

# TRADE ATTITUDES IN THE WILD

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Joshua D. Kertzer<sup>1</sup>, Pablo Barberá,<sup>2</sup> Andrew Guess,<sup>3</sup> Simon Munzert,<sup>4</sup> JungHwan Yang,<sup>5</sup> and  
Andi Zhou<sup>6</sup>

ABSTRACT: One of the central models in the study of international political economy holds that actors' preferences about economic issues like trade are a function of their economic interests as represented by their position in the global economy. Recent empirical work investigating the relationship between economic interests and trade attitudes, however, has found mixed results, leading to a new wave of experimental studies that point to the role of information in explaining why economic interests fail to predict economic preferences. But what kinds of information about trade are citizens exposed to in the real world, and what effect does it have on how they think about trade? This study combines survey data from an original 13 month national panel survey in the United States with individual-level behavioral measures of media consumption derived from web tracking data, to explore what news about trade Americans are exposed to in a naturalistic setting, and how it shapes their trade preferences. We find that most Americans are exposed to relatively little news about trade, but that the kind of trade news Americans are exposed to in the real world does not magnify the effects of economic interests; instead, we find some evidence that trade news affects trade preferences through sociotropic rather than pocketbook pathways, as Americans become more supportive of trade the more positive stories about trade they see.

Note: In a sign that the paper may have too many results (!), the PDF is slightly larger than the file limit imposed by the IPES website. A full version of the paper is available at:  
[https://people.fas.harvard.edu/~jkertzer/Research\\_files/Kertzer-IPES.pdf](https://people.fas.harvard.edu/~jkertzer/Research_files/Kertzer-IPES.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Sack Associate Professor of Political Economy, Department of Government, Harvard University. Email: [jkertzer@gov.harvard.edu](mailto:jkertzer@gov.harvard.edu). Web: <http://people.fas.harvard.edu/~jkertzer/>

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Southern California. Email: [pbarbera@usc.edu](mailto:pbarbera@usc.edu). Web: <http://pablobarbera.com/>

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Affairs, Department of Politics and Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. Email: [aguess@princeton.edu](mailto:aguess@princeton.edu). Web: <https://andyguess.com/>

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor of Data Science and Public Policy, Hertie School of Governance. Email: [munzert@hertie-school.org](mailto:munzert@hertie-school.org). Web: <https://simonmunzert.github.io/>

<sup>5</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Email: [junghwan@illinois.edu](mailto:junghwan@illinois.edu). Web: <http://www.junghwanyang.com/>

<sup>6</sup>PhD student, Department of Government, Harvard University. Email: [azhou@g.harvard.edu](mailto:azhou@g.harvard.edu)