

## ***Progressive Path-Dependency?***

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**Abstract:** Path-dependency is typically associated with a “lock-in” which is suboptimal. The sub-optimality of this “lock-in” is often attributed to a degree of ceremonial encapsulation, eroding instrumentality, whereby network effects, technical and/or behavioral, create a state of irreversibility. However, all new ideas and technologies are ceremonially encapsulated to a degree, as they are socially embedded. Yet when the term path-dependency is invoked it often has a negative connotation, implying only a purely instrumental outcome, one of no ceremonial encapsulation, is the objective. This implies ceremonial habits of thought are merely there to be overcome. Yet ceremonial habits of thought are ever-present, thus, this article theorizes progressive institutional adjustment, while considering how we can account for ceremonial habits of thought as more than a barrier but something to be utilized to achieve implementation. By using rhetoric as a tool we can play into ceremonial habits of thought, weaving policy through the ceremonial net to implementation, where its instrumentality can be revealed, and a lock-in can form as constituents become accustomed to the material benefits provided. It is here where a progressive path-dependency is formed.

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*Behavior norms should not be condemned to the outer darkness because they are eternally more or less obsolescent. Behavior norms are necessary if we are to have some degree of order and predictability in society instead of chaos...It is not useful categorically to stigmatize all institutions and their associated behavior norms as merely ceremonial, imbecile, useless, and bad, and to conclude that they should be abolished.*

*(Gordon 1984, 370)*

### ***Introduction***

Path-dependency is typically associated with a “lock-in” which is suboptimal. The sub-optimality of this “lock-in” is often attributed to a degree of ceremonial encapsulation, eroding instrumentality, whereby network effects, technical and/or behavioral, create a state of irreversibility. However, all new ideas and technologies are ceremonially encapsulated to a degree, as they are socially embedded. Yet when the term path-dependency is invoked it often has a negative connotation, implying only a purely instrumental outcome, one of no ceremonial encapsulation, is the objective.

The pursuit of instrumental value in society through institutional adjustment stems from those following in the work of Clarence Ayres, specifically John Fagg Foster, Marc Tool, and Paul

Dale Bush. The pursuit of progressive economic policy directed toward increasing instrumentality led Wendell Gordon (1984) and Anne Mayhew (1987; 2001) to push back on this research program, reasserting the need for the role of culture in the analysis, beyond simply viewing all ceremonial institutions as “imbecile”. These concerns have been taken up and countered in the literature (See: Bush 1989, 1994; Stanfield 1992); however, it seems this debate is still unsettled.

This article acts as the initial step in building a bridge between these two camps, within original institutional economics, theorizing how we can pursue progressive economic policy while still systematically accounting for the role of culture and ceremonial institutions, beyond seeing them as simply “imbecile” or something to be overcome. In doing so this article, begins by highlighting how path-dependencies should not be seen as special circumstances, but aspects in the larger process of cumulative causation, divorcing it of a positive or negative connotation. This facilitates recognition that all change is ceremonially embedded to a degree and must be to be consistent with the principle of minimal dislocation.

After recognizing this, the implications are considered on implementing progressive economic policy. To account for culture and ceremonial habits of thought systematically in this endeavor, it is argued that institutionalist should not be primarily concerned with trying to change ceremonial habits of thought to instrumental habits of thought to get policy implemented, as this is likely to cause cognitive dissonance and no change; rather, the goal needs to be to account for these habits of thought and use the rhetoric of rights and reciprocity to weave economic policy through the ceremonial net to implementation. After achieving implementation, the instrumentality of the policy will begin to reveal itself through its material effects, whereby the ceremonial behaviors and habits of thought begin to be replaced by instrument behaviors and habits of thought. This revealed instrumentality and the shift in value structure can then create a behavioral lock-in whereby undoing said economic policy will become difficult. This is a state of progressive path-dependency.

The article is organized as follows, the first section lays out Paul David’s (1985) definition of path-dependency while couching it into the original institutionalist approach, specifically, by placing it in relation to the process of cumulative causation. By couching it in the larger evolutionary process, the concept of path-dependency becomes destigmatized, as well as the ceremonial encapsulation involved. The next section considers the implications of these insights on implementing progressive economic policy, arguing we need to avoid invoking cognitive dissonance and utilize rhetoric to weave policy through the ceremonial net to implementation. The article concludes, discussing revealed instrumentality and its ability to create a progressive path-dependency.

### ***Path-Dependency, Cumulative Causation, and Ceremonial Encapsulation***

The concept of path-dependency is often associated with David’s article, “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY”. Analyzing the QWERTY keyboard and its origins, David (1985) highlighted the historical contingencies that led to why we use this keyboard configuration as opposed to other keyboard arrangements deemed more efficient, such as the Dvorak Simplified

Keyboard (DSK). David's (1985) contribution lies in demonstrating that history and its contingencies matter, overriding profit maximization and efficiency maximization tendencies associated with the market by orthodox economics, leading to outcomes orthodox models cannot explain.

In defining path-dependency, David states, "A *path-dependent* sequence of economic changes is one of which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including happenings dominated by chance elements rather than systematic forces" (1985, 332); highlighting that our behavior is, "...held fast in the grip of events long forgotten and shaped by circumstances in which neither they nor their interests figured" (David 1985, 333). These contingencies set us on a path of action we become locked into due to three factors, "...*technical interrelatedness, economies of scale, and quasi-irreversibility of investment*" (David 1985, 334). David emphasizes technological and pecuniary incentives animating this path-dependency, while also highlighting, in the latter part of the paper, the role of "irreversibility due to learning and habituation," where he does give brief reference to Thorstein Veblen.

Now these concepts are not new to original institutionalists, however, our focus tends to be more on "irreversibility due to learning and habituation"<sup>1</sup>. As original institutionalists we recognize, "all aspects of any socioeconomic system are subject to a process of cumulative and path-dependent change that results from changes in technology and from the socioeconomic conflict that changes in technology cause" (Mayhew 2018, 6). All institutions<sup>2</sup>, with staying power, take the form of path-dependencies in the process of cumulative causation. As Veblen states:

The growth of culture is a cumulative sequence of habituation, and the ways and means of it are the habitual response of human nature to exigencies that vary incontinently, cumulatively, but with something of a consistent sequence in the cumulative variations that so go forward—incontinently, because each new move creates a new situation which induces a further new variation in the habitual manner of response; cumulatively, because each new situation is a variation of what has gone before it and embodies as causal factors all that has been effected by what went before; consistently, because the underlying traits of human nature (propensities, aptitudes, and what not) by force of which the response takes place, and on the ground of which the habituation takes effect, remain substantially unchanged. (1909, 628)

As habit creatures, phenomena that influence behavior forming a habit will have staying power due to the nature of habituation. Habits can be seen as a number of path-dependencies forming a constellation which animates action. Cumulative causation is typically used as a broader term,

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<sup>1</sup> Revisiting David's (1985) article, Barnes, Gartland, and Stack (2004) and Hall, Lacasa, and Günther (2011) analyze the phenomenon through an institutionalist lens, arguing the focus needs to be on the habitual factors, while elucidating how an institutionalist lens provides a more comprehensive understanding.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of institutions this paper is using is Veblen's, defining them as, "settled habits of thought common to the generality of men" (1909, 626).

sometimes separate from path-dependency, however, cumulative causation in the broadest sense is an interlocking of many path-dependencies<sup>3</sup>.

It is our goal to study these process, as Veblen stated, "...evolutionary economics must be the theory of a process of cultural growth as determined by the economic interest, a theory of a cumulative sequence of economic institutions stated in terms of the process itself...to trace the cumulative working out of the economic interest in the cultural sequence" (Veblen 1898, 393-394). Given this is our goal, it is interesting that when the term path-dependency is invoked it often has a negative connotation, due to the sub-optimality implied. This sub-optimality, is attributed to a degree of ceremonial encapsulation, eroding instrumentality, whereby network effects, technical and/or behavioral, create a state of irreversibility. However, all new ideas and technologies have a degree of ceremonial encapsulation due to all phenomena being socially embedded.

The association of path-dependency with a degree of sub-optimality seems to too strong of a criteria to deem a change sub-optimal or not progressive. The definition of progressive institutional change is often attributed to Tool, as change that facilitates, "...the continuity of human life and the noninvidious re-creation of community through the instrumental use of knowledge" (1979, 293). The use of the word *continuity* in this quote harkens back to the work of Foster's principles of institutional adjustment, specifically the third principle of minimal dislocation. Minimal dislocation for Foster meant that, "All institutional modifications must be capable of being incorporated into the remainder of the institutional structure," which implies both ceremonial and instrumental aspects of the institutional structure (1981, 933).

There are two factors of the principle of minimal dislocation. The first regards unintended consequences, trying to minimize new changes from undoing already instrumental institutions; adjustments, in Foster's words, "...must do no violence to the factors not considered problematic" (1981, 934). The second recognizes that given we are habit creatures, we cannot do what we do not know how to do, thus revolution is ontologically inconsistent with an evolutionary ontology. This means we have to be able to incorporate new changes into existing habits of thought, as Mayhew states, "There is no way to 'wipe the slate clean' and start again with completely new institutions" (2018, 7). In other words, we must account for current habits of thought in creating change.

From this perspective ceremonial encapsulation is inevitable. If we adhere to the principles of institutional adjustment, specifically the principle of minimal dislocation, in attempting progressive institutional change, then there must be a degree of ceremonial encapsulation, whereby the change is incorporated into current habits of thought. However, this does not mean progressive institutional change is not feasible. As Bush argues, "Institutional change takes the form of a change in the value structure of the institution. A change in the value structure may be

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<sup>3</sup> The line between cumulative causation and path-dependency is unclear in the literature. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, sometimes path-dependencies are characterized, implicitly, as a subset of cumulative causation, sometimes path-dependency is used more when discussing the introduction of technologies and the contingencies that affect the chosen technologies, but not associated with societal institutions themselves. There is not space here, but there is a need to clearly elucidate the relation of these two concepts in institutional thought.

measured theoretically by a change in the institution's index of ceremonial dominance" (1987, 1099). Therefore, the goal is to mitigate the degree of ceremonial dominance. The lessening of the degree of ceremonial dominance is what Bush identifies as progressive, stating, "Progressive institutional change occurs when, *for a given fund of knowledge*, ceremonial patterns of behavior are displaced by instrumental patterns of behavior" (1987, 1101).

The path-dependency literature focuses on new technologies and the contingencies that influence their implementation. Institutionalists, focus on how these new technologies affect the value structure, advocating and laying out the process whereby these new introductions can lead to progressive change. Bush lays out two phases to institutional change, the first phase does not lead to a change in value structure, but regards the introduction of the new technology; the second phase is when the change in value structure begins, and increasing instrumentality requires that the value structure change, whereby ceremonial behaviors are replaced by instrumental behaviors, thus decreasing the index of ceremonial dominance; however, the index of ceremonial dominance at the time of implementation will influence how progressive the change can be (1994, 652).

What does this mean when thinking about progressive economic policy? Policy is different from technology, insofar as it requires majoritarian support, in a democratic institutional context, for implementation, and it requires a degree of legitimation for that policy not be overturned in the next political cycle. Technologies, do not necessarily run up against these constraints, as there is no votes before technological advancements are made, and once invented, they do not require legitimation to exist, they just do. Therefore, the phase one of institutional change for progressive policy requires a mitigation of the index of ceremonial dominance along with a garnering of majoritarian support if the policy is going to be implemented through non-authoritarian means. This leads many to think that the first step toward progressive institutional change is to undo the ceremonial habits of thought, thereby revealing the instrumentality to the majority, which will then lead to implementation.

### ***Weaving the Ceremonial Net: The Use of Rhetoric***

However, when thinking about progressive economic policy we do not need to start by trying to change habits of thoughts, replacing ceremonial with instrumental<sup>4</sup>. Once we recognize all change is ceremonial encapsulated to a degree, and pure-instrumentality, a state of no ceremonial encapsulation, is too strong of a criterion and not realistic, then we must consider how we can co-opt ceremonial habits of thought to facilitate progressive institutional change, while adhering to Foster's principles of institutional adjustment, specifically, the principle of minimal dislocation. The goal is to use rhetoric to move ideas which are instrumentally feasible and ceremonially non-feasible, to ceremonially feasible.

Now one might counter, by arguing the first barrier to progressive institutional change is vested interest, but as Bush points out, "of equal importance is the resistance of the community at large to changes in habitual modes of thought and behavior" (1989, 456). By accounting for the

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<sup>4</sup> This does not mean we should not continually try to replace ceremonial habits of thought with instrumental, if I believed this I would not be an educator, however, when advocating policy we should not start here.

communities habits of thought first, we can garner grass roots support, which is the ultimate tool against vested interest in a democratic context.

Again the goal of progressive economic policy should be those that provide for, "...the continuity of human life and the noninvidious re-creation of community through the instrumental use of knowledge," which will ultimately lead to the replacing of ceremonial behaviors with instrumental behaviors. To do this we have get the policy implemented. Therefore, we should not start by trying to change current habits of thought, ceremonial or instrumental, rather we need to think about how we can co-opt the current habits of thought in implementing change<sup>5</sup>.

If our first goal is to change habits of thought before policy is implemented then we would be violating Foster's principle of minimal dislocation. A key aspects of the second factor of minimal dislocation, implies that in attempting to shape and create change we need to avoid cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when the exposure of ceremonial habits of thoughts, leads the holder of those thoughts, at an individual or institutional level, to double-down on those habits of thought. *Cognitive dissonance is the midwife of the status quo*. If we start by trying to undo habits of thought, or by attacking certain aspects of culture we are likely to generate cognitive dissonance from the onset. Moreover, to start here would be to not recognize the functionality of habits of thought, both ceremonial and instrumental.

It is human nature to create myth structures (ceremonial habits of thought) to rationalize the arbitrariness of our world<sup>6</sup>. As Claude Lévi-Strauss argues in his first chapter of, *The Savage Mind*, myth (ceremonial reasoning) and science (instrumental reasoning) are different in kind, but similar in function, both ordering the constellation of phenomena we experience each day (1966, 13). They help to mitigate the tyranny of arbitrariness we encounter, facilitating action. Habits of thought (both ceremonial and instrumental) form a constellation of beliefs, which provide us with a level of, "ontological security"<sup>7</sup> needed to undertake action and provision. In other words, there is an instrumentality to ceremonial habits of thought<sup>8</sup>. Thus, in attempting to change habits of thought, we must be careful not to evoke cognitive dissonance, a psychological protection mechanism meant to maintain our "ontological security".

### *Rhetoric: Political Mobilization and Legitimation*

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<sup>5</sup> As Gordon argued, "The problem is how to rework eternally obsolescent behavior norms so that they better serve society's needs" (1984, 380).

<sup>6</sup> This is a time invariant aspect of human nature, the need to mitigate arbitrariness, as Pierre Boudieu stated, "Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness" (1977, 164). This naturalization is done through the formation of habits of thought, which are the foundation of the ontological and psychological security needed to undertake action.

<sup>7</sup> This term comes from Anthony Giddens' (1990) text, *The Consequences of Modernity*, developed to describe how, in modernity, habits of thought are formed to maintain a level of ontological and psychological security necessary for undertaking action.

<sup>8</sup> This is not a new idea. One of the main arguments of Emile Durkeim's (1995 [1912]) *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, is that religion plays an instrumental role in facilitating the group connections needed to provision. Bush also highlights this point, when discussing the Trobriander's Canoe building practices, specifically highlight the legitimating role of ceremonial habits of thought, ensuring continuity to the practice which was instrumental (1987, 1085).

The goal for progressive economic policy, then, is three-fold: garner majoritarian support, facilitate legitimation for the policy to give it staying power, and to decrease the index of ceremonial dominance. Current habits of thought can be co-opted toward this end. By using rhetoric as a tool, we can weave through the ceremonial net, or as Bush put it, “to slip through the ceremonial net” (1987, 1093). Instrumentality is lost when changes are instrumentally feasible, but ceremonially non-feasible. We can use rhetoric as a tool to move those possible policies from ceremonially non-feasible to ceremonially feasible<sup>9</sup>.

Rhetoric can be used to create majoritarian support, by reframing policies in a way that play into people’s current habits of thought. For policy to be implemented, we need tools for political mobilization, a space that has been under theorized in the institutionalist literature (Brown 1992, 15). Rhetoric can be this tool, specifically the rhetoric of rights and reciprocity. As Douglas Brown argues, rights discourse is the terrain of modern democratic politics, while recognizing the ceremonial underpinnings of this terrain (1992, 25). Even given their ceremonial underpinnings, we can use this discourse people are pre-reflexively wedded to, and thus predisposed to be sympathetic to, in an effort to promote rights of equal participation while “subordinating corporate profit-rights” (Brown 1992, 27). By meeting people through rhetoric on the field of discourse they are predisposed to, we have a higher probability of getting them to support a policy, rather than attacking their ceremonial habits of thought, likely to cause cognitive dissonance.

William Waller has made similar points on garnering support for instrumental policies by utilizing reciprocity rhetoric (1987; 1988;1989). Similar to Brown, Waller argues that people are wedded to the ceremonial idea of reciprocity, and often when they perceive a policy to be non-reciprocal they are likely to withdraw support (1987, 777). Therefore, we can frame policies, highlighting their reciprocal nature through reciprocity rhetoric. For example, a student in my class stated, “I didn’t need my stimulus check,” I responded with, “Sure, but the business you spent it at did”. This type of framing not only highlights the reciprocity embedded in the policy, but also facilitates a level of recognized interdependence, Foster’s second principle of institutional adjustment.

Rights and reciprocity rhetoric cannot only help to garner majoritarian support, while subverting cognitive dissonance, but can also help to create legitimacy for a policy. Legitimacy is necessary for any progressive economic policy, without it there is a threat said policy will be overturned in future political cycles. By couching policies, through the rhetoric of rights and reciprocity, within peoples’ habits of thought, there is a higher probability these policies will be seen as legitimate<sup>10</sup>. This is one of the instrumental aspects of ceremonial habits of thought, they are quintessential in the legitimation process, which is instrumental insofar as it facilitates continuity in human life. If we choose not to facilitate legitimacy for economic policies and divert to

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<sup>9</sup> This decreases the index of ceremonial dominance in the first instance. The second instance will come when instrumentality is revealed and instrumental behaviors begin to replace ceremonial behaviors.

<sup>10</sup> Waller (1988) conducts specific case studies of agricultural subsidies and veteran affairs benefits to highlight the role of reciprocity in facilitating legitimacy for these policies.

authoritarian means, then we are likely to have to continually resort to authoritarian means to keep that policy in place<sup>11</sup>.

By adhering to the ceremonial habits of thought, ceremonially encapsulating these policies, there is a loss of instrumentality<sup>12</sup>. For example, one of the concerns over welfare is the “welfare cheat”, a perceived violation of reciprocity, leading to large bureaucratic apparatuses searching for fraud that often does not exist (Waller 1987, 781). However, if we would not have adhered to these habits of thought would the policy have even been implemented? Recall, lost instrumentality lies in the set of policies instrumentally feasible but ceremonially non-feasible. By utilizing the rhetoric of rights and reciprocity, we can begin to move policies from ceremonially non-feasible to feasible, thus garnering majoritarian support, creating a sense of legitimacy around the policy, while decreasing the set of lost instrumentality, and thus the index of ceremonial dominance.

### *The Problem of Reification*

One problem this approach must address is that of reification. In other words, does playing into current habits of thought, especially ceremonial habits of thought, lead to the reification of insidious institutions such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism. Both Jennings (1992) and Peterson (1992) highlight the reification of patriarchy when governments have implemented welfare under paternalistic rhetoric. This is a real problem, however, there is no such thing as non-reifying action from an evolutionary ontology. All action is reifying to a degree, therefore, our goal must be to utilized habits of thought, such as rights and reciprocity discourse that can be used to facilitated instrumental policy, which leads to the, “noninvidious recreation of community” (Tool 1979, 293). The ultimate goal being to implement the policy to create space for the material benefits of that policy to reveal its instrumentality, leading to the replacement of ceremonial behavior with instrumental behavior over time.

### *Revealed Instrumentality: A Progressive Path-Dependency*

Once a policy does become implemented its instrumental and material benefits will begin to be realized. As the effects of the policy begin to be felt by the larger public, the instrumentality of the policy should be revealed. Then the support once animated by ceremonial habits of thought can be replaced by instrumental habits of thought. This is consistent with Bush’s phases of institutional adjustment: phase one, no change to value structure, using rhetoric to play into habits of thought; phase two, value structures begin to shift, whereby support once founded on ceremonial habits of thought is replaced by support on instrumental grounds.

The progressive economic policy, “changes the objective circumstance of the community; the new set of circumstance alter habits of thoughts and behavior, these habits of thought and behavior are projected into other areas of the community’s experience, giving rise to further

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<sup>11</sup> This is a major points of Brown (1992), specifically he addresses this in the context of Lenin style Vanguardism, arguing the use of authoritarian means, without garnering legitimacy, is likely to lead to a continual reliance on authoritarian means to keep the change in place, ultimately undermining democratic institutions.

<sup>12</sup> Waller highlights the role of ceremonial habits of thought in mitigating instrumental use of fiscal policy in a number of articles (1987; 1988; 1989; 2014; 2015).



innovations...” (Bush 1987, 1102). This is a state of progressive path-dependency, where the new policy forms a behavioral lock-in over time, while developing expectations from constituents to maintain that material benefit. As William Barnes, Myles Gartland, and Martain Stack point out, quoting Paul Pierson, “institutions frequently provide incentives that encourage individuals to act in ways that lock in a particular path of policy development creating societal commitments that may be quite difficult to reverse” (2004, 373). Now this path may be sub-optimal as it is ceremonially encapsulated to a degree, but all innovations are ceremonially encapsulated, moreover, if this ceremonially encapsulation facilitates legitimation, this could be seen as an advantage. The key is that over time, as instrumentality is revealed, ceremonial behaviors and habits of thought become replaced by instrumental, which is the definition of progressive institutional change (see: Bush 1989).

In thinking in a contemporary context, a policy like the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the material benefits it created, have been so difficult to reverse due to a progressive path-dependence. It has been eroded since its implementation, however, it is difficult to argue going back to where the United States was before its implementation is more instrumental for its citizens. Moreover, there has been a revealed instrumentality, facilitating a larger conversation about universal healthcare, not thought possible at the inception of the ACA<sup>13</sup>. When the next recession comes, will people expect and/or demand direct stimulus checks, due to how effective the policy was in propping up aggregate demand? If a job guarantee were implemented hiring all those unemployed, but ready, willing, and able to work, would politicians likely be able to overturn the policy leaving millions again unemployed? Can we play into current habits of thought to implement progressive policy which will become lock-in over time? This article argues yes on these fronts.

Now there may be a response that what has been argued is conservative or reformist, but it is not these arguments that are conservative, society is made up of both conservative and dynamic elements: we must account for both. We are habit creatures, change must be incremental and take time: this is an ontological fact. Given the state of reality, this article articulates a method of policy implementation, recognizing the real constraints of ceremonial habits of thought, rather than seeing them as something to be done away with. The alternative is to demand pure-instrumentality, revolution, abolition, all approaches likely to garner cognitive dissonance, thus yielding no change. A radical theory must yield change, as Marx said, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however is to change it” (1978 [1888], 145).

## ***Conclusion***

This article has approached the idea of progressive institutional change through a policy lens with specific focus as to how we can account for and co-opt culture and ceremonial habits of thought through the use of rhetoric to garner majoritarian support and legitimacy for progressive

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<sup>13</sup> A Gallup poll asking the question, “Which of the following approaches for providing healthcare in the United States would you prefer—[ROTATED: a government-run healthcare system (or) a system based mostly on private health insurance]?, found support for a government-run healthcare system move from 35% in November 2010 to 42% in November 2020 (Gallup 2021).

economic policy. In doing so this article begins to bridge the gap between the Ayres-Foster-Tool-Bush camp of instrumental institutional change and the Gordon-Mayhew camp emphasizing the role of culture and ceremonial habits of thought, beyond just “imbecile” institutions to be overcome. Culture and ceremonial habits of thought are a real constraint to action, not to be seen as something to remove, but to be accounted for and adapted to. Culture and ceremonial habits of thought is what separates humans from the atomistic calculators of neoclassical economics and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. By accounting for culture and utilizing the rhetoric of rights and reciprocity, we are able to implement progressive economic policy, which will then be able to reveal its instrumentality, leading to the replacement of ceremonial behaviors and habits of thought with instrumental behaviors and habits of thought. This is the definition of progressive institutional change. Overtime constituents become wedded to these policies through their material benefits, mitigating the ability to undo these policies. This then becomes a state of progressive path-dependency<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> There is a temporality to this, which is beyond the scope of this paper, but worth addressing. From the pragmatic perspective any solutions to problems is likely to yield new problems, whereby the early solution is no longer “progressive”. Progressive is a context dependent term, relative to the problem at hand. For example, reciprocity rhetoric was used in implementing and framing social security, however, as Wray (2002) has argued, we are starting to run up against the problems of this rhetoric when people believe the fund for social security is running out, which we know from a Modern Monetary Theory perspective, is not true. This will now need to be addressed by reframing the policy or developing a new policy to maintain the instrumentality social security provided.

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