The Fourth Question of Trader Preferences: How Political Leaders Can Most Effectively Communicate to Change Opinions on Trade

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Abstract

Existing literature has provided insights into the who, when, and what aspects of political leaders' ability to shape individual-level trade preferences through elite-cueing. However, little research has been conducted on the most effective communication methods for achieving this outcome. This paper aims to address this gap by examining variations in the effectiveness of different communication methods used by political leaders—specifically rhetoric, sharing academic research or expert opinions, traditional media, and social media—in influencing individual-level trade preferences. This includes preferences of the overall public as well as those within the same or opposite political party as the communicator. The paper proposes two causal mechanisms, namely partisan support/opposition associated with the communication method and the credibility of the method, to explain the variation in effectiveness. Based on these mechanisms, three hypotheses are put forth: rhetoric is the most effective method for changing trade preferences among individuals in the same party as the communicating political leader, sharing academic research or expert opinions is most effective in altering trade preferences among individuals in the opposite party and the overall public, and social media is the least effective method within the same party and overall. To test these hypotheses, a priming experiment is designed involving voting-age respondents in the United States who are exposed to relevant trade communications through one of the aforementioned methods. A difference of means test is then employed to identify variations compared to the untreated control respondents.

Introduction

The President has a problem. He has the opportunity to substantially lower the cost of goods in his nation—subsequently growing the economy, improving the life satisfaction of the public, and sending his approval ratings through the roof, all while benefiting the global market—by rolling back some of his state's protectionist policies and regulations, and signing on to a few new trade agreements. Standing in the way of this nation and leader's great opportunity, however, is the obstacle of public opinion. Public support for trade in the country is the lowest it has ever been, populistic anti-trade campaigns and politicians are becoming more and more common, and the voters simply do not have an appetite for liberal, free trade policies right now. This public opinion climate makes getting any kind of pro-trade agreement or regulation passed through the elected Congress a near-impossible task. To alleviate these issues, the President could instruct his administration to engage in a public relations campaign to change the public's trade preferences through political communications and pro-trade information sharing. To do this effectively however, they first need to understand something that no academic research has yet identified: how to share these communications and information to most effectively change the public's preferences on trade policy.

The "problem" faced by this hypothetical President is not a unique one. The need, or desire, to change public opinion on trade for political purposes is very common, in both developed and developing states, among state leaders, governments, political parties, politicians, and political activists alike. As a divisive issue, so key to the economy and relevant to political leaders, it is critical for both academics and policy makers to understand the dynamics of how public opinion on trade is formed. To that end, in this paper I will provide the framework for research that addresses this issue and seeks to answer the question of "which method of

communication has the greatest effect on individual-level trade preferences?" This will begin with a review of the existing literature that has studied the different factors that affect trade preferences and that has identified variation in the effect of different communication methods. I will then outline a developed theory about what explains the variation in the effect of different communication methods on trade preferences through the causal mechanisms of partisan support/opposition and credibility. This will be followed by a research design to prove this theory with a priming experiment conducted on 4,000 respondents who will be treated with exposure to different methods of political communication on trade. Finally, I will conclude by suggesting several potential implications of this work, both related to theory and policy.

Motivators of this research are the foundational idea of elite-cueing as a mechanism for effecting trade preferences, and the gaps that remain in the existing theory and research on this mechanism. It is a matter of common understanding that public opinion and the preferences of the average person have a large impact on policy. (Elkjaer and Iverson, 2020). With that in mind, as anti-trade sentiment and rhetoric from politicians and political leaders on both sides of the political aisle grow, it is more important than ever to understand how political actors can influence public opinion about trade. To study this, academics have identified the mechanism of "elite-cueing" through which, in the right conditions, political leaders can affect individual's preferences on certain policies, including trade. (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002; Bearce and Moya, 2020) Existing literature has given us a strong, but incomplete, understanding of how political actors can influence trade opinions through their rhetoric and communications by elite-cueing. This research has explained *who* can most effectively influence trade preferences, *when* conditions are best for them to influence trade preferences, and *what* they can speak about to influence trade preferences. *How* to best communicate trade rhetoric, however, has remained

unconsidered and left us with an incomplete understanding of the way that political actors can most effectively influence individual-level trade preferences through elite cueing. Understanding these four factors—who, when, what, and how—is key to our research, and our understanding of the effect of political communication on trade.

Literature Review

Who?

To understand how trade opinions can most effectively be influenced through elite-cueing, we have to first understand *who* are the most effective communicators. These are the elites who are viewed as more knowledgeable on an issue than the cue-takers that they are communicating to. (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002). Although this group could also include policy experts, interest groups, religious leaders, and journalists, in this case, where we are studying political actors, I will focus on politicians and political leaders that appear to be knowledgeable on relevant issues. With that said, to be most effective, these politicians and political leaders do not just need to be knowledgeable, they also need to be trusted and of the same party as the cue-taker, or alternatively not trusted and of the opposite party as the cue-taker for the opposite effect. (Dür and Sclippak, 2020) To put this into context with an example, if you are a Democrat, you are most likely to respond positively to the rhetoric of a Democratic politician that you trust, whereas you are likely to think the opposite of whatever is said by an untrusted Republican politician. This has two implications relevant to this paper. First, it defines the most effective political actors at influencing trade preferences as those who are trusted by the cue-taker, of the same party as the cue-taker, and perceived as knowledgeable by the cue-taker. Second, it also recognizes two mechanisms for the effectiveness of communication that will be relevant to my research and referred back to in a later section: partisan heuristics and credibility.

When?

The effectiveness of elite-cueing is not just dependent on *who* is communicating, but also *when* they are communicating it. The best circumstances for rhetoric from political leaders to influence public opinion is when the public is uninformed on the issue at hand. (Gilens and Murakawa, 2002) This can include many different political issues, particularly those that are less prominent in discourse and therefore less considered by the average person. This is particularly true for the issue of trade policy where the public is generally so uneducated on the topic that they cannot even recognize when they are benefiting or losing from trade. (Bearce and Moya, 2020) In these circumstances, when the public is too uninformed on an issue to form their own opinion, they are not just responsive to cueing and rhetoric from political leaders, they are reliant on it. For many, without trusted political leaders to give them guidance through their rhetoric and communications, they would simply not have an opinion on trade.

What?

While the elite-cueing research has provided an understanding of *who* can influence the public's trade preferences and *when*, the most extensive and substantial body of literature on the topic of trade preferences has focused on *what* issues should be communicated to most effectively change preferences. The most obvious issues are financial and economic. People's opinions on trade are naturally driven by financial self-interest (Schaeffer and Spiker, 2019) and as such they are more likely to support trade when they have been primed to think of themselves as consumers who are benefiting with lower prices for goods. People's preferences can also be driven by their identities, either national or factional. Opposition to trade can be influenced by feelings of patriotism and nationalism (Daniels, Kapszukiewicz, and von de Ruhr, 2020), a desire to see one's own country succeed (Mutz and Kim, 2017), or by a more anti-immigrant,

xenophobic desire to support one's own in-groups. (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009). Finally, individual's opinions about trade can also be driven by more personal factors like religion (Daniels and von der Ruhr, 2005), gender (Mansfield, Mutz, and Silver, 2015) or even one's own personal happiness, health, and broader subjective well-being. (Nowakowski, 2021) All of this to say, the literature on trade preferences, outside of elite-cueing, provides ample understanding of what issues related to trade resonate the most with people, and what issues can be discussed and communicated through rhetoric to most effectively change individual's preferences on trade policy.

How?

The literature on elite-cueing and trade preferences provides a strong understanding of the way that politicians and political leaders can most effectively influence public opinion about trade. It describes *who* can most effectively communicate to change opinions—trusted political leaders of the same party who are perceived as knowledgeable on relevant issues. It describes *when* those political leaders can communicate to most effectively change opinions—when it's an issue that the public is generally uninformed or uneducated on, like trade policy. It even describes *what* the political leaders can communicate and share about trade to most effectively change opinions— rhetoric about financial self-interest, out-group anxiety, and appeals to personal characteristics. The gap that still remains, however, is *how* these political leaders can best communicate to most effectively change opinions about trade. In the modern era, there are many ways for politicians to share rhetoric and information with the public, and we can expect variation in the effectiveness of these different ways. In general political science literature, it has been demonstrated that traditional mass media (McCombs and Valenzuela, 2004), social media (Hong and Nadler, 2011), academic research, and different forms of political rhetoric (Blumenau

and Lauderdale, 2022) are all used to influence public opinion, but have varying rates of effectiveness. With that said, however, the research in this variation has never been conducted specifically to look at policy issues like trade, where the public is so uninformed and uneducated on the subject that they rely upon elite cueing. Therefore, in an extension of the research on elite-cueing, in this paper I am going to identify how political leaders can most effectively communicate to affect opinions on trade by identifying which medium of communication has the greatest effect on individual-level trade preferences. This will extend our knowledge of elite-cueing and create a comprehensive understanding of how political actors can affect public opinion about trade.

Theory and Hypotheses

Mediums for Communication and Information Sharing

When the public is uninformed on an issue, like they are on trade, they form their opinions and preferences by taking cues from "elites" like political leaders, journalists, academics, and other high-profile figures that are considered knowledgeable on the issue. (Gillens & Murakawa, 2002; Dür and Sclippak, 2020) These findings on the effectiveness of elite-cueing at changing public opinion on trade are pronounced when the discourse on the issue is heightened, as is the case in a political campaign with a focus on trade policy. (Essig, Xu, & Keser, 2021). This is relevant for governments, politicians, and policy-makers alike because it is well-established that, especially in democratic states, policy reflects general public opinion, so any changes in trade policy will also require changes in the trade preferences of the general public. (Elkjaer and Iverson, 2020) To that end, governments and political parties embark on campaigns of political rhetoric, communication, and information-sharing to change public opinion when they are seeking major changes to their state's trade policies. (Hicks et al., (2014)

While much research has been done to identify the different conditions in which these campaigns to change trade preferences are most effective, none have identified the most effective methods of communication and information-sharing for changing trade opinions during these campaigns.

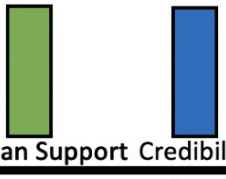
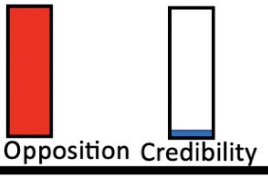
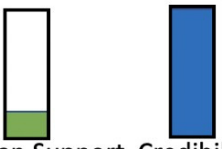
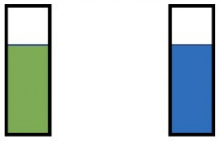
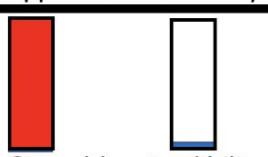
I theorize that there will be variation in the effectiveness at changing trade preferences through elite-cueing of four different, aforementioned, methods that political leaders can use to communicate and share information on the topic. The first method for them to communicate and share information is with rhetoric directly from a political leader. Probably the most traditional medium for political communication, rhetoric from a political leader includes any time a politician attempts to influence trade opinions by speaking about its effects in speeches, debates, interviews, townhalls, or any other instance where they are directly, persuasively speaking about the politics of trade. This has been a proven-effective for elite-cueing with voters updating their issue attitudes after learning about their preferred candidates' positions in debates (Abramowitz, 1978) and with constituents changing their preferences after interacting with their political representatives in online town halls. (Minnozi, et al., 2015) The second method for sharing information to change trade preferences is when political leaders share academic research or expert opinions. By referencing academic studies, empirical statistics, or the objective opinions of trusted, non-biased experts, political leaders can have a significant effect on public opinion. (Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987) The third method for changing preferences is through reports from traditional media news sources which are influenced by their alignment with political leaders (i.e. in the United States, Fox News or the New York Post aligned with Republicans, MSNBC or the New York Times aligned with Democrats.). The fourth, and final, method for communication in this study is social media posts that are shared or promoted by political

leaders, which have been shown to have a distinct, more partisan-driven effect on public opinion than information and communication shared on traditional media. (Baum & Potter, 2019)

Theoretical Mechanisms and Argument

Between these four methods for political actors to influence trade preferences- political rhetoric, sharing academic/expert sources, traditional media, and social media- I expect significant variation through two mechanisms: partisan support/opposition and credibility. First looking at partisan support, the effect of political messaging on public opinions varies significantly by political affiliation through partisan motivated-reasoning. (Bolsen, Druckman, & Cook, 2014). In what can basically be thought of as in-group vs. out-group partisanship, when a source is perceived as partisan and political, it will positively affect the opinions of those in the same party as the source, but negatively affect the opinions of those in the opposite party. (Bolsen, Druckman, & Cook, 2014) For example, when a source of information is perceived as strongly partisan from a Democratic source, it will have high partisan support and be strongly supported by Democrats, and will have high partisan opposition and be strongly opposed by Republicans. Next looking at credibility, the trade preferences of an individual can only be influenced by sources that are trusted as being accurate and reliable. (Dür & Sclippak, 2020). Whether it is because of partisanship, where you think your political allies are credible and your opponents are not, or simply trust in the source to be unbiased, legitimate, and accurate, an information-sharing medium must be deemed credible by an individual to have a positive effect on their trade preferences, or not credible to have a negative effect. In the figure below, I have applied these mechanisms to each of my four communication mediums to visualize how that medium would be perceived by an individual in the same party (in-group) as the political leader

sharing the information, and of the opposite party (out-group) of the political leader sharing the information.

MEDIUM	In-Group Response	Out-Group Response
Political Rhetoric		
Academic Research/ Expert Opinion		
Traditional Media		
Social Media		

First looking at rhetoric from a political leader, it can be expected that the effectiveness of this method at influencing trade preferences will fall along party lines. Because this method is purely political, with political arguments and thoughts being shared by a political leader, partisan support and credibility can be expected to be very high among individuals in the same party as the political leader who is trying to influence them, and partisan opposition can be expected to be very high, and credibility very low, among individuals of the opposite party. Next looking at the method of sharing academic research and expert opinions, this method is not inherently political

because academic and expert sources are generally considered to be non-biased, and are highly credible because they are backed by scientific evidence or expert knowledge. There may be slight partisan support amongst individuals in the same party because they still align with the political leader that's sharing the academic research, and there may be a slight hit to the perceived credibility amongst individuals in the opposite party because of the fact that an opposing political leader is sharing it, which may make the individual question the credibility of the research or expert opinion that is being shared, but generally you would expect partisanship to be very low, and credibility to be very high for this method of sharing information. Looking at traditional media, when the news source is of the same political orientation as the individual it is attempting to influence, it will have somewhat high partisan support and credibility, but not very high partisan support because journalists will still be expected to be somewhat objective, and not very high credibility because there will always be some questions about accuracy and objectivity in reporting. When the news source is of the opposite political orientation, there will of course be some partisan opposition, but also still some credibility due to, at least the idea, of some journalistic and objectivity, even if the source is biased. Finally, looking at social media, you can expect partisan support or opposition to be very high along party lines because it is generally easy for individuals to identify whether the source of social media content is politically aligned with them or not. You can also expect credibility to be very low, regardless of party, because the accuracy of content sources may not be easily verified, social media misinformation is so common, and because most people know— *you shouldn't believe everything you read on the internet.*

As governments and political leaders seek to build support for changes in trade policy, it is necessary for them to understand how to most effectively influence members of their own

party, the opposite party, and the mass public. I argue that there is significant variation in the effectiveness of their different potential mediums of communication and information sharing at influencing the trade preferences of the mass public, and constituencies within the mass public.

Hypotheses

As I expect political rhetoric to have very high partisan support and very high credibility amongst individuals who are in the same party as the political leader sharing that rhetoric, I expect political rhetoric to have a very high overall effect on those individual's trade preferences. As this is the only medium with both very high partisan support and very high credibility in the same party, I expect it to be the most effective at changing trade preferences within the same party. Conversely, at the same time, as the only medium with very high partisan opposition and very low credibility in the opposite party, I also expect it to be the least effective at changing trade preferences in the opposite party.

H1: *Political rhetoric is the most effective communication method for changing trade preferences of those in the same party, and least effective for changing trade preferences of those in the opposite party.*

As I expect the sharing of academic research and expert opinions to be minimally influenced by partisan considerations, and I expect credibility to be very high, regardless of partisan affiliation, I expect this medium of sharing information to be somewhat effective at positively influencing the trade preferences of those in the opposite party. As this is the method that individuals of the opposite party are expected to perceive as most credible, and have the least partisan opposition to, I expect it to be the most effective at changing those individuals trade preferences. Additionally, as sharing academic research and expert opinions will likely be deemed highly credible by both those in the same party as the political leader sharing them, and

those that are not, and because this is the only method that I expect to have a positive effect on the trade preferences, of both those in the same party, and those that are not, I expect this to be the most effective method for changing the trade preferences of the overall, general public.

H2: *Academic research/expert opinion sharing is the most effective communication method for changing trade preferences of those in the opposite party, and of the general public.*

Finally, as I expect the sharing and promotion of social media posts to be minimally trusted by all, and because there is also high partisan opposition by those in the opposite party, I expect it to be the least effective method for influencing preferences of the public overall. Additionally, as the only method untrusted in the same party, it will also be the least effective in the same party.

H3: *Social media post sharing and promoting is the least effective communication method for changing trade preferences in the same party and overall.*

Research Design

To test my hypotheses about the effects of various methods of political communication and information sharing on individual level trade preferences, I will be conducting a priming experiment on a sample of 4,000 United States citizens over the minimum voting age of 18, representative of the nation's voting population. The experiment will be conducted digitally through SurveyMonkey, and respondents will come from the firm's 175 million registered global users who are recruited by an opt-in method. These respondents will be split up evenly between five groups— one control group, and four treatment groups for the four methods I have outlined for political communication. Respondents will first be asked their political affiliation, and a set of demographic questions based on variables that have been identified in extant literature as having an effect on individual-level trade preferences. These will include their gender

(Mansfield, Mutz, and Silver, 2015), age (Schaffer and Spilker, 2019), income (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009), race (Guisinger, 2017), education-level (Bearce and Moya, 2020), employment industry (Schaffer and Spilker, 2019), and health (Nowakowski, 2021). These variables will all be controlled for in the sample selection by block randomization so that the distribution of these variables in each of the five sample groups match, as closely as possible, the distribution in the United States population. This means, for example, if we know that the median household income in the United States is around $70,000, we will distribute the sample into groups so that each group has a median household income of around $70,000. If we know that the racial breakdown of the United States is around 59% white, 19% Hispanic, 14% Black, and 6% Asian, we will distribute the sample into groups that are roughly 59% White, 19% Hispanic, 14% Black, and 6% Asian. Data from the 2020 U.S. Census will be used for the information on U.S. population demographics, and data from the Gallup, Inc. polling firm for the information on U.S. political affiliation identification.

Experimental Groups

The sample for this experiment will be split into five groups of 800 respondents. One experimental group will be a control group that will not be primed with any method of political communication or information to establish a baseline understanding of the individual-level trade preferences of the United States population. The remaining respondents will be selected into treatment groups. These treatment groups will then be split into sub-groups with half of each treatment group being respondents in the same party as the communication source (in-group), and half being respondents from the opposite party (out-group). Those sub-groups will then be divided even further with half being primed with pro-trade communications and half being

primed with anti-trade communications, effectively in total making 16 treatment sub-groups. The priming that will be received in each of the treatment groups is broken down as follows:

The first treatment group in my sample will be primed with political rhetoric and communications that come directly from a politician that is aligned with either the Democratic or Republican parties. Because individuals can be expected to have their own personal opinions about real politicians, based on any range of factors, I will avoid using rhetoric from actual politicians in this experiment. Instead, respondents will be shown a written excerpt from a mock speech, interview, or debate, and they will be told that it came from the "2024 Democratic nominee for President" or the "2024 Republican nominee for President." This rhetoric will either be in favor of increasing, or decreasing, trade between the United States and other unnamed countries. Rhetoric in favor of increasing trade will speak persuasively about the importance of lowering the cost of goods for US citizens, while rhetoric against trade will speak persuasively about the importance of preserving jobs for US citizens.

The second treatment group in my sample will be primed with academic research or expert opinions that are shared or promoted by a politician and political party. The academic research will come in the form of the abstract of a study published by a reputable research institution: the University of Maryland, College Park. Some of the respondents will read about a study that identifies a relationship between trade and a 15% reduction in the costs of goods, and some of the respondents will read about a study that identifies a relationship between trade and a 15% increase in unemployment rates. The expert opinion will come in the form of a quote from a policy-maker who is described as "one of the United States' foremost experts on trade policy." Some of the respondents will read a quote that describes trade as key to decreasing the cost of goods for US citizens, some will read a quote that describes trade as the single-greatest threat to

US manufacturing jobs. This academic research or expert opinion will be introduced as having been "shared by the Democratic Party and 2024 Democratic nominee for President" or "shared by the Republican Party and 2024 Republican nominee for President."

The third treatment group in my sample will be primed with traditional media that is commonly understood to be aligned with one political party. This will come in the form of a headline and excerpt from a print/digital news article, or a quote from a television news anchor. The reporting will either highlight decreased costs of goods in the wake of a relevant trade agreement recently signed by the United States, or identify increased unemployment in the wake of a relevant trade agreement recently signed by the United States. The print/digital news article will be identified as having been published in the New York Times which is assumed to be associated with the Democratic Party, or the New York Post which is assumed to be associated with the Republican Party. The television report will be identified as having been quoted from an anchor on MSNBC which is assumed to be associated with the Democratic Party, or from an anchor on Fox News which is assumed to be associated with the Republican Party.

The fourth, and final, treatment group in my sample will be primed with social media posts that are shared by a politician and political party. To avoid being interpreted as direct political rhetoric, this will come in the form of the politician and political party sharing trade-related social media posts that were initially posted by an unrelated, not widely known, third-party. The posts will be phrased as personal opinions, either "We need to save jobs and make things in America!" or "We need to bring prices down and open up trade!". The posts will be identified to respondents as having been "retweeted on Twitter and shared on Facebook by the Democratic Party and 2024 Democratic nominee for President" or "retweeted on Twitter and shared on Facebook by the Republican Party and 2024 Republican nominee for President."

Empirical Analysis

In the control group and each of the four treatment groups, the final phase of the experimental survey will ask respondents the broad, following question to establish their individual-level trade preferences: "How do you feel about the United States' current level of trade?" They will answer this question on a five-point ordinal scale of "very good", "somewhat good", "neutral", "somewhat bad", or "very bad". These responses will be input into a new, novel dataset on the effect of different methods of political communication on the individual-level unit of analysis on trade preferences. To analyze this data, I will take the mean estimates for each of my response categories (very good, somewhat good, neutral, somewhat bad, very bad) by each treatment sub-category (pro-trade, same-party political rhetoric; anti-trade, same-party political rhetoric; pro-trade, opposite-party political rhetoric; etc.). Then, I will simplify the responses by merging the "very good" and "somewhat good" responses into a new "good" response category and the "very bad" and "somewhat bad" responses into a new "bad" response category. I will then run a t-test to identify the difference in means between the control and treatment sub-groups. These results would be organized into a table like the mock figure below, showing the mean response for each treatment sub-group and, in parentheses, the difference in means from the control group.

RESPONSES	CONTROL	POLITICAL RHETORIC				ACADEMIC RESEARCH				TRADITIONAL MEDIA				SOCIAL MEDIA			
		IN-GROUP		OUT-GROUP		IN-GROUP		OUT-GROUP		IN-GROUP		OUT-GROUP		IN-GROUP		OUT-GROUP	
		PRO	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*	*PRO*	*ANTI*
Good	15	30 (+15)	4 (-11)	6 (-9)	24 (+9)												
Bad	25	19 (-6)	35 (+10)	32 (+7)	24 (-1)												
Neutral	60	51 (-9)	61 (+1)	62 (+2)	52 (-8)												

Finally, I will use the difference in means results in equations that identify the total effect of each treatment.

Effect on Same Party = $\Delta\bar{x}$(in-group, pro-trade, good response) + $\Delta\bar{x}$(in-group, anti-trade, bad response)
Effect on Opposite Party = $\Delta\bar{x}$(out-group, pro-trade, good response) + $\Delta\bar{x}$(out-group, anti-trade, bad response)
Effect Overall = Effect on Same Party + Effect on Opposite Party

This will give me the effect on same party, effect on opposite party, and effect overall on trade preferences for each method of communication or information sharing. I can then compare them relative to one another to determine which method is most effective or least effective in the same party, opposite party, and overall, to prove my hypotheses.

Challenges

The primary challenge of this methodology is the expensive nature of this type of research design. Where most studies will analyze accessible, affordable, existing data, this study will require a novel experiment to be conducted on thousands of respondents. This makes it one of the most expensive types of study that can be conducted in social science, and acquiring the funding to conduct it would present a significant hurdle for any researcher that wanted to do so. Further, this challenge would be even more exacerbated by increasing the sample size which a researcher would ideally do. Currently, I have estimated a sample of 4,000 respondents to be adequate for this research, but particularly given the many variables that I want to control for, and the design that calls for a control group and 16 treatment sub-groups of respondents that are relatively equally distributed by all of those control variables, a larger sample size would be preferable for the most accurate results. Unfortunately, this would make the study even more expensive and, subsequently, reduce the viability of this research design.

Implications and Conclusion

This research's most significant theoretical implication is to the burgeoning literature on elite-cueing. As was outlined in the literature review of this paper, extensive work has been done to identify when elite-cueing is most impactful on individual preferences, and which elite actors can have the greatest impact through cueing. No work before this one, however, has looked at variation in the different methods of communicating for the purpose of elite-cueing. A major new contribution of this research, therefore, is that the impact and effect of elite-cueing is not just dependent on factors related to the elite-cue giver or the elite-cue receiver, but also on the medium through which the elite-cue is delivered. In addition to being the first work to look at this variation in different communication methods on the effect of elite-cueing, it also the first look at variation in different communication methods on the effects of trade preferences specifically, which offers greater insight into how trade preferences are formed and how they can be changed. With that being said, because the theory of this research is so greatly centered around the mechanism of elite-cueing, it is also significant that the application of the theory and results of this work are not just limited to trade preferences. While this particular research design looked specifically at trade issues and offers insights into the influencers of trade preferences, the theory of this work could apply to any political issue that shares a similar level of public ignorance. Because the pre-requisite for elite-cueing and my subsequent theory is a low rate of information and understanding of the issue by the public, it would be necessary for any other issues that one attempts to apply these theories and results to, to have a similarly low rate of education and understanding. However, this could apply to many issues, particularly international relations issues which generally share that similarly low rate of public education and understanding, and could broaden the applicability and impact of this research.

Another important series of theoretical implications for this paper are related to extensions that can be done to my theories and research. Once the effect of different communication methods on trade preferences has been established, the research could be extended in a new experiment to look at the interactions between these methods which we would expect to see in practice. For example, social media can be used as a medium for sharing traditional media content or expert opinions. Political rhetoric can include references to academic research. While the research in this paper is necessary for establishing variation in individual methods, these methods will regularly be used together in reality, so it will be necessary to extend this study and identify the effect of interactions between them. Another extension that could make the results of this study more practically applicable could be to take the effect of each communication method on individual's preferences and apply it to the reach of that communication method, so that you can get a better idea of the methods actual impact on public opinion. For example, rhetoric may be much more influential than traditional media on individual's preferences, but if traditional media has a greater reach then it could have a greater overall impact on public opinion.

Next looking at the policy side, implications of this research could also be significant. By identifying the most effective method for changing trade preferences, we are providing a blueprint to government leaders, political leaders, and special interests on how to most effectively communicate to change trade preferences for the purpose of changing policy, influencing policy-makers, or winning elections. Further, the research does not just provide this blueprint for policy-makers to influence the public overall, but also for distinct political affiliations. This means that our hypothetical President from earlier in this paper knows how to appeal not just to the country in general, but also specifically to the other party, or specifically

his own party— whatever is politically necessary. This is critical for ensuring that the most effective and efficient strategy is used, allowing policy-makers to change the trade preferences of the appropriate groups with the most efficient allocation of resources. This enhanced understanding of how to most effectively change trade preferences could see trade issues become more prevalent in political discourse, subsequently leading to more volatility in, and greater public awareness of, trade policy.

This research makes significant contributions both to our understanding of how politicians can affect trade preferences, and how we can expect to see variation in the effectiveness of elite-cueing across different common methods of political communication. Through the theoretical mechanisms of partisan support/opposition and credibility, and through a priming experiment on 4,000 U.S. respondents, this paper and research outline can serve as a guide to academics and policy-makers alike for how to best understand the way that governments, political leaders, and parties can most effectively change the individual-level trade preferences of the public.

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