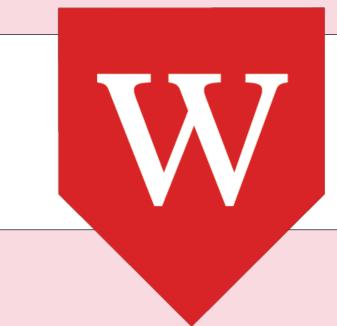
The Effect of Media Consumption and Race on Economic Assessments



Mallika Srinivas, QAC Apprenticeship, Wesleyan University Professor Erika Franklin Fowler, Breeze Floyd, and Natália de Paula Moreira

Introduction

- Hetherington (1996) studied the media's role in shaping voters' economic evaluations during the 1992 Bush election; found media exposure influenced economic perceptions in a negative manner, particularly among different racial backgrounds. The author concludes that racial discrimination may have lowered the standards for satisfaction among Black individuals.
- Bartel (1981) studied whether there were notable differences in job satisfaction levels between various racial groups; the results revealed that race did in fact influence job happiness, resulting in a range of job contentment among people. The implication is that racial variations in job satisfaction may extend to how people evaluate and perceive their economic experiences in other circumstances, even though the study did not specifically address the relationship between race and economic evaluations.
- Soroka (2006) studied asymmetry in impact of positive and negative media and found that public reaction to negative forms of media are much more impactful.

Research Question

- How do race and media consumption impact economic evaluations?
- H1: White respondents will be more likely to be dissatisfied with the economy than Black or Hispanic respondents.
- H2: Respondents that consume a lot of media are more likely to be pessimists about the state of the economy than those who do not consume a lot.

Data & Methods

- The data used is from the Wesleyan SurveyLab. National surveys were conducted by YouGov August 26 September 7, 2022 (pre-election, N=1500) and November 18 29, 2022 (post-election, N=1461).
- For dependent variables, I selected two questions that measured economic evaluations. Respondents were asked about the state of the economy in the past 12 months. Additionally, they were asked about the state of the economy in the following 12 months. These variables were measured on a five-level scale from "Much better" to "Much worse." Responses were recoded as "Economy is worse", "Economy is about the same", and "Economy is better".
- To cover the media consumption factor, I selected two variables: One measuring the amount of days per week of TV news consumption, and another similar variable measuring online news consumption. These variables were both recoded as "None", "1-4 days per week", "5-7 days per week". These variables were selected from both the Pre and Post Election surveys.
- As control variables, I selected party ID, family income, geographical region, and gender. Family income was recoded to include "Less than \$60,000", "Less than \$100,000", "Less than \$200,000"," \$200,000 or more", and "Prefer not to say". Region includes "Northeast", "Midwest", "South", "West". Gender was recoded as a binary variable with female recoded to 1 and not female recoded to 0.
- My analysis included bivariate modeling of past and future economic assessments among races, the amount of online news consumed, and the amount of TV news consumed. I used survey-weighted multivariate multinomial logistic regression to examine the relationship between economic assessment and media consumption and plotted the results.

Descriptive Statistics

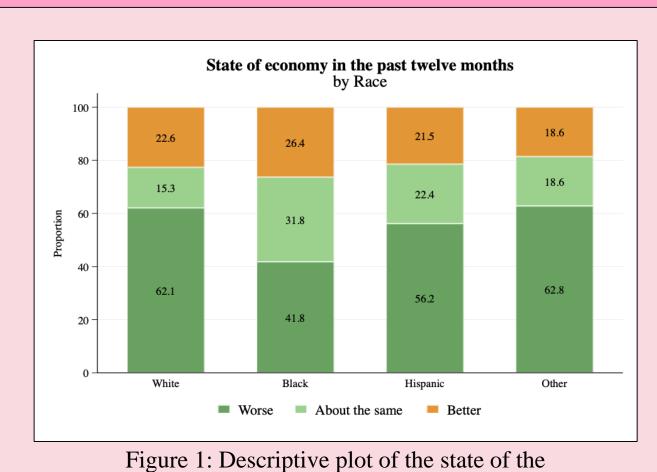


Figure 1 above demonstrates that, while all races appear pessimistic about the economy, White respondents have a higher likelihood of saying worse

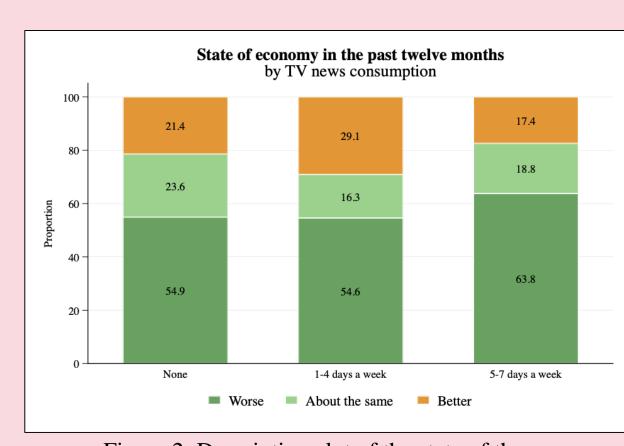


Figure 2: Descriptive plot of the state of the economy in the last 12 months by TV news consumption

Figure 2 shows that those who watch TV news 5-7 days a week are most likely to be pessimistic, while those who watch TV 1-4 days a week are more optimistic.

Multivariate Results

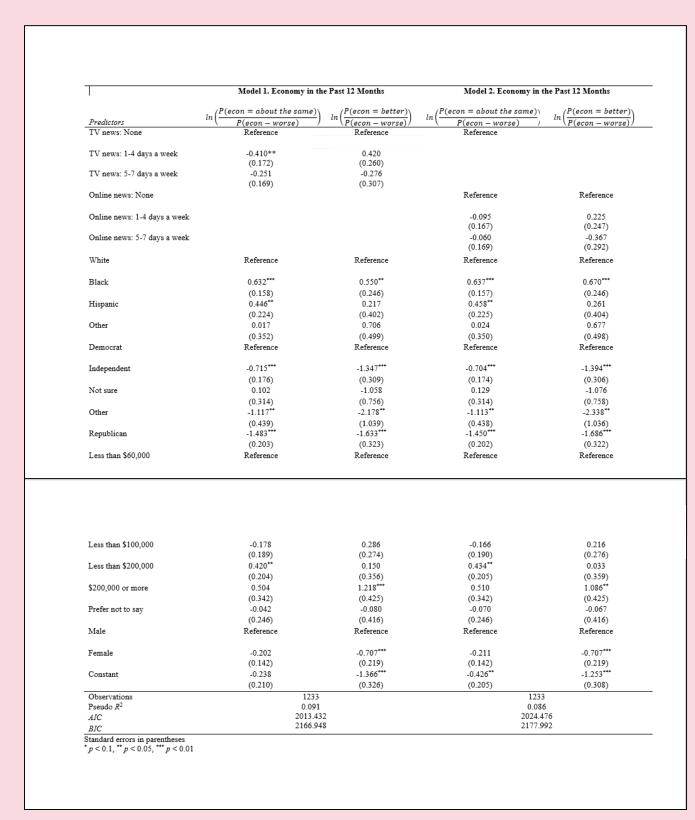


Figure 3:. The Effect of Race and Media Consumption on Retrospective Economic Evaluation

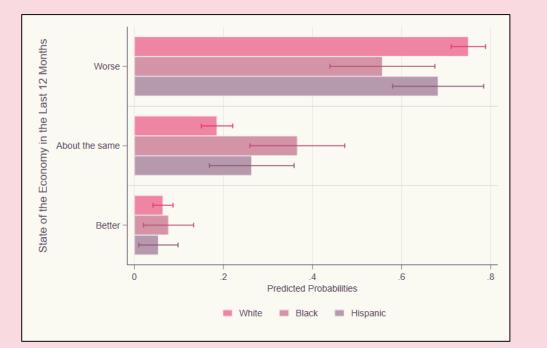


Figure 4: Margins plot representing past economic evaluation and race, pre-election

Although Black, White, and Hispanic respondents tend to hold negative views about the economy, White respondents are more likely to be pessimistic about the past economy than Black and Hispanic respondents.

Across both models pictured to the left,

- Black respondents are more likely than White respondents to say that the economy has stayed the same than they are to say it has worsened (p <0.01).
- Black respondents are also consistently more likely to say that the economy has improved than they are to say it has worsened, compared to White respondents (p<0.01) & (p<0.05).
- Independent respondents are less likely than Democrats to think the economy has stayed the same or improved compared to it being worse (p<0.01).
- Republicans are less likely to think the economy has bettered or stayed the same than they think it has worsened (p<0.01).

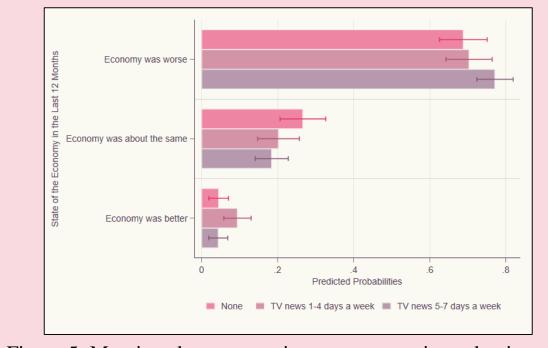


Figure 5: Margins plot representing past economic evaluation and TV news consumption, pre-election

Respondents that report watching TV news 5-7 days per week are not more likely to assess the economy as worse in the past 12 months than those who watch TV news 1-4 days or not at all.

Discussion

- Race has significant effects on an individual's retrospective economic evaluations; Black respondents appear to be more optimistic in comparison to White respondents.
- The amount of TV and online news consumption does not have a significant effect on an individual's economic evaluation.
- Party ID plays a significant role in the likelihood of an individual's dissatisfaction with the economy; Democrats appear to be the most optimistic about the economy in comparison to Republican and Independent respondents.
- H1 is supported by the findings; H2 is not supported by the findings in a statistically significant manner.