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**Priming individuals on free trade : a cross-national experiment of the linkages between economic insecurity and policy preferences**

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**PRIMING INDIVIDUALS ON FREE TRADE:**  
**A CROSS-NATIONAL EXPERIMENT ON THE LINKAGES**  
**BETWEEN ECONOMIC INSECURITY AND POLICY PREFERENCES**

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## Introduction

There exists a significant disconnect between important macro-level and micro-level theories of individuals' reactions to changes in their personal economic situations. On the one hand, a relatively new strand of political economy argues that macroeconomic shifts result in state expansion (Garrett 1995, 1998; Rodrik 1997; Iversen and Cusack 1998). These aggregate analyses explain evident growth in the welfare state according to presumed linkages between increased economic risk and policy preferences over state services and spending. Protests against the WTO's trade negotiations in Seattle, insecure textile workers lobbying for conciliatory provisions related to China's accession to the WTO, and the fact that welfare states have grown hand and hand with both globalization<sup>1</sup> and deindustrialization<sup>2</sup> lend credence to the logic employed by these studies.

Conversely, work on economic voting by scholars of political behavior in the United States suggests that these linkages might not be as significant as expected. These scholars provide extensive, though not uncontested, evidence that individuals base vote choices on "sociotropic" evaluations of the economy, rather than "pocketbook" experiences, and do not automatically make links between their personal economic situations and their political preferences.<sup>3</sup> While they do not speak directly to the linkages proposed by the globalization and deindustrialization literatures, these works give reason to doubt direct and clear links among objective economic insecurity, subjective economic insecurity, and policy preferences.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic globalization is typically defined by the increased international movement of goods, capital and labor. In this paper we generally use this term to refer to changes associated with trade liberalization.

<sup>2</sup> Deindustrialization is defined by Iversen and Cusack (1998) as the dislocation of workers due to the shrinking manufacturing sector and the growth of service industries in OECD countries.

<sup>3</sup> Among scholars who argue that individuals vote based on general concerns about the economy are Kinder and Kiewiet 1981, Kiewiet 1983, Kinder, Adams and Gronke 1989, MacKuen, Erikson and Stimson 1992, and McGraw, Best and Timpone 1995. For a recent review, see Norpoth 1996. Kinder and Kiewiet 1979 and Sniderman and Brody 1977 argue that citizens do not associate their personal situations with government actions. In contrast, fewer scholars argue that individuals vote based on their personal financial situations (see, for example, Kramer 1971, Markus 1988 and Lewis-Beck 1988; but note that the latter two find much stronger evidence for the effect of national conditions).

As noted, the macro-political economy works do not systematically test their arguments at the individual level. This paper is part of a larger project designed to evaluate the micro-logic of these studies. Specifically, we explore the following question: do individuals who are subjected to increased economic strain by either globalization or deindustrialization actually experience significant subjective economic insecurity and, in turn, change or modify their policy preferences to demand protection and compensation? Previous work by members of our research cluster has focused on the analysis of extant survey data. To date, our attempts have yielded varied evidence. Aldrich et al. (1999a, 1999b) examined NES and Eurobarometer survey data and found that the presumed microlinkages were real but seemingly insufficient to generate the macro-level effects. In more recent work, we find stronger evidence of the relationship between objective and subjective assessments and policy preferences through cross-national studies of several countries (Kramer, Stephenson and Lange 2000). We also find that, while objective circumstances and subjective assessments have some impact on policy preferences, these effects are conditioned by the partisanship and ideology of the individual (Merolla and Stephenson 2001).

Even though refinements to our initial models have provided stronger evidence of links between economic insecurity and policy preferences, our results are weaker than the macro theories suggest. One reason for these findings may be due to the fact that survey respondents have not been cued to think in terms of macro economic shifts and the effect of these changes on their personal welfare.<sup>4</sup> In the typical survey, respondents are given a large battery of questions. Questions that they answer prior to the questions on policy preferences might make certain considerations more salient than others (see Zaller 1992). Furthermore, even though these surveys typically are conducted during elections, it is not necessarily the case that the particular election made economic insecurity and its macro-level causes salient during the campaign. In other words, the disconnect between the globalization and deindustrialization literatures and existing micro-level evidence may be due in part to the fact that the respondents, from whom the micro-level evidence is collected, are not primed similarly to the protestors and displaced workers who comprise the *dramatis personae* in the political economists' stories.

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<sup>4</sup> We acknowledge and thank the many individuals who suggested this reasoning during earlier presentations of our project at Duke University and at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1999.

Can priming subjects about globalization affect their judgments about subjective insecurity, policy preferences over liberalization and state services and spending, and the link between these two? Furthermore, can attaching a valence to primes influence the direction of people's subjective insecurity and policy preferences over liberalization and state services and spending? To evaluate this question, we designed and conducted an experiment in which subjects were primed, in different directions, about the effects of globalization. Based on our previous findings regarding cross-national differences and the important conditioning effect of ideology, we conducted the experiment across three countries, and interacted these treatments with a measure of ideology.<sup>5</sup> This paper presents the preliminary results of this experiment.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we discuss our primary hypotheses in light of relevant theory and evidence. Second, we detail the experimental design, including the subject pool, the location of the experiments, the recruitment of subjects, the procedures, the treatment, and the survey instruments. We also present our specific expectations for the experiment. We then present our findings. Finally, we discuss our results as they pertain to the larger political world.

### **Political Economic Conjectures and Micro-Level Theory/Evidence**

Based on the coincidence of economic liberalization and welfare state growth in OECD countries in past decades, some scholars argue that globalization creates insecurities and dislocations that, in turn, result in increased demand for government spending and services (Garrett 1995, 1998; Rodrik 1997). Others explain welfare state growth by arguing that deindustrialization in OECD countries has caused the dislocation of workers in the manufacturing sector and, in turn, has resulted in strong demands for greater provision of welfare services (Iversen and Cusack 1998). The models used and enhanced by both groups posit a direct relationship between an individual's objective circumstances and their

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<sup>5</sup> Ideology relates fairly directly to policy debates in each of the three nations, while partisanship does not.

preferences over government policy. Nevertheless, the studies rely on aggregate analyses and fail to search systematically for micro-level evidence with which to support their findings.

The arguments implicit in the globalization and deindustrialization literatures are grounded in the assumption that a voter's sense of economic security, policy preferences and vote choices are determined by his/her position in the larger economy. Individuals perceive changes in their objective economic insecurity (e.g., higher chance of job loss in their sector of employment), translate these into subjective concerns, and then adopt policy preferences for greater government protection and services and spending. These are not uncontroversial assumptions. For example, there is evidence that voters in the United States base their vote choice and policy preferences on "sociotropic" evaluations of the economy, rather than their own "pocketbook" experience (for a recent review of economic voting literature, see Norpoth 1996). Some scholars also argue that individuals do not associate their personal economic situations with government policy (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979).<sup>6</sup> Finally, as we noted earlier, analysis of extant survey data by members of our research team found empirical links between economic insecurity and policy preferences, but ones that appear too limited to sustain the macro-level arguments proposed by the globalization and deindustrialization authors (Aldrich et al. 1999a, 199b; Kramer, Stephenson and Lange 2000; Merolla and Stephenson 2001).

All of the above analyses are based on survey data. It is possible that survey respondents are not systematically primed in ways that might draw out these linkages, and thus differ from the "real" actors highlighted in the stories told by political economists.

Zaller and Feldman (1992) and Zaller (1992) argue that when answering a survey question, people sample from the considerations that are at the "top of their heads." Unlike workers rallied to a protest, respondents are not likely to be interviewed when issues related to economic insecurity are immediately salient to them. When asked about their personal economic insecurity, rather than thinking about national economic policy, respondents might

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<sup>6</sup> Some scholars argue that individuals do not hold the government responsible for their personal financial situation. For example, Sniderman and Brody (1977) believe that individuals do not automatically assign responsibility for hardship to the government. Feldman and Conley (1991) stress that few people attribute any significant part of their welfare to the government.

be thinking about a recent positive evaluation at work, or the fact that a coworker was recently reprimanded for stealing office supplies. This might explain why survey analyses suggest that individuals do not consider seriously the causal chain that connects their personal economic situation with government policies. Such a possibility is even more likely when events such as globalization and deindustrialization, which are presumed to be generating economic insecurity, are happening at substantial remove from the individual's particular circumstances.

During times of heightened political activity, such as protests, plant closings, or election campaigns that have a significant focus on economic conditions, economic policy might be particularly salient. This could lead individuals, who would not otherwise perceive the relationship, to make a connection between economic developments and their personal economic insecurity. Furthermore, increased attention to national issues should impact individuals' policy preferences as well as increase the probability that an individual will link his/her economic insecurity to demands for policy changes (Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982; Krosnick and Kinder 1990). In other words, only with the increased saliency that the media, campaigns and protest situations provide might individuals be likely to make the necessary connections between policy and economics. Vote-seeking politicians then translate these demands into policy outputs.

What might be missing from our previous studies, then, is a context in which the issues we are interested in exploring are more salient. In terms of explaining welfare state growth, if individuals who are primed make these linkages and demand the provision of more services, the micro-logic presumed by the globalization and deindustrialization literatures might be at least partially supported.



In addition to making the economy and globalization salient in respondents minds, there are at least two other factors that might influence or condition the manner in which individuals make linkages between economic insecurity and policy preferences. The importance of these factors is suggested by analysis of survey data conducted by members of our research cluster. Both of these factors are likely to have direct effects and indirect effects that moderate the impact of the valence attached to a particular prime.

First, the country in which individuals reside and make political decisions is likely to impact preferences over government involvement prior to the valenced prime, and influence their reactions to such a message. For example, Kramer, Stephenson and Lange (2000) found evidence that individuals in countries that have more government services, or larger welfare states, are more likely to support government involvement than individuals in countries with little or no welfare state.<sup>7</sup> Given the possibility of variation across countries, we conducted the experiments in three locations: at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina; at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, D.F.; and at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in London, Ontario.

Second, ideology may condition a person's interpretation of macroeconomic events. Even if an individual is feeling economically insecure or feels that the nation's economy is in a downturn, preferences over government policy might be conditioned by personal ideological beliefs. For example, conservatives who are secure themselves but hear news that the national economy is not doing well might not be willing to abandon their ideological principles to support increased government protection in order to aid others. In addition, conservatives who feel economically insecure might not be willing to abandon their ideology to support increased government protection (Zaller, 1992). Merolla and Stephenson (2001) find evidence in survey data that ideology and partisanship mediate the effects of economic insecurity on policy preferences. While the prime might make economic insecurity and globalization salient for respondents in answering questions about government services and spending, the direction of the prime that the individual receives might be mediated by their ideology (such that more conservative individuals react less to a negative message about globalization, while liberal individuals react less to a positive message).

Figure 1 depicts the proposed relationships among objective insecurity, subjective insecurity, policy preferences, and the mediating factors that we have just described. As can be seen from the model, we propose that macroeconomic shifts may affect an individual's

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<sup>7</sup> See also Feldman and Zaller (1992). They claim that assessments of the re state by US voters are conditioned by humanitarian, sympathetic, and individualistic principles. In the 6, while individuals tend to support programs that help those who are less fortunate, an underlying logic of individualism and the importance of hard work is present. It is likely that the weight of these considerations varies across countries and cultures.



objective economic security, which will directly and indirectly affect their political preferences. The indirect process should work through several filters. The salience of the macroeconomic developments will affect an individual's subjective insecurity and their policy preferences. These effects will be conditioned by the individual's ideology and by the country in which they reside. Our experiment is designed to test for these linkages among nationality, priming, economic insecurity, ideology and policy preferences.

## **Experimental Design**

The experiment tests the effect of directional priming about the consequences of trade liberalization on individuals' subjective insecurity and policy preferences. We are thus testing a causal mechanism proposed by the globalization literature; however, there is no reason to believe that the results would not be comparable if deindustrialization was the experimental treatment.<sup>8</sup> Because we are interested in the direct effects of nationality and ideology on the links between treatment, insecurity and policy preferences, we conducted the experiment across three countries and included a measure of an individual's ideology.

### *Location, Timing, and Subject Population*

Each school that served as a site for the experiment is considered an elite institution in its country. Duke and ITAM are private institutions, while UWO is a public university; the three have similarly strict admission standards. The subject population is college students on these campuses. Using a relatively homogenous, elite student population limits our study in at least one way: we can not test for the relationship between objective economic insecurity and

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<sup>8</sup> Theories about the effects of deindustrialization predict a smaller constituency will clamour for more government provisions. These sentiments, however, would be based on the same linkages between insecurity and policy preferences. Thus, the differences between globalization and deindustrialization for our model are irrelevant.

subjective insecurity among those hit hardest by globalization.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, using students aids our study in an important way. University students should be less malleable in terms of their preferences than less educated individuals (Zaller 1992). By testing whether the experimental treatment affects subjective insecurity among students who are less likely to be subjectively insecure than the general population the study takes on a “least-likely” design, so that its results are given additional credence. Therefore, if we can successfully induce insecurity and different or stronger preferences in students, who should be less easily influenced than dislocated workers, the linkage between priming and these variables is well-supported.<sup>10</sup>

In order to control for the external political context, all of the studies were conducted the week following the country’s national election: in November in the U.S. and Canada, and in July in Mexico. To recruit the subjects, we placed flyers around the schools offering students \$10 USD, 100 Pesos and \$10 CAD in each of the respective countries to take part in a study about their opinions on current events. We recruited 100 students at Duke, 90 at ITAM, and 136 at UWO.

### *Procedure*

Upon arrival, each subject was randomly assigned to a group and was asked to fill out an information sheet to provide us with basic demographic and other information before the experiment was conducted. Upon completion of this short pre-test, participants were given a packet of 5-6 newspaper articles. After finishing the articles, the respondents filled out a longer post-test that asked their opinions about current events and governmental policy. Following the post-test, the subjects were compensated and debriefed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Because students are not in the general workforce, they will not fear losing a job or not finding a job to the same degree as other adults.

<sup>10</sup> We are in the midst of extending the experiments to the larger adult population in the U.S.

<sup>11</sup> To debrief the subjects, they were first asked what they thought was the purpose of the experiment. The vast majority in all of the countries did not figure out our main research interests. The subjects were then told about the goals of the experiment and the survey design.

### *Treatment*

The experimental treatment was a newspaper article embedded in the newspaper packet that each subject was asked to read. The subjects were divided into four categories – those who received a pro-globalization prime, those who received an anti-globalization prime, those who received both primes, and those who received none. Students in this latter (control) group only received five neutral newspaper articles pertaining to current events. Respondents in the second condition received the same articles as the control group, except a negative article about globalization and free trade was placed third in the sequence of articles. The respondents in the third condition had the same set of articles, but a positive article about globalization and free trade appeared third. The final group received some of the same neutral articles as well as both the positive and negative article, which were placed in the second and fourth positions. Table 1 below gives the number of respondents that were assigned to each treatment group in the respective country.

**Table 1.** *Structure and Number of Respondents in each Treatment*

	Anti-globalization article	Pro-globalization article	Both articles	No treatment
ITAM Students	20	20	30	20
UWO Students	34	32	35	34
Duke Students	25	25	25	25

The source of all of the neutral articles was newspapers in the respective countries. In some cases, we edited the articles to make them shorter. In all of the cases, we included a general sports article, an article about the arts, and two articles about local issues that were unrelated to the economy. The treatment articles were also taken from the newspapers, but they were modified in three ways. First, we took out any reference to political leaders, so that we would not directly prime people's attachments to any political leaders or parties. Second, in some cases we added information about globalization to make the articles more comparable across countries. Third, unlike the other articles, these articles were created using segments of several different articles. Even with the attempt to make the articles comparable,

it is, of course, likely that some differences in strength of the message remained, but we believe these to be minor.<sup>12</sup>

### *Measures*

The pretest consisted of a set of demographic questions, a set of political information questions, and a set of questions about the macro economy (see Appendix A). Through the demographic questions, we were able to assess in part the students' objective economic conditions, although we expected (correctly) that most of the students would be financially comfortable given that they were students at elite universities. Through the political information and economic questions, we gained a sense of how much general information about politics and how much specific information about the national economy the individuals had before completing the experiment. We plan to analyze these data later.

The post-test consisted of questions about current events and policy preferences. As a distractor, the first part of the post-test asked the subjects to recall some of the arguments from the articles that were not part of the treatment. The policy measures that serve as our key dependent variables were also measured in the post-test. The questionnaire also included one of our key intervening variables, ideology, and retrospective assessments of the subject's personal economic condition, of the economic condition of their area, and of the nation's economic condition.

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<sup>12</sup>The treatment articles that were used in the Duke experiment are provided in Appendix B. The others are available from the authors.

## **Key Variables and Expectations**

### *Dependent Variables*

We used five dependent variables to test our model, four of which are worded identically to measures used in the NES. Three of the measures are policy variables, and two are intermediate variables that relate to economic insecurity. Given that economic insecurity is necessary, in our model, to create policy change, we discuss those variables first. The first economic insecurity variable asks whether the subject thinks his/her personal financial situation will get better, get worse or stay the same in the future. The second variable asks the same question but substitutes the nation's economy for one's personal economic situation.<sup>13</sup> Both variables are measured such that higher values indicate feeling worse off. The prime should affect the person's assessment of his/her own economic situation and the economic situation of the economy. Thus, if they are in the negative treatment group, the subjects should respond that the future will be worse for them personally and for the country as a whole, and so on.

The next set of dependent variables relates to policy preferences. The first dependent variable is the level of support for free trade, which is measured on a seven point scale with seven being most supportive of free trade.<sup>14</sup> In terms of the design of the survey, this dependent variable should have a stronger link to the treatment groups, as subjects were primed specifically about free trade. The next policy variable is the level of support for government spending and services. The globalization literature presumes that free trade will be one of the factors that people use when answering the government spending and services question. It should both make preexisting beliefs more accessible and the valence of the prime should affect the direction of an individual's preference on government services and spending. The third and final policy we examine is the level of support for government

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<sup>13</sup> In other studies, we use questions such as how worried one is about losing or (if not employed) finding a job, but these questions are less relevant to a student population.

<sup>14</sup> We created this question expressly for this experiment; unlike other variables we use, it does not appear in the NES.

guaranteeing jobs and a standard of living, using the long-running NES question. Our hypotheses here are the same as for the government spending and services scale.

### *Independent Variables*

Treatment is measured by a series of dummy variables to indicate whether the subject was in the control, negative, positive, or negative-and-positive treatment. As stated above, we expect that these variables will be incorporated into the considerations that people use in answering the policy questions and the subjective economic evaluations. In addition, we expect that the type of prime an individual receives might influence the direction of their preferences. For example, those who received a negative treatment article might be more likely to feel that their economic situation will get worse in the future, and that the nation's economy will get worse in the future. Furthermore, those in the negative treatment group should be less supportive of free trade and more supportive of government spending and services and guaranteed jobs. Those in the positive treatment group should exhibit the opposite effects. How subjects react to receiving both treatments is not entirely clear, but parallel the "two-sided" model of Zaller (1992). For the policy questions, we expect those individuals might have greater ambivalence that will cause them either to fail to respond or to place themselves at the midpoint (or "4") of the (7-point) response scales.<sup>15</sup>

The first of the two potential mediating factors, country, is measured simply by dummy variables for each nation. The second factor, ideology, is a seven-point left-right scale, identical to the standard NES measure. We expect conservatives, in general, to be more supportive of free trade and less supportive of spending and services than liberals. Because we believe that ideology can both filter and counter information, we also created interaction terms between ideology and the negative and positive treatment groups. For example, we expect that conservatives placed in the negative treatment group might resist translating the information into their prospective assessments or policy preferences. In contrast,

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<sup>15</sup> See Alvarez and Brehm (1995) for a discussion of ambivalence. A broader discussion of ambivalence is in their forthcoming book, *Hard Choices, Easy Answers*.

conservatives placed in the positive treatment group, which should reinforce their own opinions, might be led to express stronger support for free trade and less support for government spending and services and guaranteed jobs.

In order to test the impact of economic insecurity on policy preferences, we include the personal prospective and national prospective variables in regression equations with the three policy dependent variables. Since they are coded with a higher value being worse off, we expect that for higher values on these variables, subjects will be more supportive of spending/services and guaranteed jobs and less supportive of free trade. Finally, in order to control for pre-existing economic evaluations and their impact on prospective assessments (economic insecurity), we include the relevant retrospective evaluation in each of these two models (Models 1 and 2 below). The table below summarizes our expectations for the five equations:

	Model 1: DV=Personal Prospective	Model 2: DV=National Prospective	Model 3: DV=Trade	Model 4: DV=Increased Government Services and Spending	Model 5: DV=Guaranteed Jobs and Standard of Living
Negative*	+	+	-	-	-
Positive	-	-	+	+	+
Both			DK or Midpoint	DK or Midpoint	DK or Midpoint
Ideology**	-	-	+	+	+
Ideology x Negative	-	-	+	+	+
Ideology x Positive	-	-	+	+	+
Personal Prospective			-	-	-
National Prospective			-	-	-
Personal Retrospective	+				
National Retrospective		+			

\* We refer to the four treatments as “Negative”, “Positive”, “Both”, or “Control”.

\*\*Ideology is measured on a seven-point scale, where “7” is conservative.

In addition to the general model described above, we also explore country influences. As we discussed earlier, we expect country of residence to indirectly and directly affect the dependent variables. We test for indirect effects by interacting country dummy variables with the positive and negative treatments. In terms of direct effects, we expect the baseline measures on the policy dependent variables to vary across the three countries. In particular, we expect that support for government spending and services, and guaranteed jobs and standards of living will be lowest in the United States, highest in Canada, with Mexico falling in between.<sup>16</sup> We further expect that baseline support for free trade will be highest in the United States, lowest in Canada, and in the middle for Mexico. This expectation is based upon previous understandings of the general policy orientations in each country, and each country's expected benefit from and previous experience with free trade. In the United States, the word NAFTA often invokes fears that U.S. jobs are going to go to Mexico, but in general free trade has increased the available market for exporting and has enabled US companies to take advantage of cheaper labor elsewhere. Also, free trade does not present a threat to the well-being of most US industries because of the specialization and technology that companies employ. Mexico, as a developing country, has a lot to gain from gaining access to larger economies. It has a surplus of unskilled labor that makes it a prime location for foreign companies to establish operations and employ locals.<sup>17</sup> However, Mexicans might be less supportive of free trade because of a fear that their businesses will be squeezed out by US and Canadian companies. Finally, Canadians may worry about companies relocating and jobs being lost if companies have an incentive to move because of the lower tax rates, labor, and environmental standards. Experience with the CUFTA and NAFTA may cause Canadians to be wary of further opening their borders. Since we are dealing with student populations at elite universities (who typically have more financial and educational means to succeed than others), we expect that all of the baselines will be slightly to the right of center (more in favor of free trade).

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<sup>16</sup> Kramer, Stephenson and Lange 2000 found evidence that individuals in countries that have more government services, or larger welfare states, are more likely to support government involvement than individuals in countries with little/no welfare state. For our purposes, the Canadian welfare state is bigger than both Mexico's and the United States', and Mexico's welfare state is larger than the United States' welfare state.

<sup>17</sup> The Heckscher-Ohlin-Samuelson theory of trade states that abundant factors will be the winners of trading relationships.



## Experiment Results

We begin the presentation of our results by focusing on the policy variables. We present graphs of preferences over these policies by treatment in the pooled set and then by country. We will then discuss the results of regressions for our five dependent variables in more complete models that include intervening independent variables and the treatments. The first question we are interested in is whether the valence of the prime in each treatment influenced the direction of people's preferences within the pooled dataset. Figures 2-4 show the mean response individuals within each treatment group gave to each policy question. We show only the negative, positive and control group responses here; we will discuss the fourth group, which was exposed to both treatments, later.

Figure 2 shows that the results for the free trade dependent variable support our hypotheses. On average, subjects who were exposed to the positive treatment indicate higher preferences for trade liberalization and, conversely, subjects exposed to the negative treatment report a greater preference for trade restriction, compared to the control group. A difference of means test shows that these differences are (borderline) significant.<sup>18</sup> For this policy variable, an examination of the range of responses for each treatment group provides further support for our hypotheses. Recalling that the variable ranged from one to seven, where a response of "1" indicated support for trade restriction, while a "7" indicated support for increased trade, we note that the minimum response for the positive treatment was "3", while the control group and negative treatment group each had a minimum of "2". In other words, exposure to the positive treatment restricted the range of policy preferences in the manner we expected.

Figures 3 and 4, which present the pooled results for our services and guaranteed jobs/standard of living dependent variables, lend partial support to our hypotheses. Interestingly, in the pooled set, the negative treatment works in the expected direction for our services question, while the positive treatment appears to work for our job and standard of living question. A difference of means test shows that the former is borderline significant,

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<sup>18</sup> The test is significant at the 0.10 level (one-tailed).

while the latter is not. For both policy questions, then, the positive treatment does not shift respondents in our pooled set away from the control group average.<sup>19</sup>

We next examine the basic results of our experiment across the three individual countries for each of the three policy questions. Tables 2-4 show the difference between the mean of the treatment group and the mean of the control group for each of our key policy variables. Before turning our attention to the impact of the treatments, it is interesting to examine the difference in baselines across the three countries. Consistent with what we expected, students in the U.S. case are predisposed to favor increased trade and less government involvement in the provision of jobs and services. In Canada, baseline preferences are the opposite. Students in Mexico have initial preferences that fall mostly between the two. Given a general orientation toward economic liberalization and the relatively small welfare state in U.S., the opposite in Canada, and something more mixed and complex in Mexico, these results capture well the differences in attitudes across the countries that we expected.

We now turn to the impact of the treatments on these dispositions. As Table 2 shows, with respect to the question on trade policy, both treatments had the expected effect among the students from UWO. At ITAM, only the positive treatment appears to have influenced subjects, moving them on average one-half point toward a high preference for trade liberalization. Interestingly, at Duke, both treatments move subjects toward a position of greater trade restriction, relative to the control group. The negative treatment does have a stronger impact than the positive treatment, but the positive treatment does move subjects somewhat closer to the trade restriction end of the scale. While those in the positive group at Duke are clearly receiving the prime, the valence that we attached to this prime does not move them in the direction we expected. Our revised hypothesis is that, while Duke students are generally more supportive of economic liberalization than the other subjects in our treatment, the term “NAFTA” and its related policies have a significant negative connotation

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<sup>19</sup> The t-value for the test is 1.18; the cut-off for a 0.10 significance level (one-tailed) is 1.30. Recent work by Marcus and MacKuen (1993) suggests that people process negative and positive information in different ways. When people perceive a threat, they are more likely to seek out more information about the perceived threat. When people hear positive information, they are more likely to fall back on their preexisting opinions.

as a result of a very vociferous anti-NAFTA campaign in the mid-1990s. Students continue to associate NAFTA with phrases such as “giant sucking sound” and, in general, with harmful effects. Our belief is that if we had limited our positive treatment to a description of the benefits of free trade in general, and had not mentioned NAFTA, the treatment would have had the effect we initially expected. To test this interpretation of our data, we ran a series of informal polls with Duke undergraduates in seminar classes. In some classes, we asked students to write down one word or phrase that they associated with “free trade”; in the other classes, students were asked to write down a word or phrase they associated with “NAFTA”. In general, the associations students made with “NAFTA” were negative, while those with “free trade” mixed, but positive on average.<sup>20</sup>

Table 3 shows the results for the services question. Once again, both treatments work as expected with UWO students, though the impact of the positive treatment is slight. Both treatments also work among Duke students. Finally, however, only the negative treatment works as expected for the Mexico case. Interestingly, the positive treatment moves ITAM students in the wrong direction, and to a higher degree than the negative treatment. We suspect this result may be due to the fact that preferences for economic liberalization in Mexico are closely linked to preferences for government involvement in assuring fair terms of exchange and implementing “cushioning” programs. At the time of our experiment, we also conducted focus groups in Mexico at the time of our experiment with janitorial workers, school teachers, and middle-class citizens. We found that preferences for economic liberalization were nearly always linked to preferences for programs that would cushion the effects of these reforms. Thus, it seems probable to us that the positive treatment stirred up pro-trade liberalization sentiments (as shown in Table 2) and, consequently, pro-welfare program sentiments that appear typically associated with such stances in Mexico. As will be seen, we get a similar result for our jobs and standard of living question.

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<sup>20</sup> While Duke students may pay little attention to North Carolina news, it is still the case that local media give high profile coverage to (often textile) plant closings in the state due to relocation to other nations.

**Table 2.** *Differences in Preferences over Government Trade Policy*

Restrict Trade (-) ----- Increase Trade (+)		
	Obs	Control Mean – Treatment Mean*
<u>ITAM (4.9)**</u>		
Control	20	0.00
Negative	20	0.05
Positive	20	0.55
Both	29	-0.11
<u>Duke (5.4)</u>		
Control	24	0.00
Negative	24	-0.58
Positive	20	-0.32
Both	21	-0.32
<u>UWO (4.7)</u>		
Control	31	0.00
Negative	29	-0.26
Positive	30	0.56
Both	32	0.17

\* Distance from the mean of the control group for each country

\*\* Number in parentheses is the mean of the control group

The results for the jobs and services question are summarized in Table 4. As noted already, the positive treatment in Mexico works in the direction opposite our expectations, though the impact is slight. The negative treatment, however, also has an impact contrary to our expectations. We do not have any speculation at this time as to the cause of this result. Both treatments again have the expected results among Duke students, though their impact is not great. Finally, in Canada, only the positive treatment appears to influence response to this question, and its impact is fairly strong.

We have not yet commented on the impact of the dual treatment. As Tables 2-4 show, the impact varies. We hypothesize that some of these results may be due to inducing ambivalence in those that received both the negative and positive messages. Exposure to conflicting information may cause subjects to become ambivalent, since both sides of the story have legitimate claims. If respondents have a sense of ambivalence because of the dual treatment, it might cause them to place themselves at the midpoint of the scale, since this

captures an inability to move in favor of one side or the other (Alvarez and Brehm 1995). To test this hypothesis, Table 5 presents the percent of those respondents who placed themselves at the scale's mid-point ("4") for each policy question and those respondents who did not answer the question. The table provides some support for our hypothesis that the dual treatment causes ambivalence. Specifically, the trade policy and the jobs and standard of living questions support the hypothesis, while the services question does not.

**Table 3.** *Differences in Preferences over Government Provision of Services*

Fewer Services (-) ----- More Services (+)		
	Obs	Control Mean – Treatment Mean*
<u>ITAM (4.7)**</u>		
Control	20	0.00
Negative	20	0.40
Positive	20	0.70
Both	30	0.68
<u>Duke (4.3)</u>		
Control	25	0.00
Negative	24	0.47
Positive	23	-0.24
Both	23	0.20
<u>UWO (4.9)</u>		
Control	33	0.00
Negative	31	0.54
Positive	31	-0.10
Both	34	0.00

\* Distance from the mean of the control group for each country

\*\* Number in parentheses is the mean of the control group

The above results are mostly supportive of our basic expectations. However, these tabular data do not control for ideology, which we believe conditions the effects of the treatments. Furthermore, with respect to the policy variables, we also have not yet tested our belief that economic insecurity captured in the prospective evaluations independently affects policy preferences. Thus, we next test the impact of our treatments on both economic

insecurity and policy preferences in a multivariate analysis using OLS regression. The dependent variable for the prospective economic evaluation models is the individual's response to a five-point question in which higher values indicate more negative assessments. The dependent variable for the policy models is the respondent's difference from the mean of the control group.

**Table 4.** *Differences in Preferences over Role of Government*

Job and Living (-) ----- Get Ahead on Own (+)		
	Obs	Control Mean – Treatment Mean*
<u>ITAM (4.1)**</u>		
Control	20	0.00
Negative	20	0.45
Positive	20	-0.10
Both	30	-0.20
<u>Duke (4.2)</u>		
Control	25	0.00
Negative	24	-0.16
Positive	23	0.19
Both	21	-0.15
<u>UWO (3.5)</u>		
Control	32	0.00
Negative	32	0.00
Positive	30	0.64
Both	34	0.23

\* Distance from the mean of the control group for each country

\*\* Number in parentheses is the mean of the control group

The independent variables include the following: first, dummy variables for each of the three treatments (the baseline is the control group); second, dummy variables for each country (the baseline is UWO)<sup>21</sup>; and, third, the individual's ideology measured on a

<sup>21</sup> For all models, we considered interacting these variables with the treatments, but f-tests showed that these additions did not improve our models, except in the case of the interaction between Mexico and the negative treatment where the dependent variable is the services question. We include this interaction in our

traditional seven-point scale. As we stated earlier, we believe an individual's ideology should condition the impact of the negative and positive treatments. We therefore include two terms that interact each treatment with ideology. Finally, in the economic assessment models we include retrospective evaluations, and in the policy models we include two indicators of worry – prospective individual and prospective national economic evaluations – in order to capture the hypothesized link that runs between objective economic conditions and policy preferences (see Figure 1).

**Table 5. Does Receiving Both Treatments Cause Ambivalence in Policy Preferences?**

<u>Job and Standard of Living</u>	Total	Obs at 4*	Obs NR**	Percent at 4 or NR
Control	79	16	2	23%
Negative	79	16	3	24%
Positive	77	18	4	29%
Both	90	27	5	36%
<u>Provision of Services</u>	Total	Obs at 4*	Obs NR	Percent at 4 or NR
Control	79	21	1	28%
Negative	79	12	4	20%
Positive	77	16	3	25%
Both	90	12	3	17%
<u>Trade Policy</u>	Total	Obs at 4*	Obs NR	Percent at 4 or NR
Control	79	15	4	24%
Negative	79	15	6	27%
Positive	77	14	7	27%
Both	90	26	8	38%

\* "4" is the mid-point (7-point scale)

\*\* "NR" is non-response

model; however, its inclusion has no significant impact on the results we obtain without it. For the most part, controlling for a direct impact of the respondent's country appears sufficient to counter the different predispositions we found across countries.

Tables 6 and 7 present the results for our prospective economic assessment models. Interestingly, of the three treatment variables, only the positive treatment has a significant impact in the prospective individual model, whereas only the negative treatment has a significant impact on prospective national evaluations. Each is also significant in its interaction with ideology. Furthermore, in each model, retrospective assessments are significant.

**Table 6.** *OLS Regression of Prospective Individual Economic Assessment\* on Treatments and Ideology*

Obs: 262 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> : 0.11				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	P> t
Constant	2.46	0.240	10.267	0.000
Negative	-0.27	0.339	-0.785	0.433
Positive	-0.79	0.368	-2.147	0.033
Both	0.17	0.129	0.132	0.895
Ideology	-0.15	0.044	-3.382	0.001
Ideology*Negative	0.06	0.084	0.673	0.501
Ideology*Positive	0.19	0.856	2.248	0.025
Duke	0.14	0.110	1.300	0.195
ITAM	-0.30	0.119	-2.554	0.011
Retro. Indiv. Assess.	0.24	0.053	4.467	0.000

\* Both economic variables are coded so that higher values equal more negative assessments of the economy

Turning to the policy models, Table 8 shows the regression results for the job and standard of living variable. The results show that, controlling for the above-mentioned factors, exposure to the negative treatment is significant, thus indicating that exposure to the prime entered into the individual's considerations about jobs and standard of living. Furthermore, the direction of the coefficient indicates that those in the negative treatment had higher preferences for state provision of jobs and a pleasant standard of living. In addition, ideology is significant, and its interaction with the negative treatment is just beyond a typical significance level. Individual prospective economic assessments are also significant – more negative evaluations of the economy are associated with a greater desire for government provision.



As Table 9 shows, the regression results for the services variable are similar to those for the job and standard of living question. Once again, the negative treatment variable and ideology are significant, as is the interaction between the two. Individual economic evaluations are also significant. The regression results for the trade variable are not as strong as for the other two policy variables (see Table 10). This is contrary to our expectations, which held that trade policy was more closely linked to the prime, and therefore should be more greatly affected; it is also contrary to the summary statistics that seemed to suggest a relatively strong impact by our treatments. It should be noted, however, that the coefficients are in the expected direction, and of substantial size.

**Table 7.** *OLS Regression of Prospective National Economic Assessment\* on Treatments and Ideology: Pooled Dataset*

Obs: 262 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> : 0.15				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	P> t
Constant	2.34	0.267	8.769	0.000
Negative	0.77	0.358	2.161	0.032
Positive	0.19	0.391	0.487	0.626
Both	-0.14	0.136	-1.052	0.294
Ideology	-0.11	0.048	-0.232	0.816
Ideology*Negative	-0.20	0.089	-2.270	0.024
Ideology*Positive	-0.08	0.091	-0.883	0.378
Duke	0.35	0.115	3.012	0.003
Mexico	-0.34	0.125	-2.719	0.007
Retro. Nat'l Assess.	0.22	0.057	3.828	0.000

\* Both economic variables are coded so that higher values equal more negative assessments of the economy

How does ideology condition the impact of the treatments? To consider this question, we present the values on the dependent variable predicted by one interaction term for both the job and standard of living question (Figure 5) and the services question (Figure 6). These figures only include the interaction term between negative treatment and ideology because this term was significant, or close to significant, in the regression. The predicted values for the control treatment at different ideologies are also displayed for the sake of comparison. The figures show that ideology does have the conditioning effect in these cases that we expected. Conservatives who receive the negative prime are unmoved from, or possibly even retrench further into, their baseline preferences. In contrast, our negative treatment has its

strongest impact on more liberal individuals. It should be noted that the data are insufficient to allow us to discriminate between models that include these interaction terms and those that do not; based on our prior theory, and the fact that some of the interactions are significant, we believe the models that include them are the better specified of the two options. In future work, we will work to create a more robust test of the relationship between ideology, information, economic insecurity, and policy preferences as these factors relate to our research topic.

**Table 8. OLS Regression of Role of Government\* on Treatments, Ideology and Economic Insecurity**

Number of obs = 251

R-squared = 0.19

Adj R-squared = 0.15

	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> t
Constant	-0.31	0.530	0.556
Negative	-1.02	0.604	0.092
Positive	-0.76	0.653	0.248
Both	-0.22	0.227	0.333
Ideology	0.29	0.082	0.000
Ideology*negative	0.24	0.152	0.119
Ideology*positive	0.18	0.154	0.239
Duke	-0.29	0.198	0.137
ITAM	-0.34	0.205	0.098
Pro. Indiv Eco.	-0.20	0.110	0.078
Pro. Nat'l Eco.	0.03	0.106	0.789

\*Dependent variable is the difference from the control group mean for the question that asks respondents to place themselves on a 7-point scale where "1" equals "Government should guarantee a good job and standard of living" and "7" equals "Government should let each person get ahead on his/her own."

**Table 9.** *OLS Regression of Government Provision of Services\* on Treatments, Ideology and Economic Insecurity*

Number of obs = 253			
R-squared = 0.25			
Adj R-squared = 0.22			
	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> t
Constant	0.59	0.507	0.248
Negative	1.77	0.582	0.003
Positive	0.61	0.625	0.334
Both	0.36	0.217	0.096
Ideology	-0.32	0.077	0.000
Ideology*negative	-0.28	0.145	0.057
Ideology*positive	-0.08	0.147	0.606
Duke	0.05	0.188	0.787
ITAM	0.70	0.220	0.002
Pro. Individ Eco.	0.28	0.106	0.009
Pro. Nat'l Eco.	-0.13	0.101	0.188
ITAM*negative	-0.77	0.413	0.063

\*Dependent variable is the difference from the control group mean for the question that asks respondents to place themselves on a 7-point scale where "1" equals "Government should provide fewer services" and "7" equals "Government should provide more services."

## Discussion and Conclusions

Our experiment has given us a new viewpoint from which to assess the relationship between globalization and policy preferences. Several points about this relationship should be made. First, our results show that our treatment articles did have an effect on the considerations and response directions of subjects. Second, they provide further support for the notion that the relationships among objective insecurity, subjective economic assessments and policy preferences are conditioned by a person's ideology. Finally, these relationships vary across individuals in different countries.

The findings of this paper have numerous implications for our broader project. The first implication is that there does appear to be a greater link between one's subjective circumstances and policy preferences when certain issues are primed. When students read positive and/or negative articles about globalization, there were two impacts on the

relationship between economic circumstances and policy preferences. First, priming about globalization appears to have affected assessments of economic insecurity. Economic insecurity then influenced policy preferences, as seen in the models that included policy preferences as the dependent variable. Second, priming about globalization had direct effects on respondents' policy preferences. These two findings support our primary hypothesis that priming can effect the linkages students make between objective economic conditions, subjective insecurities, and policy preferences.

**Table 10.** *OLS Regression of Trade Preferences\* on Treatments, Ideology and Economic Insecurity*

Number of obs = 247			
R-squared = 0.09			
Adj R-squared = 0.05			
	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> t
Constant	0.07	0.538	0.891
Negative	-0.33	0.616	0.595
Positive	0.97	0.678	0.153
Both	-0.21	0.229	0.358
Ideology	0.20	0.083	0.016
Ideology*negative	0.00	0.152	0.983
Ideology*positive	-0.24	0.159	0.127
Duke	-0.37	0.201	0.064
ITAM	-0.13	0.207	0.544
Pro. Indiv Eco.	-0.06	0.113	0.606
Pro. Nat'l Eco.	-0.16	0.107	0.141

\*Dependent variable is the difference from the control group mean for the question that asks respondents to place themselves on a 7-point scale where "1" equals "Restrict Trade" and "7" equals "Increase Trade."

The effect of priming individuals to think about the consequences of globalization and free trade holds tremendous significance for our larger study of how individuals respond to macroeconomic changes. We know that there is an aggregate relationship between welfare state provisions and trade openness within countries. We also know that, to date, individual-level survey data has provided somewhat tenuous results about the micro-links through which

the aggregate relationship is created. The results of our experiment demonstrate that individual-level survey responses should be considered imperfect instruments by which to judge links between one's position in the economy and policy preferences.

It is also clear from our results that the valence attached to a particular prime does not have a consistent influence on all evaluations and preferences. For example, why is it that prospective assessments of the national economy are affected by the negative treatment, while prospective assessments of personal financial situations are affected by the positive treatment? In addition, once controlling for other factors, the prime did not always have the expected effect. For example, while the summary statistics appear to show significant effects for the negative and positive treatment with respect to the trade policy question, these variables were not significant in the regression. Finally, it should be noted the negative treatment was significant (or, in the case of trade – closest to significant) in the policy regressions, while the positive treatment was not. It may be that threat is a stronger motivator than more comforting messages when it comes to policy issues. We will explore this in the future. In the meantime, it is useful to note that the globalization and deindustrialization literatures are only concerned with the former.

With respect to our second finding, our results indicate that an individual's ideology is an important filter through which information about globalization is translated. While we may be able to influence the considerations that people have in their mind when answering questions, we are limited in the extent to which we can "sway" the opinions of the respondents. It is likely, and our results indicate that it is possible, that ideology conditions one's response to the effects of globalization. For example, our data show that conservatives are likely to resist information that runs counter to their ideological perspective (i.e., suggests that free trade has significant negative effects) or that primes them to think of welfare packages that might cushion these effects. The data show that these conservative individuals maintain the policies positions they are predispositioned to take while, in contrast, more liberal individuals express even more "liberal" policy preferences than their counterparts who do not receive the negative prime.

This leads to more discussion of our third key finding, regarding the importance of country specific context. The country in which an individual lives has a great impact on, not only their reaction to globalization, but also on how they interpret certain questions. As our data show, individuals from different countries have different predispositions with respect to national economic policy. These predispositions may be due to differences in experiences under certain policies, as well as cultural differences across individuals. For example, the American culture of individualism, as well as the position of the U.S. in the global economy, might be important for understanding the baseline attitudes displayed by the subjects at Duke.

The results presented in this paper are only the first step in analyzing the data from the experiment. There are at least three areas in which we plan to expand our analysis in the future. First, once the information and open-ended questions about trade are coded, we will be able to apply Zaller's model of attitude change to the data in our experiment. This will be an important contribution to the literature because Zaller's model has not been applied in an experimental context. Furthermore, coding the open-ended questions will enable us to test the competing model of persuasion, the Elaboration Likelihood (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

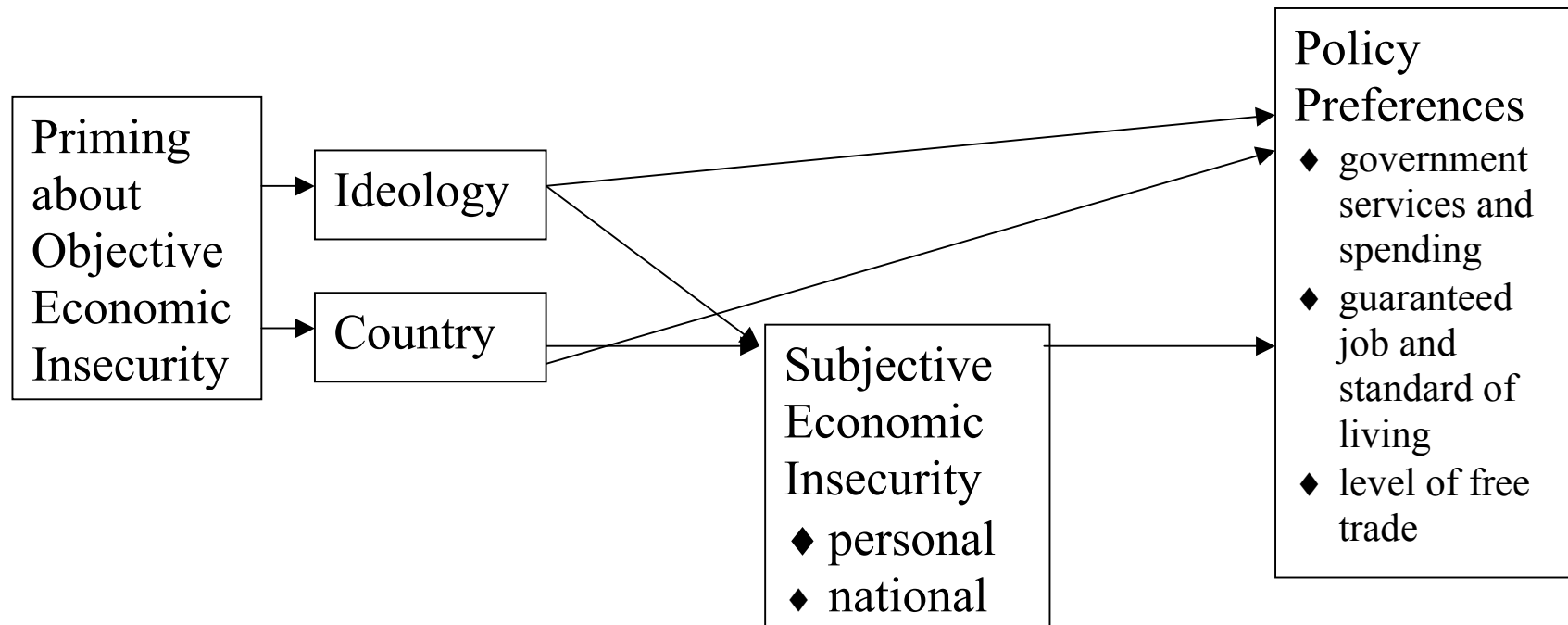
Second, in addition to this experiment, we are in the midst of conducting experiments with the adult population in North Carolina. These experiments will enable us to look at variation in circumstances and preferences across different groups. In particular, we will have individuals who genuinely are economically insecure, in contrast to the student experiments. Furthermore, the strength of individual predispositions might be less pronounced in the more general population; thus, the direction of our primes might have a stronger effect.

Third, in order to explore further the influence of the treatments on respondents' policy preferences, we plan to examine questions that asked respondents to place political leaders (candidates from the last election) on the same policy scales. One factor that might dampen the effect of the treatment is if the policy variable is not politically competitive, meaning that it does mark a division among political leaders or parties. If individuals do not see the political parties that they associate with differentiating themselves on certain issues, it is possible that they cannot easily be swayed away from their initial positions. This might, in particular, explain our relatively weak regression results for the trade question. It is possible

that respondents in all countries do not feel that decreasing free trade is an option in society, as the majority of politicians favor expanding markets and gaining new trading partners.

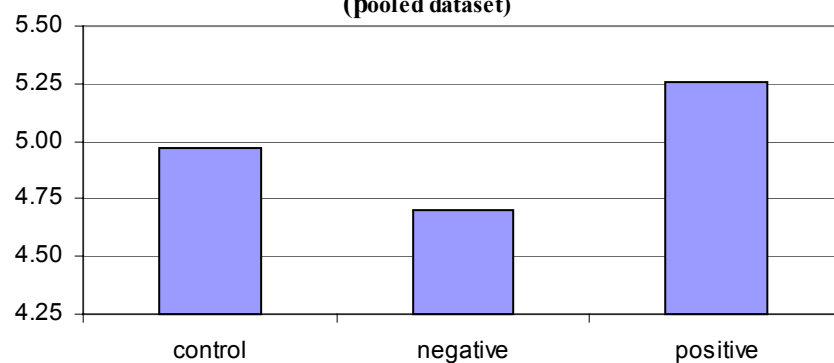
In conclusion, the analysis of this paper suggests that our larger investigation into citizen responses to globalization may be hindered by the availability of adequate data. The results from this experiment, however, suggest ways in which existing instruments should be altered to provide better information. Citizens are affected by the information they receive about globalization and its consequences. In times of high information (i.e. immediately before an election or during times of organized unrest), this information is likely to affect citizen preferences for government services. Electoral candidates, anxious to emerge victorious, typically listen to these preferences and attempt to accommodate them. It appears, then, that the micrologic we seek to substantiate is credible. The last step to investigate is whether citizen vote choice is also subject, significantly, to the influence of globalization's effects. It will be interesting to see, if globalization does affect the voting process, to which politicians react.

**Figure 1. Proposed Model of the Linkages Between Economic Insecurity and Policy Preferences**

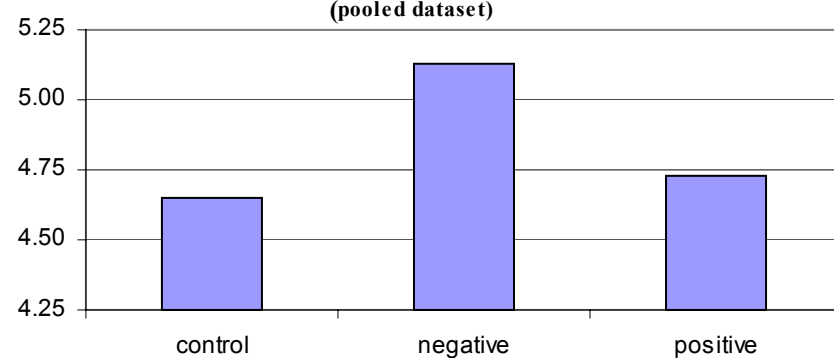




**Figure 2. Preference over Government Trade Policy:  
Restrict Trade (1) -- Increase Trade (7):  
(pooled dataset)**



**Figure 3. Government Provision of Services:  
Fewer (1) -- More (7):  
(pooled dataset)**



**Figure 4. Role of Government:  
Provide Job & Living (1) -- Get Ahead on Own (7):  
(pooled dataset)**

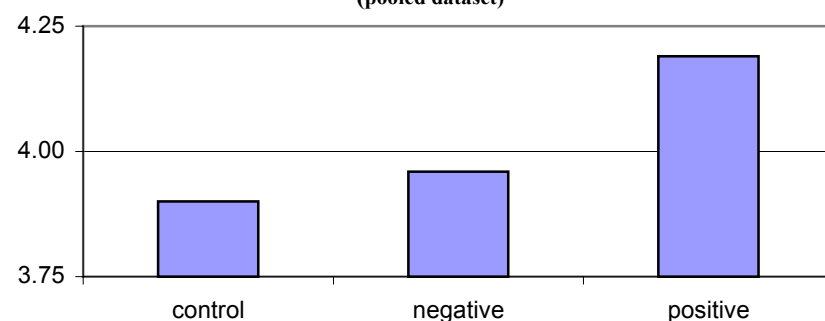


Figure 5. Effect of Ideology and Treatment on Preferences over the Role of Government

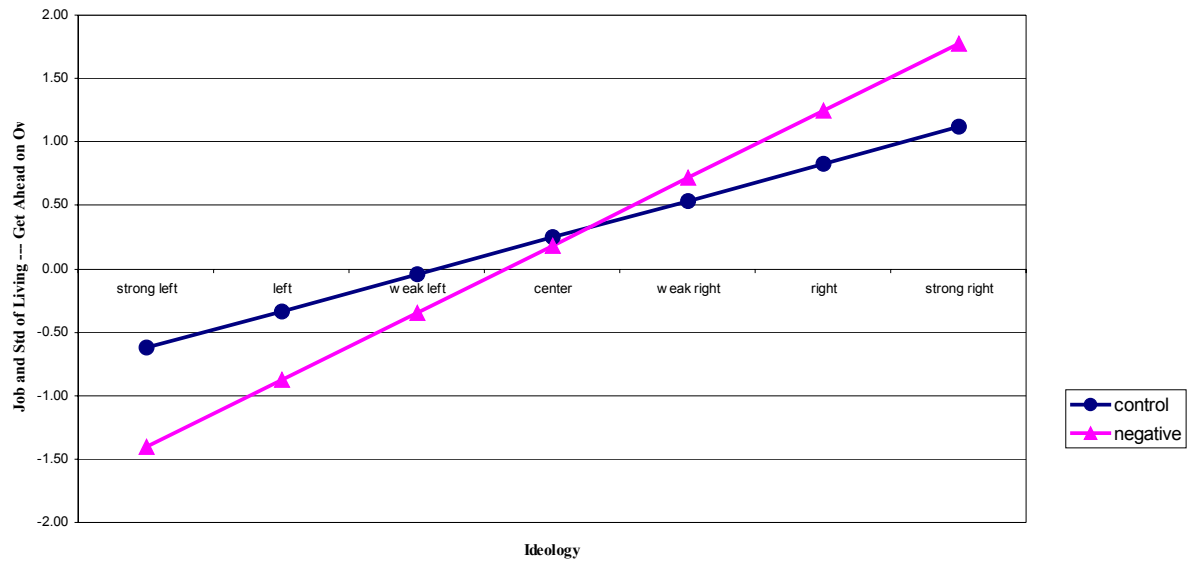
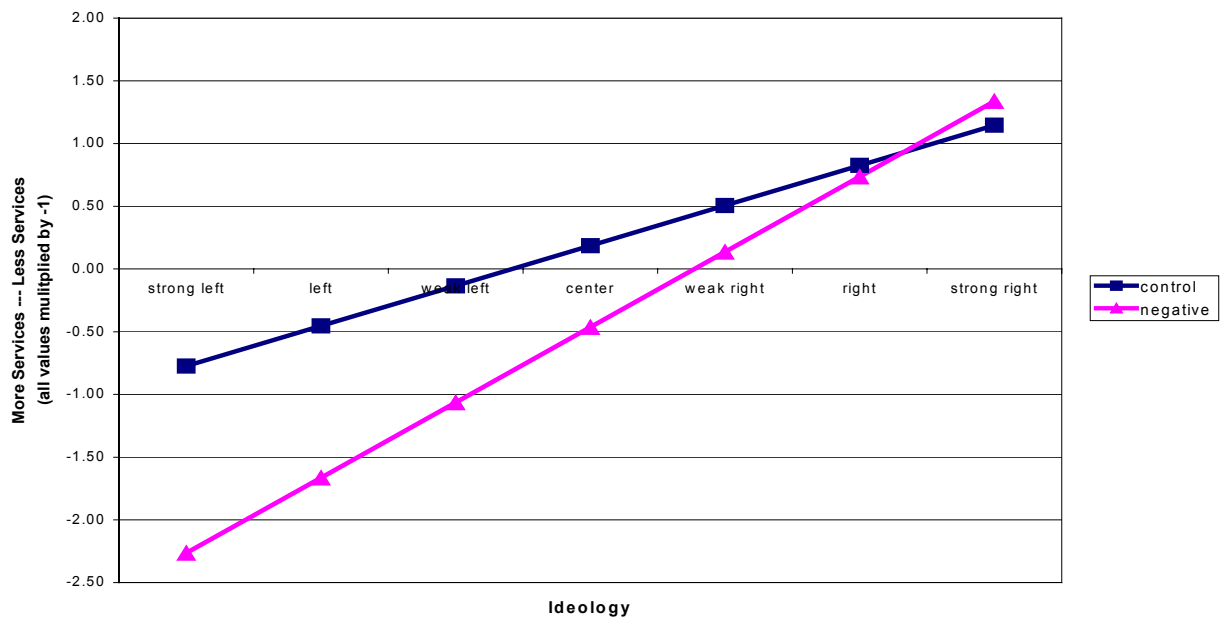


Figure 6. Effect of Ideology and Treatment on Government Provision of Services



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