing” types of values (harm/care, fairness/reciprocity). The latter correspond to clusters that extend rights and obligations to all individuals. Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) showed that liberals

²³See Enke (2024) for a more thorough review of this concept and its implications beyond politics.

rely predominantly on the individualizing or universalist foundations, while conservatives also rely on the communal ones. Enke (2020) found that this moral divide maps onto voting patterns and political rhetoric in the US, with universalist foundations predicting higher support for the Democratic party and Democratic legislators employing more universalist terms in their speeches.²⁴

Enke, Rodriguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann (2022) developed a survey-based way to measure universalism in five Western countries. They asked respondents to make money allocation decisions between hypothetical recipients, each time varying the recipient's group membership. Recipients could be members of the respondent's social groups or outsiders and either come from the respondent's country or elsewhere, producing a ranking in social distance from domestic ingroup to global stranger. Universalism measured as the slope of donation amounts in social distance strongly predicts policy preferences across multiple domains. Higher universalism implies higher support for redistribution, health care, environmental protection, affirmative action, and foreign aid. Lower universalism instead correlated with support for spending on the military, law enforcement, and border protection. Importantly, the study shows that the same type of policy receives different levels of support depending on whether it is framed in a more versus less universalist way. For instance, less universalist respondents are more likely to support redistributive policies, if they are cast as policies that redistribute taxes to local communities that raised them. Policy preferences driven by universalism in turn also translate into preferences over parties. Enke et al. (2024) employ a measure of universalism based on the gradient of donations in geographic and social distance for districts in the US. They find that universalism predicts voting for the Democratic party, as well as

²⁴These low-dimensional representations of human values, be they five foundations or a single parameter for universalism, in turn echo earlier studies identifying tolerance (Jennings, 1967) or openness versus conservation values (Schwartz, 1992) as predictive of political orientations. It is likely that all these varying attempts of reducing the dimensionality of human values load onto a similar underlying factor.

legislators' ideology and rhetoric, and that its predictive power is stronger than that of income or education.

Using the same approach as Enke, Rodriguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann (2022), Cappelen, Enke, and Tungodden (2022) elicit universalism in twenty countries, providing the first evidence on global variation in this type of preference, and enabling further investigations into the role of culture for sustaining it. Cappelen, Enke, and Tungodden (2022) show that universalism correlates strongly with support for programs to reduce inequality, a preference for alleviating global rather than domestic poverty, support for global environmental protection, openness to immigration and support for a weaker military. When breaking down the relationship between universalism and political preferences by country, Cappelen, Enke, and Tungodden (2022) find that it is weaker or disappears outside rich Western countries. This suggests that the mapping between “deep” preferences and political ideology is context-dependent and raises the more general question of what affects it. One hypothesis proposed by Cappelen, Enke, and Tungodden (2022) is that experiences with democracy have a causal effect on universalism, because people who come together as equals in a society to engage in collective action for electing their leaders may develop the perception that they have equal moral obligations to everyone. They find evidence consistent with this hypothesis by leveraging variation in exposure to democracy across different cohorts in the same country and among first-generation migrants.

What explains global variation in universalism and how much of it is cultural? Several studies point in the direction of a link between generalized morality and a history of impersonal exchange that rendered universalist preferences adaptive and likely to be successfully transmitted. Universalist values are more prevalent among ethnic groups that had a higher historical exposure to markets (Enke, 2023) and groups characterized by weaker kinship structures, in which individuals were more likely to interact with strangers (Enke, 2019). In turn, determinants of the tightness

of kinship, based on factors related either to institutional influences (Schulz et al., 2019) or to ecology and mode of subsistence (Le Rossignol and Lowes, 2022), also predict universalism across societies today. Fasching and Lelkes (2024) demonstrate a direct correlation between ancestral tight kinship and contemporary right-wing ideology among respondents in the European Social Survey and World Values Survey.

6 Challenges and future directions

In this chapter, we have reviewed the literature linking culture to contemporary political preferences. We relied on the conceptualization presented in Figure 1: political preferences—understood as preferences over policies, candidates, parties or regimes—are downstream of other preferences and beliefs, which are culturally transmitted or sustained. Furthermore, political preferences themselves may also be the product of cultural transmission. Table 1 lists surveyed studies, the outcomes they examine and whether they document direct transmission of political preferences or indirect transmission of other primitives. Our framework highlights two key challenges for the literature.

Identifying what is being transmitted. Many of the studies reviewed in Section 4 examine the persistence and transmission of political preferences within the family and the community. This literature does not address whether the persistence seen in intergenerational or intertemporal correlations in political behavior reflects a direct preference for a party, ideology, or form of government, or a deeper underlying preference or belief about the world that maps onto the observed ideology. Understanding the object of persistence or transmission is important, because the mapping between deep underlying preferences and beliefs and political preferences can vary over time, as illustrated by several studies in this chapter. For example, as shown in Bazzi et al. (2023b), underlying anti-Black bias among Southern white

migrants in the US manifested as Republican voting only after the realignment of parties in the 1960s. Deep preferences and beliefs may persist through cultural transmission but only manifest in political behavior when there is a matching supply of political platforms or when issues relevant to these beliefs become salient.

Mapping underlying preferences and beliefs to political preferences. The majority of the studies we review trace how a single underlying preference or belief affects political preferences. An example of this is the large literature on the link between beliefs about returns to effort and preferences for redistribution. Yet, as the studies reviewed in this chapter reveal, the mapping is more complicated than that.

First, a single underlying cultural preference or belief may map onto multiple policy preferences. Work by Chinoy et al. (2023) on zero-sum beliefs and Enke, Rodríguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann (2023) on universalism show how the entire structure of ideology can be shaped by one cultural trait. This research raises several interesting questions: How do different cultural traits that shape ideological structures interact? Are certain preferences or beliefs more fundamental than others in driving ideology and political behavior? One empirical challenge is convincingly demonstrating a causal relationship from underlying traits to political ideology. Reverse causality is difficult to rule out, and both cultural traits and expressed ideological positions may be influenced by other, unmeasured preferences or beliefs. Enke, Rodríguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann (2023) make progress in this direction by varying the universalist framing of policies in a survey experiment. At the same time, policies cast as less universalist may also be less likely to cue a specific party line, leaving open the possibility that ideology (as determined by supply-side factors, such as party platforms) influences universalism.

Second, a single political preference may be influenced by many different cultural preferences and beliefs. Preferences for redistribution have been shown to be

driven by beliefs about returns to effort, zero-sum thinking and universalism. There could be other, yet unexplored, drivers, such as culturally transmitted preferences about inequality. The question that arises is how these underlying preferences aggregate to shape preferences for a particular policy or set of policies. A different mix of culturally transmitted preferences and beliefs may lead to different types of ideologies across societies. One example is the cultural legacy of the frontier in the US. While Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) identify individualism and self-reliance as central elements of frontier culture, their followup study (Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Garcia, 2023) shows that frontier life also fostered reliance on the local community and moral particularism. As a result, and in contrast to Western Europe, US counties with a longer exposure to the frontier have a unique profile of “particular(istic) individualism”: they oppose taxation, but more at the federal than at the state level.

Third, the mapping from underlying beliefs and preferences to their political expression may be even more complex when some aspects of political ideology are also directly transmitted within families and communities. One example of this in the US context is that of support for the Democratic Party among Black Americans. This is a powerful political identity that is both vertically transmitted and sustained by community-level norms (White and Laird, 2020). At the same time, Black Americans hold other culturally transmitted preferences and beliefs with political implications that sometimes conflict with the Democratic Party platform. For instance, Chinoy et al. (2023) show that the historical experience of slavery is associated with zero-sum beliefs, which imply support for affirmative action but also opposition to immigration. Since the Democratic Party platform generally supports domestic minorities and adopts a more lenient stance on immigration than the Republican Party, a higher prevalence of zero-sum beliefs among Black Americans may weaken support for the Democrats. The experience of slavery and Jim Crow could affect other preferences as well. Ramos-Toro (2023) finds that descendants of socially ex-

cluded individuals are more altruistic towards other excluded groups and more mistrusting of those they associate with their historical exclusion. The aggregation of these different underlying cultural traits leads to ambiguous predictions about the political behavior of marginalized groups.

We believe that these challenges represent fruitful ground for future research. More generally, we encourage theoretical and empirical work that more closely connects political preferences to underlying preferences and beliefs. Much research in economics sheds light on the evolutionary (Robson and Samuelson, 2011; Alger and Weibull, 2013) and cultural (Bisin and Verdier, 2001; Tabellini, 2008) foundations of preferences. Only a small set of studies links such underlying preferences to political ideology, let alone provides evidence of their cultural variation. Tracing the entire pathway from culture to preferences to political ideology would offer a more complete picture of the cultural foundations of political behavior.

Table 1: Summary of studies

Study	What is being transmitted		Type of transmission
	Primitive	Political preference	
Jennings and Niemi (1968)	Evidence against transmission of certain primitives, such as outgroup bias	Party ID	Direct
Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009)	No direct evidence	Party ID	Direct
Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott (2019)	Possibly xenophobia, though not anti-Semitism. Some evidence against direct transmission of right-wing ideology.	Voting for the far-right	Unspecified
Giuliano and Nunn (2013)	No direct evidence	Support for democracy	Unspecified
Persson and Tabellini (2009)	No direct evidence	Support for democracy	Unspecified
Fontana, Nannicini, and Tabellini (2023)	No direct evidence	Voting for communists	Unspecified
Cannella, Makarin, and Pique (2024)	No direct evidence. Results consistent with higher political disenchantment and distrust in the state.	Voting for extreme parties	Unspecified
Carillo (2022)	No direct evidence	Voting for fascists	Unspecified
Williams (2022)	Some evidence for lower transmission of patriotism. Speculated mechanism is beliefs about costs of voting.	Turnout	Unspecified
Cantoni and Pons (2022)	No direct evidence	Turnout, party ID	Unspecified
Brown et al. (2023)	No direct evidence	Turnout, party ID	Unspecified
Giuliano and Tabellini (2020)	No direct evidence	Preferences for redistribution, party ID, left-wing ideology	Unspecified

(continued on next page)

Table 1: Summary of studies - continued

Study	What is being transmitted		Type of transmission
	Primitive	Political preference	
Ochsner and Roesel (2020)	No direct evidence	Voting for the far-right	Unspecified
Tabellini and Magistretti (2024)	No direct evidence	Support for democracy	Unspecified
Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020)	Rugged individualism (belief about returns to effort, preference for individual over group interest, beliefs about upward mobility)	Preferences for redistribution, voting for Republican party	Indirect
Alesina and Glaeser (2004)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Alesina and Angeletos (2005)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Benabou and Tirole (2006)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Luttmer and Singhal (2011)	No direct evidence	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Corneo and Grüner (2002)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Alesina, Ferroni, and Stantcheva (2021)	Belief about origins of racial inequality	Preferences for state intervention	Indirect
Alesina and Fuchs-Schündeln (2007)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Couttenier and Sangnier (2015)	Belief about returns to effort	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Chinoy et al. (2023)	Zero-sum beliefs	Preferences for redistribution, affirmative action, immigration; party ID	Indirect
Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth (2017)	Social capital (norms of conformity)	Voting for Nazi party	Indirect
Boeri et al. (2021)	Social capital (norms of conformity)	Voting for Democratic party	Indirect
Giuliano and Wacziarg (2020)	Social capital (norms of conformity)	Voting for Democratic party	Indirect
Harrington and Gelfand (2014)	Norm tightness	Voting for Republican party	Indirect
Jackson, Gelfand, and Ember (2020)	Norm tightness	Preferences for authoritarian leadership	Indirect
Baranov, De Haas, and Grosjean (2023)	Gender norms	Policy preferences over same-sex marriage referenda	Indirect
Grosjean and Khattar (2019)	Gender norms	Preferences for female politicians	Indirect
Bazzi et al. (2023a)	Gender norms	Preferences for female suffrage; preferences for female politicians	Indirect
Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn (2013)	Gender norms	Preferences for female politicians	Indirect
Shayo (2009)	Group identity (class or nation)	Preferences for redistribution	Indirect
Rico and Jennings (2012) Rico and Jennings (2016)	Group identity (region)	Party ID	Indirect
Dewitte (2024)	Group identity (place)	Preferences for climate policy	Indirect
Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Party ID, policy preferences on affirmative action	Indirect
Bazzi et al. (2023b)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Voting for Republican party	Indirect
Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov (2017)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Voting for anti-Russian parties	Indirect
Rozenas and Zhukov (2019)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Voting for anti-Russian parties	Indirect
Lupu and Peisakhin (2017)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Turnout, voting for anti-Russian parties	Indirect

(continued on next page)

Table 1: Summary of studies - continued

Study	What is being transmitted		Type of transmission
	Primitive	Political preference	
Fouka and Voth (2023)	Group identity (outgroup bias)	Voting for anti-German parties	Indirect
Pitlik and Rode (2017)	Individualism (preference for self over group)	Preferences for state intervention	Indirect
Enke, Rodriguez-Padilla, and Zimmermann (2022)	Universalism (gradient of preference for group altruism in social distance)	Preferences for redistribution, health care, environmental protection, affirmative action, and foreign aid	Indirect
Enke (2020)	Universalism (gradient of preference for group altruism in social distance)	Voting for Democratic party	Indirect
Cappelen, Enke, and Tungodden (2022)	Universalism (gradient of preference for group altruism in social distance)	Policy preferences on inequality, poverty, climate, immigration, military	Indirect

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