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The Puzzle of Heterogeneity in Support for Free Trade

Jeffrey Drope

Marquette University, jeffrey.drope@marquette.edu

Abdur Chowdhury

Marquette University, abdur.chowdhury@marquette.edu

Jeffrey Drope and Abdur Chowdhury*

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Abstract: Over time and across countries, researchers have noted frequent and mostly unexplained gender differences in the levels of support for policies of free or freer trade: according to aggregate results from many surveys, women tend to be less favorable toward policies of liberalizing trade than men. Positing an economic security explanation based largely on a mobile factors approach, we ask if it is women generally who are more negative toward trade or rather women who are more economically vulnerable – i.e., women from the scarce labor factor. We utilize data from two recent surveys on individuals' attitudes toward different facets of trade and its effects to examine this hypothesis empirically. Rejecting a monolithic definition of “women,” we find that disaggregating by education level illuminates to some extent what underlying characteristics might be helping to drive some of these findings. Lower-skilled women in the US are much less likely to support free trade compared to higher-skilled women and this may largely explain previous negative findings. The low versus high-skill dynamic is, however, much less clear in the findings using survey data from a small sample of developing countries.

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1 Introduction

Over time and across countries, researchers have noted frequent and mostly unexplained gender differences in the levels of support for policies of free or freer trade: women tend to be less favorable toward policies of liberalizing trade than men.¹ Because citizens can and often influence the making of this vital macroeco-

¹ For example, Seligson (1999); Graham and Pettinato (2001); O'Rourke and Sinnott (2001); Scheve and Slaughter (2001); Baker (2005, 2009); Mayda and Rodrik (2005).

***Corresponding author: Abdur Chowdhury**, Department of Economics, Marquette University, 606 North 13th Street, Milwaukee, WI, USA, e-mail: abdur.chowdhury@marquette.edu

Jeffrey Drope: American Cancer Society, Atlanta, GA, USA; and Department of Political Science, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA

conomic policy, and women comprise >50% of the population in most countries, women's possibly distinct preferences in this major policy area are an important phenomenon to consider. While earlier studies have posited multiple explanations for general attitudes toward trade policy, no well-substantiated account of the gender component of trade attitudes has emerged.²

While this research seeks to address all of the above approaches in order to explain gender differences in trade attitudes, it posits the concept of labor mobility as a reasonable theoretical starting point, but with a gender twist. We hypothesize that it is not women in general who tend to be negative toward trade but particularly women in the less abundant labor factor – higher or lower-skilled depending on the country context – who have heightened concerns about open trade's negative effects on them. In particular, these individuals tend to be more concerned about the potentially disruptive economic effects that such policies might have on them or their families.

One of the central obstacles to testing theoretical propositions related to explaining trade policy attitudes has been the limitations of the available data. Most public opinion surveys ask respondents to provide only a general opinion about free trade, and researchers are left to conjecture as to which particular aspect(s) of trade policy and/or its effects the respondent is reacting.³ Trade is complex and few surveys ask questions about its meaningful components, a shortcoming that poses serious problems for direct testing of many key hypotheses. Trade, and more importantly, changes in trade policy, can have a number

2 The few studies focusing specifically on the gender-trade attitudes nexus underscore exposure to economic ideas (Burgoon and Hiscox 2004) and consumption decisions (Hall, Kao, and Nelson 1998), while those examining general attitudes toward trade have employed not only these two approaches (e.g. Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006; Baker 2009), but have also emphasized more traditional mobile factors (Scheve and Slaughter 2001) and specific factors (Mayda and Rodrik 2005) approaches, in addition to considering education as human capital (Gabel 1998) and sociotropic concerns (Mansfield and Mutz 2009).

3 The following surveys include general questions about attitudes toward trade or trade policy: the American National Election Study or NES 1992 (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Blonigen 2009); Globescan International Survey 2003 (Baker 2009); International Social Survey Program or ISSP 1995 (O'Rourke and Sinnott 2001; Mayda and Rodrik 2005); Knowledge Networks 2007 (Mansfield and Mutz 2009); Latinobarometro 1996 (Beaulieu, Yatawara, and Wang 2005), 1997 (Baker 2009); the National Annenberg Election Study 2004 (Mansfield and Mutz 2009); Pew Global Attitudes Project 2002, 2007 (Baker 2009); Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences or TESS 2003 (Burgoon and Hiscox 2004); the Wall Street Journal Americas 1998 (Baker 2009); the World Values Survey 1990–1992, 1995–1997, 1999–2001 (Baker 2005, 2009; Kaltenthaler, Gelleny, and Ceccoli 2004; used 1995–1997 only). Baker (2009: Ch. 8) utilizes some questions from his 4-City Survey (Brazil – 2005) about particular aspects of trade but uses them to create an index and explore a different theoretical inquiry.

of major implications for individuals and societies, and respondents are likely to be more concerned about the particular aspects that most affect them or their household, including, e.g., trade's effects on consumption, jobs (theirs and/or employment more broadly) and economic growth. These specific concerns are the components shaping the "general" attitudes upon which most researchers focus. Specific to this inquiry, the existing literature suggests that there may be a gendered component to many of these aspects, including those related to economic security and possibly consumption.

Ideally, in order to determine more effectively why women may be generally less receptive to trade liberalization, survey questions need to ask directly about the specific aspects and/or effects of trade policy that might be affecting women differently. Such data are even better if they are collected across space and time. Researchers can then employ these more nuanced responses as dependent variables in order to test competing or complementary theoretical propositions more meaningfully. Exploring gender differences in individuals' wide-ranging concerns about trade's effects on different facets of economic security helps to ensure that the findings are robust. The breadth of questions might also help to disentangle the effects of major causal and/or other important variables that are otherwise lumped together in the general questions.

Two recent major public opinion surveys – the first on the US and the second on five countries with predominant or large Muslim populations – offer an excellent opportunity to explore some of these complexities because they probe deeply and widely into individuals' perceptions of and attitudes toward trade and its effects. Survey themes emphasize economic concerns – e.g., jobs, overall economic growth, markets for exports, employment, and pocketbook economic concerns and consumption – while also collecting other crucial individual-level data such as educational attainment. A multi-country and region research design serves to examine possible divergence in gender's effects on trade attitudes between developed and developing countries, thereby helping to test a mobile factors theory more effectively.

The empirical findings of this research suggest that a mobile factors approach is a useful theoretical starting point in an explanation of gender differences in trade attitudes, at least in one major developed economy, the US. In the US, less educated women are more likely to have negative attitudes toward international trade and many things that it affects including consumption, workers, business, the overall economy and the individual-level "pocketbook" concerns. In contrast, women with higher levels of formal education in the US are more likely to report that trade has positive effects on the country's workers and consumption. The results from the developing country survey are much less clear. Notably, there appears to be little evidence of a divide between less and more educated women

in the Muslim-country survey. Though the logistic regression results preliminarily suggest a weak negative relationship between educated women and free trade, a more sophisticated empirical analysis suggests that the logistic results provide incomplete information that is likely affecting any inference.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the literature and develops the theoretical framework. Data and the methodology are given in Section 3, while Section 4 presents the empirical results. Alternative explanations are discussed in Section 5, and the paper ends with concluding remarks in Section 6.

2 Literature and theoretical framework

The existing literature on trade policy attitudes has empirically established that a number of theoretical approaches offer explanatory utility. Recognizing this utility, and because there are no compelling reasons that these explanations need to be theoretically or empirically exclusive of each other, we employ a framework that seeks to integrate them. However, because the literature on trade attitudes has grown somewhat vast, we will focus in this section on the approaches that have been most directly associated with gender and/or are most germane to our broader argument, including economic security, consumption, education/knowledge and risk.

2.1 A mobile factors approach and economic security

A major component of economic security is labor mobility. In a mobile factors approach to explaining trade attitudes, individuals in the abundant labor factor – higher-skilled in developed countries and lower-skilled in developing countries – are more likely to prefer policies of freer trade because they are theoretically better positioned to thrive in a more liberalized economy.⁴ Researchers argue that the goods or services generated by the abundant labor factor are comparatively more competitive in the global marketplace, which garners those workers higher wages. The corollary suggests that individuals in the scarce factor – lower-skilled in developed countries and higher-skilled in developing countries – will be more

⁴ In an analysis of the relationship between trade policy and inequality, Dutt and Mitra (2002) also employ a framework consistent with a mobile factors approach. Though gender and inequality are of course distinct concepts, the multi-purpose nature of the general framework illustrates its broad utility.

skeptical of liberalized trade because their industry will not do as well thereby mitigating demand for their skills and driving down their wages.⁵

We suggest the possibility that the scarce-factor dynamic is particularly heightened for women because they potentially face even greater economic and workforce constraints than men and stand potentially to lose more from policies that may cause economic distortion or dislocation. Many researchers have noted and some have demonstrated empirically that women often bear a disproportionate economic burden after liberalization.⁶ The broader literature on gender-related labor issues has highlighted a number of potential challenges that women are more likely to face than men in the labor marketplace, including among others: a higher likelihood of part-time work, which is generally much less secure than full-time work; a greater probability of leaving the paid workforce at different points to provide care (children or others); fewer years of experience to secure promotions and new positions (a consequence often of the previous two challenges); and blatant gender discrimination. The literature on gender effects of economic reform makes the connection that these types of challenges are often heightened when economic conditions change, such as when countries liberalize. Therefore, women in the scarce labor factor face a veritable double burden: both their gender and their skill set might limit their economic opportunities. It is reasonable therefore to expect that these women might tend to be more skeptical of economic policy changes that present potential uncertainty to their already more precarious economic status, including trade liberalization.

Accordingly, we should be able to observe clear evidence of predictable differences among more and less educated women in both developed and less developed economies. In developed economies, women with more formal education, by virtue of being the abundant labor factor, should enjoy greater labor market flexibility and opportunity and be more positive toward different facets of trade. Also, in developed economies such as the US, less educated women are generally more economically vulnerable and may demonstrate wide-ranging and deeper concerns about liberalizing trade. Kucera and Milberg demonstrate empirically that in the higher-skilled Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, trade with countries with abundant lower-skilled labor has had a disproportionate negative effect on lower-skilled female workers in these more developed economies.⁷

⁵ For in-depth general discussions of these approaches, see Baker (2009); and Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

⁶ See, e.g., School of International and Public Affairs (2001) and Tickner (2001).

⁷ Kucera and Milberg (2000).

In developing countries, higher-skilled workers are not only the scarce labor factor, but higher-skilled women in particular in many circumstances are newer to and a minority in the workforce (compared not only to men in their countries, but also compared to educated women's relative positions in developed economies), and may be the first to feel negative effects as labor demands change. Empirically, the ILO finds precisely this negative dynamic across a wide range of developing countries and regions: educated women are consistently facing lower wages, losing their jobs and not finding work disproportionate to educated men.⁸ Thus, policies such as free trade that can generate significant economic change may be more likely to be viewed with skepticism and even negativity by these women. Finally, theory also suggests that less educated women in developing countries will be more likely to endorse freer trade. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that in the post-liberalization environment, wage gains for women in developing countries have accrued disproportionately to the lower-skilled.⁹ Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that they might look at trade more positively than their better-educated compatriots. However, this expectation should also be tempered with the complex economic reality that while lower-skilled women might be doing better than before economic opening, many studies show that trade liberalization generates winners and losers as labor is reallocated according to factor endowments and some groups of low-skilled women have also fared poorly.¹⁰

Kaltenthaler et al. and Seligson have shown that another component of the mobile factors approach is individuals' direct economic pocketbook concerns, because these concerns are closely associated with wages and consumption, and thus economic security of the individual and their household.¹¹ Though studies have found only occasional evidence that these concerns drive individual-level attitudes toward trade, women may feel these microeconomic pressures more acutely than men. In recent decades, women have been taking an increasingly direct household management role in both developed and developing countries, and pocketbook concerns may now be more important to many women because of these significant role changes.¹²

Changes in trade policy might affect individual-level consumption and thus their broader economic situation. Baker argues that perceptions of improved

8 International Labor Organization (2010). It is important to note that mobile factors approaches assume full employment, which in strict terms, limits the theory to anticipating only wage decreases.

9 See, for example, Kabeer (2000), Saavedra (2001) and Mathew (2006).

10 See, Artecona and Cunningham (2002).

11 Seligson (1999); Kaltenthaler, Gelleny, and Ceccoli (2004).

12 See Varley (1996).

consumption opportunities as a result of more open trade help to drive more positive attitudes toward liberalized trade.¹³ It is possible that women – generally highly active in household-level purchasing – more strongly consider policies that potentially affect consumption. A recent survey, reported by the Boston Consulting Group, of 12,000 women in 21 countries estimates that women are responsible for nearly two-thirds of purchasing worldwide.¹⁴ With an increasing number of women heading households, perhaps especially so in developing countries, this proportion of purchasing will likely continue to increase.¹⁵ Accordingly, it is reasonable to anticipate that women's perceptions of the effects of trade policy on consumption – including the price, quality and variety of consumer goods – may directly affect their policy attitudes. Note that following this logic, women should be more supportive of open trade because of these positive effects on consumption.

In a similar vein, Hall, Kao, and Nelson examine the historical relationship between female political influence and trade policy utilizing a logic that suggests that women have more of a consumption-based perception of trade policy and are going to be more in favor of liberalized trade because tariffs increase prices.¹⁶ Comparing US tariff levels before and after women's enfranchisement, they find a gender gap wherein policy became more open – at least in terms of tariff levels – after this systemic change in voter eligibility, though they note the large number of possible conflicting or complementary explanations. In essence, the researchers are suggesting that women are more likely to condition their votes on changes in prices, while men tend to emphasize wages. The research, however, does not explicitly consider the interaction of gender and education.

Women's central interest in consumption presents at least two related theoretical possibilities. First, because women across education and income groups are generally active in household purchasing, the perceived consumptive benefits from trade might cause all women to look more favorably on this aspect of open trade (or even tilt general attitudes of women more positively toward open and/or international trade). Or second, women with more limited means – indicated best by lower levels of education and/or income – might be more sensitive to their purchasing power because necessary items comprise such a large proportion of their typical basket of goods.¹⁷ Thus, women with lower levels of education and/

¹³ Baker (2003, 2009).

¹⁴ Boston Consulting Group (2008).

¹⁵ Varley (1996) argues that women-led households are in fact dramatically undercounted because the convention has been to count only single-female-parent with dependents as "woman-led."

¹⁶ Hall, Kao, and Nelson (1998).

¹⁷ See, e.g., Booth et al. (1993).

or income will be more supportive of open trade because of its positive effects on consumption (and their purchasing power relative to their purchasing power pre-liberalization). Since both surveys query respondents directly about how they think trade and/or trade policy is affecting their consumption, it is possible to examine this relationship directly.

2.2 Sociotropic

Somewhat outside of the mobile factors framework, some scholars suggest that perceptions of the macroeconomic or “sociotropic” environment, including overall economic growth and/or broader employment opportunities in the general economy, have an effect on attitudes toward trade. For example, Mansfield and Mutz find that in the US, regardless of gender, respondents’ sociotropic concerns have a resounding impact on their attitudes toward trade: people who view the economy positively are more supportive of open trade.¹⁸ In developing countries, where there is ample evidence that trade can disproportionately affect vulnerable segments of the population under certain circumstances, it is reasonable to expect individuals to demonstrate concern about trade’s macroeconomic effects. But the theoretical expectations are complex and not well developed. For example, it is challenging to disentangle individuals’ perceptions of their pocketbook concerns from sociotropic ones because it is not clear that people can make these distinctions clearly. Is it reasonable to expect that an individual would support free trade if it is working well for the broader economy but not for them individually? Finally, there are no clear expectations for specific gender implications.

2.3 Ideas and education

Scholars have also focused on exposure to ideas and information about the economic principles of trade, as well as on education more generally, in order to explain trade attitudes. Hiscox and Hainmueller argue that the actual ideas that people learn are important in terms of shaping their attitudes toward trade.¹⁹ They posit that the fairly consistent positive relationship between education and support for free trade in developed countries that scholars have found is more a function of educated people’s exposure to specific economic ideas. Burgoon

¹⁸ Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

¹⁹ Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006).

and Hiscox's version of this basic argument includes a gender twist by suggesting that the gap between men and women is mainly a difference in their exposure to economic ideas.²⁰ The authors argue that men are more likely to be exposed to ideas that support freer trade such as comparative advantage – e.g., by being more likely to take a college economics class – and therefore will be more likely to prefer policies that correspond to these ideas. They test their hypothesis using data from the US and find that incorporating knowledge of trade issues (or suitable proxies) considerably closes the gender gap even after controlling for alternative explanations including those more focused on mobility and consumption.

The logic of the “ideas” hypothesis is extremely challenging to test because it is necessary to know the actual ideas to which individuals have been exposed. One crude possibility is that college-educated women have generally been exposed to more economic ideas than women without a college education because of the relative sophistication of the subject material compared to other educational experiences (e.g., high school or vocational institutions), and they will therefore be more positive toward trade. Some important shortcomings of this claim are discussed in greater detail below.

The human capital explanation interprets the role of education differently than the “ideas” approach. Scholars who privilege the importance of human capital argue that no matter the context, people with more education are better poised in the labor market and will be more supportive of general social welfare-maximizing policies such as liberalized trade.²¹ Thus, regardless of their status in terms of factor abundance and/or the economic ideas to which they have been exposed, more educated people – including women – should be more supportive of liberalizing trade.

In the cases of both the ideas and human capital, a clear pattern should emerge across the data and corresponding analyses below. If either or both are helping to explain some of the variation – and we will not be able to discern which with these data – we should observe consistently that better educated women support open trade (in any country).

2.4 Risk preferences

A strand of the economics literature examining why men and women often make different economic decisions privileges the role of risk. In particular, studies cite the possible gender effects of emotions, overconfidence, and interpretations of

²⁰ Burgoon and Hiscox (2004).

²¹ See, e.g., Gabel (1998).

risk as threat or a challenge; some have argued that women tend to be more emotional and less “overconfident” than men and are more likely to interpret risk as a threat.²² Because economic liberalization by nature entails some, if not significant, risk, this logic could be used as a theoretical starting point to understand preferences toward changes in trade policy.

While we cannot test these propositions directly – in fact, most of this literature is based on controlled laboratory experiments – we can predict the general results that we should observe if this logic is suitable in helping to explain trade preferences. If women by “nature” are simply more emotional, less overconfident and see risk as a threat, there should be systematic evidence of women, *ceteris paribus*, being more likely to reject the riskiness of a potentially changed economic context – i.e., liberalized trade – no matter their status in terms of factor endowments (and/or other variables). To further complicate this proposition, however, Atkinson et al. have found that education and knowledge can attenuate gender differences in economic decisions.²³ If this is the case, then we should see clear evidence of educated and/or trade-knowledgeable women more likely to support trade liberalization.

2.5 Specific factors

Finally, a specific factors approach suggests that the individual’s industry strongly influences trade policy preferences: individuals in export-oriented sectors are more likely to support open trade while those in import-competing sectors prefer more closed trade policies.²⁴ In a recent working paper, Beaulieu and Napier test a specific factors hypothesis and a related tradables versus non-tradables hypothesis and find that neither sectoral differences in employment nor employment in a tradable versus a non-tradable sector helps to explain gender differences in attitudes toward trade.²⁵ They do find, however, that the gender gap is more pronounced in developed economies than in developing ones, but do not offer an explanation as to why. They conclude in part that the lack of a clear explanation of the gender gap in attitudes may be due to immeasurable differences between the attributes of males and females. Unfortunately, we were unable to find appropriate survey data to test this hypothesis meaningfully.

²² See Crosson and Gneezy (2009) for a review.

²³ Atkinson, Baird, and Frye (2003).

²⁴ See Mayda and Rodrik (2005).

²⁵ Beaulieu and Napier (2008).

3 Data and methodology

3.1 Data

The data are drawn from two recent public opinion surveys. The first survey was administered in the US while the second was conducted in five countries with predominant or large Muslim populations (Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey).²⁶ These surveys provide considerable variation in terms of the average income, the type of political system and the structure of the national economies, among other country-level variables.

The US survey is “Fortune Magazine Poll # 2008-4311: Economy,” which was fielded in 2008 by Abt – Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Incorporated (SRBI).²⁷ The survey sought to examine the attitudes of 1000 randomly-selected individuals toward the US economy and related issues in the first year of the worldwide economic crisis.

The second survey was administered in countries with predominantly or large Muslim populations in early 2008 by www.worldpublicopinion.org, which is a collaborative project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.²⁸ The original survey sought the opinions of a random sample of more than 5000 individuals in eight countries about globalization and related issues including international trade. Four of the five survey countries are among the top 10 countries in the world with the largest Muslim populations (all but Azerbaijan).

Note that we are not attempting to integrate the findings from the analyses of the two surveys. We fully recognize that they are not readily comparable in such a direct fashion because of the different contexts of survey implementation and the different questions. However, we argue that there is inherent value in looking at the broader pattern of findings to determine if the effects are broadly consistent with theoretical constructs.

²⁶ The broader Muslim-country survey also included Great Britain, Iran, and Palestine, but questions about trade were excluded entirely for Great Britain and Iran, and basic demographic variables were excluded for Palestine. Where possible, we run alternative analyses in order to include Palestine, and consistently; these results are similar to those presented in this research.

²⁷ Fortune Magazine (2008).

²⁸ World Public Opinion (2008).

3.2 Dependent variables

As the survey data permit, we seek to use dependent variables that examine both trade policy attitudes generally and individuals' attitudes toward trade's major effects, including on jobs, mobility, economic pocketbook issues, macroeconomic performance and consumption. While the precise questions vary, there is sufficient continuity across the two surveys to generate a meaningful discussion comparing the results (see Data Appendix A for the wording of each question).

In the US survey, the dependent variables are direct queries about attitudes on trade generally, and its effects on the respondent personally, workers, business and consumption. Though three responses are possible, for reasons of data analysis and more intuitive presentation of results, we have re-coded the variable dichotomously wherein a "1" indicates support for free trade.

The questions in the survey of Muslim countries tap into several of the same conceptual issues as the other survey, and include trade generally and trade's effects on consumption, job security, job creation, standard of living and domestic business. There is one additional question about trade's effects on the environment that is difficult to place directly in this research's broader theoretical discussion but which we include as a robustness and stability check for the significance and direction of the coefficients of the variables included in the other analyses. The possible answers to all of these questions are dichotomous: "good" (1) or "bad" (0).

3.3 Independent variables

Considering the theoretical inquiry of this research, the first independent variable is *gender*. Following most research, it is a dummy variable where "female" is set to 1. Drawing from the general literature on trade attitudes, other key variables include: education; age; income; prospective economic outlook; and ideology and/or political party. Where data permit and there is compelling theoretical logic and/or strong precedent in the literature, we include several other controls in some analyses.

The second major independent variable most relevant to this theoretical inquiry, *education*, is a very complex variable in the trade attitudes literature and, as discussed above, is often poorly developed theoretically. Scholars use it to represent mobility by identifying if an individual is part of the abundant factor, the level of individual human capital, and "knowledge" about trade and related economic issues.

In this research, it is particularly important theoretically to understand how gender and education interact, and if there are distinct patterns across different types of countries. Accordingly, in order to generate a meaningful interaction, we first dichotomize education into college graduate and those who are not college graduates. Hainmueller and Hiscox present empirical data supporting the contention that college education – more than any other type of education – has a measurable and significant effect on support for free trade.²⁹ We then create an interaction between the two dummy variables: college graduate and female. In addition, in contrast to using the ordered education variable in the interaction term, generating an interaction of gender and the dichotomous education variable permits more meaningful interpretations of the constituent terms. The female constituent term represents women who are not college graduates, while the college graduate constituent term represents males with college degrees.

Age is often linked by scholars to aspects of broader adaptability in the workforce. In particular, scholars suggest that older people are more typically less able or perhaps less willing to relocate, so policies such as liberalizing trade that can have implications for dislocating workers are often less popular with them. In each dataset, age is a continuous measure by year.

Like education, *income* is also often poorly developed theoretically. High incomes can indicate some level of adaptability or flexibility, or perhaps even propensity for risk. High incomes can also indicate more consumptive power. Income is also usually highly correlated (and/or causally related) to education, so it is not easy to disentangle these complexities. In any event, it is positively related to attitudes toward open trade and statistically significant in most research. In terms of measurement across the surveys, though the actual increments are different, the measures are conceptually similar. The US survey uses a seven-point scale: 1 represents respondents reporting income <\$20,000; 2=\$20,000 to just under \$35,000; 3=\$35,000 to just under \$50,000; 4=\$50,000 to just under \$75,000; 5=\$75,000 to just under \$100,000; 6=\$100,000 to just under \$150,000; and 7=\$150,000 or more. In the Muslim-country survey, using specific scales for each country relative to cost of living, the surveyors use a three-point income scale of low, medium and high, which we code from 1 to 3, respectively.

Studies have found a consistent positive relationship between broader macroeconomic outlook and attitudes toward open trade.³⁰ Though theoretically it is challenging to disentangle this notion from mobility and/or economic security distinctly (and from several of the dependent variables, too), it appears likely

²⁹ Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006).

³⁰ See particularly Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

that many citizens consider the broader economy and link those perceptions to the policies that may be affecting it, including trade policy. In the US survey, the question is a short-term prospective, one in which the survey asks if the economy is “getting better” (coded 1), staying the same (0), or getting worse (–1).” Unfortunately, there are no sociotropic questions asked in the Muslim-country data, nor any questions that could serve as a reasonable proxy.

Though it has been much less consistently demonstrated in the empirical research, Kaltenthaler et al. posit that attitudes toward trade policy are shaped by more of a personal economic interest or “pocketbook” concerns.³¹ Again, only the US survey asks a pocketbook economic question: *Just thinking about your own personal economic situation, do you feel that over the past 12 months things have gotten better* (coded as 1), *worse* (–1), or *stayed about the same* (0)?

Some researchers have posited a strong link between ideology and attitudes toward trade. But once again, the theoretical logic is far from clear. On the one hand, from the viewpoint of a mobile factors approach, political parties that are supported largely by the abundant labor factor should have supporters that are in favor of more open trade. In developed countries, these parties should be right-leaning and supported by capital and higher-skilled citizens, and in developing countries, these parties should be left-leaning and supported by lower-skilled labor.³² The US survey offers data on political party affiliation and ideology, and we code the political party variable on a five-point scale with strong Democrat coded to 1, a leans-Democrat coded as 2, an independent that reports no leaning to either party as 3, a leans-Republican as 4 and a strong Republican coded as 5.³³

In order to examine preliminarily the trade knowledge hypothesis using the US survey data, we include a measure of self-identified trade knowledge.³⁴ Of course, whether the respondent is qualified to assess his or her own knowledge of trade is a separate but important issue; in effect, in many cases, it is more likely a measure of individual-level issue salience than actual knowledge. In either event,

³¹ Kaltenthaler, Gelleny, and Ceccoli (2004).

³² While this dynamic seems to hold well in analyses of trade openness in developed countries, scholars have found more support for openness in some developing countries from right-leaning parties (e.g., Magaloni and Romero 2008) or a near convergence in support for more open policies between the left and right (e.g., Armijo and Faucher 2002; Kingstone and Young 2009).

³³ A separate question in the survey asks respondents if they self-identify as liberals or conservatives. We use this measure as an alternative, and it produces substantively similar results to the political party variable.

³⁴ See Burgoon and Hiscox (2004).

we argue that it is a useful control. The question asks: *On another topic, compared to most other issues in the news, how closely do you follow news about US trade with foreign countries – very closely (3), somewhat closely (2), not very closely (1), or not at all (0)?*

Lastly, scholars have posited that religion might affect outlook on economic liberalization. Briefly, researchers posit that some religious-based social movements are skeptical of modernization and/or strong policies that they conceptualize as secular.³⁵ Only the Muslim-country survey asks a religion question and it is limited to Muslim (coded “1”) and non-Muslim (“0”).

3.4 Methodology

The dichotomous nature of the responses suggests the use of logistic regression.³⁶ As a general check on the robustness of the results, we also re-run the models using probit analysis. The results do not change substantively from the logistic regression results. The results for the US are given in Table 1.

Because country-level traits might affect the results, we include country dummies in the analysis of the multi-country survey results. It is possible that specific characteristics of certain countries affect the results, but without more countries to establish a sample at this higher level of analysis, it is not possible to control meaningfully for these possibilities. In an ideal scenario, a hierarchical model *a la* Baker would be utilized, but under the constraints of the data – specifically, too few countries – the best alternative is the use of a set of country dummies.³⁷ The important issue when choosing the baseline country is a sufficient sample size: you do not want the baseline sample to be small. Since the country samples are similar in size it does not matter in this regard which country we choose. Some scholars propose using the most “average” case though the selection conceptually is mostly arbitrary. We present results in Table 2 using Nigeria as the baseline, but it has no substantive effect on the results which country we use.

³⁵ See Daniels and von der Ruhr (2005).

³⁶ We run the models for the US using the original three-point scale in both ordered logistic and probit regressions and these models produce substantively similar results to the regular logit and probit models in terms of direction, size and strength of the coefficients.

³⁷ Baker (2005, 2009).

Table 1 Logistic regression of individual attitudes toward International trade and its effects in the US, 2008.

	General	Consumer	Workers	Business	Personal
Female	−0.40* (0.19)	−0.58** (0.19)	−0.83** (0.29)	−0.58** (0.20)	−0.54** (0.21)
College graduate	0.27 (0.22)	0.26 (0.21)	−0.09 (0.27)	0.12 (0.21)	0.43* (0.22)
Female*College graduate	0.19 (0.32)	0.57* (0.29)	0.90** (0.41)	0.37 (0.29)	0.19 (0.31)
Income	0.13* (0.05)	0.18** (0.05)	−0.007 (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)
Age	−0.08* (0.04)	−0.13** (0.04)	−0.14** (0.04)	−0.02 (0.04)	−0.12** (0.04)
Party	0.009 (0.17)	0.09 (0.16)	0.09 (0.21)	0.22 (0.16)	−0.09 (0.16)
Pocketbook economic	0.18 (0.13)	0.33** (0.12)	0.37** (0.16)	0.30** (0.11)	0.39** (0.12)
Prospective sociotropic outlook	0.76** (0.15)	0.36** (0.14)	0.62** (0.17)	0.39** (0.14)	0.40** (0.15)
Trade knowledge	0.002 (0.10)	−0.09 (0.09)	−0.03 (0.12)	0.11 (0.09)	−0.07 (0.09)
Constant	−0.46 (0.35)	0.51 (0.33)	−0.34 (0.41)	−0.25 (0.32)	0.18 (0.34)
Observations*	852	865	872	864	836

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

*The number of observations varies because not all respondents answered every trade question.

4 Results and discussion

The findings from the empirical analyses of the two surveys reveal preliminary evidence that a mobile factors-inspired theoretical argument to explain gender differences in the perceptions of trade policy is, at a minimum, a reasonable starting point for explaining the results in the US survey, though much less so for the survey in the five developing countries. Partly consistent with the predictions of this research's theoretical framework, the results demonstrate that there are sometimes important differences in how gender affects attitudes toward trade among those respondents from the developed country and the developing countries in these analyses. In brief, in the US, we find that college-educated women tend to perceive the effects of international trade more positively than women without college degrees, though college educated-

Table 2 Logistic regression of individual attitudes toward International trade and its effects in five predominantly muslim countries, 2007.

	Consumption		Economic security				Other
	Trade	Consumer	Job security	Job creation	Standard of living	Domestic business	Environment
Female	0.11 (0.09)	0.09 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	0.06 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)	0.31** (0.09)	0.11 (0.08)
College graduate	0.59** (0.16)	0.14 (0.16)	0.22 (0.15)	0.34* (0.15)	0.26 (0.16)	0.57** (0.16)	0.25 (0.14)
Female*College graduate	-0.42+ (0.24)	-0.12 (0.24)	0.09 (0.23)	-0.04 (0.23)	0.13 (0.24)	-0.45+ (0.24)	0.03 (0.22)
Age	0.004 (0.003)	0.01 (0.003)	0.01* (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.04 (0.003)	0.01** (0.003)
Income	0.12* (0.06)	0.13* (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	0.13* (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.005 (0.05)
Muslim	-0.59** (0.11)	-0.18 (0.12)	-0.81** (0.11)	-0.62** (0.11)	-0.52** (0.11)	-0.86** (0.11)	-0.61** (0.10)
Constant	0.46** (0.17)	0.93** (0.18)	0.02 (0.17)	0.20 (0.17)	0.49** (0.17)	0.37* (0.17)	-0.07 (0.16)
N of Obs	3341	3186	3107	3266	3099	3269	3152

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$.

women do appear to support it on average not much differently than their male counterparts with or without a college degree. In contrast, in developing countries, the results of the multivariate analyses – though much less statistically significant than the US analyses – suggest preliminarily a rather different scenario. College-educated men were the most likely to support economic openness. Women were a little less likely to support free trade, with very little discernible gap between college-educated and non-college educated. The most pronounced gap was with men without a college degree, who were notably less likely than the other three groups to support economic openness. With the caveat that the statistical significances were very weak or often non-existent, this finding does not augur well for a gender/mobile factors approach for these developing countries.

With binary logit models with interactive terms, a more meaningful interpretation of the results requires some additional empirical effort. Accordingly, following Mitchell and Chen, we graph the results so we can better understand the substance of the results – in this case, to visualize the different propensities to support open trade of the discrete groups of interest generated by interacting

Figure 1 “International trade... is good for consumers in the US” – Visualization of main effects and interactions of gender and college education.

the gender and college-educated variables.³⁸ The vital benefit of such a technique is that it incorporates the contributions of the covariates when we use predicted probabilities to interpret the broader effects. We also argue that it is a particularly intuitive way to examine the data. For both the sake of simplicity of presentation and, more importantly, because the patterns are remarkably consistent across the different dependent variables within the results for each survey, we present only one graph (i.e., one “sample” dependent variable) for the results from each survey/table.

In Figure 1, we observe that the predicted probability of college-educated men and women to believe that international trade benefits consumers is about equal at slightly <0.6 . Their male peers without college degrees are only marginally less likely to share this belief. Women without a college degree, however, are much less likely to think that trade is good for consumers (almost 0.3). This result bears out consistently in a statistically significant manner across the different components of free trade that we test, suggesting a robust finding. The one small difference that we note is a shift downward of all of the probabilities with the question about “workers” – the probabilities across all four groups are much lower (<0.3) though very much in the same overall pattern visible in Figure 1.

Arguably, if we consider a more “pure” mobile factors approach, the positive finding for less-educated males is puzzling. If anything, the anecdotal evidence – the peer-reviewed literature is so far relatively sparse – suggests that steady decreases in manufacturing in the US have particularly hurt male workers who

³⁸ Mitchell and Chen (2005).

Figure 2 “International trade is good for companies...” – Visualization of main effects and interactions of gender and college education in five developing countries.

are not college-educated.³⁹ Perhaps a plausible explanation for this discrepancy lies in the risk-focused literature discussed above, which suggests that men have a larger appetite for risk, including new economic policies. However, the preliminary results below from the five developing countries cast some doubt on the contention that men are generally more risk-tolerant. We do not have a good explanation for this finding and it suggests a path for future research.

On a related note, a mobile factors approach assumes full employment. While it is reasonable to argue that women are concerned about wage levels, it is likely that they also have grave direct concerns about their employment status – i.e., job or no job – and concerns well beyond the individual level. The results from these analyses clearly bear out women’s broad concerns about trade liberalization. These more comprehensive interpretations, however, are not well accounted for theoretically in a strict mobile factors approach, so it seems reasonable to consider relaxing this assumption to allow for these concerns.

Finally, the graphical representation in Figure 1 strongly suggests that the consistent negative general finding for gender across many studies may be driven in considerable part by women with less education in developed countries. The negative and significant coefficient that scholars have observed in many of the studies may be missing the fact that it really depends on the key characteristic of women. Thus, the “median” woman might have a more negative outlook toward free trade but it hardly tells the whole story.

The graphical representation in Figure 2 tells a different story for these five developing countries. In this figure, we see that college educated men are the

³⁹ For example, “Decline of the working man: why ever fewer low-skilled American men have jobs,” *Economist*, 28 April 2011.

most likely to be positive toward international trade, while college-educated women are the next most likely group to support it, followed closely by women without college degrees, and lastly men without college degrees. Note, however, that the spread amongst these groups is much tighter than we observe in Figure 1 for the US. Also, note that both lines are well above the 0.5 mark, suggesting that all individuals in all four groups are more likely to be positive toward international trade than not. These patterns repeat across the other five analyses that examine effects of international trade on consumption, job creation, job security, standard of living and environment. This finding is in marked contrast to the US where overall support across the components of free trade is simply lower, which begs for more analytical attention in future surveys and corresponding research.

Considering that neither gender nor the interaction between gender and education is significant in most of these analyses, we have to consider these results very cautiously. This finding of little or no effect might suggest that there is a less strong gendered component to trade attitudes in these five developing countries with large or predominant Muslim populations. More research is necessary to explain meaningfully why there are more limited effects of gender, especially compared to the US, and also to determine if this is a pattern across other developing countries and regions.

4.1 Consumption

The finding from the US survey that educated women are more likely than their non-college educated female counterparts to state that they believe that free trade is positive for consumers is puzzling in light of the existing research. This finding is not consistent with Hall et al.'s theoretical supposition about perceptions of how women link tariffs and price.⁴⁰ The evidence in this US survey suggests that is rather uncertain that all women share this viewpoint.

4.2 Education and/or knowledge

The divergent results between the US and developing countries in these surveys suggest that scholars need to pay closer attention to issues of education and knowledge. While this research finds generally what Burgoon and Hiscox⁴¹ and

⁴⁰ Hall, Kao, and Nelson (1998).

⁴¹ Burgoon and Hiscox (2004).

Hainmueller and Hiscox⁴² find – that educated people in the US, and perhaps especially educated women, have more positive viewpoints toward open trade – the finding that men without college education do not differ markedly cast some doubt on both the human capital and knowledge arguments. In developing countries, there simply is not much statistically significant variation among these groups. If the human capital hypothesis were valid, we would not likely observe that, e.g., women without college degrees hold similar views toward international trade as their educated counterparts.

This research does examine very preliminarily the closely-related issue of trade knowledge using the US survey. The coefficients of the trade knowledge variable are mixed in direction and are never statistically significant across the five analyses.⁴³ When we generate an interaction of trade knowledge and gender, it does not produce results that are statistically significant. Women who follow trade closely do not have views statistically different from women who do not follow the topic closely. It is possible that many respondents, regardless of gender, do not really understand the complexities of international trade, and the survey question that this research utilizes is an unreliable measure. However, it is also possible that an individual's actual knowledge of trade does not affect their views of it in any discernible pattern; in other words, the distribution of those who are negative or positive toward trade openness is comparable no matter the level of knowledge, which is similar to the issues discussed directly above. Future surveys need to develop better questions that actually test people's economic and trade knowledge more objectively.

4.3 Risk

As acknowledged above, we cannot effectively test risk-based hypotheses directly with these data, but the general trends suggest that risk might be a situation-specific explanation. If women are more risk-averse naturally, then we should observe systematic negative trends in women's attitudes toward trade across the two surveys. These results do not bear out such a consistency. Similarly, as discussed above, there is possibly a divergence among men, too, with preliminary evidence that men without a college degree in these developing countries are the least supportive of international trade. Considering the complexity of the relationship between risk and trade attitudes, a next logical step in terms of testing these potential explanations might include more work in the experimental laboratory.

⁴² Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006).

⁴³ Removing the knowledge variable from the analysis does not change any other result substantively.

5 Alternative explanations

While the results for many of the control variables vary among the analyses depending on the survey and the particular dependent variable, there are some consistent findings of theoretical note. One of the most stable findings using the US survey is the direction and significance of the coefficients for prospective economic outlook variable: in nearly every analysis, the coefficients of this variable are positive and statistically significant. This finding is consistent with Mansfield and Mutz's finding across two national surveys in the US.⁴⁴ If a respondent is optimistic about the nation's economic prospects, they are much likelier to support international trade generally, or to think that it has positive effects on specific facets of the economy (e.g., consumption, mobility, macroeconomic, etc.).

There are, however, potential problematic issues with sociotropic variables that scholars sometimes do not acknowledge sufficiently. Undoubtedly, there is genuine potential for tautology because the crude logic suggests that (dis)satisfaction with the economy leads to (dis)satisfaction with a major component of the economy – i.e., trade. On a closely related note, it is difficult to know whether sociotropic issues belong on the left- or the right-hand side of the empirical equations. There is a reasonable case for both and scholars should consider these issues more carefully.

In the Muslim-country survey, the coefficients of the Muslim dummy variable are negative and statistically significant in six of the seven analyses (not the consumer dependent variable), suggesting that Muslim respondents are much less likely to support trade generally or to think that it has positive impacts on any major aspect such as jobs or the macro-economy. There could be myriad explanations for this finding and it deserves considerably more investigation in future research, particularly considering the general conclusion of the surveyors that Muslims are generally supportive of globalization, which was based on aggregated responses not on multivariate analysis with appropriate controls.⁴⁵

Age demonstrates an unanticipated divergence between the two surveys in terms of the direction and consistency of the statistical significances of the coefficients. As with many other empirical studies, the findings for age in the US survey suggest a negative relationship: older people are less likely to be supportive of free trade or to believe that it has widespread positive effects. In all analyses for the US, the coefficients for age are negative, and in four of the five analyses, they are statistically significant. In the Muslim-country survey, age is positive in all analyses, though only significant with the job security and environment

⁴⁴ Mansfield and Mutz (2009).

⁴⁵ See, World Public Opinion (2008).

dependent variables, and the magnitude of effect is small. It is possible that in many developing countries, older people recall the long-term economic challenges associated with closed economies, though new survey data would be necessary to address this issue effectively.

As discussed above, across the analyses, income is fairly consistently positive and significant at the 5% level in nearly half the analyses. Respondents with higher incomes are more likely to deem international trade as good generally, or positive for specific aspects of their lives or for their country. Again, income is easily conflated with other variables in the analysis, especially education, and scholars must continue to consider these complexities.

Political party is not a strong predictor of attitudes toward trade policies in the US. The coefficients of the political party variables are never statistically significant and are inconsistent in terms of direction. This finding might have to do with the broad umbrella of diverse groups that each of the two major parties has become, wherein support for trade varies greatly among these groups.

6 Conclusions

By using an original analytical approach that focuses not just on general attitudes toward free or international trade, but for the first time on a significant scale, on attitudes toward the issues and components of free/international trade and its effects, this research generates some valuable theoretical insight into and empirical illustrations of how gender may be affecting preferences toward trade policies. The evidence suggests that a mobile factors/economic security approach helps us to understand better how gender is affecting trade policy attitudes in the US. Women who perceive that they are more economically secure or perhaps observe better economic prospects – at least in the face of trade policy change – tend to be more sanguine about trade liberalization. In contrast, women who find themselves in more vulnerable economic positions are more skeptical about policies of freer trade. Considering that the preponderance of research on trade attitudes includes only developed countries and finds a consistently negative gender effect, this very robust finding for the US is enormously important. Moreover, these findings are robust to trade's broader economic effects – similar patterns clearly emerge across multiple facets of trade. While scholars must do more work to test these relationships, empirical evidence supporting broader mobile factors of trade attitudes explanations may be partly driven by gender.

The “non-” findings for the gender-education interaction in the developing country survey clearly suggests that the broader explanation is complex. These findings do not support well the gender/mobile factors framework. If this were

the case, we would observe much weaker support from college-educated women in these countries. The findings also cast some doubt on the human capital argument: less education does not necessarily automatically translate into less support for economic liberalization. Scholars need to dissect the specific components of the overall explanations and corresponding theoretical frameworks better. In particular, in most research, the mobility, human capital, knowledge and ideas components are not sufficiently distinct. In terms of a mobile factors approach, it is quite likely that our old definitions of “scarce” and “abundant” factors are much less meaningful in this highly globalized world, particularly in rapidly-growing middle-income countries such as Turkey. To examine better the knowledge and ideas arguments, scholars need to probe the individual’s technical background and preconceptions about principles of trade more objectively, not only by testing their economic and trade knowledge, but also by determining better what is being taught in universities or other educational venues concerning trade, and how the media are presenting these issues in each country.

The theoretical implications of these findings demand further testing of the economic security-focused propositions in new and different contexts. This research generates compelling results from analyses using public opinion data from the US, but it is clear that future research needs to test this proposition in other developed economies. Similarly, the findings from the survey of five important predominantly-Muslim countries in Asia and Africa demand that we investigate whether a lack of a gender gap exists in other contexts. If these two patterns emerge consistently across space (and perhaps time), it is very clear that the research community needs to be more innovative in our theoretical thinking. Hopefully, too, more pollsters will ask about attitudes toward trade’s effects on multiple relevant aspects and not the blunt, much less useful, instrument that has been ubiquitous in previous surveys. Similarly, surveys executed with similar methodologies across multiple, varied countries over time would greatly enhance our abilities to infer from these type of data.

With trade policy continuing to be high on both national and international agendas, it behooves researchers and policymakers to learn more about how attitudes and preferences develop. A recent major event in Latin America demonstrates the importance of developing a better understanding of individual-level trade attitudes. The 2007 referendum in Costa Rica on the ratification of a free trade agreement among the Central American countries, the US and the Dominican Republic only narrowly passed and public opinion polls suggest that men were slightly more likely to support the pact than women.⁴⁶ With such a close

46 Surveys from both the Universidad de Costa Rica’s (UCR) Escuela de Estadística and Centro de Estudios de Opinión immediately after the referendum and Latin American Public Opinion Project in early 2008 suggest this result.

vote, for either the “yes” or the “no” side, the disproportionate preferences of specific major discrete groups, such as those defined by gender and/or education, may well have played a role in the final outcome. Across time and space, there continues to be some evidence of a gender component to differences in these individual-level trade policy preferences and this research takes important steps toward parsing out some of the explanations of this phenomenon.

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Appendix A – Survey questions

US Survey

The general question reads:

1. *As you may know, international trade has increased a great deal in recent years. Do you think that the growth in international trade has made things better or made things worse for the US as a whole?*

The trade effects questions use the same root as the general question, but replace the underlined with the following:

2. *... for you personally?*
3. *... for American workers?*
4. *... for American business?*
5. *... for consumers in the US?*

Muslim-Country Survey

1. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for creating jobs in [country]?*
2. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for job security for [country] workers?*
3. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for [country] economy?*
4. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for [country] companies?*
5. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for your own standard of living?*
6. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for consumers like you?*
7. *Do you think international trade is good or bad for the environment?*

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