How Does Fox News Shape Preferences?
Trust, Altruism, Revenge, and Morality

Tim Hua

Fall 2022

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- Gary Becker is wrong and sounds like one of those academics in crappy jokes who "assumes" their problems away.

Evidence on Global Preference Heterogeneity from Falk et al. (2018)
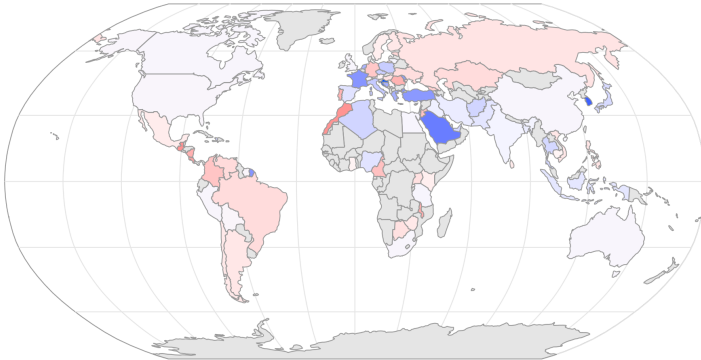

Trust
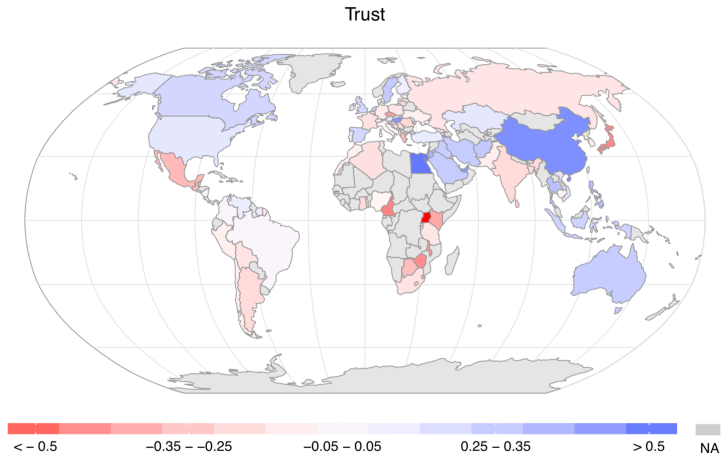
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Altruism
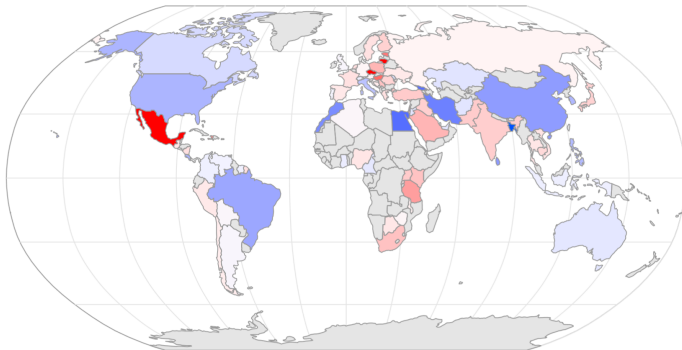
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Negative Reciprocity

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- A recent example on the influence of preferences is how universalist moral values (belief that Caring and Fairness is important) are correlated with voting for Democrats in the US, whereas communal moral values (Loyalty and Authority) are correlated with voting for Republicans (Enke, 2020).

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- But I think preferences can be changed.

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- Using the channel position instrument, researchers have found that Fox News caused individuals to stay-at-home less during the pandemic (Ash et al., 2020), led judges to give harsher sentences (Ash and Poyker, 2021), increased police killings of Blacks in Florida (Crabtree and Poyker, 2021), and more.

There are a lot more examples: Download the slides at timhua.me/thesis.pdf to see one-sentence summaries of some of these in the appendix

- Media in general
  - Alatas et al. (2019) Banerjee et al. (2019) Kearney and Levine (2015) Jensen and Oster (2009) Armand et al. (2020) Jacobsen (2011) Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) Ang (2022) Wang (2021) Adena et al. (2015) Chen (2021) Gagliarducci et al. (2020) Rubin (2014) La Ferrara et al. (2012) Xiong (2021) Olken (2009)
- Fox news
  - DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) Martin and Yurukoglu (2017) Clinton and Enamorado (2014) Knill et al. (2022) Crabtree and Poyker (2021) Ananyev et al. (2021) Ash and Poyker (2021) Ash et al. (2020) Ash et al. (2022) Li and Martin (2022)

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- By understanding the way media affects preference formation, we are also answering the question "How does Fox News convince voters"
  - Information or a change in underlying views?

Measuring Outcome Variables

- First three are measured using the same survey questions from Falk et al. (2018), moral attitudes are measured using Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ20).

Figure: One of the questions for Altruism

Imagine the following situation: Today you unexpectedly received 1,600 U.S. dollars. How much of this amount would you donate to a good cause?

Trust and Negative Reciprocity

How well does each of the following statements describe you as a person? Please indicate your answer on a scale from 0 to 10. A 0 means "does not describe me at all," and a 10 means "describes me perfectly." You can use any number between 0 and 10 to indicate where you fall on the scale, using 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10

I assume that people have only the best intentions

| 0 - Does not describe me at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - Describes me perfectly |

If I am treated very unjustly, I will take revenge at the first occasion, even if there is a cost to do so

| 0 - Does not describe me at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - Describes me perfectly |

Altruism and Negative Reciprocity

We now ask you for your willingness to act in a certain way. Please again indicate your answer on a scale from 0 to 10. A 0 means "completely unwilling to do so," and a 10 means "very willing to do so." You can also use any number between 0 and 10 to indicate where you fall on the scale, using 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10

How willing are you to punish someone who treats you unfairly, even if there may be costs for you?

| 0 - Completely unwilling to do so | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - Very willing to do so |

How willing are you to punish someone who treats others unfairly, even if there may be costs for you?

| 0 - Completely unwilling to do so | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 - Very willing to do so |

How willing are you to give to good causes without expecting anything in return?

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- Respect for authority is something all children need to learn (Authority).

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- In addition, I have the current channel positions for a person's town, which has generally remained stable over time.
- I could then use instrumented Fox News viewership to obtain a casual effect of watching Fox News/length of exposure to Fox on my outcome variables.

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- What counts as "watching Fox"? At least one hour a week?
- Potential weighing strategies to make my survey sample more representative that I could employ if I field the survey on MTurk (e.g., Levay et al. (2016))
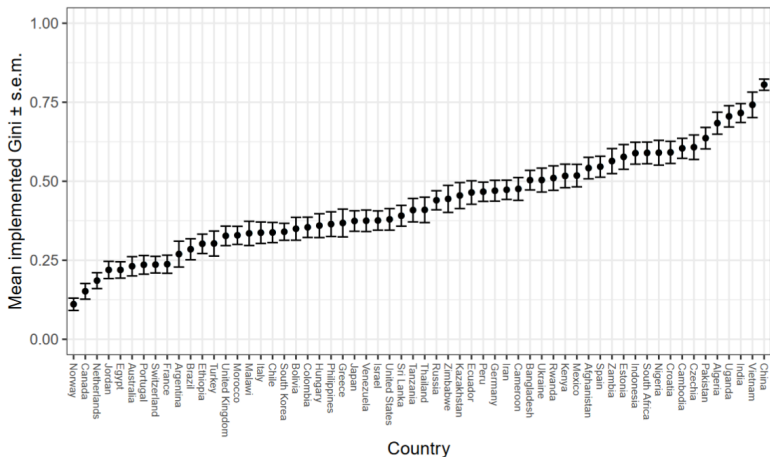
Appendix

More goodies

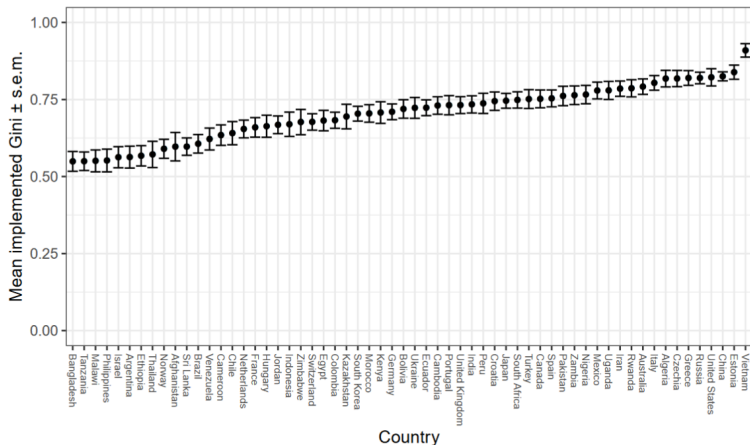# Evidence on Global Preference Heterogeneity: Falk et al. (2018)
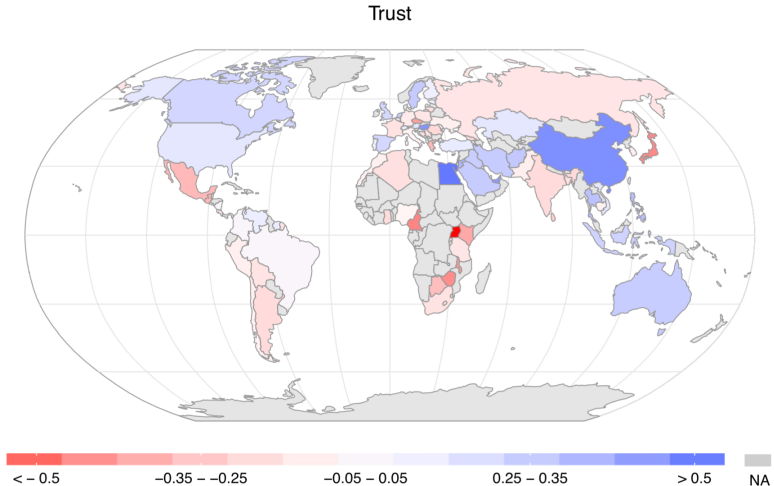
Trust

Global Preference Heterogeneity: Almås et al. (2020): Lower numbers means more egalitarian when unfair outcomes are due to luck

Global Preference Heterogeneity: Almås et al. (2020): Lower numbers means more egalitarian when unfair outcomes are due to merit/skill

Past research on Fox

- Fox news was rolled out starting December 1996, and by around 2006 it was available in most zip code.
- DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) found a 0.4–0.7 percentage point increase in votes for Bush in the 2000 share among counties that have rolled out Fox compared to those who haven't.
- Martin and Yurukoglu (2017) found that one-standard-deviation decrease in Fox News's channel position is associated with 0.3 percentage point increase in Republican vote share
- There's a lot more! There's Clinton and Enamorado (2014) Knill et al. (2022) Crabtree and Poyker (2021) Ananyev et al. (2021) Ash and Poyker (2021) Ash et al. (2020) Ash et al. (2022) Li and Martin (2022)

Examples of media doing good: I

- Showing primary students in Uganda *Queen of Katwe*, a movie about a Ugandan girl's success in chess tournaments, decreased the probability that a female student fails math by 44%(Riley, 2022)
- Celebrity endorsements on Twitter is effective in driving a vaccination campaign (Alatas et al., 2019)
- Banerjee et al. (2019) showed individuals a TV show that educated them about HIV, increased individuals testing for HIV, and reduced Chlamydia rates.
- MTV's *16 and Pregnant* reduced teen pregnancies by 4.2% between 2009 and 2010, which represents 24% of the total decline in that period (Kearney and Levine, 2015)
- Chen (2021) Exposure to the Amos 'n' Andy show—the first Black sitcom—reduced the Black-White infant mortality gap and increased the probability that a white child will attend an integrated school.

Examples of media doing good: II

- "Introduction of cable TV decreases the differences in attitudes and behaviors [towards women] between urban and rural areas by 45% to 70%" (e.g., Is it acceptable to for a husband to beat his wife) (Jensen and Oster, 2009)

- "A one standard deviation increase in signal strength [of BBC Radio in Fascist Italy] increases the number of episodes of Nazi-fascist violence related to partisan and civilian resistance by almost three times" (Gagliarducci et al., 2020)

- Broadcasting radio messages urging a rebel group to defect causes defections, reduces fatalities, and reduces attackes on civilians. (Armand et al., 2020)

- Watching Al Gore's *An Inconvinient Truth* lead to more purchases of carbon offsets, but the effect fades a year later (Jacobsen, 2011)

Examples of media doing bad:

- A single pro-genocide radio station is accountable for 10% of the violance in the Rwandan Genocide (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014)

- "Instrumenting for roadshow destinations using the location of theaters prior to the movie's release, I show that [*The Birth of a Nation*] significantly increased local Klan support in the 1920s...for counties in Kansas, where *The Birth of a Nation* was banned by the governor, historical theater stock is uncorrelated with future Klan presence." (Ang, 2022)

- A one standard deviation increase in exposure to Father Coughlin's anti-semetic radio station "was associated with 15 percent lower per capita purchase of war bonds in 1944" (Wang, 2021)

- Nazi radio propaganda was effective overall and especially effective in areas with historically hight anti-semetic views. It has the opposite effect in areas with historically low anti-semetic views (Adena et al., 2015)

Media doing things:

- "Cities with at least one printing press by 1500 were at minimum 29 percentage points more likely to be Protestant by 1600." (Rubin, 2014)
- Soup Operas featuring small families caused birth rates to fall among its viewers, especially among poorer women (La Ferrara et al., 2012).
- TV led to less social groups and less trust in rural Indonesia (Olken, 2009)
- Reagon's tenure as the host of *The G.E. Show* increased votes for him in the 1980 presidential election (Xiong, 2021)

Bibilography I

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