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Online Appendix: press.princeton.edu/books/winners-and-losers

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Beyond the Conventional Wisdom

Kevin Watje manufactures garbage trucks in Iowa. He knows a lot more about international trade than most Americans because his company gets the steel it uses in its trucks from China. Trump's trade war with China has made obtaining materials much more expensive for his company. Yet when a reporter interviewed this Trump supporter about his views on trade, he remained steadfast in his support for both Trump and his trade policies, suggesting that we "got to do what we've got to do." When asked about this larger goal, he described his quandary:

I get it, there is an imbalance of trade, and that needs to be dealt with. And I support him in that, but we just want to make trucks out here, O.K.? And I understand it needs to be done, and I support his efforts, but I think it's been adding a lot of stress to our company because of these tariffs and how it's disrupted our supply chain.¹

Pressed further by the reporter about why he supports a policy that is personally hurting him and his company, Kevin explains,

There's men and women that go to war and put their lives at stake. And we're Americans, we all ought to fight this fight with our president. And we're not risking the things that soldiers do to keep our future safe and prosperous. So, I think it's a small price to pay. I think we ought to stand in there and help him.

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Kevin may be unusual in his level of knowledge about how he and his company are affected by trade, but the way in which he thinks about where he stands on trade is more commonplace. It has less to do with how he is personally affected by the policies in the short term than about broader, often symbolic long-term objectives.

This book examines how Americans decide what they think about international trade. Some scholars question whether they even think about it at all. But in the twenty-first century, globalization of the world economy is difficult to ignore. People know that products and services come from all over the world, that globalization is an inevitable fact of everyday life. But is this development something they welcome or something they view as best avoided, if at all possible?

From the initial conversations about trade that I had with everyone from neighbors to participants in random national surveys, three general observations emerged, themes that seemed to me to contradict much academic thinking about mass opinion on trade. First, for most Americans, globalization is something happening “out there,” away from their everyday lives. Unlike Kevin, most do not see themselves as an integral part of this narrative. For example, a consistent majority of Americans say that their families’ personal finances are unaffected by international trade in either positive or negative ways.² While I’m certain that economists and policymakers would beg to differ, it is nonetheless striking that most Americans see it that way.

Second, when people talk about what they like about international trade, they seldom talk about economic principles. For economists, there are two standard reasons that trade makes sense as a mutually beneficial enterprise.³ One logic, credited to Adam Smith, is that specialization saves everyone time and money.⁴ People can produce more things of value if each person does one thing instead of trying to do everything for themselves. By trading for other things that they need, production is more efficient, and everyone gets more of what they need than they would working on their own. I have once, and only once, made my own butter. It was interesting, but highly inefficient relative to buying it at the store.

A later extension of the logic in favor of free trade is more complex. In his theory of comparative advantage, David Ricardo argued that international trade was mutually beneficial due to differences in countries’ capacities to produce goods. A country does not have to be best at anything to gain from trade, but mutual benefits occur when countries specialize in things they are *relatively* better at, even though they may not have an absolute advantage in those areas. I find that even college-educated Americans are not thinking

about these logics when asked about international trade. They lack confidence in their understanding of the expansive and complicated range of large-scale interactions constituting the international economy.

When average Americans who favor trade articulate its benefits, these virtues are notably absent. For example, even among those who are enthusiastic about trade, few wax poetic about the wonders of the invisible hand, the efficiency of market specialization, or even the lower cost of consumer goods. And not a single individual mentioned the importance of trade relationships to the liberal international order, a common refrain among political scientists. This is not to say that these ideas are completely absent from their reasoning, but they speak a different language about trade from that of economists and political scientists.

A third observation is that despite limited economic knowledge, people do, nonetheless, hold opinions about international trade, even quite strong opinions in some cases. People are not so much misinformed as they hold alternative, lay theories about how international trade works. But again, contrary to what much of the academic literature suggests, these opinions are seldom expressed as a matter of personal economic costs and benefits. Instead, the mass public's views are rooted in their understanding of the psychology of human interaction, projected onto their nation's relationship with foreign countries. The way ordinary Americans think about trade is very different from the way economists and policy wonks think about it.

Previous work on how people form attitudes toward trade has focused almost exclusively on people's *economic* reasons for supporting or opposing trade. Consequently our understanding of public opinion has been incomplete. This book addresses that gap by focusing on the lay theories and internal logic the public uses to make judgments about international trade.

I begin by briefly rehashing what we thought we knew about how the public formed its opinions on trade. I then outline an alternative framework that has emerged from my observations over fifteen years of studying the American public. Fortunately, this time period happens to have been a particularly tumultuous time for American attitudes toward trade, thus shedding light not only on how people form their views, but also when and why they change them.

The Conventional Wisdom

There are two well-known theories that have been offered to explain the origins of mass opinions on trade. Both focus on individuals' pocketbooks and how they are personally affected by trade. According to the Heckscher-Ohlin

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model, trade preferences depends on a person's skill level and what kinds of products their home country produces most efficiently. In a high-skill country like the US, highly skilled people should favor trade, and low-skill individuals should oppose it. An alternative theory, known as the Ricardo-Viner model, suggests that people base their opinions about trade on the industry in which they are employed. If their industry benefits from trade by exporting goods, they favor it. But if their industry must compete with foreign imports, they will oppose international trade.

Such highly rational expectations are common in economic analyses, but they seem much less plausible from the perspective of what we know about American political behavior. Situations in which people have been found to express self-interest-based policy preferences are known to be rare. They are limited to simple, straightforward issues, or to populations of especially sophisticated people.⁵ Trade policy does not fit that mold well. As an economic issue, trade is complicated, abstract, and multi-faceted. There is a lot for people to consider and potentially synthesize, particularly when trade has simultaneous positive and negative effects on people as workers, as employers, and as consumers. As one study recently concluded, "The sheer complexity of the global economy makes it difficult for economic actors—and the scholars who study them—to predict how policies would affect material interests."⁶

Nonetheless, it is not difficult to convince people that there is merit to theories rooted in self-interest, and not only because economists have widely endorsed this idea. Media coverage also promotes this idea as a "natural" reaction to the loss of jobs that is caused by trade.⁷ Apparently humans have a well-documented psychological tendency to overestimate the impact of self-interest on *others'* attitudes and behaviors,⁸ even when they are not personally influenced by it. In the context of international trade, this means it is easy to sell the idea that opinions boil down to how it affects people's pocketbooks.

Why have alternative explanations for trade preferences been so slow to emerge? My best guess is that this is because people seldom find what they are not looking for. Initially the economic studies supporting self-interest-based interpretations were exclusively aggregate-level analyses based on measures of collective behavior within geographic units of some kind. When scholars turned to individual-level survey data to test these theories, some findings still seemed supportive of skill-based self-interest because education level was equated with skill level. Education consistently plays a role in promoting support for international trade.⁹

Studies of individuals as well as analyses of geographic aggregates agree on the importance of education in predicting trade preferences. Higher levels of education are directly related to support for open trade, even when taking characteristics such as income into account. Where these studies disagree is in the interpretation of what the relationship between education and trade support means. When economists are interpreting this evidence, education is often viewed as an indicator of a person's job skills. Political psychologists, in contrast, are likely to note that education is associated with a wide range of potential explanations for trade preferences, including many that have nothing to do with whether trade threatens a person's livelihood. For example, low levels of education are terrific predictors of negative attitudes toward outgroups, whether domestic or international. Low levels of education also support the tendency to see the world in an "us versus them" framework.

Survey data ultimately made it possible to distinguish among these various interpretations of education. People could be asked about their industry of employment, as well as their skill levels, and this could be matched with official data on how industries were affected by trade, as well as with occupational wages. The overall consensus from these studies is that personal economic self-interest plays little, if any, role in people's opinions on trade.¹⁰ With the exception of varying interpretations of education's impact, relationships between labor market attributes and trade policy preferences do not hold up in US survey data.¹¹

Indeed, the behavioral revolution in international relations increasingly suggests that inferring ordinary people's preferences based on complex economic models can lead scholars astray. Thus a second wave of studies of trade opinions has pursued a variety of alternative, largely non-economic explanations. This book attempts to pick up where the early explanations left off, focusing on explanations for trade preferences that have surprisingly little to do with economics and far more to do with basic human psychology.

To be clear, the fact that personal self-interest matters little to trade preferences does not imply that Americans are altruistic or that the economic impact of trade does not matter to them. When contrasting self-interested and "sociotropic" predictors of trade preferences, that is, how a person believes he or she is affected by trade as opposed to how he or she believes the country *as a whole* is affected, scholars have at times equated sociotropic impact with altruism.¹² This characterization overlooks the fact that there are many reasons that people base their policy views on perceived

national impact, reasons that have nothing to do with altruism as traditionally understood. Rooting for the home team to win is not an altruistic act.

Although personal economic interests may not predict trade preferences, perceptions of how trade affects *national* economic conditions, that is, sociotropic perceptions, matter a great deal.¹³ People's perceptions of the national-level impact of trade may or may not be accurate, but these perceptions are key to understanding their opinions on trade policy.¹⁴ Regardless of how selfless or selfish one might be, it is simply much easier for people to connect policy decisions made in Washington to those policies' collective national consequences than to connect events in their daily lives to decisions made in Washington. Surprisingly, even something as gut-wrenching as losing a job is widely viewed as a personal rather than a political problem; unemployment is seldom a cause for a change in political attitudes or behavior.¹⁵ Far from being a default reaction, politicizing personal economic experiences is difficult and uncommon.

This is surprising to many because personal experience is such an easily accessible source of information. But the process of politicizing personal experience involves multiple steps, any one of which can break down the process. In the case of international trade, first, ordinary people need to be able to formulate accurate assessments of how trade affects their personal incomes and purchasing power. Second, they must attribute these effects to actions (or inaction) by government leaders. Finally, they must link the personal economic consequences of trade to support for specific policies. What is depicted by some as a "puzzling disconnection between material interests and policy preferences"¹⁶ does not seem puzzling or even unusual to those who study how ordinary Americans form policy preferences. Across a wide range of issues beyond trade, evidence of self-interested policy preferences is uncommon.¹⁷

Most Americans have a difficult time figuring out when a policy aligns with their personal financial interests. There are some exceptions, of course, but trade policy does not seem likely to be one of them. It is very difficult to observe directly the positive and negative effects of trade on individual American lives. With the exception of when a person knows that he or she has lost a job due to trade, this is a complex calculation.¹⁸ The effects of trade on the lives of people overseas are even more difficult for Americans to observe.¹⁹

The progression of research on how people form attitudes toward trade closely parallels the progression in studies of how the national economy affects voting. Initially, the idea that people voted their pocketbooks was

considered a “self-evident truth.”²⁰ But as individual-level data became more widely available with the advent of representative national probability surveys, serious questions were raised about this interpretation.²¹ When family financial self-interest did not predict voting behavior as had been anticipated, some explained this by saying scholars simply had not measured self-interest properly. Others suggested that perhaps it was group-based financial interests that mattered.²² But neither of these approaches did much to resolve the inconsistency between aggregate patterns that seemed to support the idea that people voted their pocketbooks, and individual-level evidence suggesting that they did not. This disjuncture was resolved to some extent by the concept of “sociotropic” economic voting. People did not vote on the basis of how they themselves had been affected economically, but they did vote on the basis of how they thought the nation as a whole had been affected.

Studies of trade preferences have followed a very similar path. In contrast to the lack of evidence that personal financial self-interest drives attitudes toward trade, there is clear evidence that the perceived collective effects of trade on the country as a whole matter a great deal to people’s policy preferences.²³ Here, as in many other policy domains, sociotropic perceptions, that is, beliefs about the impact of trade policy on the country as a whole, are more easily linked to policy preferences. What is unique about international trade is that in forming opinions, one can potentially consider not only its perceived effects on one’s own country, but also its perceived effects on trading partner countries. In this sense I have termed it doubly sociotropic because people may consider trade’s impact on trading partner countries as well as its impact on the US.

Conceptualizing a Global Economy

It is easy enough to criticize Americans’ lack of formal knowledge about economics and international trade. But it is worth taking a step back to remember that the sheer idea of a *national* economy is highly abstract, and only a recent phenomenon. One hundred years ago, people did not talk about something called the “national economy.” Unlike the national anthem, or the American flag, there was no national economy until social scientists imagined it into existence in the wake the Great Depression. Indeed, 1934 was the first time the US government had a quantitative indicator of how things were going in the country as whole, something they initially dubbed “National Income.” Before that, concepts like GDP were not a part of public consciousness.²⁴

Today it seems as natural to talk about how “the economy” is doing as it is to discuss sports scores. We forget that economies are highly abstract entities, reified at regular intervals by economists and journalists. We don’t see them or touch them, and we rely a great deal on experts to tell us in what shape they are in. Few people would have enough personal exposure to the extensive American economy to assess how it is doing across this large country were it not for regularly released government statistics.

If the notion of a national economy is abstract, then an international economy is even more incomprehensible. Global trade has brought about relationships on a scale and at a level of abstraction that was previously unimaginable. Because these relationships are indirect and typically mediated by complex international markets, they are extremely abstract and difficult for most of us to wrap our heads around. What’s more, when these abstract entities seem distant and divorced from everyday life, people may feel the lack of control that naturally comes with not understanding how distant processes work.

Because humans are guided by a psychology that is deeply rooted in concrete, face-to-face, interpersonal interactions, our thought processes are poorly suited to comprehend large-scale, complex systems such as international trade. To deal with this problem, people often try to extend what they know about human interaction to understand international interactions, an approach that does not always serve them well.

Relationships and interactions on scales beyond our comprehension lead to some predictable responses. One is to simplify the target of our consternation down to something concrete that we do feel we can understand. When someone tells us that balancing the federal budget is just like balancing the family checkbook, then we are reassured by the familiarity, even if it is misleading.²⁵ Likewise, the stories we tell one another about trade can influence the attitudes we form, regardless of their veracity. Whether the stories are about foreigners stealing our jobs or about poisoned dog treats from China, once these ideas are reduced to compelling narratives, they can spread quickly.

Such narratives and metaphors encourage people’s sense that international trade is a source of risky relationships, unlike relationships with people we can see, hear, and know firsthand.²⁶ After all, we tell children at a young age not to speak to strangers, let alone to have “relationships” with people in far-flung countries. Distant relationships are naturally seen as less trustworthy and reliable than those close to home. Thus globalization runs headlong against the grain of much of basic human psychology, asking us to trust

distant, impersonal, and dissimilar others, and to cede the control we may feel over at least our immediate environments.

For someone who has never thought much about whether trade is beneficial or harmful, intuition based on everyday experience is a natural starting point. Americans begin by forming lay theories about how their day-to-day lives are influenced by trade.²⁷ Given an admittedly challenging task, this approach seems like a reasonable way for people to try to grasp the highly abstract concept of participating in a global economy. Indeed, one major theme running through this book is that people react to trade relationships in much the same way they do other relationships in their lives.

Competition versus Cooperation

If their opinions are not based on economic considerations, then how do Americans think about trade? The most basic difference that comes through when Americans talk about trade is whether they view it as a form of cooperation or as a source of competition. One recent observer characterized the kind of people predisposed to be unfavorable versus favorable toward globalization as either “drawbridge up” or “drawbridge down” types:

Do you think the bad things will all go away if we lock the doors? Or do you think it’s a big beautiful world out there, full of good people, if only we could all open our arms and embrace each other?²⁸

The former, “drawbridge up” types, tend to be distrustful of people beyond their borders, and fearful of being taken advantage of by others. They believe cooperation is for suckers. These are people who tend not to trust strangers and especially do not trust foreigners who seem very different from themselves.

“Drawbridge down” types, on the other hand, come out of central casting for the old Coca-Cola commercial featuring a multicultural chorus of young people from all over the world gathering on a mountaintop to sing, “I’d Like to Teach the World to Sing in Perfect Harmony.”²⁹ Of course, this characterization is overly simplistic and definitely corny. But as I describe in the chapters that follow, this warm feeling is an important part of why people who favor trade feel so positively about it.

Nonetheless, most Americans appear to view trade as a form of international competition. In a 2013 address, the economist Paul Rubin lamented this fact, noting that introductory textbooks on economics in the US mention competition eight times more often than cooperation.³⁰ Of course, most

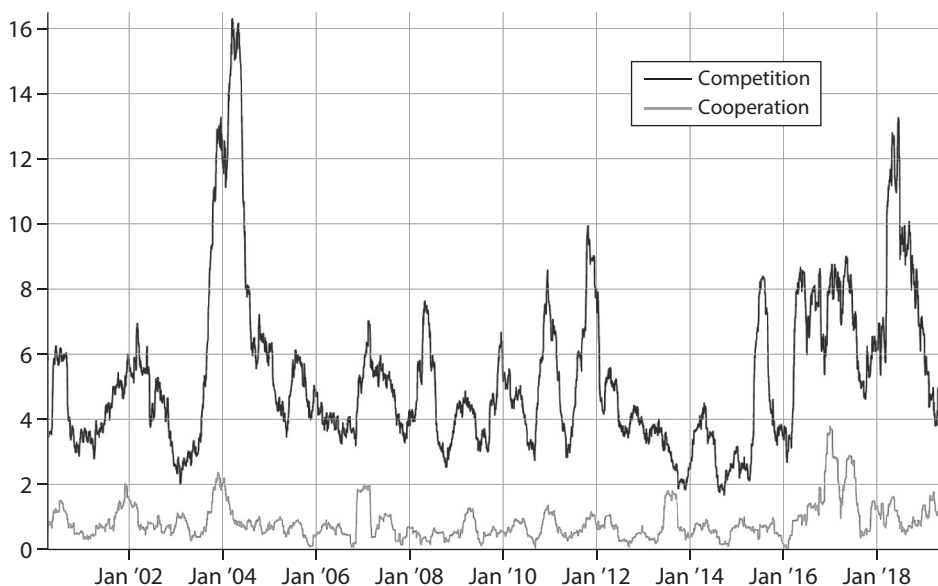


FIGURE 1.1. Extent to Which Trade Is Mentioned in Conjunction with Competition and Cooperation in Major US Newspapers, 2000–2018

Note: Lines represent the rolling average of the number of mentions of trade within the same article as either the word “competition” or the word “cooperation,” or their variants. Numbers are based on a batch download of all articles mentioning trade in major US newspapers included in the Nexis database, after extracting those articles that use this term in other contexts.

Americans do not read economics textbooks anyway. But this raises the question of which of these perspectives—the cooperative or the competitive one—dominates in popular discourse? To provide a quick answer to this question for the US, I downloaded a large quantity of text from an extensive database of major US newspapers from 2000 to the present, including all articles that met specifications indicating that international trade was being discussed in some capacity.³¹ I then plotted how many times articles mentioning trade co-occurred with the word “competition” versus “cooperation” over time, including variants of these words.

The findings in Figure 1.1 suggest that trade is overwhelmingly mentioned by the press in conjunction with competition, far more often than in conjunction with cooperation. Although this is admittedly a quick and dirty assessment of the emphasis on competition versus cooperation, regardless of the terms I used to specify these ideas, competition always dominated cooperation. Whether this coverage simply reflects the pre-existing emphasis of policymakers or helps to shape the competitive emphasis among the

public remains to be seen. But competition clearly dominates thinking about trade in the US.

The tendency to emphasize a competitive framing of trade may be responsible for many of trade's negative connotations for Americans. Whereas cooperation sounds highly moral and laudatory, and implies a win-win situation, a policy rooted in competition sounds to many like a dog-eat-dog, cut-throat situation that results in one group dominating another.³² A policy that creates winners and losers is inherently more dangerous than one rooted in cooperation.

What is ironic about this characterization is that when economists refer to trade as a policy that creates “winners” and “losers,” they are referring to the distributional consequences of trade, that is, winners and losers in different lines of work *within the home country*. For example, in the US, businesses and industries that export products generally benefit, as do employees in those lines of work. But industries that cannot compete in the global marketplace may go out of business, thus creating “losers” and unemployment among people in those industries. In contrast, when the public at large thinks about winners and losers due to trade, they are more likely to think of a competition involving the US and a trading partner country, one in which winner and loser countries must ultimately emerge.

Winners versus Losers

In the US, a common way people understand trade is by means of a competitive sports metaphor.³³ The US Department of Commerce has encouraged this framing, for example, by featuring a photo of a basketball game over a discussion of the US trade agenda.³⁴ The whole point of a competition is to determine a winner and a loser, and many Americans see trade as precisely that: a competition between nations that the US must either win or lose, with national pride on the line.³⁵ Still others view it through the closely related Darwinian metaphor of survival of the fittest. In this view, trade compels intense competition between nations, making us leaner and meaner and better at what we do. But ultimately America must destroy other economies or be destroyed, because only the strongest survive, at least so the argument goes.

When talking to Americans about trade, I was at times transported to episodes of one of my kids' favorite shows on The Discovery Channel: *Animal Face-Off*. This program featured hypothetical battles between animals, frequently animals that would never encounter one another in real life or

who do not compete for resources due to differing territories or diets. A computer-animated fight scene nonetheless allowed them to duke it out until one or the other was eaten alive, drowned, crushed, or hurled off a cliff.

However illogical these programs may be, Americans love competition, particularly when their side wins.³⁶ Indeed, cross-national studies demonstrate that Americans believe in the merits of competition more than any other industrialized country in the world.³⁷ The problem posed by globalization's rise is that Americans no longer see themselves as the sure-fire winners of this competition. Instead, they fear themselves to be potential losers in an inter-country competition. It is in this sense that Americans today complain about whether there is "a level playing field." For most members of the mass public, a desire for "fair trade" does not indicate a concern about treatment of overseas labor or the environment; instead, it means they believe the game itself is unfair, and thus they may "lose" this competition by no fault of their own. Indeed, politicians frequently reassure the American public by telling them, as the Democratic platform did in 2012, "If the playing field is level, Americans will be able to compete against every other country on Earth."³⁸ Therefore, if Americans are not "winning" in this global competition, and China is gaining ground in a zero-sum game, it must be because of a faulty playing field. The 2012 Republican platform similarly advised that, "American workers have shown that, on a truly level playing field, they can surpass the competition in international trade."³⁹

Many of the statements Americans make about trade suggest that they believe we must dominate or be dominated. To hear some tell it, when we engage in trade, we risk our very autonomy as a nation and as human beings. As one person expressed a common refrain, "The way things are going, we will all work for the Chinese one day." Thirty years ago, it was Japan that was rumored to be buying Yellowstone National Park.⁴⁰ More recently, one American pondered, "I wonder if some day we will sell California to China."⁴¹

Notably, the disclaimer for *Animal Face-Off* warns, "Since the fights are created artificially, results in real life may vary." Likewise, I am unaware of any Chinese efforts to buy California, although President Trump did recently attempt to purchase Greenland.⁴² He also argued that Americans would need to learn Chinese if his challenger were elected.⁴³

Whereas economists view trade as a form of cooperation for mutual benefit, the public sees it as a high stakes competition that the US could lose. For those who see global interconnections as threatening, a trade negotiation is just another episode of *Sperm Whale versus Colossal Squid* (spoiler alert: Sperm Whale wins).⁴⁴

The increasing concerns about trade witnessed in the contemporary political environment have a lot to do with public attention focused on the rise of China. It is not that Americans oppose the idea of trade per se; but many see trade as benefitting “them” at “our” expense, and China is now perceived as a much stronger country than it used to be. If Americans could be assured that they would come out on top in what they conceive of as an inter-country competition involving trade with China, then they would be fine with it. Trade has essentially become another weapon to use in a great power competition.

Ingroup-Outgroup Dynamics

Once an enterprise becomes “us versus them” in people’s minds, there are well-known psychological processes that kick into gear. In particular, when relationships are viewed through the lens of competition rather than cooperation, people assume a defensive posture, and the psychology of intergroup competition comes to the forefront. Given the strong emphasis on competition in discussions of trade in the US, the most useful psychological theories for understanding Americans’ trade preferences come from studies of domestic intergroup relations and ingroup-outgroup dynamics. Thus throughout the book, I draw on psychological constructs to identify who is most likely to view trade through a competitive versus a cooperative lens. These measures do not ask about people’s opinions on trade at all, but instead identify individual differences tied to tendencies toward ingroup favoritism.

For example, in some studies, I use social dominance orientation (SDO), an index developed to tap how appropriate a person thinks it is for some groups in society to dominate others.⁴⁵ Being high in SDO means a person prefers hierarchy to equality. A sample item from this index asks people to agree or disagree with statements such as, “Superior groups should dominate inferior groups.” Those high in social dominance naturally care a lot about being on the dominant, winning side of competitive contexts like trade.

SDO is known to correlate strongly with authoritarianism,⁴⁶ that is believing in the importance of obedience to authority, which is measured in a totally different way, asking about the kinds of child-rearing practices people favor. For example, people are asked which is a more important quality to instill in children, independence or respect for their elders? Both authoritarianism and SDO are known to be tied to ethnocentrism, that is, racist beliefs and attitudes. More important for my purposes, they also have implications for trade when it is viewed as a competition between ingroups

and outgroups.⁴⁷ Likewise, national superiority, a sense that one's own nation is better than other nations, is tied to ingroup favoritism and trade preferences.⁴⁸ In slightly different ways, each of these tendencies identifies people who see their ingroups as superior to an outgroup. Although these are all distinct concepts, they overlap a great deal. What they share is the tendency to think in black and white, "us versus them" terms.

Since a major distinction in Americans' views of trade is whether they view it primarily as cooperation or competition, I also include scales developed to identify highly-competitive versus less-competitive individuals. Some people can't walk away from a game of checkers without establishing a winner and a loser, whereas winning is less of a motivator for others. People also vary in whether they see competition as a beneficial or a destructive force. One widely-used question asks people if they think competition is harmful and brings out the worst in people, or whether competition is basically good because it stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas. Competitiveness intensifies ingroup favoritism, and Americans are uniquely strong believers in the value of competition. For this reason, I also identify those who view trade in "zero-sum" terms with respect to its impact on jobs. Those who view job gains in one country as tied to job losses in another country can be said to view trade's impact as zero sum.

In the context of trade, public perceptions of threat from outgroups play an important role in this story. The outside threat was Japan in the 1980s, whereas China is seen as the enemy today. Perceptions of threat can trigger ingroup favoritism and negative outgroup attitudes among those most susceptible to it. For example, theories of authoritarian "activation" posit that when individuals with certain authoritarian traits "perceive that the moral order is falling apart, the country is losing its coherence and cohesiveness, diversity is rising, and our leadership seems (to them) to be suspect or not up to the needs of the hour, it is as though a button is pushed on their forehead that says 'in case of moral threat, lock down the borders, kick out those who are different, and punish those who are morally deviant.'"⁴⁹

In other words, for people sensitive to threat, ingroup favoritism can be intensified by threat. For example, "China bashing" rhetoric can elevate people's sense of anxiety and focus them on a threat and the need to confront that enemy.⁵⁰ This constellation of closely related characteristics—social dominance, authoritarianism, national superiority and ethnocentrism—all strengthen ingroup favoritism. They are important to understanding mass opinions on trade because trade preferences are heavily influenced by ingroup favoritism.

What is especially noteworthy is that these are all also characteristics tied closely to education levels. Less-educated people are higher in authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. They also tend to be higher in ethnocentrism and to hold more discriminatory views toward outgroups. Less-educated Americans are also higher in their sense of national superiority. The important role of education in predicting support for trade is thus subject to numerous alternative interpretations beyond its potential to represent a worker's skill level.

As documented in the many studies that follow, whether one sees trade as a cooperative endeavor or a competitive threat does not, by itself, determine whether a person supports trade or opposes it. If trade is viewed as cooperation, people are generally favorable toward it as a means to better relationships and more peaceful international relations. But if trade is viewed as a competition, whether people favor it or not depends on whether they think "we" or "they" are winning. Competitions are naturally more popular when the home team is seen as winning, and more unpopular when it is perceived to be losing.

A Psychological Perspective on Opinions toward Trade

My central purpose in this book is to bridge a gap in our understanding of the causes and consequences of American attitudes toward international trade. It is not intended to be a treatise on why one should or should not support free trade, nor is it an analysis of the positive and negative economic consequences of trade. I leave those tasks to economists. Instead, it is an attempt to understand why mass opinion toward trade appears to have been on a rollercoaster over the last twenty years, with support rising and falling by double-digit percentages during short periods of time, and changing partisan alliances—all leaving one to wonder what could possibly account for this turmoil in mass support.

The book is also a plea for economists and political scientists who study public opinion and voting behavior to pool their considerable resources. Both groups study public reactions to trade and their influence on politics and policy. But their depictions of how the public operates in this realm could not be further apart. Based on aggregate-level evidence, economists generally conclude that Americans understand how trade affects them and hold political leaders accountable at the ballot box for the effects of trade on their personal financial well-being. In this view, trade opinions simply reflect democratic accountability for the economic consequences of trade. Political

scientists using survey-based evidence present a starkly contrasting picture suggesting that people seldom understand their position in the international economy, and that whatever understanding they have is unlikely to be connected to their vote choice. This book alone cannot definitively reconcile this evidence, but my hope is that it will stimulate a dialogue that can bring these two versions of reality closer together.

Why It Matters

At the time I began writing this book, many felt that understanding public attitudes toward trade was of little importance. Trade policies were made by elites, after all, and the public did not pay enough attention to trade for their opinions to matter to elites. Since the 1970s, a largely pro-trade consensus among elites had kept globalization moving forward without much fear of public reaction.⁵¹ But that has changed. Since the 2016 election, trade and globalization have received increasing attention, thus making them more salient as potential election issues than they have been in the last several decades.

In the latter part of the book, I explore two consequences of trade opinions for American society. Electoral consequences are typically first on people's minds, and my evidence suggests that such effects can occur, although they are not as common as has been assumed. Even when trade features prominently as an issue in voting decisions, it is but one of many issues. Most importantly, there is little if any evidence of political accountability for trade's impact. Even when trade opinions help to change people's votes, these opinions are not reflections of how individuals have been helped or hurt by trade policies.

Secondly, I present evidence that public attitudes toward trade have social consequences. America's cross-national relationships affect how Americans think and feel about groups of people different from themselves, both domestically and overseas. When politicians decide to whip up frenzies of anti-trade sentiment for possible electoral gain, this affects everyday interactions in a diversified America. Likewise, when they opt to promote a sense of solidarity and inter-country similarity, this has implications for how people in a diversified America treat one another.

The way elites portray international trade and the way the public talks about it are central to the quality of intergroup relations in the United States. Because the public tends to think about international trade the same way it thinks about small-scale social interaction and exchange, this relationship turns out to be a two-way street. Just as attitudes toward foreigners and people of other races or ethnicities affect attitudes toward international

trade, the way that Americans are encouraged to view international trade—as a competitive threat or as an opportunity for cooperation with often dissimilar others—can change their attitudes toward “others,” both global and domestic.

Chapter Overviews

In the chapters that follow, I use a wealth of survey and experimental data to explore the ways in which these central themes influence American reactions to trade. When trade is viewed as a form of cooperation, it is regarded as fundamentally different from when it is viewed as a form of competition. And even among those who similarly view it as a form of competition, it matters whether they see their nation as winners or losers in this competition. Although my focus is primarily on American mass opinion, I use parallel studies of Canadian and American public opinion toward trade to illuminate how the way in which a country thinks about itself can alter the dynamics of trade preferences.

Whenever possible, I draw from the respondents’ open-ended comments to illustrate my quantitative findings. These verbatim comments are shown in italics throughout. Although I have left the respondents’ capitalizations intact to reflect their own emphases, I have occasionally corrected spelling and added punctuation to their comments to avoid distracting readers from my central purpose in including their thoughts. More detailed analyses pertaining to findings in each chapter are included in chapter appendices linked to each chapter. Those interested in the original sources of data discussed throughout will find descriptions in the appendix. Throughout the text there are references to figures and tables for supplementary analyses included in an online appendix. A link to this appendix material can be found at press.princeton.edu/books/winners-and-losers.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of how Americans think about and express their views on trade in their own words. I find that there is an internal logic to their beliefs, even if it is not the same logic that economists or policymakers might offer. While relatively few Americans are familiar with the economic case for free trade,⁵² this lack of knowledge plays at best a minor role in influencing their trade preferences.

In Chapter 2 I also ask Americans to explain, in their own words, what they like and dislike about trade, both in term of its impact on the US, and in terms of its impact on other countries. There are, after all, many dimensions to this issue that might motivate the public. Trade both creates jobs and takes them away. It can be good or bad for the environment. The treatment of labor

has been argued to improve as a result of trade, while in other contexts trade is blamed for promoting sweat shops and child labor. Consumers may perceive both prices and the quality of goods to be influenced by foreign trade. Some may view it as a source of ongoing conflict between nations, whereas others argue that trade relationships are a primary reason that countries avoid going to war against one another.

Interestingly, people's views on the many dimensions of trade's impact were not as nuanced as one might expect. People seemed to either like trade or dislike it, and they perceived its consequences for the US and trading partners countries either to be entirely salutary or as all bad. The one important exception is trade's influence on job availability, where the same Americans who see trade's impact on the US as one that takes away jobs tend to see its impact on other countries as one of creating jobs. I find little consensus among Americans as to why one should support international trade, but there is strong consensus on why one should oppose it: its impact on American jobs.

Chapter 2 suggests that what scholars view as a highly complex economic issue is not so complicated when considered by ordinary Americans. Instead of complex economic calculations involving import competition or labor market differentials, trade is supported or opposed for largely expressive and symbolic reasons such as high levels of nationalism,⁵³ racial prejudice,⁵⁴ competitiveness,⁵⁵ and the general desire to "win" and dominate others.⁵⁶ Slogans such as "Foreigners are stealing our jobs" epitomize the simplistic way trade is typically presented to the public, as an appeal to ingroup loyalty and "taking care of our own." When trade opponents claim that "buying American" is a form of patriotism, or that jobs that have gone overseas are rightfully "ours," this emphasis on loyalty to the home country becomes clear.

Chapter 3 addresses the relationship between partisanship and trade preferences. Almost all controversial issues in American politics are divided along party lines, with Democrats largely on one side, and Republicans on the other. But American attitudes toward trade are unusual in this regard. Partisanship has not consistently predicted trade preferences over time. In fact, the positions of Republican and Democratic partisans on trade has flipped during the course of just the last fifteen to twenty years. From the 1990s through roughly 2008, Republicans and Democrats in the mass public had largely indistinguishable views on trade. After Barack Obama's election, Democrats in the mass public became more favorable toward trade and globalization than Republicans. But once Trump was elected, Republican views on trade became far more positive.

Such large swings on policy preferences in short periods of time underscore the malleability of opinions on international trade. In Chapter 3 I use the emphasis on trade as a form of competition to explain how that came about. I suggest that people did not dramatically change their minds about the value of these international relationships so much as their views of trade as cooperation versus competition underwent dramatic change. Among those who viewed trade as form of competition, trade as a form of dominance appealed to Republicans in a way that trade as cooperation did not.

In Chapter 4, I get to the heart of the importance of viewing trade preferences through the lens of human psychology. Because trade is widely viewed as a competition by the American public, it matters a great deal how much one feels they are a part of the home team. Because people reason about trade relationships in much the same way they reason about human relationships more generally, ingroup and outgroup sympathies play an important role.

I use a nationally-representative survey experiment to examine two distinct forms of ingroup favoritism that influence American attitudes toward trade. The first, and least surprising, is that Americans value the well-being of other Americans more than the well-being of people outside their own country. The more surprising finding is that Americans are no more supportive of a “win-win” trade policy than they are of a policy in which the US wins the same number of jobs, but our trading partner countries lose jobs. In other words, “winning” this competition is important to people; mutual benefits are not necessarily their goals.

Those Americans who care about “winning” at trade prefer policies that benefit the ingroup and *hurt the outgroup* over policies that help both their own country and trading partner countries. In other words, for a policy to elicit mass support in the US, it is important not only that the US benefit, but also that it hurt the trading partner country so that the US achieves a greater *relative advantage*. This study highlights the difficulty of judging what “fair” trade might look like in the eyes of Americans.

In Chapter 5, I go beyond examining people’s overall attitudes toward trade to better understand why trade preferences are not constant across potential trading partner countries. Why are Americans fine trading with some countries, but not others? The mass public may lack a nuanced understanding of trade, but they nonetheless have views that vary according to *the specific country* with which their country is trading. Isn’t this inconsistent? At the very least it seems implausible that these opinions vary due to complex calculations based on how their finances will be affected by trade with Mexico as opposed to Canada.

I find that people make judgments about trading with other countries the same way they decide with whom to trade sandwiches at lunch: whom do they trust? For better or worse, trust is rooted in many dimensions of similarity between people. Likewise, similar countries are deemed more worthy trade partners as well. I use an experiment embedded in a national survey to systematically alter many different types of country similarity in order to assess their effects on willingness to trade with other countries. I find that Americans are reliably more supportive of trading with countries that are similar to the US than with countries perceived to be different, regardless of the particular dimension of difference.

Interestingly, using similarities as the basis for supporting trade contrasts with one of the key reasons trade is supposed to be mutually beneficial; at least according to the Ricardian logic in favor of trade, specialization is advantageous because each country can produce whatever it produces best,⁵⁷ and then trade with other countries for other necessities. In other words, trade is advantageous because of the inherent *differences* among countries, not because of their similarities. Nonetheless, the public is more likely to support trade with other wealthy western countries that are just like the US.

Given the important role of ingroup favoritism and trust in influencing support for trade, it is natural to wonder how trade preferences are related to other forms of ingroup favoritism. In Chapter 6 I examine how racial and ethnic minorities in the United States feel about trade and how whites' racial attitudes enter into considerations involving international trade. Minority groups such as African-Americans and Hispanics tend to have lower incomes and lower levels of education, so they are more vulnerable to economic downturns and to potential job dislocations due to trade. Likewise, their occupational skills make their jobs more likely to be displaced by trade. All of these characteristics suggest they should generally be more opposed to trade than whites.

On the other hand, as members of low-status groups in American society, Blacks and Hispanics are less prone to prejudice and outgroup animosity than are whites. The extent of white Americans' prejudice toward minority outgroups is consistently greater than the animosity minority groups feel toward majority whites. These differing levels of ethnocentrism turn out to matter to trade support. As detailed in Chapter 6, for most of the last fifteen years, minorities have exhibited more *positive* attitudes toward trade than whites, thus highlighting the need for theories that take into account characteristics that go beyond economics.

The results in this chapter suggest that minorities reason differently about trade than majority whites. For example, even when the so-called winners and losers from a given trade agreement are known, minorities are more likely to value the gains to trading partners than are whites. Ingroup favoritism is a stronger force when majority whites reason about trade than when minorities do. As the US becomes a “majority minority” country, these differences will matter. When trade is framed as a form of cooperation for mutual benefit, minorities tend to hold more favorable views of trade than whites. But they hold more negative views of trade when it is framed as a competition with winners and losers.

This chapter suggests that the future framing of trade by political elites is likely to influence the kinds of people who form coalitions supporting or opposing trade. Trade as a competition with winners and losers is less likely to attract minority support. The findings in this chapter also foreshadow the ways in which the politics of white grievance is inextricably tied to the politics of international grievance. Just as many white Americans have come to believe that minorities are now taking advantage of whites, the idea that the US has been taken advantage of by the rest of the world has simultaneously gained credence. In both cases, powerful groups/nations claim to have been taken advantage of by less powerful entities.

In Chapter 7, I delve further into one of the more depressing earlier conclusions, the finding in Chapter 4 that Americans care little, or not at all, about how people in other countries are affected by international trade. Ingroups and outgroups play such a persistent role in human behavior that it is tempting to interpret these findings as mere human nature. Of course, people care about their compatriots more than foreigners in other countries. However, by replicating the exact same survey-experiment described in Chapter 4, but this time on a Canadian sample, I show how ingroup loyalties need not necessarily lead to negativity toward outgroups. In a culture with far less emphasis on competition, these same patterns are not necessarily inevitable. Although Canada is more trade-dependent than the US, Canadian citizens exhibit many of the same beliefs and hold roughly the same levels of misinformation about trade as Americans. However, my survey-experimental findings suggest that there are important differences that stem from the fact that Canadians view trade in less competitive terms. Unlike Americans, Canadians are more supportive of “win-win” trade agreements than of agreements in which they achieve greater dominance over trading partner countries by gaining at others’ expense.

Chapters 8 and 9 examine the impact of Americans' most important sources of information about trade, the mass media. Coverage of trade in the US media, like coverage of the economy more generally, tends to emphasize negative news over positive news. Media appear to play an important role in informing people's sociotropic perceptions of trade's impact on the country as whole. But even more importantly, mass media tend to frame discussions of trade's impact around sympathetic individuals who are victims of trade. Using an experimental design embedded in a national survey, in Chapter 8 I demonstrate how this prominent media framing of trade influences public support.

In Chapter 9, I examine the role of media coverage in assigning blame for job loss. News media have emphasized trade as the major source of manufacturing job loss. Likewise, the American public perceives most manufacturing job loss to be due to trade, when in fact more job loss has resulted from automation.⁵⁸ Again using an experimental design embedded in a representative national survey, I show that by altering a single news story about one man's job loss and attributing it to automation rather than trade with China, I can reduce anger about job loss, change attitudes toward trade, and make Americans less likely to think that manufacturing jobs can be brought back.

Even though losing a job is economically traumatic regardless of the cause, the personification of job loss as something caused by foreigners as opposed to machines leads people to believe it is more socially acceptable to make derogatory statements about Asians. This finding, in combination with additional findings in Chapter 12, underscores the dangerous link between denigrating outgroups through trade bashing and promoting racial intolerance and discrimination.

Chapters 10 and 11 address a topic studied by both economists and political scientists, the potential impact of trade on electoral politics. One of the chief reasons that people care about mass opinion toward trade is that they believe it can affect election outcomes. Drawing on panel data from 2008 to the present, I explore the potential for trade to matter in people's presidential vote decisions. Because most Americans' voting preferences are predetermined by partisanship long before any given election campaign occurs, very few issues have been documented to make such a difference, so this is a high bar. This is also where economists and political scientists butt heads most often, with economists using aggregate-level evidence to argue that exposure to import competition changes election outcomes, while political scientists who study electoral behavior are less convinced. As many as four different theories have been offered for a variety of proposed relationships

linking trade to voting behavior, but findings have been inconsistent. In addition, trade support is subject to change depending upon which party is in power at the time, a pattern I refer to as “party-in-power” effects. Panel data document a consistent increase in trade support among co-partisans when a new party comes into power. This pattern complicates efforts to hold political leadership accountable for any negative impacts from trade.

My own panel analyses of Americans voters in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 elections suggest that trade has only recently attained the status of an issue likely to impact elections. Before 2016, Americans did not perceive any clear differences in trade support between the two parties, and thus had little means by which to hold political leaders accountable for the impact of trade on jobs, whether locally or nationally. In Chapter 11, I suggest that the 2016 presidential election was unique in that trade as an issue clearly benefitted support for Donald Trump in ways that immigration and other issues did not. But most importantly, these two chapters call into question the common narrative in economic analyses suggesting that citizens’ voting patterns hold political leadership accountable for the economic impacts of trade on their lives and communities.

In Chapter 12 I draw on multiple experimental studies to examine what happens when people purposely attempt to change others’ trade preferences. These findings provide insight into what kinds of appeals are most likely to work and which are not. Two studies strongly support the theory that increasing perceived interpersonal similarities is the easiest route to increasing support for trade, far more than making economic arguments. To increase trade opposition, efforts to increase the perceived threat from trade were effective, but these efforts had noteworthy consequences that went beyond encouraging people to be more opposed to trade. Encouraging negative attitudes toward foreign outgroups has unintended consequences for intergroup relations in the US, encouraging discrimination against Asians, regardless of whether they are Asian-Americans or foreigners.

Chapter 13 summarizes the lessons learned from these many studies for knowledge about what drives American trade preferences and what the consequences of these views are. As debates about globalization continue, it is increasingly important to understand trade preferences as a function of psychological forces. Viewing trade as a purely economic issue leads to very different conclusions about how to proceed, regardless of whether one is for or against trade.

The concluding chapter also speculates about the future of public opinion toward trade and globalization more generally. Given the unusual

malleability of mass opinion on trade, much about the future of globalization depends on how future leadership chooses to frame this issue. If it is seen as a means to peaceful relationships and cooperation, it will be far more popular across both parties than if it is cast as an ongoing competition between countries. Although a competition that the US is supposedly “winning” by dominating other countries also can be popular among highly competitive Americans, trade-as-domination is not a sustainable position for a country. In the long run, who would be eager to engage in a trade agreement with a country that is openly doing so for purposes of gaining a relative advantage over the other country?

I conclude that the widely acknowledged backlash against globalization leading up to Trump’s election was less a function of individuals who had been personally hurt by trade than of general anxiety that the national ingroup as whole was losing status relative to other countries. Likewise, the surge in support for trade during Trump’s administration was not due to improvements in the lives of those formerly impacted by trade.

The fact that policy opinions were not tied to self-interest does not make it any less important that so many people lost jobs and/or experienced depressed wages as a result of trade. Improving the strength of America’s safety net for workers displaced by trade will be essential to American confidence that trade is good for the country as a whole. But to forestall future backlashes requires renewed confidence in America’s status in the world. Despite President Trump’s claims to the contrary, trade wars have no winners, and the American public has borne the brunt of the fallout from increased protectionism.

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