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Party Identification and Cultural Theory in Europe: Methodologically Advancing Comparative Studies of the Advocacy Coalition Framework

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ABSTRACT *To enhance comparative studies of the ACF, this contribution provides empirical evidence for the measurement of deep normative core beliefs and cultural theory through partisan affiliation. It assesses the interplay between cultural worldviews, partisanship, and policy core beliefs by means of linear regression analyses and correlation statistics to answer the question how deep normative core beliefs are best operationalized across and within European countries. The results methodologically advance and validate cultural theory and partisanship as conceptualizations of deep normative core beliefs and indicate that an appropriate measurement is dependent both on the national context and the policy subsystem. Under different conditions, either cultural worldviews or partisanship depict deep normative core beliefs and explain the formation of policy core beliefs as the basis for advocacy coalitions.*

Keywords: deep normative core beliefs; comparative public policy; belief systems; partisanship; policy core beliefs; advocacy coalition framework (ACF); cultural theory (CT); partisan theory

Introduction

The existence of belief systems is a core assumption of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to explain individual actors' values, attitudes, and behavior in policy processes. Yet

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recent scholarship calls for the refinement of key concepts especially regarding the integration of context in comparative ACF studies (Henry et al. 2014). While the operationalization of policy core beliefs in surveys mostly draws on specific questions on policy-related opinions (Leach and Sabatier 2005; Weible 2005; Vogeler and Bandelow 2018), the measurement of deep normative core beliefs remains contested (Sabatier and Brasher 1993; Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014; Sotirov and Winkel 2016). Simultaneously, when transferring the ACF to European democracies, the role of parties in presenting and producing individual actors' beliefs has been addressed only marginally, although existing research in political science establishes a link between core values and party identification (Goren 2005). At the same time, cultural theory has found its way into policy analysis as a hitherto "neglected variable" (Geva-May 2002; Hoppe 2007). In the ACF, cultural theory has been used to measure deep normative core beliefs, but a combination with partisanship has been claimed as being less generalizable due to the unidimensional scale on which party competition usually takes place, though this argument remains theoretical and empirically untested (Ripberger et al. 2014). Partisanship at least theoretically fulfills the criteria on the measurement of deep normative core beliefs (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), regarding both the scope of applicability across subsystems and its comparability due to a universally applicable indicator.

Addressing this link between deep normative core beliefs, cultural theory, and political parties, this paper analyzes the representative European Social Survey (ESS 2016) that provides individual-level data for multiple European countries to answer two central questions: To what extent can party identification offer an added value and potentially simplified operationalization of deep normative core beliefs in comparative studies of the ACF? Does it complement or replace cultural theory in this regard? In answering these questions, this article analyzes the interrelation of cultural worldviews with partisanship within and across 20 European countries and assesses the suitability of the two concepts to measure deep normative core beliefs.

Originating in US politics, the ACF has meanwhile been applied across the globe, including in countries with multiparty systems in which coalitions have a different meaning than in the ACF. While it is apparent that parliamentary or governmental coalitions are not advocacy coalitions (Weible et al. 2019, p. 1057), political parties do play a role in the analysis of advocacy coalitions, as politicians and partisan members can well be members of advocacy coalitions (Weible and Ingold 2018). Furthermore, different countries are shaped by different cultures, which are partly reflected by their party systems (Grendstad 1995, 2001; Bandelow et al. 2013). Even in the US, the ACF was developed at a time when the party system was not as polarized as it is today (Twenge et al. 2016). It is therefore necessary for applications outside the US but also within the US to relate more closely the notion of belief systems with partisanship. For decision-making in Congress, the partisan identity is now more central to decision-making than it was previously. The ACF is based on the idea that actors unite on the basis of core beliefs, which competes with the view of actors coming together on the basis of strategic party coalitions. Hence, there is a conceptual challenge arising that this study contributes to. As a comparative study on European countries, it methodologically advances research strategies in comparative ACF studies as one central challenge to the internationalization of the framework (Henry et al. 2014).

As a consequence, this article assumes that political parties have the potential to serve as an operationalization of deep normative core beliefs, thereby presenting a predictor of policy core beliefs that form the basis for advocacy coalitions. To underpin this argument, the article proceeds as follows: To begin with, and following the introduction, the

subsequent two sections review the theoretical and empirical foundations of deep normative core beliefs within the ACF and cultural theory and the role of political parties in ACF research. The latter derives testable hypotheses on the correlation between deep normative core beliefs, cultural theory, party identification, and policy core beliefs. This theoretical and empirical state of the art is followed by a detailed explanation of the research design and methodology. Afterwards, the proposed links between cultural worldviews, partisanship, deep normative and policy core beliefs are analyzed by means of descriptive, correlation, and inferential statistics. To account for the impact of national contexts, the analyses are performed firstly per country and secondly across countries with interaction effects controlling for the national context. A final conclusion summarizes the results regarding its impact on future comparative empirical research on the ACF, the role of political parties therein, and cultural theory.

ACF Research and Cultural Theory

Since the late 1980s, the ACF has developed as one of the central perspectives on policy processes. Its original emphasis rests on the explanation of policy change in general (Han et al. 2014; Pierce et al. 2017), with a particular focus on policy learning both as outcome and as one possible necessary but not sufficient condition for policy change (Bandelow et al. 2017; Moyson et al. 2017; Riche et al. 2020) and on the role of collective action in advocacy coalitions to effect policy change (Matti and Sandström 2013; Heikkila et al. 2019). One of the core assumptions is the psychological foundation of belief systems, of which deep normative core beliefs are the most basic, universal beliefs coined by individual socialization and independent of a policy subsystem. Policy core beliefs are stable for a decade or more, derive from deep normative core beliefs but are by contrast specifically concerned with a policy area. According to the Belief Homophily Hypothesis, coalitions form on the basis of shared policy core beliefs, which makes both types of core beliefs an essential research interest due to their pertinence to collective action within advocacy coalitions and later achieved policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2017).

In the attempt to measure deep normative and policy core beliefs, scholars have drawn on various approaches such as direct questions in questionnaires on specific policies (Weible and Sabatier 2005), working out policy core beliefs by the analysis of articulated narratives (McBeth et al. 2005), or analyzing statements and discourses (Kübler 2001). The measurement of deep normative core beliefs has – apart from the ACF's pioneer study (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) – only recently gained increasing attention. In more concrete terms, cultural theory has been prominently used to measure deep normative core beliefs as predictors of policy core beliefs (Jones 2011; Sotirov and Winkel 2016).

American political scientist Aaron Wildavsky applied cultural theory, originally developed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1978) to explain policy actors' thinking and behavior. He stated that policy preferences of individuals emerge endogenously from social relations and interaction with institutions that shape an individual's cultural identity (Wildavsky 1987). Consequently, cultural identity is only limitedly a matter of individual choice but rather a matter of choosing between a defined set of alternative cultures, whereby each culture survives in reaction to another. Cultural theorists have attempted to categorize these different cultures that the interplay of values, beliefs, and relations produces (Swedlow 2002). The result is a distinction of individualism, fatalism, egalitarianism, and hierarchy as distinct cultural

worldviews. Individualists value individual effort and talent over collective achievements. They appreciate freedom and independence. Fatalists see their personal achievements as depending on external circumstances rather than influenced by their individual action. They appreciate security and order. Egalitarianists desire equal opportunities for the society they live in and are characterized by solidaristic behavior. Hierarchists value tradition and hierarchical structures and a top-down solving of problems (see also West et al. 2010; Jones 2011).

The power of individualism, hierarchy, and egalitarianism to explain policy core beliefs has been confirmed in defense policy (Ripberger et al. 2011), although in this model partisanship also remained significant. The use of cultural theory as an adequate measurement of deep normative core beliefs proved valid in several other analyses especially in the broader area of environmental policy (Sotirov and Memmler 2012; Swedlow 2017). This is possible because cultural theory also assumes cultural worldviews and risk perceptions are stable – just as the ACF assumes that core beliefs are stable – and thereby adheres to the view of cultural orientations being stable rather than mobile (Kahan 2012). At the same time, cultural theory allows for defining measurement items that are comparable across countries, which contributes to comparative ACF research already. Whereas these studies mostly concentrate on the national context of the US, comparative studies or European case studies that address the cross-fertilization of the ACF and cultural theory are largely missing. This is where this article ties in and further elaborates the operationalization of deep normative core beliefs within the ACF in European countries. It takes advantage of the previous studies on cultural theory and the ACF but also sheds light on the still missing integration and empirical test of partisanship in this conceptualization.

Partisanship in ACF Research

Partisanship and party systems have been introduced and discussed as institutions in other theories of the policy process, such as the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) (Zohlnhöfer et al. 2016). A cross-fertilization of the ACF with other theoretical perspectives has generally proven fruitful, for example when looking at coalitions that shape and populate the streams of the MSF (Howlett et al. 2016). Although ACF scholars have called for observing partisanship (Nohrstedt and Olofsson 2016) and partisan actors (Weible and Ingold 2018), there is still a need for empirical testing of the role of partisanship in comparative ACF studies and in countries with a strong relevance of party competition like Europe. Previous studies that found a higher explanatory power of cultural worldviews compared to partisanship with regard to policy preferences rest on a purely US empirical basis and/or limited policy areas (Kahan et al. 2010). Also, their results do not exclude but even prompt the possibility of an interrelation between cultural worldviews and partisanship. A similar finding is presented by Wildavsky and Dake (1990), who expose that worldviews – under which they equally count cultural theory and political ideology – substantiate biases that act on the individual formation of beliefs. It is therefore possible that cultural worldviews are reflected by the party system, which would allow for taking partisanship as an indicator for cultural worldviews and thereby facilitate the measurements of deep normative core beliefs. It is assumed that this is even more the case in multiparty systems and national contexts with complex party systems, rather than the two-party ideological scale of US politics (Ripberger et al. 2014). The reflection of political culture in party systems has been demonstrated at least for the European case of Norway (Grendstad 2003) (*Partisanship Replacement Hypothesis*).

The aim of this article is not to discard cultural theory as a measurement of deep normative core beliefs but to investigate whether in certain national and cultural contexts party identification reflects cultural worldviews or better depicts deep normative core beliefs as explanation for policy core beliefs. The ultimate goal is an improvement in the measurement of belief systems.

Thus, besides testing partisanship as an indicator of cultural worldviews, this article aims at improving the explanation of policy core beliefs by referring to party identification as a potential alternative measure of deep normative core beliefs. Provided that it does not suffer from multicollinearity with cultural theory dimensions in a way that worsens the model fit, partisanship may enhance the comparative studies of advocacy coalitions. Complementing the measurement of deep normative core beliefs by adding party identification should increase the explained variance in policy core beliefs to justify such an improvement of measurement. Recent literature furthermore identified important criteria on the measurement of deep normative core beliefs according to the original conceptualization by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). This affects, firstly, the scope of deep normative core beliefs, which should exert influence across all subsystems and, secondly, the comparability of the findings through the application of a universally applicable measurement scale. The use of partisanship as an operationalization of deep normative core beliefs fulfills both criteria. Since political parties intend to win elections, take part in government and pursue a variety of policies, electoral programs of political parties depict policy preferences that can in the widest sense be referred to as policy core beliefs, since their program addresses specific policies in almost all policy fields (Volkens and Merz 2018). Despite parties having a definite position on a specific policy field and owning issues – such as Green parties on environmental and sustainability policy and left-wing parties regarding subsidies (Engler and Zohlnhöfer 2018) – every political party that competes in a party system generally addresses all policy fields when communicating its views and preferences on party conventions or via the media. This leads also to the need for understanding party stances not just on a left–right scale but on many dimensions (Wenzelburger 2015). Party identification thus includes opinions on a wide range of policy fields and can therefore be considered as an indicator for deep normative core beliefs (*Partisanship Supplement Hypothesis*).

Partisanship as identification with a party has been found to be interrelated with party system stability and other system developments in emerging and established democracies (Dalton and Weldon 2007). Based on supplemental findings, it can be argued that a functioning party system with competition between parties (usually found in parliamentary systems) is fostering party identification more than systems that build on institutional control (Zohlnhöfer 2009, p. 110). For example, ACF applications in Sweden doubt the explanatory power of advocacy coalitions in subsystems with contested policies and in systems with strong party discipline (Nohrstedt and Olofsson 2016). Pluralistic countries with a strong importance of partisanship then would show a greater importance of partisanship in depicting deep normative core beliefs and explaining policy core beliefs (*Country Moderation Hypothesis*).

Hypothesis 1a (Partisanship Replacement Hypothesis): Partisanship serves as a valid indicator for cultural orientations and thereby depicts equally well deep normative core beliefs in a given country.

Hypothesis 1b (Partisanship Supplement Hypothesis): Partisanship serves as an additional measurement for deep normative core beliefs and thereby enhances the measurement of deep normative core beliefs in a given country. Even when controlling for cultural worldviews, partisanship has a significant impact on policy core beliefs.

Hypothesis 2 (Country Moderation Hypothesis): The effect of cultural worldviews and partisanship on policy core beliefs is dependent on the national context.

To sum up, the link between advocacy coalitions and political parties has been addressed only marginally so far. Andrew et al. (2018) argue that the central difference between advocacy coalitions and political party coalitions is that the latter do not necessarily share beliefs in that they are often internally disunited but cooperate out of strategic reasons. However, belief systems are a concept originally developed for individuals, due to their psychological basis. Empirical evidence furthermore tells us that preference formation and values often stem from party identification (Goren 2005), which would support the claim that a strong party identification can create individual beliefs (Hornung et al. 2018) and thus foster the building of advocacy coalitions among supporters of the same political party. Some argue that in fact deep normative core beliefs are those that separate advocacy coalitions while differences in policy core beliefs are bridgeable (Kukkonen et al. 2017). While the formation of advocacy coalitions is not of central interest to this article, the explanation of policy core beliefs indeed is, since they form on the basis of deep normative core beliefs. Consequently, we assume that party identification can serve as an indicator for deep normative core beliefs and explain policy core beliefs – either in its correlation with cultural worldviews or as an added value. Thus, it provides a complementary measurement – and in the future might also help to shed light on advocacy coalition formation.

On the other hand, cultural worldviews and partisanship as explanations for policy core beliefs could equally be triggered in their salience by specific policy core beliefs. Concretely, the egalitarian worldview should be salient when it comes to questions of distribution of goods and general justice, the hierarchical worldview should be salient when competencies and security are discussed, salience of the individualistic worldview would respond to attempts to reduce any type of freedom and benefits for individual achievements, and the fatalist worldview should be activated when the policy topic circles around global and encompassing decisions in relation to each individual's contribution to that. Partisanship would be triggered when the policy at hand has once motivated the emergence of parties (as cleavages or anti-EU campaigns have) (Bornschieer 2010), or when the policy presents an issue that the party claims to own (Banda 2019). This can be transferred to policy subsystems, in which partisanship would be relevant as a depiction of deep normative core beliefs only when a certain party strongly identifies with the issue discussed or emerged from it, and demarcates itself from the others.

Hypothesis 3 (Policy Core Belief Trigger Hypothesis): Independent of context, policy core beliefs trigger the salience of specific worldviews and party identification. An

adequate measurement of deep normative core beliefs therefore strongly depends on the policy subsystem.

Summarizing the hypotheses, our aim is to test both cultural theory and partisanship as mutually alternative or complementary measures of deep normative core beliefs. We test whether they are suitable to operationalize deep normative core beliefs by assessing their explanatory power for policy core beliefs. This is done against the backdrop of the assumption that deep normative core beliefs predict policy core beliefs. Therefore, deep normative core beliefs are both operationalized via partisanship and cultural theory in the paper, and their correlation with policy core beliefs is assessed. In addition, we test whether this is dependent on context, which includes both the national and policy context.

Methodology

Testing these hypotheses requires data from multiple countries on multiple policy areas, partisanship, and cultural worldviews. The European Social Survey (ESS) is a biannual representative survey that collects data on individual characteristics, attitudes, values, and preferences across selected European countries. From the most recently published round of 2016/2017, the 21 countries are chosen for testing the propositions of cultural theory nationally and comparatively with respect to its correlation with party identification, macrolevel influence, and policy core beliefs.¹ The countries chosen are sufficiently different with respect to institutional and cultural differences to ensure generalizability of the findings: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia.

Policy core beliefs are measured via questions on policy preferences regarding immigration policy, climate policy, social policy, and foreign policy. Respondents were asked whether their country is made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries, how much of the electricity used in your country should be generated by nuclear power, whether they are against or in favor of a basic income scheme, and whether they think that European unification should go further. These four policy core beliefs can likewise be seen as belonging to distinct policy subsystems.

Partisanship in the ESS is operationalized via party closeness since questions inquiring the party voted for in the last general election brings with it the problem of strategic voting and time bias, given that the partisan identification might have changed since the last election. A strong subjective party identification in the sense of feeling belonging to it is hypothesized to be comparable to a firm belief (Searing et al. 1973). Given this comparison, and following previous research on party identification (Dalton and Weldon 2007), the indicator of party closeness is used in the analysis. Responses of “other”/“no party”/“blank sheet” were coded as missing. This results in partly low sample sizes and a challenge to the interpretation of the regression analyses separated by country, which must be borne in mind.

For the national analyses, the parties are intendedly not assigned to party clusters, such as left-wing/right-wing or social democratic/conservative. Instead, the link between cultural worldviews, nation-specific party systems, and deep normative core beliefs as

well as their effect on policy core beliefs is tested separately in the selected countries. Thereby, it is possible to compare the single country models to get a first impression of how cultural views and party identification interrelate in different national contexts. This procedure also avoids loss of information and concept invalidity. For the comparative analyses that include all countries in one model per policy core belief, the parties are clustered according to widely used categories, which are also represented by the political groups in the European Parliament (EP 2019): Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Conservatives, Liberals, Greens, Left-Wing, Populist (Nationalist/Freedom/Direct Democracy). The detailed operationalization is indicated in Table A1 of the appendix.

The ESS provides a set of questions to use for the operationalization of the four cultural worldviews in cultural theory as cultural identity. In wording, these are not identical with established and proven item questions. Nevertheless, there is one question per worldview that is closely related to the approved cultural theory questions, which is why this slight downside is compensated by the richness of the data and wide distribution across Europe that presents an added value. For the operationalization, the question that is most similar compared to the items previously used in the above cited empirical studies on cultural theory is used.² In detail, this is indicated in Table 1.

National Analyses: Cultural Worldviews vs. Partisan Identity as Deep Normative Core Beliefs

The analyses per country are designed to test the hypothesis that party identification and cultural worldviews are interrelated and, if there is evidence for this, to reveal whether the relation differs across countries. Additionally, when assuming partisanship and cultural worldviews as complementary indicators of deep normative core beliefs, regression analyses per country shed light on the circumstances under which one operationalization or the other is most valid. Following the operationalization of cultural worldviews that uses one item per worldview (see Table 1), these items are z-transformed and used as a scale of individualism, fatalism, hierarchism, and egalitarianism. The cultural variables then are checked separately per country for correlation with party identification by calculating chi² values and partial correlations where the respective worldview is assumed as the dependent variable that is influenced by party identification.

Table 1. Indicators of cultural worldviews

Individualism	Fatalism	Hierarchy	Egalitarianism
It is important to make one's own decisions about what one does. People should be free and not depend on others.	And how much would you say that the political system in your country allows people like you to have an influence on politics?	People should do what they're told. People should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.	For a society to be fair, differences in people's standard of living should be small.

Source: Questions taken from original ESS (round 2016/2017).

Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

Cross-checking the correlation between, on the one side, each cultural worldview and, on the other side, partisanship as feeling close to a specific party brings about interesting results. Table A2 in the appendix delineates in which countries there is a significant partial correlation between cultural worldviews and partisanship, i.e. which party uniquely correlates with a certain worldview. In each partial correlation matrix, the largest (in terms of supporters) national party belonging to the European People's Party (EPP) is taken as reference category, because it is the only EP's parliamentary group that has representatives in every country. Hence, all partial correlations refer to the baseline category of the respective national party that is part of the EPP. When interpreting the results of the chi2 test and partial correlation, it is first necessary to say that they are sometimes inconsistent in a way that a significant chi2 test does not lead to significant results when calculating partial correlations (e.g. individualism in Estonia) and vice versa (e.g. individualism in Spain). This mainly results from differences in calculating the bivariate figures and the fact that a reference category is needed for partial correlation. Thus, the figures have to be interpreted against this backdrop but present a contribution to the overall argument developed in this article, just as the other analyses are pieces to this overall puzzle.

In short, there are countries in which cultural worldviews are strongly related to partisanship and in which the different worldviews are also taken up by the multiple facets of party system. This is the case in Sweden and Lithuania, and partly also in Ireland and Switzerland, where only one party correlates twice with a worldview. Here, partisanship could well serve as an alternative measurement for cultural worldviews in these countries.

In some countries, there is a strong correlation between some political parties and cultural worldviews, but the political parties are not singularly tied to one cultural worldview. For example, in Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands, every cultural worldview is correlated significantly with (almost) the same parties. In contrast, other parties in these countries do not show any significant partial correlation (with the respective EPP party as baseline category) with any cultural worldview.

In other countries, only some cultural worldviews are significantly correlated with party identification but the others are not. In Norway and Finland, it seems that almost every national party shows a significant correlation (compared to the baseline of the respective EPP party) with egalitarianism while the other worldviews are less represented. Egalitarianism also is a cultural worldview that is captured by many parties in Portugal, whereas the other worldviews are only related to one Portuguese party. This indicates that some countries seem to reflect specific cultural variables in comparison to other countries, which makes it necessary to control for the influence of the country when assessing the linkage between beliefs, partisanship, and cultural variables. In Poland, only two parties, Law and Justice (with individualism and fatalism) and KORWIN (with hierarchy and egalitarianism), significantly correlate with cultural worldviews. Most visibly also in Hungary and Slovenia, partisanship and cultural variables seem to be distinct concepts.

With regard to the Partisanship Replacement Hypothesis and the Partisanship Supplement Hypothesis, we thus find strong support for both of them depending on the national context. This also presents the first empirical evidence that the country

moderation hypothesis holds true. What is interesting to see beyond this finding is that some countries show evidence that cultural worldviews are not as separated as theory suggests but that cultural worldviews are interdependent. Furthermore, there is not one cultural worldview that has a strong correlation with partisanship while the others do not show this correlation. For example, in Belgium, the partial correlations of each worldview also show significant correlations with at least one other worldview. This again supports the argument that it is strongly country-dependent how cultural worldviews and partisanship can be used in ACF research.

Inferential Statistics

To assess in detail what better explains policy core beliefs in each country, and therefore serves as adequate indicator of deep normative core beliefs, four regression analyses are conducted per country, summing up to a total of 80 regression models. Table A3 in the appendix depicts in detail these results of an ordinary least square linear regression per country. It lists only the *significant effects* that cultural worldviews (individualism, fatalism, hierarchy, egalitarianism) and partisanship have on the four policy core beliefs “nuclear energy”, “immigration”, “basic income”, and “EU unification”. Household income, religion, gender, and job situation serve as demographic control variables which might be representatives of original party cleavages. When running the regressions, some countries fall out because the combination of variables leads to a small N so that a reliable interpretation of the values is not possible. However, the results for a large part of the sample indicate that both cultural theory and partisanship contribute to the explanation of variance in policy core beliefs. Table 2 serves as a simplified overview on the national context and policy subsystem under which either partisanship or cultural worldviews or both significantly explain policy core beliefs.

The low sample sizes partly stem from the inclusion of control variables and from the operationalization of partisanship as “closeness to party”. Leaving the control variables outside the models and including only partisanship and cultural worldviews leads to a decrease in R^2 /adjusted R^2 by approximately two-thirds. Most models then show an R^2 of around 0.20. The effects remain also for higher sample sizes. This supports the interpretation of results below.

Firstly, the results show that the contribution of party identification and cultural worldviews as explanatory factors of the variance in policy core beliefs differs depending on countries. In parliamentary systems like Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, partisanship exerts significant influence on at least three if not all policy core beliefs while cultural worldviews are barely relevant. Cultural worldviews seem to be relevant only in specific policy areas, mostly in immigration policy. In Poland and France, neither parties nor cultural worldviews contribute widely to the explanation of policy core beliefs. In Ireland, cultural worldviews serve better in explaining policy core beliefs than parties. Partisanship is a stable predictor of policy core beliefs in the two-party system of Great Britain. This again outlines the divergent importance of either partisanship or cultural worldviews on policy core beliefs depending on the national context. Furthermore, these results suggest the viability of our measurement since Ireland’s party system is not primarily based on the usual labor–capital cleavage but on an historical conflict, so that cultural worldviews are more suitable to explain

Table 2. Significant cultural worldviews and partisanship for policy core beliefs per country and policy subsystem

country	significant effects on nuclear energy policy core	significant effects on immigration policy core	significant effects on basic income policy core	significant effects on EU unification policy core
AT	FPÖ, individualism, egalitarianism	SPÖ, Grüne	fatalism	SPÖ, Grüne
BE	Vlaams Belang, CD&V, egalitarianism		N-VA, Open VLD	N-VA, Vlaams Belang, CDH
CH	Egalitarianism, Social Democratic Party			Swiss People's Party, egalitarianism
CZ		not enough observations		
DE	fatalism	Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen, FDP	Die Linke, Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen, individualism, fatalism, hierarchy	AfD, fatalism
EE				
ES	PSO, Podemos, individualism	IU	Podemos, fatalism, hierarchy	CDC
FI	The Centre Party, Green League	True Finns	True Finns, Christian Democrats	True Finns
FR			Front National	
GB	Green Party, individualism		Liberal Democrat, UKIP, fatalism	Labour Party
HU		not enough observations		
IE				individualism
IT		not enough observations		
LT	Electoral Action of Poles		Liberals' Movement, hierarchy, egalitarianism	
NL	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy			Party for Freedom
NO	egalitarianism	Progress Party, hierarchy	Progress Party, fatalism	The Party Red, Centre Party, Progress Party
PL				KORWIN, Law and Justice
PT		fatalism	PCP-PEV-CDU, PPV/ CDC	
SE	Folkpartiet liberalerna, Miljöpartiet de gröna, Socialdemokraterna			
SI		hierarchy	SMC; ZAAB, hierarchy, egalitarianism	

positioning in policy subsystems. The two major parties in Ireland promote similar policy positions. In contrast, the two-party system in Great Britain leads to strong party competition with strong differences regarding policies.

Secondly, the explanatory power of partisanship and cultural worldviews is divergent across policy core beliefs. Partisanship better explains the variance in opinions on EU unification while cultural worldviews are more pertinent to the context of immigration policy. These findings indicate that policy subsystems do not just trigger the salience of policy core beliefs but that depending on the situational importance of policy core beliefs, different deep normative core beliefs become relevant.

Regarding results per country, we can postulate that the correlation between partisanship and cultural worldviews, as well as their appropriateness as operationalization of deep normative core beliefs differs. At this point, there is first evidence as to which might be more important in certain countries compared to others and that a strong correlation between cultural worldviews and partisanship shows that partisanship is a reliable predictor for policy core beliefs but future studies are needed to gain more country-specific knowledge on this. As a next step to further assess the effect that the national affiliation of an individual has on their policy core belief and the effect of country affiliation, partisanship, and cultural worldviews on policy core beliefs overall, the following section leaves the path of separated analyses per country.

Overall Analysis: What Explains Policy Core Beliefs?

Regarding an overall European analysis, we are first interested again in the relation between partisanship and cultural worldviews as synonymous or alternative indicators for deep normative core beliefs. A second step analyzes whether cultural worldviews and/or cultural dimensions and/or partisanship have a *generalizable* impact on policy core beliefs.

Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

Figures A1 and A2 in the appendix show a graphical representation of the relationship between cultural worldviews by partisan families and across countries in Europe. Corresponding to the results gained from the separate country analyses in the previous sections, the results show that the mean values of individualism and fatalism differ less across party families than hierarchy and egalitarianism, which is in line with the observation that at least egalitarianism is more often interrelated with partisanship than individualism and fatalism. The fact that left-wing supporters are more egalitarian and right-wing supporters less so is a hint that the operationalization of cultural worldviews with the ESS question is viable.

Proceeding with the interest in revealing single effects of partisanship and cultural worldviews on policy core beliefs, four regression analyses are conducted, one for each policy core belief, with partisanship (according to European party families), cultural worldviews, country interaction effects for cultural worldview, and respective control variables as independent variables. Table 3 shows the results of regressing each policy core belief on the variables of interest.

Table 3. Regression results policy core beliefs across countries

	MI: nuclear pcb b/se	MI: basic income pcb b/se	MI: immigration pcb b/se	MI: EU unif. pcb b/se
R2/adj. R2	0.25/0.21	0.16/0.11	0.24/0.20	0.19/0.14
N/p	2,236/***	2,226/***	2,292/***	2,232/***
Party Identification (ref: European People's Party)				
Social democrats	-0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.05)	0.53*** (0.13)	0.64*** (0.16)
Liberals	0.23** (0.08)	-0.00 (0.07)	0.16 (0.17)	0.44* (0.22)
Conservatives	0.07 (1.11)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.55** (0.21)	-0.69** (0.26)
Left-wing	-0.23 (0.13)	0.23* (0.10)	0.98*** (0.24)	0.01 (0.31)
Greens	-0.30* (0.12)	0.18* (0.09)	1.02*** (0.24)	0.79** (0.29)
Right-wing populists	0.13 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.10)	-1.50*** (0.26)	-1.95*** (0.31)
EU-critical movements	-0.19 (0.26)	-0.17 (0.19)	0.33 (0.50)	-1.01 (0.64)
Cultural theory				
Individualism	0.06 (0.11)	0.12 (0.07)	0.08 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.23)
Fatalism	-0.12 (0.34)	-0.56 (0.23)	-2.30*** (0.60)	-3.05*** (0.75)
Hierarchy	-0.05 (0.13)	-0.00 (0.09)	-0.43 (0.24)	-0.51 (0.29)
Egalitarianism	0.00 (0.13)	0.14 (0.09)	0.44 (0.23)	0.32 (0.29)
Country (ref: AT)				
BE	0.67 (0.64)	-0.62 (0.44)	-2.47* (1.13)	-4.03** (1.41)
CH	0.06 (0.67)	-1.35** (0.47)	-2.42* (1.21)	-5.13*** (1.50)
CZ	-0.03 (1.60)	-0.06 (1.15)	1.14 (3.01)	-7.88* (3.73)
DE	-0.17 (0.58)	-0.59 (0.40)	-0.63 (1.03)	-1.47 (1.28)
EE	-0.26 (0.84)	-0.75 (0.62)	-1.51 (1.54)	-2.88 (1.92)
ES	1.51* (0.63)	-0.09 (0.44)	-1.11 (1.12)	-2.35 (1.41)
FI	1.61* (0.81)	-0.43 (0.58)	-0.54 (1.49)	-3.91* (1.85)
FR	0.35 (0.95)	-0.71 (0.74)	-0.18 (1.74)	-2.04 (2.16)
GB	1.16 (0.72)	-0.92 (0.51)	1.78 (1.30)	-4.79** (1.64)
HU	3.18 (2.05)	-0.68 (1.32)	6.83* (3.45)	-1.04 (4.28)
IE	-0.53 (0.84)	-0.44 (0.61)	2.10 (1.54)	-0.46 (1.98)
IT	5.21 (2.98)	2.75 (1.41)	1.39 (3.62)	-7.42 (4.14)

(continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

	M1: nuclear pcb b/se	M1: basic income pcb b/se	M1: immigration pcb b/se	M1: EU unif. pcb b/se
Country (ref: AT)				
LT	0.96 (0.72)	0.45 (0.51)	-1.19 (1.28)	-5.10*** (1.60)
NL	0.81 (0.82)	-0.65 (0.58)	-0.38 (1.53)	-2.57 (1.85)
NO	0.20 (0.59)	-0.80 (0.41)	-0.57 (1.05)	-4.31*** (1.31)
PL	0.94 (0.66)	-0.71 (0.46)	-1.53 (1.19)	-4.14** (1.46)
PT	0.43 (0.66)	-0.24 (0.44)	0.58 (1.13)	-3.36* (1.42)
SE	0.20 (0.80)	-1.21 (0.57)	0.04 (1.47)	-5.41** (1.95)
SI	1.17 (0.64)	-0.24 (0.44)	-1.49 (1.14)	-3.47* (1.43)
Interaction effects of countries and cultural worldviews (only significant effects reported)				
Individualism	HU: -0.95* (0.38)	LT: -0.22* (0.10) SE: -0.27* (0.13)	CZ: -1.18* (0.56)	
Fatalism		BE: 2.12** (0.72) CH: 2.49** (0.80) ES: 1.49* (0.70) PL: 1.99** (0.72)	BE: 1.89*** (0.74) CH: 2.12*** (0.83) PL: 1.72*** (0.75)	BE: 3.28*** (0.89) CH: 4.55*** (0.99) CZ: 5.09** (0.99) DE: 2.09* (0.82) EE: 2.53* (1.19) ES: 3.04*** (0.87) FI: 2.76* (1.27) GB: 3.32** (1.07) IT: 4.91* (2.39) LT: 4.62*** (0.97) NL: 2.66* (1.11) NO: 3.50*** (0.89) PL: 3.38*** (0.89) PT: 3.50*** (0.89) SE: 4.31** (1.45) SI: 3.56*** (0.88) BE: 0.94** (0.35) PT: 0.95** (0.35)
Hierarchy	LT: 0.37* (0.18)			

(continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

	MI: nuclear pcb b/se	MI: basic income pcb b/se	MI: immigration pcb b/se	MI: EU unif. pcb b/se
Interaction effects of countries and cultural worldviews (only significant effects reported)				
Egalitarianism		CZ: -1.24** (0.41) EE: -1.01* (0.40) ES: -0.54* (0.27) IE: -0.71* (0.34) PL: -0.55* (0.28) SI: -0.57* (0.26)	CZ: -1.44*** (0.46) EE: -0.98*** (0.41) SI: -0.56*** (0.26)	FR: -1.58*** (0.49) SI: -0.64* (0.32)

(for reasons of space, the effects of control variables are left out of the table; effect sizes are standardized beta values).

The interpretation of these final models starts from the independent variables. Partisanship has a strong effect and explanatory power for immigration policy beliefs and EU integration policy beliefs. In detail, this means that compared to supporters of EPP parties, being a supporter of a social democratic party on average changes the approval towards immigration by 0.53 points on the scale, and by 0.64 on the scale of favoring EU unification. Compared to supporters of the EPP parties, supporters of right-wing populist parties' positioning are 1.95 units lower on the approval scale for EU unification.

Fatalism is the only significant cultural worldview across countries contributing to the opinion regarding immigration and EU unification policy. This might be due to the strong correlations of the other worldviews with partisanship (see Table A1), so that the effects are better captured by a partisan–country interaction. Running the same models with an additional interaction effect of partisanship and country results in significant interaction effects across party families, but particularly for Conservatives and right-wing populists. The effects, however, are hardly interpretable due to the low degrees of freedom, and therefore not reported here. Looking at the interaction effects of countries and worldviews, it becomes visible that the fatalist worldview is also highly significant in interaction with several country contexts. Fatalists are on average less in favor of immigration although in Belgium, Switzerland, and Poland, this effect is weakened in the other direction. In sum, the great number of significant interaction effects of country and cultural worldviews emphasizes that national specificities heavily moderate the effect that cultural worldviews have on policy core beliefs, and that partisanship has an independent effect.

The policy core beliefs of basic income and nuclear energy are not captured by cultural worldviews or strong partisanship, although regarding the latter, belonging to a green party significantly lowers the support for nuclear energy and increases the support for basic income. In the case of basic income, the national context significantly moderates the effect that cultural worldviews have on this policy core belief, outlining that individualism, fatalism, and egalitarianism can be considered as deep normative core belief measures in some countries but not in others. It is at first sight surprising that egalitarianism in some countries leads to a diminishing preference for basic income. This indicates that the interpretation and consequences of certain worldviews are also dependent on the national context. In some countries, basic income seems to be subject to party competition. This finding provides evidence for the fact that it might be taken up as an issue by a certain party and while this party engages with the issue, others stay away from it.

To sum up, the results show that depending on the country and depending on the policy core belief, different cultural worldviews and different party affiliations are significantly explaining policy core beliefs and therefore serve as an indicator for deep normative core beliefs. Thus, all hypotheses can be confirmed. When interpreting the partisan and country effects, it is important to reflect upon the reference category to which the indicated effects relate. The significance therefore is in relation to the baseline of identifying with the European People's Party and living in Austria (and the combination of both for interaction effects). Running the models with different reference categories results in different significance and strength of effects, although the general argument presented in this article remains stable.

Conclusion

The main research interest of this contribution was to advance ACF research by revealing the link between cultural theory, partisanship, and deep normative core beliefs to provide new insights on the operationalization of the latter in order to explain policy core beliefs. In doing so, separate country analyses and overall cross-national analyses have revealed the different and divergent effects of cultural worldviews and partisanship on the policy core beliefs of nuclear energy, immigration, basic income scheme, and EU unification, controlled also for the moderation of country. Previously, separate country analyses tested the relation between cultural worldviews and partisanship in different national contexts.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b on the interrelation of partisanship and cultural worldviews can be partly confirmed. In some countries, cultural worldviews overlap with party identification in the sense that certain parties take up the cultural worldviews, making party identification a valid replacement of the operationalization of deep normative core beliefs. This is, for instance, the case for Sweden and Lithuania, where it may present a simplification of research on deep normative core beliefs. In other countries, partisanship is unrelated to cultural worldviews, for example Slovenia. In these cases, however, partisanship should not be neglected as an additional measurement of deep normative core beliefs, as regression analyses per country provide evidence for the coexistent importance of cultural worldviews and partisanship to explain policy core beliefs, which also varies with the policy subsystem.

The results on Hypotheses 1a and 1b likewise confirm Hypothesis 2, that the link between cultural worldviews and partisanship depends on the country and cannot be generalized easily. Although the relation between partisanship and cultural worldviews differs depending on the national context, individual alignment on cultural worldviews apparently also differs within countries in such a way that it contributes to the explanation of variance in policy core beliefs. Cultural worldviews are therefore suitable to use as explanatory factors in both national and internationally comparative studies.

Finally, an overall regression analysis of policy core beliefs indicates that the effect and relevance of partisanship and cultural worldviews is highly dependent on the policy at hand, which confirms Hypothesis 3. This finding is relevant to ACF research as deep normative core beliefs, for which both concepts present ways of operationalization, have been described as being much more universal and holistic than policy core beliefs. The presented analyses provide evidence for the postulation that deep normative core beliefs can be measured differently and with varying reliability depending on the context. Based on these results, we suggest partisanship and cultural worldviews should be taken into account as potential indicators for deep normative core beliefs in future studies to shed further light on the circumstances (policy core beliefs) under which one or the other, or both, are relevant.

Besides these insights, there are some important limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results. The database is secondary, which leaves us with the challenge of an adequate operationalization of partisanship, cultural worldviews, and core beliefs depending on what the database presents as variables. Especially cultural theorists usually work with established questionnaires that capture the grid/group dimensions and scales that also include the support or rejection of worldview, as Olli (2012) does. In view of the already high complexity of this study

and the limited availability of data, we chose to stick with the single-item questions to approximate cultural worldviews. This decision does not touch upon the correlation between partisanship and policy core beliefs. However, future research is strongly encouraged to confirm or modify these results with different methods of operationalization and testing.

To sum up the results in view of future ACF research, we have shown that the measurement of deep normative core beliefs is more complex than originally described and that in line with current research on how to best operationalize deep normative core beliefs, it is important to take into account both cultural theory and partisanship. In any case, the role of context must be reflected when choosing how to assess deep normative core beliefs. While there is evidence that in two-party systems like Great Britain and the USA partisanship is a less suitable indicator of deep normative core beliefs than cultural worldviews, research on more pluralistic countries with a great importance of party competition (e.g. Sweden, partly Spain, Netherlands, Germany) seems to profit from the consideration of partisanship as an alternative or additional indicator. Especially when the policy core beliefs of interest have been subject to the emergence of new parties, such as is the case for many anti-EU parties, partisanship is a crucial factor in explaining policy core beliefs. To conclude, this article is a first step in the attempt to shed light on the interrelation between partisanship, cultural worldviews, and core beliefs, yet future research with large comparable data and the approved operationalization of cultural worldviews is needed to reveal in detail the mechanisms between the three in different countries and policy subsystems.

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Supplemental Data

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Notes

1. The ESS provides a representative sample of a country's population and therefore does not only include elites, for which the ACF is originally designed. Because deep normative core beliefs are theoretically independent of policy subsystems, it is argued that the results of this study – if approving the proposed relationship – demonstrate a harder empirical verification, as Ripberger et al. (2014) also argued for their study. This is all the more the case given the limited citizens' knowledge of policies (Jensen and Zohlnhöfer 2020).
2. Established measures of cultural theory are found in Johnson et al. (2020) They include the following single-item questions: Individualism: Even if some people are at a disadvantage, it is best for society to let people succeed or fail on their own. Fatalism: No matter how hard we try, the course of our lives is largely determined by forces beyond our control. Hierarchy: Society would be much better off if the people in charge imposed strict and swift punishment on those who break the rules. Egalitarianism: What society needs is a fairness revolution to make the distribution of goods more equal. Furthermore, Swedlow et al. (2020, p. 2332) show that even approximate measures of cultural dimensions can be used to predict attitudes and behaviors that CT hypothesizes.

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