# Pre-Analysis Plan for "Moral Universalism: Global Evidence"\*

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### 1 Overview

This document provides a pre-analysis plan for a project that introduces a new representative survey dataset to study the global heterogeneity in moral universalism: the extent to which people exhibit the same level of altruism towards strangers as towards in-group members. Through the 2020 Gallup World Poll, we deploy a series of hypothetical disinterested dictator games with about 60,000 individuals in 60 countries to study the global distribution of universalism, its correlates and determinants.

Understanding the distribution of people's moral preferences and beliefs through large-scale surveys, and linking these data to economic and political variables, is attracting increased interest in behavioral economics, political economy and cultural economics. A rich body of early lab and lab-in-the-field experiments study the nature of people's moral and fairness concerns, including regarding how people weight the welfare of in-group and out-group members.<sup>1</sup> More recently, researchers have moved beyond these smaller subject pools to study the distribution of moral and fairness preferences in the broader population through large-scale surveys and experiments (e.g., Almås et al., 2019; Falk et al., 2018; Alesina et al., 2018). In doing so, Enke (2020) and Enke et al. (forthcoming, 2020) specifically focus on measuring moral universalism. They link estimates of moral values and preferences to political ideology, voting, and various economic behaviors. While this work suggests large heterogeneity in universalism in the population, which is linked to variation in economic and political behaviors, little is known about the broader distribution of universalism outside the relatively narrow set of a handful of "Western" countries that have been studied thus far.

Our new data-collection exercise will contribute to this line of work by documenting the global heterogeneity in universalism, and its relation to economic behaviors, at an individual and aggregate level. The data are collected in the framework of the 2020 Gallup World Poll. About 60,000 respondents complete hypothetical disinterested money allocation games in which they split \$1,000 between two other individuals, a random stranger and a specified in-group member, such as a friend or a co-ethnic. By collecting data on these hypothetical decisions (i) for various different types of in-groups and (ii) by varying the specific instructions provided to respondents, we study both the distribution of universalism in the population and the (moral) motivations that underlie in-group favoritism vs. universalism. Specifically, our survey is designed to address questions such as:

1. What is the magnitude of universalism (or its counterpart, in-group favoritism) in a global sample, for different types of in-groups?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>See, for example, Fershtman and Gneezy (2001); Goette et al. (2006); Bernhard et al. (2006); Lane (2016); Bauer et al. (2020); Berge et al. (2018).

- 2. To what extent are deviations from universalism motivated by group-specific altruism or by views about what is morally right?
- 3. How does universalism covary with individual traits such as age, gender, educational attainment, urban residence, and religiosity?
- 4. Does universalism help in understanding policy views on redistribution, immigration, or global climate change? How do these relationships vary around the world?
- 5. Which types of societies tend to be relatively universalist, on average? How does this cross-country heterogeneity correlate with deep characteristics such as historical family structures, or with economic outcomes such as a country's federal redistribution, income equality, firm structure, and economic development?

In the next section, we lay out the precise structure of the survey. Sections 3-7 detail our anticipated empirical analyses.

# 2 Data and Survey Items

#### 2.1 Structure

As part of the Gallup World Poll 2020, we administered the following survey items to representative population samples in 60 countries. Each respondent is randomized into one treatment out of *Baseline*, *Moral* and *Deserving*, with 50% of respondents in the first treatment and 25% each in the two latter treatments.

Each respondent in *Baseline* answers two randomly selected questions out of A-1 through A-5. Each respondent in *Moral* answers two randomly selected questions out of B-1 through B-5. Each respondent in *Deserving* answers two randomly selected questions out of C-1 through C-5.

All respondents answer two randomly selected questions out of D-1 through D-6.

The treatments differ from each other roughly as follows. Treatment *Baseline* (A) asks respondents to allocate money between an in-group member and a stranger, without any restrictions on what should motivate their decision, except that we always ask respondents to imagine that the two potential recipients have the same living standard. In *Moral* (B), we ask about how people would allocate the money if they were to implement what they consider morally right. In *Deserving* (C), we restrict respondents' beliefs by asking them to make an allocation decision assuming that the two recipients are equally good people.

### 2.2 Treatment Baseline

Suppose you have earned \$1,000, but you have to give away the money to two other people. You can't keep any of the money for yourself. Assume that these two people have the same living standard.

A-1. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person in your family, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

This means that you would give [VALUE FROM A-1] to a person in your family and [1,000 MINUS VALUE FROM A-1] to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME). Is this correct?  $\rightarrow$  if No, repeat A-1.

All subsequent questions follow this same logic, whereby the interviewer verifies participant responses through a follow-up question.

A-2. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a friend of yours, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

A-3. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who lives in your neighborhood, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

A-4. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who shares your religious beliefs, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

A-5. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who shares your ethnic background, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

A-6. Suppose now that the two people are someone from (COUNTRY NAME) and someone from anywhere in the world. Again, assume that these two people have the same living standard. How much of your \$1,000 would you give to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME), if the rest goes to a random stranger from anywhere in the world?

## 2.3 Treatment Moral

Suppose you have earned \$1,000, but you have to give away the money to two other people. You can't keep any of the money for yourself. Assume that these two people have the same living standard.

B-1. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person in your family, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

B-2. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a friend of yours, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

B-3. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who lives in your neighborhood, if the rest goes to a random

stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

B-4. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who shares your religious beliefs, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

B-5. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a person who shares your ethnic background, if the rest goes to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME)?

B-6. Suppose now that the two people are someone from (COUNTRY NAME) and someone from anywhere in the world. Again, assume that these two people have the same living standard. If you were to do what you think is morally right, then how much of your \$1,000 would you give to a random stranger from (COUNTRY NAME), if the rest goes to a random stranger from anywhere in the world?

## 2.4 Treatment Deserving

Suppose you have earned \$1,000, but you have to give away the money to two other people. You can't keep any of the money for yourself. Assume that these two people are equally good people and have the same living standard.

C-1 through C-6: Same questions as B-1 through B-6.

## 2.5 Additional Questions

We are now going to read a number of statements. In each case, we want you to say whether you Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

D-1. There are too many immigrants in the area you live in.

D-2. There are too many immigrants in (country).

D-3. The national government should focus on helping the poor in (country), rather than the poor elsewhere in the world.

D-4. The national government should focus on protecting the environment in (country), rather than protecting the global environment.

D-5. The national government should focus on having a strong military.

D-6. The national government should aim to reduce the economic differences between the rich and the poor in (country).

# 3 Magnitude of In-Group Favoritism vs. Universalism

#### 3.1 Definitions

**Definition.** Full in-group favoritism is given by allocating 100% of a monetary endowment to an in-group member rather than a stranger. Full out-group favoritism is given by allocating 100% of an endowment to the stranger. A 50-50 split corresponds to full universalism, and unequal splits in either direction to partial (in-group or out-group) favoritism.

Note that this definition is a reduced-form one in that it does not specify the reasons behind why an individual migh exhibit favoritism in either direction.

**Definition.** Moral ideals capture what people deem morally right. Full moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism is given by a person deeming it morally right to allocate 100% of a monetary endowment to an in-group member rather than a stranger.

Analogous definitions apply to moral-ideals-based out-group favoritism and moralideals-based universalism.

#### 3.2 Summary Statistics

Across all treatments, for each respondent, we compute three summary statistics. First, *Domestic Universalism* is given by one minus the unweighted average of the fraction of money shared with the domestic in-groups in questions 1 through 5 (A-1 through A-5, B-1 through B-5 etc.). We call this measure "universalism" for brevity (rather than "out-group vs. in-group favoritism") because we expect that very few people will allocate more than 50% of the money to the stranger, on average.<sup>2</sup> If all respondents indeed allocate at least 50% to their in-group, then *Domestic Universialism* would go from 0 (full in-group favoritism) to 0.5 (full universalism).

Second, *Foreign Universalism* is given by one minus the fraction of money shared with the domestic stranger in question 6.

Third, *Universalism* is given by the unweighted average of *Domestic Universalism* and *Foreign Universalism*.

We plan to show histograms of these three summary statistics.

Based on these measures and the definitions above, we analyze the following questions:

1. What is the magnitude of in-group vs. out-group favoritism (treatment Baseline)?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>This expectation is based on prior work reported in Enke et al. (forthcoming, 2020). Moreover, the expectation is strengthened by us asking respondents to imagine that the potential recipients share the same living standard.

2. What is the magnitude of moral-ideals-based in-group vs. out-group favoritism (treatment *Moral*)?

#### 3.3 Variation in In-Group Favoritism Across In-Groups

Next, we investigate which relationships or in-groups are more likely to generate ingroup favoritism. To this effect, we calculate, across respondents, the average fraction of money that is shared with the different in-groups in questions 1–6 above (family, friend, neighbor, same religious beliefs, same ethnicity, same country). We will further analyze whether the relative rankings of these groups vary across countries.

We also analyze how consistent respondents are in their universalism. To this effect, we compute intra-correlations among a respondent's allocation decisions.

For these analyses, we pool the data across treatments and partial out treatment fixed effects.

# 4 What makes people (non-) universalist?

#### 4.1 Objective

The main objective of this section is to use a simple model to illustrate how we aim to decompose observed "behavioral" in-group favoritism in treatment *Baseline* into *tastebased in-group favoritism* and *moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism*. Rougly speaking, we would like to shed light on whether in-group favoritism is motivated primarily by a taste for helping certain groups or by considerations of what is the morally right thing to do.

If we find a significant role for moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism, we further decompose it into *beliefs-based moral-ideals in-group favoritism* and *relationship-specific moral-ideals in-group favoritism*, as defined below.

#### 4.2 Model

A decision-maker has group-specific altruism weights  $\alpha_i$  (for in-group) and  $\alpha_s$  (for socially more distant strangers). We denote their difference by  $\alpha_{i,s} \equiv \alpha_i - \alpha_s$ . This parameter captures taste-based in-group favoritism: that individuals may care more about the welfare of their in-group than of a stranger. The decision-maker also has a subjective "moral ideal"  $F_{i,s}$  that determines which allocation between in-group and strangers he considers morally right. Note the difference between  $F_{i,s}$  (moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism) and groupspecific altruism (taste-based in-group favoritism): the decision-maker may think that, in general, it is morally right to split resources equally between in-group and strangers (i.e.,  $F_{i,s} = 50\%$ ), but at the same time he cares more about the welfare of his specific in-group than about that of strangers (i.e.,  $\alpha > 0$ ).

Suppose that the decision-maker is tasked with allocating \$1 between in-group and stranger. Denote by  $x_i$  the amount allocated to the in-group. Utility is given by

$$U = \alpha_i x_i + \alpha_s (1 - x_i) - \frac{\gamma}{2} (x_i - F_{i,s})^2$$
(1)

$$= \alpha_{i,s} x_i - \frac{\gamma}{2} (x_i - F_{i,s})^2$$
 (2)

where  $\gamma > 0$  scales the importance of behaving in line with the moral ideal relative to individual altruism weights. The optimal allocation decision in treatment *Baseline* is

$$x_i^{\text{Baseline}} = F_{i,s} + \frac{\alpha_{i,s}}{\gamma}$$
(3)

This has a simple interpretation, according to which the decision-maker's allocation deviates from his moral ideal to the extent that he has group-specific altruism (taste-based in-group favoritism).

#### 4.3 Decomposing In-Group Favoritism

Treatments *Baseline* and *Moral* are designed to identify  $F_{i,s}$  and  $\frac{\alpha_{i,s}}{\gamma}$ . In *Baseline*, respondents' allocation decision is given by (3). In *Moral*, we ask respondents to make an allocation based purely on what they consider morally right. Therefore, in our analysis, we treat allocation decisions in *Moral* as if they reflected  $F_{i,s}$ :

$$x_i^{Moral} = F_{i,s} \tag{4}$$

As a result, we can use the treatment difference in allocations between *Baseline* and *Moral* to pin down  $\alpha_{i,s}/\gamma$ :

$$x_{i}^{Baseline} - x_{i}^{Moral} = F_{i,s} + \frac{\alpha_{i,s}}{\gamma} - F_{i,s} = \frac{\alpha_{i,s}}{\gamma}$$
(5)

We predict that this difference is strictly positive, i.e., people exhibit some taste-based in-group favoritism, on average. We will compute both  $F_{i,s}$  and  $\alpha_{i,s}/\gamma$  separately for each country to assess the relative importance of these two types of in-group favoritism in

explaining behavior in Baseline. To this effect, we define:

Moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism = 
$$F_{i,s} - 0.5 = x_i^{Moral} - 0.5$$
 (6)

Taste-based in-group favoritism = 
$$\alpha / \gamma = x_i^{Baseline} - x_i^{Moral}$$
 (7)

We use these measures to address the following questions:

- 1. Are moral ideals or taste-based in-group favoritism weights more important in generating observed in-group favoritism?
- 2. Does the relative importance of these two vary systematically across countries?
- 3. Does the relative importance of these two vary with individual education, income, gender, age, religiosity or urbanicity?

# 4.4 Understanding the Nature of Moral-ideals-based favoritism

If we find that  $x_i^{Moral} > 0.5$ , we use treatment *Deserving* to further identify the relative importance of beliefs about deservingness in generating moral ideals. We introduce the following two definitions:

**Definition.** Beliefs-based moral-ideals in-group favoritism is given by the extent to which people believe that it is morally right to give more money to their in-group because they don't think that their in-group and strangers consist of "equally good people."

**Definition.** Relationship-specific moral-ideals in-group favoritism is given by that part of moral-ideals-based in-group favoritism that is not explained by beliefs-based moral-ideals in-group favoritism.

We think of treatment *Deserving* as fixing people's beliefs that both potential recipients in the money allocation games are equally good people. This implies that we can compute the relative importance of beliefs about deservingness in generating in-group favoritism as

Beliefs-based in-group favoritism = 
$$x_i^{Moral} - x_i^{Deserving}$$
 (8)

Because in our surveys the difference between treatments *Moral* and *Deserving* is very subtle, our conjecture is that estimated beliefs-based in-group favoritism is going to be small or even zero. If this conjecture is correct, we pool the data from *Moral* and *Deserving*, including in comparisons between *Baseline* and *Moral*.

If our conjecture turns out to be incorrect, we will repeat the analyses 1.–3. from above also for this beliefs measure.

In summary, the three treatments allow us to identify the relative importance of moral ideals vs. taste, and the importance of beliefs for moral ideals, in generating ingroup favoritism.

# 5 Individual-Level Heterogeneity

In all within-country analyses that are described in this section of the pre-analysis plan, we pool the data across treatments, while always including treatment fixed effects.

#### 5.1 Demographics

We implement individual-level regressions in which we relate our summary measure of universalism to the following individual characteristics, controlling for country fixed effects. Our predictions are based on the correlations reported in Enke et al. (forthcoming, 2020) and Enke (2020). Signs indicate the direction of the hypothesized relationships:

- 1. Age (-)
- 2. Female (+)
- 3. Education (+)
- 4. Income (-)
- 5. Religiosity (-)
- 6. Urbanicity (+)

We also implement these regressions separately (i) only for treatment *Baseline* and (ii) by pooling only treatments *Moral* and *Deserving*.

We aslo present correlations for domestic and foreign universalism separately.

#### 5.2 Treatment effect heterogeneity

We check for treatment heterogeneity by running regressions of our summary measure of universalism on treatment indicators interacted with the demographics above. Specifically, for each demographic, we run a separate regression in which we interact that demographic with two treatment indicators for *Moral* and *Deserving*.

# 6 Correlations with Political Views and Behaviors

In all within-country analyses that are described in this section of the pre-analysis plan, we pool the data across treatments, while always including treatment fixed effects.

### 6.1 Political Views

We correlate our summary measure of universalism with responses to questions D-1 through D-6. This is done through regressions that control for country fixed effects.

- 1. We hypothesize that universalism is negatively correlated with D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4 and D-5, and positively correlated with D-6.
- 2. We hypothesize that the magnitude of these correlations increases in a country's per capita income. There are two potential reasons to expect such a relationship. First, measurement error could be more pronounced in poorer countries. Second, prior research discussed in Enke et al. (2020) suggests that moral universalism is more predictive of policy views in rich, Western nations.

On top of the pooled analysis, we also report correlations separately for treatment *Baseline* and for the pooled sample of *Moral* and *Deserving*.

We also present correlations for domestic and foreign universalism separately.

### 6.2 Behaviors from World Poll

We hypothesize that our summary measure of universalism is positively correlated with the Gallup WP item "helped a stranger who needed help" (WP110). In robustness checks, we present correlations for domestic and foreign universalism separately.

# 7 Cross-Country Heterogeneity

We compute average universalism in each country. We separately correlate country average universalism with two sets of variables, where signs indicate the direction of the hypothesized correlation.<sup>3</sup>

#### Set A: Economic structure and development:

- 1. Historical and current strength of family ties (-)
- 2. Prevalence of family firms (-)
- 3. Property rights and democracy indices as proxies for quality of institutions (+)
- 4. Per capita income (+)

These hypotheses link to a rich literature on the role of morality and family ties in cultural economics and political economy (Tabellini, 2008, 2010; Greif and Tabellini, 2017; Greif, 2006; Enke, 2019; Alesina and Giuliano, 2013). The basic argument in this literature is that societies maintain different bundles of moral and institutional mechanisms to enforce cooperation in society. At one end of the spectrum, societies largely rely on strong extended family networks and a morality that is centered around mutual obligations and in-group favoritism. At the other end of the spectrum, societies largely rely on more impersonal mechanisms (large-scale anonymous institutions, universalistic values) to enforce cooperation.

#### Set B: Inequality, Redistribution and Prosociality:

- 1. Redistribution as fraction of GDP (+)
- 2. Income inequality (-)
- 3. Foreign aid as fraction of GDP (+)
- 4. Environmental protection index (+)

These hypotheses link directly to our individual-level data. We posit that universalistic societies redistribute more (in a formal sense, abstracting away from informal redistribution within families etc) because people care about the well-being of others beyond their own community or group. By the same logic, universalist societies also internalize the welfare of foreign populations or even of different species.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>When we report correlations with variables that relate to specific groups, such as family ties, we additionally report correlations with the universalism measure for this specific group.

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