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Political Self-Identification and Political Attitudes

by

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Honours Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate people's attachment to political labels, and the extent to which these political identifications are associated with other measures of political attitudes and orientations. We predict that individuals high in authoritarianism will strongly associate with labels they identify with; however, the majority of the research was exploratory. Participants currently residing in the United States as American citizens ($n = 340$; 197 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.34$) completed a questionnaire that was designed to measure participant's attachment to their political identification to 6 different labels, and measures of attitudes toward immigration, free-market attitudes, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO), to explore how aspects of conservatism related to political identification. For all six labels the social context was an integral aspect of identification. Overall, RWA was the strongest predictor of identification with the labels, except for "capitalist", which was predicted more strongly by SDO. These results indicate the potential benefits of using an identity approach for research on political avenues.

Political Self-Identification and Political Attitudes

In political discourse, stances on issues are often described on a spectrum with labels describing the endpoints such as conservatism versus liberalism. Often these political labels are not entirely clear as to what social attitudes, beliefs and policies are associated with them (Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006). The purpose of the current study is to investigate people's attachment to specific political identities, such as party affiliations (Republican/Democrat) and specific political labels (liberal/conservative, capitalist/socialist). We aim to address the following research questions: How strongly are people attached to the political labels they associate with? How does social context relate to this (i.e. having many friends/family members with similar identifications)? What is the relationship between people's attachment to the various political labels and different aspects of conservatism (Free Market Ideology, Social Dominance Orientation, Right Wing Authoritarianism and Attitudes towards Immigration)?

Political Beliefs and Political Identity

The depth and meaning of people's attachments to specific political identities has been seldom studied. The present study will examine a broader range of political identities in terms of the attachments to the various labels associated with party affiliations and political attitudes. Previous research has tended to ask people to identify themselves according to labels, but relatively little has focused on the importance of these labels for people. One exception is Katz's (1979) examination of the National Election Panel Study that suggested two dimensions for party identification: strength and direction. Strength was measured by direct self report initially, and later in relation to behavioural support such as voting for that party, and attending election rallies for an individual's party identification (Kamieneicki, 1988). The two dimensions for party identification would allow categorization of someone as a Republican who feels only weak

connection to the party, for example. Ultimately, the present objective was to integrate these dimensions into a more psychological context. For example, some labels may be important for our sense of identity, such as reflecting values we have, or want to be seen to have. This raises questions about the link between these labels and specific beliefs that may go with them. It also questions whether the content, or the label, is most important to people. Although there is not much research looking at these questions in terms of identity, there are some studies examining the relationship between labels and specific beliefs.

A common assumption is that a label is a summarization that describes a pattern of certain beliefs. The definition of a label is “a word or phrase indicating that what follows belongs in a particular category or classification” or “a short word or phrase descriptive of a person, group, intellectual movement, etc.” (Label, 2016). Some psychological research suggested that self-identification in terms of labels is somewhat loosely connected to any specific content, and that changing context can change the label a person adopts. Ostrom (1970) reported two studies showing content and self-labeling as being flexible by showing that changing context could change either. One study showed that changing the endpoints on a rating scale could lead people to alter their identification as “stern” or “lenient”, suggesting that people used the label points to determine the label that applied to them. A second study showed that contextually changing the label a person applied to themselves can alter the length of a prison sentence that they proposed for a hypothetical crime. Similarly, Upshaw, Ostrom and Ward (1970) changed the attitude context toward people of colour by having them read either an unfavourable or favourable statement supposedly from another student. This manipulation influenced participant’s self-ratings but not their content. In other words, changing the range of possibilities a person considers for a given attitude dimension can change a label response but not the beliefs. These

findings have important significances for the current research by suggesting that the way a person self identifies is not totally dependent on the belief that person holds. Therefore, it is important that there has been a distinction between labels and content in previous research. A question this previous research raised was if the label and content are loosely related, which aspect is most important to people?

Although previous findings have shown flexibility in the association between content and label, other research has shown that self-identification and content are interrelated. There are two ways that identity and content have found to be related. The first point of view on how the dimensions interrelate suggested that political behaviours and attitudes are most strongly and consistently predicted by ideological self-identification (Levitin & Miller, 1979). Basically, these findings show that self-labels (as representing ideologies) can have an impact on a person's beliefs and attitudes. Malka and Lelkes (2010) proposed that having a conservative or liberal identity would make people more readily able to adopt newly politicized values and attitudes that are consistent with their identity. This means that when an individual encounters a new idea or belief they are more likely to follow that belief if the new idea is consistent with their identity. In order to test their hypothesis Malka and Lelkes manipulated social cues by having participants read specific policy descriptions about a topic that was not politicized at that time. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions that either said "conservatives support the policy and liberals oppose", "liberals support the policy and conservatives oppose" or "various groups support the policy". The study found that the adoption of particular issues was influenced by social cues that relate to an individual's ideological identity. These findings suggest that labels can influence their attitudes and behaviour. In relation to the current study, these ideas are important as they support the potential importance of people's political labels.

Although the research by Malka and Lelkes would seem to suggest that political labels are deeply rooted, the research described previously by Ostrom (1970) and Upshaw et al. (1970) suggests that labels may be changed by context. In a political context, Katz (1979) found that strong identifiers of a party would be strong identifiers of a new party if switching identities between elections. In other words, these individuals would go from one party to the next but still strongly identify with that new label. This shows that individuals can change beliefs or labels but that attachment to the label they identify with can be a strong connection. Consequently, our research on political self-identification will attempt to examine the nature of people's attachment to their political labels.

Social Context and Political Identity

A psychology researcher once argued that people only viewed their beliefs and opinions valid if they were shared by others who were close to them (Festinger, 1950). Recently, Echterhoff, Higgins and Levine (2009) posited the idea of a shared reality. The essence of the shared reality argument is that humans have a fundamental need to share in the experience of reality with others and often obtain this need by sharing the same beliefs as others, communicating to others of the shared opinion and being under the impression that those closest to you follow the same beliefs and labels as you. Obtaining a state of shared reality among group members and close family and friends can create a sense of confidence in an individual's opinion and belief system (Echterhoff, et al., 2009).

Support for the idea that individuals surround themselves in their social world with people who describe themselves using the same labels can be found in Cutler's (2007) study on local interests forming political attitudes. Cutler found that public opinion was predominately discussed through the context of interpersonal interaction. The understanding behind this idea

was that particular areas are going to have certain political attitudes based on the public opinion within that area. Cutlers findings on local interests as a determinant in political attitudes relates to Echterhoff's idea of a "shared reality". Usually to form a common public opinion in a given area the majority of citizens who reside in that area share that same opinion. Bringing these two concepts together, the point being made is that often individual's political attitudes are influenced by the local opinions that have a sense of a shared reality where everyone experiences those values and beliefs as one.

The present study will also examine people's attachment to their political self-identification and social context. It is expected that those who strongly associate with specific labels will have a larger number of family members and friends who would also describe themselves using the same label. This is based on the idea that "shared reality" with important others may be a factor that makes a label important for a person's sense of identity.

Political Belief Systems

Our study further examines the identification of political labels in relation to various political belief systems. As very little research has been conducted within the area of individual's attachment to their political self-identification, it remains to be seen what specific political beliefs might predict which labels are integrated into a person's identity. The present study focuses on four political belief systems that will be assessed to provide us with an understanding of how an individual's political belief system can relate to their self-identification. Within this study the political belief system's fall under two dimensions: political attitudes (free-market ideology (FMI) and attitudes towards immigration) and political orientation (right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO)).

Free market ideology. The beliefs and political views associated with conservatism and liberalism have changed drastically over the years. Historically, preference for the free markets and minimal interference for the government have been linked to the liberal label (Ellis & Stimson, 2007). However, recent research conducted by Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, and Hunyady (2003) and Roney and Alexander (2016) have shown that there is a significant correlation between the belief in free market attitudes and conservative ideology. Adam Smith (1776/1986) wrote a book titled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* discussing the idea that free markets are best economically as they optimize outcomes due to the reality of human nature. The essence of Smith's argument is that through the use of the free-market the economic system, would run smoother and be more productive as human nature is to be selfish and competitive and the free market would encourage this behaviour, leading to prosperity. Moreover, Smith claims that through the free-market the economic system has the ability to self-regulate and ensure maximum efficiency without government interference. Research was conducted showing that a strong free-market belief system exists as an ideology, a belief system that was termed Free-Market Ideology (Roney & Alexander, 2016). This ideology includes beliefs about human nature as selfish, as strongly opposed to any government interference, and seems to imply that free-markets are best in all situations.

Attitudes towards immigration. Approximately 26 percent of the overall U.S. population are immigrants - roughly 81 million people (Zong & Batalova, 2016). There are many different views and beliefs about immigrants and immigration. Public attitudes towards immigrants are not always positive, many resist the acceptance of new people to their countries even if there are economically positive effects (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Munz, 2004). Research has shown that individuals high in SDO are more likely to have

unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Esses et al., 2001; Esses et al., 2006). This follows from the belief that people high in SDO view the world in a hierarchical structure where competition for resources should be how society is organized. Therefore, people high in SDO would have higher anti-immigration attitudes because they view immigrants as potential competition.

The current study explores how attitudes towards immigrants and immigration will relate to each of the political label identifications. One of the party affiliations the current study looked at, Republican, has been found to be strongly predicted by attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Malone, 2016). We are predicting that people who highly associate with the political affiliation Republican would show high anti-immigration patterns.

Right-wing authoritarianism. The origins of the authoritarian personality come from the work of Theodor Adorno a psychologist during the time of World War II. Adorno and several colleagues held that an individual with an authoritarian personality tended to be submissive to authority, conventional, accepting of aggression and inclined to simplistic stereotypical thinking (Adorno et al., 1950). More recently Altemeyer (1981) updated these ideas presenting the personality type Right-wing Authoritarianism (RWA) which involves belief in authority, conformity, security, order and structure. An individual who is high in right-wing authoritarianism often upholds societal conventions and will act aggressively towards those who defy the norm. Exploring the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and political self-identification is another goal of the present study.

This construct will be of particular interest in this study as it is both a belief system and a variable that has been suggested to predict the nature of people's beliefs due to its preference for certainty and dislike of ambiguity. For example, a study found that conservative senators spoke

in a manner that was less complex and used simpler terms when interpreting policy issues consistent with the authoritarian personality (Tetlock, 1983). Devine (2012), argued that individual's conceptualization and application of ideological labels are influenced by authoritarianism. Devine regards authoritarianism as a set of pre-existing attitudes that cause resistance to new information. This would mean that the personality trait authoritarianism could influence an individual's political self-identification, possibly making labels important because they provide simple ways of interpreting the world.

Social dominance orientation. The third political belief system examined in the present study was Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). SDO has been defined as a personality trait that emphasizes social hierarchy. Viewing the world as a competitive place, people high in SDO value dominance and believe that some groups are more deserving than others (Pratto et al., 1994). An important aspect of this is the belief in a hierarchical system as a persistent and universal concept. Social groups strive for power, status and wealth and the difference between these groups is their competence in attaining these (Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

The current research study examined SDO to understand any potential connections between the personality trait and political self-identifications. Along with authoritarianism, Jost et al. (2003) suggest that this is a second component of conservative ideology. It would be expected, therefore, that SDO correlate with the identification of "Conservative" and "Republican". Previous research has also found significant correlation between SDO and FMI that can be explained due to the association of an assumption of inequality among groups that a free market would allow for (Buckland, 2014; Pratto et al., 1994). SDO might also predict a "Capitalist" identification as well.

The Present Study

To explore people's attachments to political identity and the relation to various aspects of conservatism the present study used various questionnaires to assess participant's attitudes and beliefs in relation to their attachment to political labels from a population from the United States. Due to the limited previous research a new questionnaire was developed in order to test participant's level of attachment to the various political labels (Conservative, Liberal, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, and Capitalist). Existing questionnaires of FMI, RWA, SDO and attitudes towards immigration were used to measure these attitudes (Altemeyer, 1981; Pratto et al., 1994; Roney, 2009).

We hypothesize that participants high in authoritarianism will strongly associate with the labels that they identify with, reflecting their tendency to view the world in more concrete terms. Furthermore, free-market ideology will correlate very strongly with the capitalist and socialist labels (positively and negatively, respectively), and will also correlate, but less strongly, with other political labels. SDO and anti-immigration attitudes should also predict identification as "Conservative" and "Republican", and SDO with "Capitalist". Little research has been done in this field, so many additional analyses will be exploratory. For example, it will be interesting to see which political dimensions emerge as the strongest predictors of each of the political labels. Also, there are no major predictions about the role of "shared reality", but it will be interesting to see which political label identities tend to be shared most strongly with friends and family.

Method

Participants

Participants were 340 American citizens currently living in the United States of America recruited from an online website called Mechanical Turk (MTurk) ranging from 19 years of age to 81 years of age ($M_{age} = 36.34$, $SD = 11.8$; 197 males and 143 females). The study was

advertised on MTurk through a poster advertising a study on political attitudes (appendix A).

The participants were asked to complete five online surveys and received an amount of \$1.50 for their time. Individuals were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Research has found that sample populations taken from MTurk are generally representative of the North American population (Berinsky, Huber & Lenz 2012).

Materials

The present study used five questionnaires to assess participant's attitudes and beliefs in relation to their attachment to political labels, in addition to a brief demographics questionnaire (refer to appendix B for the demographics questionnaire). All items were responded to using a seven-point Likert scale with endpoints that relate to the statements being presented. Participants indicated their response by clicking the appropriate number on the scale. The questionnaires were completed in the order in which they are described below.

Free market attitudes. Buckland (2014) expanded on an earlier measure of free-market attitudes by Roney (2009) to examine additional aspects of free-market attitudes. That expanded measure was used in the present study. The questionnaire included items used by Jost (2003) in his "fair-market ideology" questionnaire. Based on previous research using the FMI measure, seven possible factors are assessed in relation to free-market attitudes through this questionnaire; emphasis on economic change, belief in pure economics, economic competitiveness, and mistrust of government, views on socialism, non-compassion and vulnerability, and traditionalist views. The questionnaire consists of 65 items that are rated on a seven-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* = 1, *neither agree nor disagree* = 4, *strongly agree* = 7). Participants read the introductory paragraph, "Following are statements about various political points of view that different people hold. On the rating scale below each question, please indicate your level of

agreement or disagreement with each statement” before completing the items. Please refer to Appendix C for the questionnaire.

For the current study a factor analysis was conducted on all 65 of the free-market belief items to determine what factors should be examined in this study. This analysis indicated the occurrence of two large factors that represented a general free-market ideology (FMI) and traditionalism, reflecting the belief that free-market capitalism has historical roots in the culture. For the purpose of the present study these two dimensions of the free-market ideologies were used for further analysis. Analysis revealed that both FMI and tradition had good internal reliability (refer to Table 1).

Social dominance orientation. This is a questionnaire developed by Pratto, Sidanus, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) consisting of 16 statements measuring the degree to which one believes the world is a competitive place where some groups are more deserving than others. A sample SDO item is “some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups”. Each of these items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale (*very negative* = 1, *negative* = 2, *slightly negative* = 3, *neither positive nor negative* = 4, *slightly positive* = 5, *positive* = 6, *very positive* = 7). The following instructions were given “which of the following statements do you have a positive or negative reaction to”. The SDO questionnaire was found to have good internal reliability (refer to Table 1).

Right wing authoritarianism. This questionnaire developed by Altemeyer (1981) consists of 24 statements such as “Laws have to be strictly enforced if we are going to preserve our way of life”. The RWA scale measures the degree to which an individual has an authoritarian personality on three dimensions: adherence to established authority, aggression against people who deviate from social conventions, and a strong sense of tradition and convention. Each of the

items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale (*totally disagree* = 1, neither agree nor disagree = 4, *totally agree* = 7). Participants were prompted with the following statement before proceeding, “Following are statements about various political points of view that different people hold. On the rating scale below each question, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement”. Currently, good internal consistency was found for the RWA questionnaire (refer to Table 1).

Political identity questionnaire. A new questionnaire was developed for the present study to assess participants level of attachment to six different political labels (conservative, liberal, republican, democrat, socialist, and capitalist). The questionnaire consists of seven items for each label, each rated on a different seven-point Likert scale as determined by the question. Participants were prompted with the following statement “Following are a number of political labels that people sometimes use. You will be asked a variety of questions about how these labels describe you and your social environment”, proceeded by one of the six political labels and then given the seven questions to answer. Participants were asked to do this six times, once for each of the labels. Please refer to Appendix D for the questionnaire. Please refer to Table 2 to view reliability analyses for each political identity label.

Attitudes toward immigration. To measure attitudes toward immigration a questionnaire used by the Environics Institute (2015) with Canadian citizens was adapted and tailored to Americans. The adapted version consisted of 11 items that were measured on a 7 point Likert Scale (*strongly disagree* = 1, neither agree nor disagree = 4, *strongly agree* = 7). The following statement prompted the participants on how to complete the items, “Following are statements about various points of view on immigration that different people hold. On the rating scale below each question, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each

statement”. The items can be seen in Appendix E. The immigration measure had good internal reliability (refer to Table 1).

Procedure

Using an online poster participants were recruited from the online website MTurk (appendix A). The questionnaires described above were presented to participants via the internet, using a website called “Survey Monkey”. Before entering the survey participants had to complete a consent form (appendix F). If they consented to participate, participants proceeded to complete the questionnaires described above which took approximately an hour to finish. Upon completion of the questionnaires participants received a debriefing letter (appendix G) and were provided with contact information of the researcher. Participants received a small monetary reward (\$1.50) for their participation.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha for Free Market Ideology (FMI), Tradition, Anti-Immigration Attitude (AIA), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), and Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scales

<u>FMI</u>	<u>Tradition</u>	<u>AIA</u>	<u>SDO</u>	<u>RWA</u>
0.97	0.86	0.92	0.96	0.94
(27 items)	(6 items)	(11 items)	(16 items)	(24 items)

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha for the identity labels: Liberal and Democrat (LD), Conservative and Republican (CR), Capitalist (CAP), and Socialist (SOC)

<u>LD</u>	<u>CR</u>	<u>CAP</u>	<u>SOC</u>
0.93	0.95	0.89	0.90
(12 items)	(12 items)	(6 items)	(6 items)

Results

Factor Analysis on Political Identity Labels

To explore the roles of personal values and social context in identification with political labels, six factor analyses, with varimax rotation, were conducted on the 7 identity items for each of the six labels. Generally, a similar pattern was found for 5 of the 6 identities (conservative, Democrat, Republican, socialist and capitalist), that one large factor emerged with the percentage of variance ranging from 56% to 65%. The one exception was the liberal label which also revealed one large factor (accounting for 52.1% of the variance), but also had a second sizable factor accounting for 15.1% of the variance.

The major factor emerging for all of the labels appears to represent a general identity attachment to the label identity including both personal values and social context. The personal items asked the participants to what extent the label describes them, how closely the label fits with their values, and how often they would describe themselves to others using this label. The social context items asked participants how many of their friends and family fit with this label and socially, to what extent do they actively seek out or avoid people who fit this label. Factor analysis showed that the personal items for all six identity labels correlated highly on the factor, ranging from 0.83 to 0.93. The social context items loaded slightly lower than the personal items, ranging from 0.58 to 0.83. Even though the social context was not as high as the personal values, both are clearly important for an individual's sense of identity.

Further examination of the six analyses revealed that the item "thinking about your answer to the previous question would you say that as an adult you have always identified this way or has your identity changed?" loaded fairly low on the factor for all political identity labels, ranging from 0.28 to 0.76, and was the only item that loaded highly on factor two for the liberal

identity label at 0.98. This item and second factor appears to be reflecting the stability of the attachment to the label. Because there was only one item, and we didn't have predictions for stability specifically, it was not analysed further for this thesis.

Composite political identity variables were created using six of the seven items for each of the identity measures: capitalist, socialist, conservative/Republican, and liberal/Democrat. The latter two were combined because the correlation matrix revealed redundancy, discussed below.

Correlation Matrix for Political Identity Measures

Table 3 for an overview of the descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix for the political identity measures. The most noteworthy correlations were between the conservative (CON) label and the Republican (REP) label, as well as the liberal (LIB) and Democrat (DEM) labels. As described above, to reduce redundancy, CON and REP were combined into a singular composite variable, as well as, LIB and DEM. Also supporting this are the strong negative correlations between CON and LIB, as well as, REP and DEM.

A surprising finding was the non-significant correlation between the labels capitalist (CAP) and socialist (SOC). In essence, the non-significant finding between these two identities suggests that, rather than these labels being opposite, they are completely independent.

Correlation Matrix for Political Attitudes and Political Orientations

Table 4 presents mean scores and correlations for the political attitude and orientation measures used as predictors in this study. The correlation matrix examining the associations among the various political belief systems revealed quite strong, significant correlations among all the dimensions. SDO and RWA positively correlate with AIA. Interestingly one other attitude measure, FMI, correlated as strongly as these broader political orientation measures do. A noteworthy finding is that RWA has a somewhat higher correlation with tradition than SDO

does, suggesting that the traditionalism of a free-market ideology is higher among authoritarian personalities compared to those who value social dominance, possibly because of the “traditionalism” aspect of RWA.

Table 3

Correlations and Mean Scores among the identity labels: Liberal (LIB), Democrat (DEM), Conservative (CON), Republican (REP), Capitalist (CAP), and Socialist (SOC)

	Mean Scores	LIB	DEM	CON	REP	CAP	SOC
LIB	4.02(1.43)	1	0.78**	-0.56**	-0.48**	-0.12*	0.59**
DEM	3.72(1.46)		1	-0.58**	-0.52**	-0.11	0.48**
CON	3.34(1.51)			1	0.89**	0.39**	-0.25**
REP	3.08(1.49)				1	0.37**	-0.17**
CAP	3.48(1.32)					1	-0.03
SOC	2.67(1.31)						1

Note. * $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed), ** $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed). Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 4

Correlations and Mean Scores among Free Market Ideology (FMI), Tradition, Anti-Immigration Attitude (AIA), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), and Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scales

	Mean Scores	FMI	Tradition	AIA	SDO	RWA
FMI	3.61(1.38)	1	0.58**	0.66**	0.60**	0.66**
Tradition	4.84(1.19)		1	0.39**	0.36**	0.47**
AIA	3.63(1.39)			1	0.62**	0.73**
SDO	2.47(1.37)				1	0.56**
RWA	3.63(1.23)					1

Note. ** $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed). Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Predictors of Political Identities

A series of regression analyses were conducted using liberal/Democrat, conservative/Republican, socialist, and capitalist identity measures as the criterion variable and FMI, Tradition, AIA, RWA and SDO as the predictor variables. The predictors were examined individually, and then were simultaneously entered in sets with the political attitudes entered in one, the political orientations (SDO, RWA) in one, each of the orientations entered with the specific attitudes, and then all five predictors entered in one (see Table 5 and Table 6). For all four composite label identity measures the five predictor variables were found to be significant when entered separately. Differences were found when the predictors were entered together, however, as discussed below.

Beginning with the identity label “capitalist”, analyses revealed that when the attitude variables: FMI, Tradition and AIA, were entered together tradition was the only significant predictor (see Table 5). When the political orientation variables, RWA and SDO were entered simultaneously the strongest and only significant predictor was SDO. With all predictor variables entered at the same time, only tradition and SDO were significant. The persistent significance of the traditionalism variable suggests that people who highly associate with the label capitalist have a strong belief that free-markets are part of their cultural heritage.

Regression analyses predicting “socialist” identity are presented in Table 5. It was found that, when the attitude measures are entered as predictors, tradition and AIA are significant predictors, with the Betas being negative. When RWA and SDO were entered together only RWA was significant. The last regression analysis showed that when entering all predictor variables only two were significant for predicting a socialist label: tradition and RWA. These results suggest that people who strongly associate with the socialist label are low in

authoritarianism and do not necessarily believe that free-markets are a tradition in their country. It is interesting that RWA was the significant predictor of socialist identity, but SDO was the significant predictor of capitalist identification.

Exploring the identity label conservative/Republican in relation to the predictor variables we get a sense of personality variables overwhelming most of the attitude variables (see Table 6). Entering the attitude variables together we observe that all variables are significant. When RWA and SDO were entered together, RWA was strongest, however both were significant independent predictors of the label. For the final regression with all five predictors, RWA and SDO were both significant and, surprisingly the weakest predictor among the attitude variables, tradition, remained significant.

The identity label liberal/Democrat found similar results to those for the conservative/Republican label for most of the regression analyses (see Table 6), with the Betas in the opposite direction. Entering the attitude variables together we observe that AIA and FMI are significant, and tradition is not. When RWA and SDO were entered together, RWA was a stronger predictor than SDO, though both are significant. For the final regression RWA was the only significant predictor of the label liberal/Democrat, which is the most striking difference from the conservative/Republican identity where SDO and tradition were also significant.

Table 5

Regression Analyses Predicting two Political Identities: Capitalist and Socialist by Free-Market Ideology (FMI), Tradition, Anti-immigration Attitudes (AIA), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarian (RWA)

Predictor Variables	Criterion Variable	
	Capitalist	Socialist
Entered Separately		
FMI	0.31***	-0.37***
Tradition	0.38***	-0.40***
AIA	0.21***	-0.39***
SDO	0.30***	-0.25***
RWA	0.19***	-0.49***
Entered Simultaneously		
FMI	0.14	-0.06
Tradition	0.31***	-0.28***
AIA	-0.00	-0.24***
SDO	0.27***	0.03
RWA	0.04	-0.51***
FMI	0.11	0.01
Tradition	0.32***	-0.24***
AIA	-0.02	-0.08
SDO	0.20**	0.09
RWA	-0.12	-0.38***

Note. The numbers presented are Betas, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 6

Regression Analyses Predicting two Political Identities: Conservative/Republican and Liberal/Democrat by Free-Market Ideology (FMI), Tradition, Anti-immigration Attitudes (AIA), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarian (RWA)

Predictor Variables	Criterion Variable	
	Conservative/Republican	Liberal/Democrat
Entered Separately		
FMI	0.56***	-0.44***
Tradition	0.40***	-0.26***
AIA	0.57***	-0.47***
SDO	0.56***	-0.41***
RWA	0.64***	-0.57***
Entered Simultaneously		
FMI	0.29***	-0.24***
Tradition	0.11*	-0.01
AIA	0.33***	-0.31***
SDO	0.28***	-0.13*
RWA	0.48***	-0.50***
FMI	0.05	-0.09
Tradition	0.13*	0.04
AIA	0.10	-0.05
SDO	0.21***	-0.09
RWA	0.36***	-0.45***

Note. The numbers presented are Betas, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Discussion

The initial factor analyses conducted on the six political identity measures indicated one large factor. Examination of the factor loadings indicated that individuals who strongly described themselves using the label showed a strong tendency to report that their family and friends described themselves using the same label. It was predicted that personal identification and social context would correlate, but it is still interesting how strongly they go together. Items regarding the social context of family and friends both loaded strongly, but the friend item (e.g. “How many of your friends would fit this label?”) and the contact item (e.g., “Socially, to what extent do you actively seek out or avoid people who fit this label”) loaded higher on the factor than the family item, suggesting that we actively seek out others who describe themselves using the same labels. The idea of seeking out others with similar political identities as us supports the theoretical concept of a ‘shared reality’ which states that people will surround themselves with others who hold the same values and beliefs as them (Echterhoff, et al., 2009). By creating a ‘shared reality’ state with others an individual can build confidence in their own beliefs, essentially becoming more attached to that idea that they hold because they have been given validation that it is ‘acceptable’. These results enhance our understanding of the impact that a person’s social environment can have on our political identity. It should be noted, though, that these correlational findings also may indicate an exaggerated perception of this shared reality as well.

The factor analyses also revealed stability of a person’s association with the political identity label was not part of their overall identification. For five of the political identity measures the item “Thinking about your answer to the previous question would you say that as an adult you have always identified this way or has your identity changed?” was shown to have a

weak loading on the factor, and was its own separate factor for the “liberal” identity. This finding is interesting as it presents a general look into whether people’s political identities remain stable or change over time, and surprisingly suggests that, stability is not strongly related to stronger identification. Future research needs to be conducted to advance our understanding of the implications of the stability measure.

The hypothesis that an authoritarian personality would predict stronger association with their political labels than social dominance does was supported for three of the four labels; the regression analyses revealed that RWA was a stronger positive significant predictor of the conservative/Republican label and a stronger negative significant predictor of the liberal/Democrat and the socialist label. The rationale for these results is that political labels may reflect a relatively clear and simple world view which would fit with an authoritarian preference for certainty (Altemeyer, 1981). Previous research analyzing political conservatism observed the fundamentals of conservatism to be resistance to change and the ability to manage uncertainty and threat, as well as the acceptance of inequality (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Past finding reviewed by Jost et al. (2003) were suggested to support this based partly on research showing separate prediction of conservatism by RWA and SDO. We suggest that the identity approach used in this thesis is leading to the prominence of RWA.

Originally, it was predicted that people high in RWA would be especially likely to identify using the label “capitalist” because of the historical tradition that capitalism holds within the United States, and the fact that traditionalism is a component of RWA. However, this prediction was not supported. An unexpected finding was that SDO was a stronger predictor of the capitalist label than RWA. This may be because those who identify as a capitalist place a high value on individual freedom and a low value on equality (Sidanius, & Pratto, 1999). A

person who is high in SDO may prefer capitalism because they see it as supporting their preference for a hierarchical system leading to an unequal balance of power. By having an economy that is based on competition, there would be a greater opportunity for some groups to do better than others, which is an essential part of the SDO personality. An authoritarian personality is more about adhering to authority and not defying the norms put in place, which seems to be reflected more in the labels “conservative”, and negatively with “liberal” and “socialist”. However, this rationale is speculation, and further research would need to be conducted for an in depth look at why SDO was a stronger predictor of “capitalist” than RWA.

Regression analyses found that when all five political belief variables were entered simultaneously that the political orientations (RWA and SDO) appeared to be stronger predictors of the political labels more than the political attitudes (FMI, tradition and anti-immigration attitudes). This finding of political orientations being more strongly linked to an individual’s sense of political identity likely reflects the orientations being part of a person’s personality and general values compared to the attitudes which are more specific. Interestingly, the one variable that tended to remain significant when RWA and SDO were also in the analysis was tradition. This new variable, believing that capitalism is part of traditional American culture, would be interesting to study further. It appears to relate to political identities for reasons that are not part of RWA and SDO.

Results showed that anti-immigration attitudes (AIA) were a positive significant predictor of the conservative/Republican label supporting previous findings in Malone’s (2016) study that suggested those who affiliate with the Republican party are more likely to hold anti-immigrant attitudes. Malone also suggests that this has increased over the past decades. An interesting finding was that AIA does not seem to predict identification with the “capitalist” label,

suggesting that immigration attitudes are not part of the capitalist identity. This seems surprising as results showed that the identity labels “conservative” and “Republican” both had a moderate, positive correlation with capitalist identity. It may be that the conservative aspects of this identity are balanced by a belief in free-markets and open competition, which could predict favourable immigration attitudes.

The non-significant finding between “capitalist” and “socialist” identities is interesting as the two are typically considered polar opposites. This striking discovery suggests these identities are in fact separate. Researchers studying these identities therefore need to develop their measures of each separately.

General Conclusions

This initial study using an identity approach suggests that it can be informative for understanding political orientations. By using a multifaceted identification measure we were able to gain a better understanding of the various aspects of a person’s sense of political identity such as the personal and social components. If the research had used a simple “yes or no” approach to political identification the way it typically is done, then our results would not have encompassed the wider meaning that the identity has for the person.

As well, with the identity approach some novel findings might have been observed. For example, the findings revealed that, as predicted, individuals with an authoritarian personality may view the political world in a more simplistic, concrete way with the use of various political identity labels. It was surprising that this was not found for identification with “capitalist”, however. Further research should investigate why identification with this label differs from the other three. Also, a study where participants are randomly assigned to either complete this

identity questionnaire, or a simple “yes/no” questionnaire, would allow stronger conclusions about how an identity approach differs.

Limitations

One limitation of the research is that based on the geographical location of our study we cannot generalize the results as the findings could be different based on the country or culture the study is presented in. The current research had recruited participants who were currently American citizens living in the United States who had access to a computer. This is limiting to the study as various cultures could provide a different insight into political identity and how that relates to political belief systems. Different cultures could require the use of different political labels within the study. As well, based on the style of research using an online study, we are unsure of differences between those locations within the United States that do not have access to the online data base mTurk.

Another limitation is that some the five political attitudes and orientations examined in the study there could involve sub-categories that could give different results. It is established that there are 3 factors within RWA, for example, and this could be true for the other measures as well. Also, when creating the questionnaire looking at immigration attitudes we did not consider differences between legal and illegal immigration. Not differentiating between these types of immigration could hinder the current findings because there might be potential differences between the two. Future research should account for these limitations to better understand the findings on multiple levels.

Practical Implications

The present research provided an initial starting point for looking at political attitudes and orientations from an identity approach. Previously most research investigated political attitudes

either using simple “yes/no” measures (e.g., for political party affiliation), or by asking a number of items thought to underlie specific political attitudes (e.g., measuring belief in capitalism).

Using an identity approach, this research has spearheaded a different avenue for exploring political attitudes. Through this identity approach the present research provides insight into how our sense of identity includes both a personal and social component. This understanding of what makes up an individual’s identity could provide valuable insight for social psychology that deals with identity issues as well as political researchers.

Another implication of the current research is the insight it may provide regarding the polarization of political identities. A study conducted in 2014, found that within the United States, Americans who identified as Republican and Americans who identified as Democrat were historically at the farthest point apart ideologically (Doherty, 2014). Essentially, Republicans and Democrats held highly negative opinions about the opposing party which was shown to be reflected in their personal lifestyles. Through the present research an awareness of the potential state of polarization can be seen and how this is affected by the different political belief systems.

Future Research

Future research should address the limitations in the current study discussed above. An investigation into the various political identities cross-culturally would extend our understanding of political identities to other cultures. For example, it would be interesting to see if the social context is as strongly part of the overall political identity in other countries.

Additionally, the research area would benefit from a more integral investigation into the subtypes within the political belief systems. For example, right-wing authoritarianism breaks down into three dimensions (adherence to authority, a dislike for those who deviate from the

status quo, and a strong sense of tradition) that were not analyzed separately by the current research.

Another direction that can be taken within future research would be to inspect the implications of the stability measure that was mentioned earlier as being distinct from the other aspects of political identity. It seems interesting that the social context aspect of identity, for example, does not predict more stability in identifying with the label. Research should be done studying the personal and social aspects of identity as they develop over time.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that people's association with various political identity labels are multifaceted in that both personal values and the social context can impact the strength of association. The study identified the various political belief systems that related to several of the political labels Americans identify with. Support was found for the prediction that people high in authoritarianism will strongly associate with the labels "conservative" and "Republican" and well negatively associate with "liberal", "Democrat" and "socialist". Surprisingly, the capitalist label was predicted more by social dominance orientation than right-wing authoritarianism, suggesting that identification with that specific label is somewhat unique.

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Appendix A

Poster

Where do you stand on a variety of political and economic issues? How do you identify yourself politically? Even if you don't consider yourself extremely political, we would like to know your views. Participants will complete 5 questionnaires (ranging from 5 to 65 questions) online. Participation should take an hour or less, and you will be paid \$1.50.

I am looking for adults (over 18) who live in the United States of America, and are fluent English speakers to participate.

To accept this HIT, simply complete the study at the following website:

To complete this HIT, enter the code at the end of the study here: _____

Principal Investigators:

Dr. Chris Roney,
Department of Psychology,
King's University College, University of Western Ontario

Appendix B

Background Information

Before you begin, we would like to know some background information about you.

Gender M_____ F_____ Other/Prefer Not to Categorize _____

Are you 18 years of Age or over? Yes ___ No ___

Age _____

Are you an American Citizen? Yes_____ No _____

Current Country of Residence: America ___ Other _____

Appendix C

New FMI Questionnaire

Following are statements about various political points of view that different people hold. On the rating scale below each question, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree or Disagree			Strongly Agree

1. Government regulation can only interfere in the production and efficiency of the economy. ___
2. If the government gets involved in the Free Market it will undoubtedly end in failure, because politicians lack the expertise required to run an economy. ___
3. Anyone's fortunes can change in a free market system. ___
4. Programs aimed at helping balance inequalities have a necessary place in our society. ___
5. The free market system is a fair system. ___
6. Regulation of the free market restricts the most skilled and intelligent traders and bankers. ___
7. The competition associated with free markets is consistent with the historic values in my country. ___
8. Welfare makes people lazy and hurts the economy in the long run. ___
9. Socialism may work in other countries, but our system has made our country the great nation that it is. ___
10. Common or "normal" business practices must be fair, or they would not survive. ___
11. Regulation of the free market economy only serves to help those individuals unwilling to help themselves. ___
12. People born into bad circumstances deserve our help to give them a chance in life. ___
13. A free market system can lead to great gains and losses for all involved. ___
14. The free market system does not reflect the values and traditions of my country. ___
15. Governments should help individuals in need, but should largely leave economic markets and businesses alone. ___
16. Acting in response to market forces is not always a fair way to conduct business. (R) ___
17. The Socialist systems in some countries punish those who do well, but countries with a tradition of capitalism encourage success. ___
18. We should maximize free enterprise and minimize government interference. ___
19. The Government is unable to balance its own budget, and it should stay out the Free Market. ___
20. In free market systems, people tend to get the outcomes that they deserve. ___
21. A free market is a dynamic system in which fortunes can be made or fall at any moment. ___
22. A market that governs itself will develop its own regulations to protect the economy. ___
23. The free market provides equal opportunity for any individual to do well; those that don't succeed should not burden those that do. ___
24. Governments should not interfere with economic markets, but they do have a responsibility to help individuals in need. ___

25. Free enterprise can run almost everything, including universities and hospitals, better than government bureaucrats. ___
26. Profitable businesses tend to be more morally responsible than unprofitable businesses. ___
27. The free market provides a mechanism for economic stability in individual wealth (R). ___
28. If individuals are unable to compete in a free market system they should not bother participating. ___
29. Economic markets do not fairly reward people (R). ___
30. Fortunes rise and fall in a free market system and are constantly in a state of flux. ___
31. The Wealthiest bankers and traders have not earned their position at the top in the free market (R). ___
32. Free enterprise is the best way to run an economy, but social programs to help needy individuals also have their place. ___
33. No one benefits from regulating a free market, except for those unskilled and unwilling individuals that burden our economy. ___
34. The intricacies of the Free Market are understood by government officials and should not be left to the private sector (R). ___
35. Everybody wins from free trade in the end. ___
36. The free market system reflects the spirit of competition and freedom that has made our country what it is (R). ___
37. Socialist countries are sure to achieve to economic success (R). ___
38. Rules and regulations governing free market transactions can only serve to reward undeserving individuals. ___
39. The less environmentalists interfere with the free market, the better things will be for the economy, and for the environment as well. ___
40. Interfering with financial markets in any way may hinder efficiency. ___
41. Governance over the Free Market should be left to bankers and economists, and kept out of the hands of politicians. ___
42. Stability and a lack of change in the economy are due in part to the nature of the free market (R). ___
43. Redistribution of wealth allows those at the bottom to hold everyone else back. ___
44. Politics has no place in the Free Market; politicians are apt to try and further their own careers at the expense of economic growth. ___
45. The best government is the one that least interferes with the economy and the markets. ___
46. By hindering the freedom of market interactions, the economy may prove unable to compete in an international setting. ___
47. The corruption found in modern government demonstrates why it should have no place in the Free Market setting. ___
48. Given absolute freedom, the competition in financial markets will prevent stagnation. ___
49. As long as people have a free choice in the marketplace, business cannot be blamed for consumer's mistakes. ___
50. A free market system is not the best way to discover the most skilled economic players (R). ___
51. It might sound harsh, but free economic markets allow things to work as Darwin suggested, by removing the weak. ___

52. The free market, like life in general, ensures that the fittest survive, the weak perish, and the world and economy are better for it. ___

53. My country would not hold the economic power and influence it does today were it not for the free market. ___

54. The free market is an agent of economic change. ___

55. Socialist countries are often plagued by corruption. ___

56. Where I live, free markets have a long history. ___

57. Innovation is discouraged by the unfettered competition of free markets (R). ___

58. Without the free market we would not have enjoyed the comforts and luxuries of economic prosperity in this country. ___

The traditions of free enterprise and competition in North American and European societies have resulted in the development of the free market. ___

59. The people at the top in countries with free markets tend to be the most deserving of their position. ___

60. Politicians are only good at spending money, not making difficult decisions that benefit the economy in the long run. ___

61. Those individuals who cannot compete in a free-market economy should not be coddled, but left to their own devices. ___

62. Even undeserving individuals can make their fortunes in a free market system (R). ___

63. Over-regulation of the free market threatens the position we have earned in the world's economy. ___

64. It is essential that an economic market be regulated in order to develop the most productive system (R). ___

Appendix D

Label Attachment Questionnaire

On the following pages you will see a number of political labels that people sometimes use. You will be asked a variety of questions about how these label describe you and your social environment.

Given this term please answer the following questions:
 Liberal/conservative, Republic/democrat, Socialist/Capitalist

1. This label describes me?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree or Disagree			Strongly agree

2. Thinking about your answer to the previous question would you say that as an adult you have always identified this way or has your identity changed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has Not Changed			Changed a bit			Changed Greatly

3. How closely does this label fit with your values?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Close			Somewhat			Extremely Closely

4. How often would you use this term to describe yourself to other people?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never			Sometimes			Always

5. How many of your friends would fit this label?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Virtually None			Some			Virtually All

6. How many of your family do you feel would fit this label?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Virtually None			Some			Virtually All

7. Socially, to what extent do you actively seek out or avoid people who fit this label?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Avoid			Neither seek or avoid			Strongly Seek

Appendix E

Immigration Survey

Following are statements about various points of view on immigration that different people hold. On the rating scale below each question, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree or Disagree			Strongly Agree

Statements:

1. Overall, there is too much immigration in the United States.
2. Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of the United States.
3. Immigrants take away jobs from other Americans.
4. Most people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.
5. The United States is doing a good job of keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country.
6. There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting American values.
7. Ethnic groups should try as much as possible to blend into American society and not form a separate community.
8. It is more difficult for non-whites to be successful in American society than it is for other groups.
9. Ethnic and racial groups should take more responsibility for solving their own economic and social problems.
10. Someone born outside the US can be just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here.
11. The US should accept political refugees who otherwise would not qualify for immigration.

Appendix F

Consent Form

Title: Political self-identification and political attitudes

We appreciate your interest in this study. Participants will be asked to complete four questionnaires (ranging from 5 to 64 questions) asking about your opinions on, and identification with, a number of political issues and identities. Participation in this study is expected to take an hour or less. Compensation of \$1.50 will be given for your participation in this study.

It is important to acknowledge that your participation in this study is voluntary: you may withdraw from the study at any point for any reason. You may refuse to answer any question you do not wish to, there will not be a penalty. All responses will remain anonymous, and you will not be asked to provide your name or any other identifying information, ensuring confidentiality. All data obtained in this study will be kept confidential and only reported in statistical summary form, for research purposes. This research has no known psychological or physical risk involved. Upon completion of the study you will receive a form outlining the research question and purpose of the study in greater detail.

If you have any questions about the research or want to obtain information about results, feel free to contact Dr. Chris Roney (Email croney@uwo.ca). For any concerns related to ethics of this study please contact *Dr. Joseph Michalski, Associate Academic Dean, King's University College at the University of Western Ontario* (jmichal2@uwo.ca).

Please indicate your consent by clicking the NEXT button at the bottom of the screen.

Appendix G

Debriefing Form

Title: Political self-identification and political attitudes

When people discuss political issues, a variety of labels get used; liberal/conservative, capitalist/socialist, Republican/Democrat. The purpose of our study is to examine how strongly people feel an attachment to these political labels. One of the questionnaires that you completed asked you separately about how strongly you feel the label describes you, whether it has always described you, and about how much you feel the people around you identify with the label.

Although many studies ask people if they consider themselves conservative, liberal etc., to our knowledge no studies have looked at how important these labels are to people.

In addition to exploring how important these various labels are to different people, we also want to examine some political values that may be part of these beliefs. For example, the longest questionnaire that you completed examines a wide range of beliefs about free-market. I have done a number of studies examining this, and have found quite a range in free market attitudes. For example, some have very strong pro free-market attitudes reflecting a belief that they are generally the best way to run everything, and that government interference undermines these benefits. Others are pro free market in the business domain, but also support welfare and government assistance. Another questionnaire was developed to measure Right-wing authoritarianism, which is largely related to belief in tradition and authority (Altemayer, 1981). The other questionnaire you completed was designed to measure what is called Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto, Sidianus, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), reflecting a competitive political orientation reflecting a concern (or lack of concern) with the relative status of different social groups.

Since the emphasis on political identity the way we are doing it is new, we don't have many predictions; we will be examining how well these various political measures predict strong identifications. Just to give one example of a question we will be able to investigate, we would predict that the strong pro free-market attitudes will predict strong identification with the label "Capitalist" (and complete non-identification with "Socialist"), but how strongly will it predict other labels, such as "Republican" or "Conservative"? As commonly as these various labels are used every day, we know surprisingly little about what specific beliefs are most important that are associated with the labels. This study will be our first attempt at investigating this.

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your participation has allowed us to further our understanding and knowledge into this field of research that has been very limited in the past. Below are some references if you are interesting in learning more about these issues:

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Pratto, F., Sidianus, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 741-763.

Concerns over any aspect of this project may be referred to Dr. Chris Roney at King's University College at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada, N6A 2M3, or at croney@uwo.ca; Any issues or complaints regarding the research can be addressed to Dr. Joseph Michalski, Associate Academic Dean, King's University College at the University of Western Ontario (jmichal2@uwo.ca)