

What's in a Name?
Investigating the Effect of Prejudice on Individual Trade
Preferences¹

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Abstract

Does prejudice have an independent causal effect on trade opinion? For over a decade, students of public opinion have consistently observed a strong statistical association between symbolic predispositions such as prejudice and nationalism, on the one hand, and opposition to international trade, on the other. But as multiple scholars have correctly pointed out, this correlation—however strong and consistent—does not shed light on the important question of causation. In this paper, I draw on behavioral economics and political psychology to provide a theoretical foundation for the causal claim that cultural prejudice increases protectionism. Then, to investigate the claim empirically, I employ a creative survey experiment fielded on a nationally representative sample of Americans. I find that among prejudiced Americans, “cultural distance” from trading partners more than doubles the level of opposition to international trade. These results strongly suggest that prejudice causes an increase in protectionism, and that this causal effect is very large.

1 Introduction

Does prejudice have a causal effect on trade preferences? For over a decade, students of public opinion have consistently observed a strong statistical association between symbolic predispositions such as prejudice and nationalism, on the one hand, and opposition to international trade, on the other (Dong et al. 2013; Mansfield and Mutz 2009; Margalit 2012; Mayda and Rodrik 2005; O’Rourke and Sinnott 2002; Rankin 2001; Sabet 2012). This constitutes one of the most important recent developments in the study of mass attitudes in international political economy (IPE). But as multiple scholars have correctly pointed out, this correlation—however strong and consistent—does not shed light on the important question of causality (Fordham et al. 2012; Margalit 2012). Despite an impressive array of research into the non-material sources of trade preferences, the nature of the relationship between symbolic attitudes and trade opinion remains conspicuously unclear. This ambiguity represents a fundamental gap in the IPE literature. If prejudice does not *cause* protectionist trade sentiment, then the correlation we observe becomes largely irrelevant to explanations of public attitudes toward trade. Addressing the causal question is thus of central importance.

Causal inference in this context is not easy. Observational studies are especially challenged in isolating the independent effect of prejudice on protectionism, and the use of randomized experiments toward this end has been limited and problematic. This paper employs a creative experimental design to overcome this inferential problem. I take inspiration from Bertrand and Mullainathan’s famous resume experiment (2004)—where names on identical resumes are manipulated to identify the presence of racial discrimination in the U.S. labor market—and investigate the effect of “cultural distance” from trading partners on individual trade preferences. The survey experiment, fielded on a nationally representative sample of Americans, cleanly isolates the effect of cultural distance by manipulating only the name of a hypothetical foreign firm that would be affected by a potential U.S. trade measure. The results strongly suggest that the causal effect of symbolic attitudes on trade opinion is both real and strong: prejudice greatly increases opposition to international trade.

The implications of this finding are significant. Not only does it shed light on a particularly fundamental question in the IPE literature, but it also highlights the potential impact of prejudice on the politics of trade and on the contours of international trade policy more broadly.

The remainder of this paper will proceed as follows. I begin by presenting theoretical foundations for the causal claim, building upon the notion of heuristic judgment from behavioral economics and the theory of symbolic politics from political psychology. Next, Section 3 reviews obstacles to causal inference in observational studies of public opinion and examines the limits of past experimental research into the effect of symbolic attitudes on trade preferences. In Section 4, I thoroughly describe the experimental design of this study. Section 5 presents the results of the experiment, while Section 6 concludes.

2 Prejudice and Protectionism: Situating the Relationship

2.1 Evidence of Strong Correlation

There is mounting evidence that symbolic predispositions of various kinds—prejudice, ethnocentrism, nationalistic chauvinism—are strongly associated with opposition to international trade. For example, Sinnott and O’Rourke (2002) and Mayda and Rodrik (2005) analyze the same cross-national survey data to find that various measures of nationalist sentiment are strongly correlated with protectionist trade preferences. Likewise, Rankin (2001) argues that nationalistic attachment is a key factor in explaining mass attitudes toward trade. Focusing on the United States, Rankin finds that attachment to what he calls “patriotic,” “sovereign,” and “cultural” conceptions of national identity are all highly correlated with protectionism.

To capture symbolic attitudes, Mansfield and Mutz’s 2009 study of American trade opinion relies primarily on ethnocentrism scales designed to measure “the commonplace inclination to divide the world into ingroups and outgroups, the former characterized by virtuosity and talent, the latter by corruption and mediocrity” (Kam and Kinder 2007, p.

321). As Mansfield and Mutz explain, ethnocentrism taps “prejudice, broadly conceived” (p.440). Once again in this study, the association between symbolic attitudes—in this case, ethnocentrism—and trade protectionism is strong. More recently, Dong et al. (2013) replicate this finding using a sample of Chinese citizens. And in yet another example, Sabet (2012) finds that in a survey of over 4,000 U.S. workers, sentiment toward foreign cultures powerfully predicts individual trade opinion.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations for the Causal Claim: Affective Judgment and Symbolic Politics

These observational studies consistently reveal one finding: symbolic predispositions such as prejudice are strongly associated with protectionist attitudes toward international trade. While the theoretical basis of this finding is left unexplored and underdeveloped in many studies, political psychology offers a compelling and theoretically grounded explanation for this consistent result (Rankin 2001; Sabet 2013). Indeed, theories of heuristic judgment and symbolic politics from psychology expect this association to not only be strong, but also to be *causal*: prejudice should increase protectionism.

Consider first that rationality, as a cognitive process, is very demanding. As research in social psychology indicates, the mind relies on shortcuts wherever possible to avoid the effortful mental work of conscious and deliberate reasoning. This idea is famously articulated by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, who argued in their Nobel prize-winning work that individuals use “heuristics”² to simplify complex decisions into quick, intuitive judgments (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Such heuristics are not consciously chosen. They are part of a “mental shotgun” whereby the mind instinctively evades the demanding work of complex reasoning by substituting an easier question for a difficult one—typically without noticing the substitution (Kahneman and Daniel 2011).

One of the most commonly used intuitive heuristics in decision making involves reliance

²The technical definition of heuristic is “a simple procedure that helps find adequate, though often imperfect, answers to difficult questions” (Kahneman and Daniel 2011).

on emotion and gut feeling, or affect (Kahneman and Daniel 2011; Sears 2001).³ The notion of affective judgment was introduced into the heuristics lexicon by psychologist Paul Slovic as an *affect heuristic* (Slovic et al. 2002). Building on the work of Kahneman and Tversky, Slovic observed a process of decision making in which judgments are guided directly by reflexive gut feelings of liking and disliking, without deliberation or reasoning. The affect heuristic, in other words, is an instance of substitution where the answer to an easy question (How do I feel about it?) serves subconsciously as an answer to a much harder question (What do I *think* about it?).

In the realm of political preference formation, the notion of judgment through affective response finds prominent expression in the theory of symbolic politics. According to this theory, people acquire early in life a set of very broad and stable “symbolic” predispositions (e.g., prejudice, nationalism, political ideology) which drives their attitudes toward particular political issues in adulthood (Sears et al. 1979; Sears et al. 1980). Importantly, symbolic predispositions influence political preferences by facilitating the affective shortcuts discussed above. Later in life, as an individual is confronted with new and unfamiliar policy issues, the symbols posed by those issues evoke habitual and highly affective responses based on the person’s longstanding symbolic predispositions. As Sears et al. explained when they introduced the theory in the late 1970s, the political symbols posed by issues such as “integration” and “affirmative action,” for example, evoke habitual and emotional responses based on underlying predispositions such as racial tolerance or prejudice (1979).

The theory of symbolic politics thus implies a distinctive mode of information processing which proceeds by way of strong affective responses to political symbols. In the arena of mass politics, then, strong symbolic predispositions make possible the cognitive shortcut of judgment via affect: when the relevant predispositions are sufficiently strong, the gut feelings evoked by political issues direct preferences, making a demanding cognitive process unnecessary.

³I follow Russell Neuman et al. (2007) and use the terms emotion and affect interchangeably.

My claim is that individual judgments about international trade are no exception. The theory of symbolic politics suggests that the symbols associated with trade—it represents a transaction with a “foreign other,” for instance—evoke an affective response based on stable symbolic predispositions such as generalized prejudice, nationalism, or aversion toward out-groups. To put it in the language of heuristics, the difficult and complex question—“What do I think about trade?”—is displaced by the much easier question: “How do I feel about it?” The resulting hypothesis is clear: individual preferences over trade will be directly affected by individual-level predispositions such as prejudice. Put differently, prejudice should have an independent effect on mass attitudes toward international trade.

As already demonstrated, evidence of a strong, positive relationship between prejudice and protectionism is plentiful. Empirically identifying the *causal* nature of this relationship, however, presents challenges that are difficult to overcome in observational studies. I now turn to this inferential problem.

3 Prejudice, Protectionism, and Causal Inference: The Limits of What We Know

3.1 Obstacles to Causal Inference in Observational Studies of Trade Preferences

The studies referenced in Section 2.1 make a significant contribution to our understanding of mass attitudes toward trade by suggesting that trade preferences might be influenced by non-economic, symbolic predispositions. As skeptics of the “non-material” interpretation of trade preferences correctly point out, however, the meaning of a strong relationship between one attitude and another is essentially ambiguous (Fordham et al. 2012). The causal priority of prejudice, in other words, is far from obvious in this context.

It is possible, for instance, that a causal link between non-material sentiment and trade opinion *does* exist, but that causality runs in the reverse direction. It might be that, in fact, opposition to free trade or a generally negative posture toward global economic integration results in contempt toward out-groups and foreignness. International trade is, after all, an

interaction with some foreign “other.” That strong opposition to trade could color one’s broader outlook on “otherness” is not implausible.

It is also possible that the strong relationship we observe between symbolic attitudes and trade opinion is a spurious one: some *other* factor might be causing both. For example, it could be that an individual’s attitudes toward trade *and* outgroups are *both* the result of her association with some group or doctrine. Fordham and Kleinberg illustrate this point nicely:

Groups adopt common positions on many issues. Some common attitudes are logically unrelated but are nevertheless consistent within the group. For example, members of a particular occupation might dress or speak in a similar way to show their solidarity—or simply to blend in—even if nothing about their job requires them to do so. Even though one would certainly find a strong statistical relationship between these modes of dress and speech and the attitudes typical of the group, this relationship is not causal. The same problem of causal inference applies to associations between logically unrelated attitudes on less trivial matters. A group might be especially patriotic, ethnocentric, or isolationist, but there is not necessarily a causal relationship between these attitudes and the group’s typical position on trade (2012, p. 323).

Needless to say, the “third” factor driving both prejudice and protectionism may very well be some underlying economic interest. Trade competition with an ethnically distant nation could lead to both anti-trade sentiment *and* prejudice or chauvinistic nationalism.

It is thus far from clear that the statistical association we observe between prejudice and trade opinion is evidence that symbolic attitudes enjoy causal priority in connection to protectionism. The claim that prejudice has a causal effect on trade preferences—and especially, that this effect is independent of economic interests—calls for the design of research that can specifically test the causal nature of the relationship. This is a crucially important task in the study of globalization opinion. As Margalit explains, “[If] non-economic sentiments are not the cause of support for trade protectionism, then the correlation [that] scholars find is irrelevant for explaining the sources of popular opposition to trade openness” (Margalit 2012, p. 484).

3.2 Past Experimental Study of Symbolic Predispositions and Trade Opinion

Despite the obstacles to causal inference in observational studies, the use of randomized experiments to detect the effect of symbolic predispositions on trade attitudes has been extremely limited. The only experimental study of which I am aware was carried out by Margalit (2012).⁴ His survey experiment was fielded on a sample of 1,455 American respondents who were randomly assigned to either a control or one of two treatment groups. The first treatment group was exposed to a “cultural” prime; the second to a “libertarian” prime. The cultural prime treatment consisted of a set of questions about social and cultural issues which relate to changes in the traditional American way of life—whether the U.S. national anthem should be sung in languages other than English, and whether homosexual couples should be allowed to legally marry. In contrast, individuals in the control group were exposed to questions about their preferences over outdoor activities. All respondents were then asked: “Do you think that growing trade and business ties of the United States with other countries have made the average American better or worse off?”

Margalit’s results show that respondents exposed to the cultural prime express more negative views of the impact of economic integration than either those in the control group or in the libertarian treatment group—but this treatment effect is only observed among the less-educated. Margalit takes this finding to suggest both that cultural concerns do indeed have a causal effect on trade opinion, and that the less-educated are “more likely to associate economic integration with a set of social and cultural consequences that they view as harmful” (Margalit 2012, p. 495). The latter conclusion is attributed by the author to the fact that educational attainment is negatively correlated with factors such as prejudice, intolerance of other cultures, and feelings of in-group superiority.

While this study is path-breaking in many respects, it is also susceptible to a number of critiques, especially as an investigation into the independent causal effect of symbolic

⁴Mansfield and Mutz (forthcoming) present the results of a survey experiment designed to test the relationship between symbolic attitudes and preferences over another dimension of globalization, namely, outsourcing.

attitudes. More generally, the experimental investigation of any challenging research question benefits from refinement through the development and implementation of diverse designs. In this study, I build upon Margalit’s important contribution, benefiting from the strengths of his experimental design while trying to address its weaknesses.

First, for the purposes of distinguishing the effect of cultural concerns from economic ones, Margalit’s experimental manipulation is somewhat limited. In line with the general argument of his paper (the survey experiment is only one part of a broader study), the cultural treatment is meant to prime a sense of “cultural threat” by reminding respondents of potentially imminent changes to the traditional American way of life. But it is quite plausible that this particular manipulation (if indeed, it is successful) triggers a feeling of *generalized* threat to one’s “way of life”—a feeling that might subsume or easily spillover to other, namely economic, aspects of life. In other words, by specifically highlighting impending threats to a way of life rather than employing a more subtle prime of underlying symbolic predispositions, the study is less likely to preclude from the subject’s judgment considerations of *economic* loss or threat.

Given the nature of Margalit’s argument, this issue might not be problematic for his study. He argues, after all, that global economic integration is generally perceived as an “openness package,” the “broad and complex effects” of which are difficult for individuals to disentangle and separately assess (Margalit 2012, p. 486). To specifically isolate the effect of prejudice, however, an experimental manipulation that subtly primes prejudice while keeping economic factors constant is far more suitable.

Toward this end, the experimental design I present below explicitly controls for other variables that might explain the correlation between cultural concerns and negative trade opinion. Specifically, the economic, political, and safety-related implications of trade are specified and held constant. I can therefore be confident that any treatment effect observed in my study is truly due to cultural factors and not the result of assumptions made by respondents about other aspects of trade.

In order to distinguish those who received the treatment from those who did not, my study also includes a post-treatment manipulation check. Unfortunately, without such a check in Margalit’s design, we cannot know whether his cultural prime was in fact successful in encouraging heightened cultural concern. This is especially problematic since the effect of his cultural treatment depends on low educational attainment. As Margalit himself points out, it “may be that the effect of the prime on individuals with lower education was stronger not because of their cultural sensitivities, but simply because they are more susceptible to priming” (p. 495).

Finally, the use of education as a proxy for prejudice or “cultural sensitivity” is less than ideal. Margalit suggests that a cultural treatment effect is observed only among the less-educated because these individuals are more likely to be prejudiced, ethnocentric, nationalist, and so on. But if, theoretically speaking, the relevant characteristic is prejudice or nationalism, then conditioning the analysis on a more direct measure of that symbolic predisposition would offer a much more revealing and direct test of the underlying argument. I overcome this limitation by including in my survey a direct measure of individual prejudice.

4 Experimental Design

4.1 Overview

To investigate the effect prejudice on trade preferences, I designed a population-based survey experiment (Mutz 2011) that builds upon the studies discussed in the preceding section. The experiment was fielded on a sample of 1,001 Americans from July 13 to July 16, 2013. The GfK Group conducted the survey using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the KnowledgePanel. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have internet

access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection. People who already have computers and internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment.

The experiment employs a creative design to resolve the inferential problem described in Section 3. I take inspiration from Bertrand and Mullainathan’s famous resume experiment (2004), where names on identical resumes are manipulated to identify racial discrimination in the U.S. labor market, to investigate the effect of “cultural distance” from trading partners on individual trade preferences. All subjects were informed of a potential policy measure that would ease U.S. trade restrictions and make it easier for some foreign firms to sell their products in the United States. Subjects were then presented with the hypothetical example of one company that would be affected by such a trade measure (i.e., a foreign company for whom it would become easier to export goods into the U.S. as a result of the trade policy under consideration). Finally, respondents were asked to report their level of support for the potential trade measure.

The key experimental manipulation of the study concerns the *name* of the hypothetical foreign firm that was presented to respondents. Subjects were assigned to a firm name that was shown (through earlier experimental investigation—see below) to sound either culturally familiar or ambiguously foreign. A second manipulation involved the economic characteristics of the hypothetical firm, specifically, whether the skill level of the company’s labor input is high or low. In all treatment conditions, respondents were explicitly informed that the hypothetical foreign firm is from a country that poses no political or security threats to the United States, and that the company respects safety and labor standards. Furthermore, and as mentioned previously, I collect data on respondents’ levels of prejudice, enabling me to test directly the prediction that the effect of the “culturally foreign” treatment is contingent on a high degree of individual prejudice.

By keeping constant the economic characteristics of the firm, as well as the political relationship of the United States with the firm’s country of origin, this strategy makes it possible to cleanly isolate the causal effect of cultural distance from trading partners on individual

trade preferences. If exposure to the culturally distant firm name increases protectionism, and if this effect, in turn, is contingent upon high levels of individual prejudice, then we can infer that generalized prejudice in the form of aversion to out-groups and foreignness is driving the increased opposition to trade. In other words, this design makes it possible to directly investigate for the first time whether cultural prejudice is causally prior to trade preferences, independent of other considerations.

4.2 *Culturally Familiar versus Ambiguously Foreign: The Choice of Firm Names*

Obviously, the choice of a culturally foreign and a culturally familiar firm name is crucial to the success of this study and to the credibility of its findings. Most importantly, in order to avoid the possibility that the results are driven by the cultural, economic, or political characteristics of any one country or part of the world, it is essential that the name used to signal cultural distance is *ambiguously* foreign. That is to say, the chosen name should not be easily or overwhelmingly associated by subjects with a single country or cluster of countries. Rather, what is needed is a name whose believed origin enjoys a relatively even distribution across a reasonably broad range of culturally distant countries and regions.

Given this criterion, I tested the suitability of numerous invented and quasi-invented names through a series of surveys on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Respondents on MTurk were asked: “[*Firm Name*] is the name of a foreign (i.e., non-U.S.) company. Which country or part of the world would you say that [*Firm Name*] is from? Please be as specific as possible and remember that the most accurate responses are usually those that come immediately to mind.” Based on responses to this question, I finally identified the name “Tuntyakore & Zideying” as an ideal candidate. The preceding question was also posed at the outset of this survey to those in the culturally foreign treatment group of the nationally representative sample. Their answers—classified according to the standard United Nations Geographical Region Groupings⁵ and represented in Figure 1—confirm the suitability of

⁵See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>.

“Tuntyakore & Zideying” as an ambiguously foreign firm name.

[Figure 1 about here]

As a company name that signals cultural proximity, I chose “Gordon & Roberts.” MTurk respondents identified this name primarily with the United Kingdom, but “Gordon & Roberts” was also strongly associated with Canada and a number of other Western European countries. The responses of those in the culturally familiar treatment group of the nationally representative sample, again offered at the outset of this survey and represented in Figure 2, largely reflect the MTurk findings.

[Figure 2 about here]

Needless to say, this study relies heavily on the assumption that cultural distance is binary in the context of trade preference formation. While this assumption is unlikely to be accurate, it is both reasonable and highly useful: it enables us to directly address a central—and as yet unresolved—research question in the study of globalization.

4.3 *Stimulus and Manipulation Check*

Respondents were presented with the following information and question:

Now consider that the United States is contemplating the removal of trade restrictions which would allow some foreign companies to more freely sell their goods in the United States. As a hypothetical example, consider the case of [*Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts*], one such foreign firm. [*Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts*] has the following characteristics:

It has about 500 workers.

[*Over 90% of its workers are not college educated, and approximately 60% have not completed high school./ Approximately 60% of its workforce has a PhD or other advanced degree, and over 90% of its workforce is university educated.*]

The company respects safety and labor standards, and is based in a country that poses no political or security threats to the United States.

Would you support or oppose removing trade restrictions which would allow firms such as [*Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts*] to more freely sell their goods in the United States?

Response options spanned a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly support” to “Strongly oppose.” The two manipulations yield a 2x2 design with four treatment conditions. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of these four groups.

As explained in Section 4.2, respondents were asked to guess the geographic origin of Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts in the survey’s opening question. The next question on the survey (still before exposure to the firm-related information and question above) was designed to strengthen the effectiveness⁶ of the treatment by asking subjects: “Think for a few moments about the country or part of the world that [*Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts*] is from. What language or languages are spoken there? If you’re not sure, don’t worry—just take a guess.” The purpose of this second question is simply to fix in the respondent’s mind her original guess, reducing the likelihood that she would change her mind about the firm’s country of origin (and potentially, its cultural familiarity or foreignness) upon learning of the firm’s other characteristics.

To monitor the latter possibility, I included the following post-treatment manipulation check after measuring the dependent variable: “Did you continue to assume that [*Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts*] is from [*respondent’s original answer*]?” Those who answered “no” were asked where they assumed Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts to be from. Over 80% of respondents maintained their original answer. Those who changed their mind did not do so in a way that significantly altered the original distribution of guesses across different regions of the world. As a result, the changed answers do not lead to a noticeable shift away from the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation.⁷

⁶I use the term “effective” here to mean that the treatment is effective in producing the intended variation in the *independent* variable, not that it is effective in altering the *dependent* variable. The latter kind of effectiveness, of course, depends on whether my theory is correct and will be examined in Section 5 (Mutz 2011, Chapter 6).

⁷Further details are presented in Figures 1a and 2a of the Appendix.

4.4 *Measuring Prejudice and Protectionism*

If cultural distance or foreignness has a causal effect on trade preferences, we should observe greater opposition to the hypothetical easing of trade restrictions among those exposed to the culturally foreign firm name, Tuntyakore & Zideying, versus those exposed to the culturally familiar firm name, Gordon & Roberts. In line with the hypothesis derived from the theory I advance in Section 2, however, the effect of this manipulation should be moderated by the level of individual prejudice. Among the prejudiced, in other words, the perceived cultural foreignness of Tuntyakore & Zideying should trigger an automatic, emotional judgment *against* trade liberalization.

Measuring individual levels prejudice is thus of central importance in this study. To do so, I use an abridged Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) index. SDO scales, used by psychologists to measure racial and ethnic prejudice, offer a number of significant advantages which have not yet been exploited in the study of symbolic attitudes and trade preferences.

The concept of SDO comes from Social Dominance Theory, a social psychological theory based on the idea that “all human societies tend to be structured systems of group-based hierarchies” consisting of “one or a small number of dominant and hegemonic groups at the top and one or a number of subordinate groups at the bottom” (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, p. 31). From this theory emerged the individual-level variable called *social dominance orientation*, “the extent to which one desires that one’s in-group dominate or be superior to out-groups” (Pratto et al. 1994). As Pratto et al. explain, “We consider SDO to be a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal, versus hierarchical, that is, ordered along a superior-inferior dimension” (Pratto et al. 1994, p. 741).

SDO is very strongly and consistently correlated with both racism and nationalism (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Importantly, these correlations hold even when rather different measures of racism and nationalism are used. This reflects one of the great strengths of SDO as a measure of symbolic predispositions in this context, namely, that it has been shown to

capture the underlying predisposition (i.e., a generalized preference for group dominance) that drives more specific, and often culturally-contingent, symbolic attitudes (Pratto et al. 1994; Sidanius et al. 1994). In other words, though I label it “prejudice” in this paper, SDO in fact taps the fundamental predisposition underlying all the symbolic attitudes which have been found to correlate with protectionism in various observational studies of trade preferences. In sum, SDO offers what is likely to be the most basic and generalizable measure of relevant symbolic predispositions in the context of globalization opinion.

The latter point is also important for the eventual extension of this study and others like it to contexts beyond the United States. As a measure of out-group aversion that is not specific to any particular content or culture, SDO can serve as a consistent measure of symbolic predispositions across cultures, countries, and contexts. Indeed, a recent study of SDO in 15 languages and 20 countries shows that the measure is highly general and cross-culturally robust (Pratto et al. 2012). The lion’s share of scholarship on mass attitudes toward international trade and globalization focuses on the United States, and studies that rigorously examine the impact of symbolic predispositions on trade preferences outside the American context are especially scarce. The use of a generalizable measure such as SDO can help facilitate greater cross-cultural research in this area.

In this study, I use a two-item SDO scale. After administering the treatment, measuring the dependent variable, and checking the manipulation, I asked respondents to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements:

“In setting priorities, we must consider all groups.”

“We should not push for group equality.”

Response options spanned a five-point scale, ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” To construct a measure of SDO, I first code responses to each of these two statements so that in each case, those favoring (opposing) group inequality have higher (lower) scores on a five-point scale. I then average the two scores, yielding a five-point SDO variable. In the analysis that follows, those with an SDO score of “4” or “5” are considered

prejudiced.

Finally, recall from Section 4.3 that the dependent variable in this study (i.e., protectionist trade sentiment) is derived from responses to the following question:

Would you support or oppose removing trade restrictions which would allow firms such as [Tuntyakore & Zideying/Gordon & Roberts] to more freely sell their goods in the United States?

Figure 3 summarizes the experimental design and maps the order in which respondents were exposed to the relevant stimuli and questions.

[Figure 3 about here]

5 Results

Table 1 summarizes the estimated effect of a trading partner’s cultural foreignness on protectionism. The left column presents the results from the analysis of all respondents, while the right column presents the results for prejudiced respondents only.⁸

[Table 1 about here]

The table shows the percentage of respondents who opposed easing trade restrictions when the affected (hypothetical) non-U.S. firm was culturally foreign and when it was culturally familiar. While the level of trade opposition is virtually identical across treatment groups in the general population, as predicted, cultural foreignness has a significant effect on protectionism among the prejudiced. Approximately 22.1% of highly prejudiced respondents opposed the easing of trade restrictions when the foreign firm was culturally familiar, versus 40.4% when the hypothetical firm was culturally foreign. Cultural distance thus nearly doubled opposition to trade in this subgroup, increasing it by more than 18 percentage points, with a 95% confidence interval of 4.3 to 32.5. Clearly, this effect is highly significant both

⁸Since my primary concern here is assessing the effect of cultural distance, I pool over both economic treatment conditions in the analysis that follows. Conditioning the results on the skill level of the hypothetical firm’s labor input, however, yields results that are substantively similar.

statistically and substantively. The observed interaction between prejudice and the cultural distance treatment provides strong evidence of the independent causal effect of prejudice on protectionism. A visual summary of this result is presented in Figure 4.

[Figure 4 about here]

The manipulation check discussed in Section 4.3 confirms that the final distributions of respondent beliefs about the origins of the two hypothetical firms are highly similar across the general sample and the prejudiced subset.⁹ It is not the case, in other words, that more highly prejudiced respondents were more likely to successfully receive the treatment. The conditional treatment effect I report, therefore, is due to prejudice—it is not due to differences in manipulation susceptibility across the two groups.

Relatedly, the effect of cultural distance should become amplified if we focus more narrowly on those respondents who were identified (via the manipulation check) as having received the treatment. I repeat the analysis presented above, but this time, I include only those respondents who believed that Tuntyakore & Zideying (Gordon & Roberts) is from a culturally foreign (familiar) country or part of the world. In the case of the culturally foreign treatment group, I dropped from the analysis all those who associated Tuntyakore & Zideying with North America, Western Europe, Australia, or New Zealand. Conversely, in the case of the culturally familiar treatment, I dropped respondents who associated Gordon & Roberts with anywhere but Western Europe (including the United Kingdom), Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. I also excluded any respondent who refused to answer the question about firm origin, or who answered the question by saying that he either did not know or did not care. In total, 383 of the original 988 respondents were dropped from the analysis of the general sample, while 70 of the original 166 subjects were dropped from the prejudiced subgroup.

Table 2 summarizes the results of this analysis. Once again, I present the percentage of respondents who opposed easing trade restrictions in each treatment group.

⁹For details, see Figures 1a and 2a in the Appendix.

[Table 2 about here]

Both in the general sample and in the prejudiced subgroup, the magnitude of the foreignness effect increases when I include only those who received the treatment: from 0.099 to 5.6 percentage points in the case of the former, and from 18.3 to 25.4 percentage points in the case of the latter.¹⁰ In this second analysis, in other words, cultural distance more than doubles the level of protectionism among the prejudiced. The effect remains highly significant statistically in this subgroup, but once again, does not attain conventional levels of statistical significance in the general population.

The implications of these results are substantial. Establishing the causal effect of prejudice on trade opinion not only resolves a particularly fundamental question in the study of IPE, but it also advances the research agenda on the politics of trade more generally. For example, my study sheds considerable light on the often puzzling *public* politics of international trade. Economists have expressed surprise and dismay over the political presentation of globalization in emotionally charged and logically irrelevant terms (Krugman 1996; Mankiw and Swagel 2006). Indeed, a significant proportion of public communications about economic globalization—including *pro*-globalization messages—are designed to activate symbolic predispositions such as prejudice and nationalism (Skonieczky 2001; Luntz 2005; Mullainathan et al. 2008). But if symbolic predispositions are strong drivers of mass attitudes in this area, then the economically irrelevant frames employed by political elites become expected rather than surprising.

In a context where trade agreements are increasingly made with specific countries or regions, the causal effect of prejudice on trade opinion has further important implications for politics and policy. Scholarship on trade opinion is overwhelmingly concerned with preferences over trade *in general*, but polling data indicates that, in the United States at least, the public's support for trade varies substantially across trading partners (Kohut 2010). The

¹⁰Note that these results are robust to the exclusion of respondents whose beliefs about the country origin of Tuntayakore & Zideying cluster around any one of the various geographic sub-regions. In other words, the results are not driven by respondents who identify the firm with any single sub-region of the world.

findings of this paper strongly suggest that this variation is due to partners' degree of cultural foreignness, not just their economic characteristics. Support for the causal role of symbolic predispositions leaves students of globalization much better equipped to investigate these underexplored contours of trade politics, as well as their implications for policy.

The particular design of this study also reveals a promising set of opportunities for future research. I have relied here on a dichotomous conception of cultural distance, characterizing perceived trading partners as either culturally foreign or culturally familiar. The assumption that cultural distance is binary has served the aims of this paper well. But further analysis of this new data might uncover interesting variations in trade preferences based on the *specific* (perceived) identity of trading partners, shedding further light on the course of research outlined in the preceding paragraph.

More generally, the success of this experimental design highlights the possibility of its fruitful application to other issue-areas, including, but not limited to, other dimensions of economic globalization. As research increasingly shows, international trade is not the only global issue that provokes an affective response based on longstanding symbolic predispositions such as prejudice, nationalism, or attitudes toward foreignness (Baker and Fitzgerald 2012; Kinder et al. 2009; Mansfield and Mutz forthcoming). The type of experimental manipulation I use in this study can likely be employed with great success to investigate the effect of symbolic factors on voter attitudes in other policy domains.

6 Conclusion

This paper has presented the first evidence of the independent causal effect of cultural distance on trade preferences. I have argued from a theoretical perspective grounded in psychology that prejudice causes opposition to international trade, leading to the specific prediction that cultural distance from trading partners will increase protectionism among the highly prejudiced. I then tested this proposition using a creative survey experiment fielded on a nationally representative sample of Americans. The results are striking: among

the prejudiced, cultural distance more than doubles opposition to international trade. These findings provide strong support for the causal priority of symbolic predispositions in the formation of individual trade preferences.

Importantly, the design of this study has made it possible to cleanly isolate the effect of cultural factors from that of material self-interest or other economic considerations, implying a strong and independent effect for symbolic predispositions. Critics might counter that even this study cannot rule out the possibility that economic interests are ultimately responsible for the impact of symbolic attitudes on trade opinion. If prejudice is inherited from parents or formed early in life, it has been argued, and if one's family has benefited economically from international trade, then the views expressed at home may very well be more favorable to out-groups and those with whom we trade (Fordham et al. 2012). In this way, the independence of prejudiced-based judgments from economic interests remains questionable.

Admittedly, my study does not address the origins of prejudice and thus, cannot imply absolute independence for its effect. But we must take care not to set the bar unreasonably (or even unattainably) high, dismissing in the process truly significant gains in our understanding of public opinion toward globalization. As Robert Keohane and Lisa Martin wrote of the independent effect of international institutions years ago, "Institutions are important 'independently' only in the ordinary sense used in social science: controlling for the effects of power and interests, it matters whether they exist" (Keohane and Martin 1995, p. 42). In this sense at least, this paper has established unequivocally that cultural factors have an independent causal effect on public opinion toward international trade.

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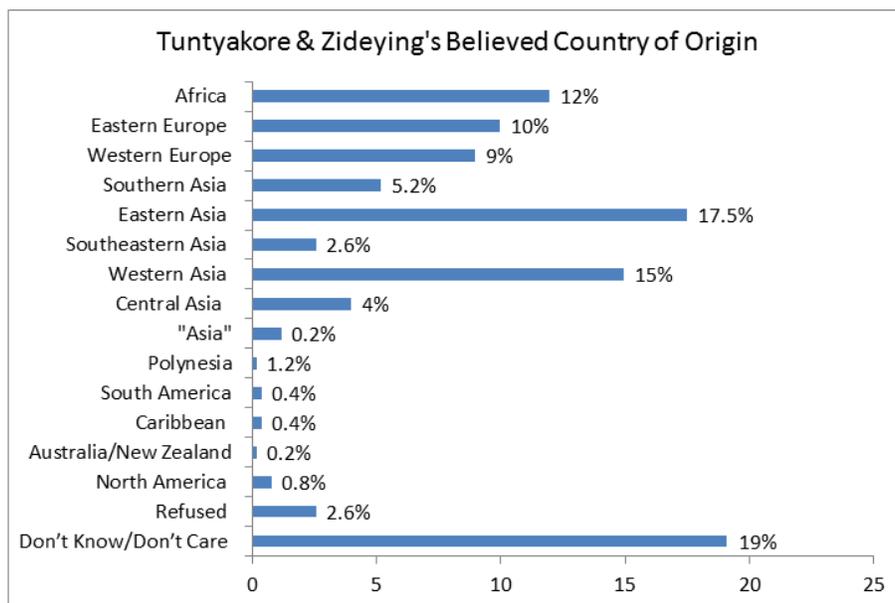
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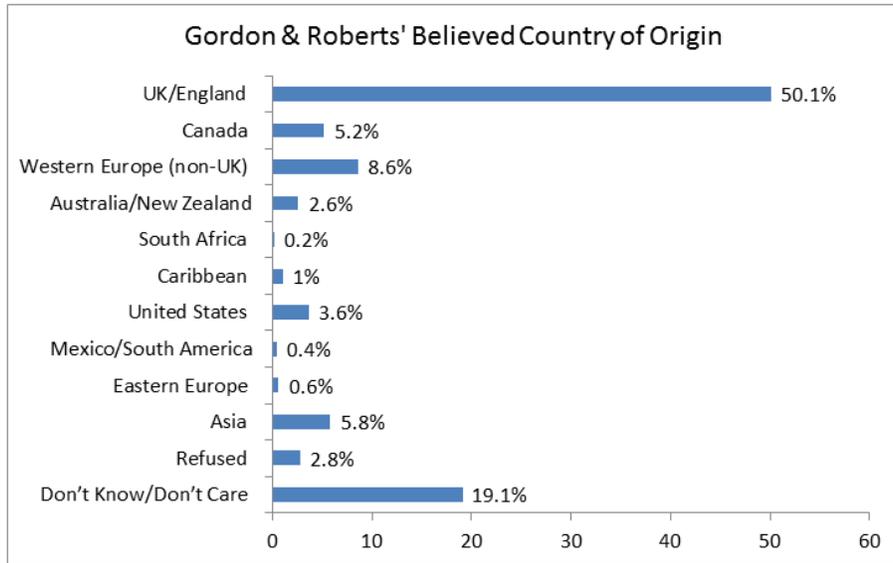
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Figure 1



Note: Figure 1 categorizes and presents answers given by respondents to the following question: “Tuntyakore & Zideying is the name of a foreign (i.e., non-U.S.) company. Which country or part of the world would you say that Tuntyakore & Zideying is from? Please be as specific as possible and remember that the most accurate responses are usually those that come immediately to mind.” I classified countries and geographic areas according to the standard United Nations Geographical Region Groupings, with three exceptions. First, I collapse the sub-regions identified by the UN classification as Northern, Western, and Southern Europe into the one category commonly known as “Western Europe.” Second, because about 50% of the respondents who identified Tuntyakore & Zideying as being from the African continent did so by simply identifying the continent as a whole (i.e., “Africa”), I collapse the UN’s African sub-regions into one category. Note that among the remaining 50% of responses that identified the name as African, but did so more specifically by identifying a particular country or sub-region of the continent, no particular area of Africa was overrepresented. In other words, all areas of the continent were represented relatively evenly. Third, I include an additional category called “Asia” to represent the small minority who responded to the question by simply answering “Asia” and not specifying any particular country or region within that continent.

Figure 2



Note: Figure 2 categorizes and presents answers given by respondents to the following question: “Gordon & Roberts is the name of a foreign (i.e., non-U.S.) company. Which country or part of the world would you say that Gordon & Roberts is from? Please be as specific as possible and remember that the most accurate responses are usually those that come immediately to mind.”

Figure 3: Map of Experimental Procedure

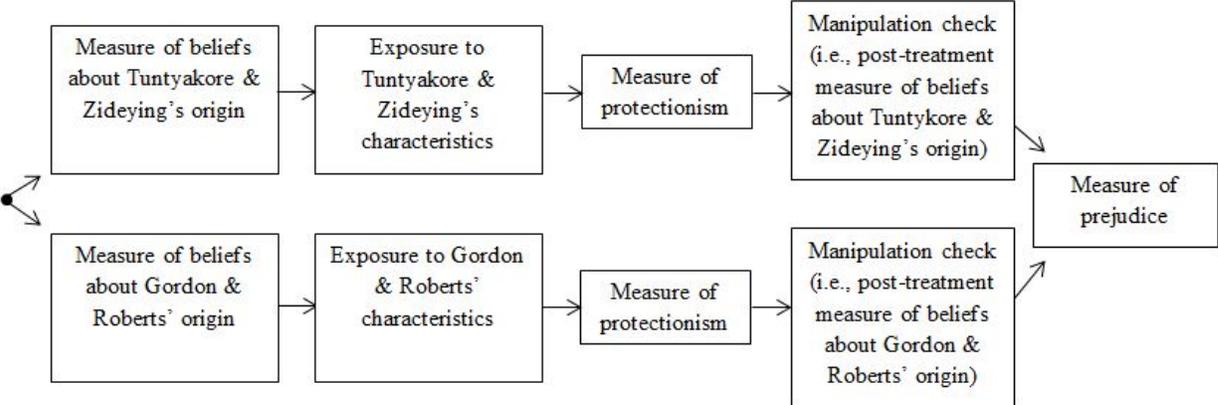
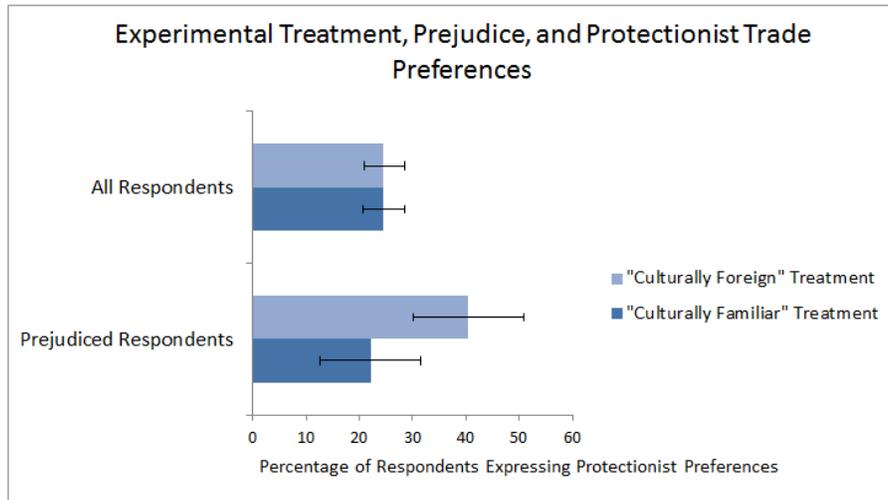


Figure 4



Note: Horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1: The Estimated Effect of Cultural Distance on Protectionism

	All Respondents	Prejudiced Respondents
Culturally Foreign	24.5	40.4
Culturally Familiar	24.4	22.1
Difference	0.099	18.3*
95% Confidence Interval	(-5.3 to 5.5)	(4.3 to 32.5)
p-value	0.9711	0.0112

Note: The table presents the percentage of respondents who opposed easing trade restrictions when the affected non-U.S. firm was culturally foreign and when it was culturally familiar. The difference is the estimated effect of cultural distance, with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. An asterisk indicates an effect that is statistically significant at conventional levels. The sample sizes for the analysis of all respondents were 493 for “Culturally Foreign” and 495 for “Culturally Familiar.” The corresponding sample sizes for prejudiced respondents were 89 and 77.

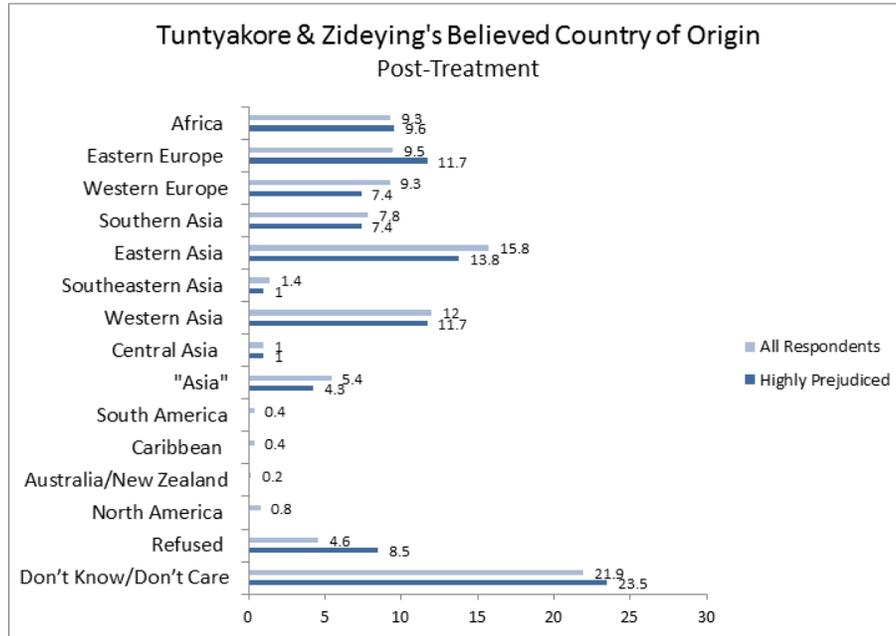
Table 2: The Estimated Effect of Cultural Distance on Protectionism, Treatment Received

	Treatment Received	
	All Respondents	Prejudiced Respondents
Culturally Foreign	25.6	44.4
Culturally Familiar	20.0	19.0
Difference	5.0	25.4*
95% Confidence Interval	(-1.1 to 1.2)	(6.6 to 44.1)
p-value	0.1010	0.0085

Note: The table presents the percentage of respondents who opposed easing trade restrictions when the affected non-U.S. firm was culturally foreign and when it was culturally familiar. The difference is the estimated effect of cultural distance, with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. An asterisk indicates an effect that is statistically significant at conventional levels. The sample sizes for the analysis of all respondents were 320 for “Culturally Foreign” and 285 for “Culturally Familiar.” The corresponding sample sizes for prejudiced respondents were 54 and 42.

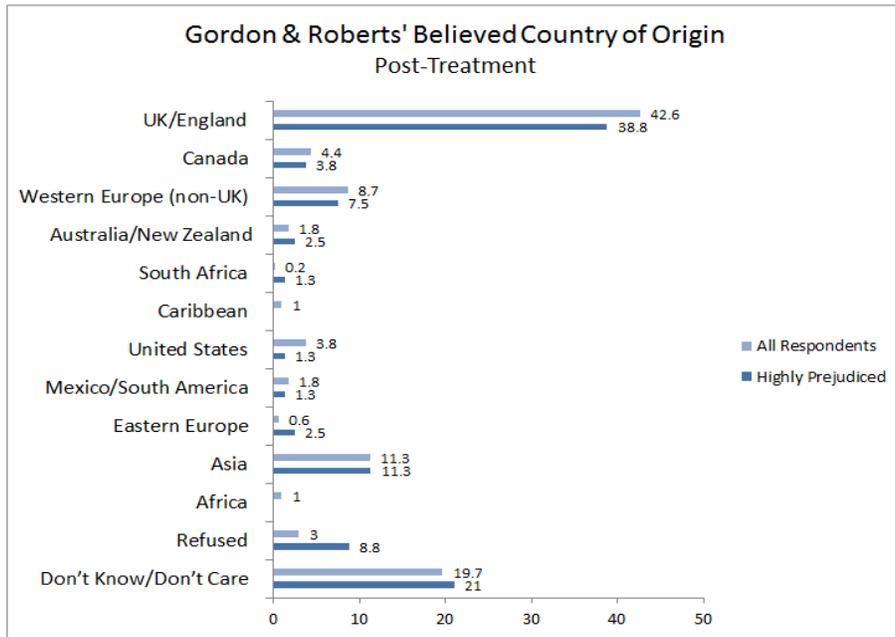
APPENDIX

Figure A1



Note: Figure 1a classifies and presents respondents' post-treatment beliefs about the geographic origin of the hypothetical foreign firm, Tuntyakore & Zideying. Numbers represent the percentage of respondents who identify the firm with the given category. I classified the countries and geographic areas given by respondents according to the standard United Nations Geographical Region Groupings, with three exceptions. First, I collapse the sub-regions identified by the UN classification as Northern, Western, and Southern Europe into the one category commonly known as "Western Europe." Second, because about 50% of the respondents who identified Tuntyakore & Zideying as being from the African continent did so by simply identifying the continent as a whole (i.e., "Africa"), I collapse the UN's African sub-regions into one category. Note that among the remaining 50% of responses that identified the name as African, but did so more specifically by identifying a particular country or sub-region of the continent, no particular area of Africa was overrepresented. In other words, all areas of the continent were represented relatively evenly. Third, I include an additional category called "Asia" to represent the small minority who responded to the question by simply answering "Asia" and not specifying any particular country or region within that continent.

Figure A2



Note: Figure 2a classifies and presents respondents' post-treatment beliefs about the geographic origin of the hypothetical foreign firm, Gordon & Roberts. Numbers represent the percentage of respondents who identify the firm with the given category.