

SBSI Brown Bag

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

12:00pm - 1:15pm

Solomon B50

[Yphtach Lelkes](#)

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A structure and (an) origin of political beliefs

ABSTRACT: The right-left dimension is ubiquitous in politics, but prior perspectives provide conflicting accounts of whether cultural and economic attitudes are typically aligned on this dimension within mass publics around the world. Using survey data from ninety-nine nations, I first show that not only is the right-left attitude organization uncommon but that it is more common for culturally and economically right-wing attitudes to correlate negatively with each other, an attitude structure reflecting a desire for cultural and economic protection. Next, I uncover one origin of this political attitude structure. The family is the “most primitive institution in society.” While we know that political beliefs are transmitted through generations, very little attention has been given to the way family structure affects political attitudes. In other fields, such as economics and anthropology, the strength of family ties is an essential predictor of cooperation and trust. Tighter family structures are designed to enforce ingroup norms while reducing contact with outsiders. Looser family structures allow for a universalistic value system to promote efficient cooperation with outsiders. I argue that tight-knit family structures partly underpin the cultural and economic protect value system. Using historical ethnographic information on the family structure of hundreds of ethnic groups around the world, which I link to several contemporary survey datasets, I first show that those from more tight-knit groups are more likely to exhibit higher needs for security. They also right-wing cultural attitudes and left-wing economic attitudes.

The presentation will begin at 12:00pm. Food and drinks will be provided.

