

The Cultural Assimilation of Individualism and Preferences for Redistribution^{*}

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Abstract:

In this study, I analyze the relationship between individualism and preferences for income redistribution and equality, using variation in immigrants' countries of origin to capture the impact of cultural beliefs on individual preferences. Using global survey data for a large number of individuals and countries around the world, I find strong support for the hypothesis that coming from a more individualistic culture is negatively and significantly associated with an individual's preferences for redistribution. The results are confirmed using a variety of robustness checks, including matching estimators and the grammatical rule of a pronoun drop as an instrumental variable. Cultural assimilation analysis, however, indicates that the impact of the cultural origin weakens off with time spent in the new country, and that the culture of origin has no statistically significant effect on an individual's current preferences for redistribution if migration took place before the age of 10.

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Keywords: Individualism, Collectivism, Preferences for redistribution, Cultural assimilation.

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