



Personal values and support for Donald Trump during the 2016 US presidential primary[☆]

Ryne A. Sherman

Department of Psychology, Texas Tech University, 2500 Broadway, Lubbock, TX 79409, United States



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Personal values
Political psychology
Donald Trump

ABSTRACT

Donald Trump's ascension to the Republican Party nomination and election as President of the United States in 2016 was a surprise to many political analysts. This article examines the notion that personal values played an important role in support for Trump. Using data from the Trump Similarity Values Test ($N = 1825$), a web based personality test that provides users with feedback on their similarity to Donald Trump, this article shows that personal values played a role in support for Donald Trump. First, people who supported Trump were more likely have a value profile characterized by low Altruism and high Power, Commerce, and Tradition. Second, people with a values profile similar to Trump's (presumed) values profile were more likely to support Trump. These results held even after controlling for party affiliation and political ideology, indicating that personal values were an even stronger predictor of support for Trump than traditional political attitudes.

“#TrumpNation: Supporters see themselves in Republican nominee”.

“In Trump, some see themselves[...]and others see themselves as they wish they were.”

– Rick Hampson, USA Today, July 17, 2016.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable features of the 2016 US Presidential election was that the Republican Party¹ candidate was Donald Trump, a well-known celebrity and real estate mogul. Trump's nomination was astonishing to many because Trump was not seen as a mainstream Republican candidate and had no political experience prior to announcing his bid for the nomination in July of 2015. Indeed, a number of high ranking members of the Republican Party (e.g., former Presidents George Bush and George W. Bush and former party nominees John McCain and Mitt Romney) publicly disapproved of Trump as the nominee. Thus, it is reasonable to wonder how Mr. Trump was able to garner enough public support to not only win the Republican Party nomination, but ultimately the Presidential election.

While there are many possible, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, answers to this question,² the research reported here investigates the notion that individual differences in shared personal values were a key driver of support for Donald Trump. Why might this be the case? In an APA Presidential address, Newcomb (1956) argued

that perceived (psychological) similarity is an essential component of attraction. Later, an experimental study demonstrated a causal link between perceived attitudinal similarity and likability, such that people tended to like those who share their attitudes and values (Hogan, Hall, & Blank, 1972). Such findings formed the basis for Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition model of organization fit, wherein individuals find themselves attracted to people and organizations that fit with their own personal values. Research also suggests there are functional benefits to preferring those who share one's own values. Specifically, value congruence (or similarity) predicts relationship conflict, task conflict, and productivity in teams (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997). Finally, at an evolutionary level, it is reasonable to assume that our hominid ancestors developed local cultures based upon shared values. Given that (a) psychological traits such as values are heritable (Kandler, Gottschling, & Spinath, 2016; Renner et al., 2012; Turkheimer, 2000) and (b) our hominid ancestors lived in small, genetically similar groups, it follows that liking those who share one's own values would have conferred inclusive fitness benefits. Thus, modern human brains might well be designed to prefer those who share their values. In summary then, it stands to reason that personal values could be a key driver of support for Trump.

In investigating the question of whether and/or how personal values

[☆] I am grateful to Nicolas Brown who developed the web application of Trump Values Similarity Test used to gather the data for this article. All statistical analyses were conducted using R (R Core Team, 2017).

E-mail address: ryne.sherman@ttu.edu.

¹ For readers unfamiliar with US politics, the Republican Party is one of two major political parties (the other being the Democratic Party) in the US and is considered the more conservative of the two.

² For example, economic issues for working class citizens, social issues including prejudices against minorities and women, and political issues including immigration policy.

may be related to support for Donald Trump, it is critical to distinguish this relationship from the relationship between personal values and political attitudes in general. That it, is not simply enough to say that personal values predicted support for Donald Trump without taking into account the fact that personal values are related to political attitudes in general. Indeed, there is a plethora of evidence that personal values shape political attitudes and voting behavior (e.g., Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006; Duriez, Luyten, Snauwaert, & Hutsebaut, 2002; Piurko, Schwartz, & Davidov, 2011; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010). As such, the present investigation examines the relationship between personal values and support for Donald Trump, controlling for party affiliation (Democrat vs. Republican) and political ideology (Liberal vs. Conservative). Thus, this study examines whether personal values uniquely predicted support for Trump, and not simply support for the Republican Party or conservative attitudes.

The present study was conducted with three questions in mind: (1) What values are most associated with support for Trump? (2) To what degree, if any, do personal values uniquely predict support for Trump beyond party identification and political ideology? And (3) to what degree, if any, does sharing values with Trump actually correspond to support for Trump?

1. Method

The data for this project come from the Trump Values Similarity Test website <http://shermanassessment.com/Trump/>. The website was designed to (a) gather these kinds of data for research purposes and (b) as a fun way to engage people in the political process. The test was made publicly available on March 8, 2016. The website was announced via a Psychology Today blog post about Donald Trump's values (Sherman, 2016a) inviting readers to take the Trump Values Similarity Test by linking the aforementioned website. This blog post was shared on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and allowed to spread via the web (e.g., some person, unknown to me, shared the blog and website on the Reddit politics page). Thus, the sample is best described as a voluntary convenience snowball sample of internet users. The Trump Values Similarity Test has remained active since its launch; however data reported here are limited to responses gathered on or prior to March 13, 2016 (6 days of data collection). This date was chosen because (a) the sample size was already large by psychology standards, (b) response rates had slowed after a large initial burst, and (c) these data were used to write a follow-up blog post about the results from the survey (see Sherman, 2016b). To avoid any possible contamination this follow-up blog post might have on subsequent responses, only data gathered on or prior to March 13, 2016 are reported.³

1.1. Participants

At the time of data analysis, 2249 people had voluntarily responded to at least some questions on the Trump Values Similarity Test. Before analyzing data, $n = 424$ participants were removed for at least one of the following reasons: indicating a political party choice of “something else” or “rather not say,” indicating a political attitude of “rather not say,” indicating either no gender, transgender, or “rather not say,” or not indicating any attitude towards Trump. The remaining total N after these exclusions was 1825. With $N = 1825$, these data provide statistical power of 0.99 to detect an $r = 0.10$ at the 0.05 level of statistical significance (two-tailed). Put another way, a 95% confidence interval is approximately $r \pm 0.05$ with this sample size. Thus, this sample offers an accurate picture of the relationships among the variables measured.

³ The results reported here reflect the first time these data were analyzed, on March 13, 2016. Thus, these results are not subject to p-hacking or optional stopping rules in data collection.

The ethnic breakdown was 0.8% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 4.7% Asian, 2.2% Black or African American, 0.2% Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 6.2% Hispanic/Latino, 78.8% White, 3.8% “I'd rather not say,” and 3.3% not responding to this question. The gender breakdown was 47% female and 53% male. The average age of respondents was 27.38 ($SD = 11.27$, median = 24, min = 13, max = 80).⁴

1.2. Measures

The first page of the Trump Values Similarity Test asked respondents to indicate their age in years, gender, ethnicity, and ZIP code, along with three questions regarding political attitudes. The first two questions were taken directly from the General Social Survey (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2017). To measure party affiliation, participants were asked “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?” Response options ranged from 1 (*Strong Democrat*) to 7 (*Strong Republican*), with two alternative options (“I'd rather not say” and “something else”) excluded prior to analyses. To measure political ideology participants were asked “Where would you place your political attitudes on this scale?” with options ranging from 1 (*Extremely Liberal*) to 7 (*Extremely Conservative*). Finally, to measure attitudes towards Trump, participants responded to the prompt “Regarding Donald Trump's Presidential race, I am...” with response options ranging from 1 (*Strongly Against Mr. Trump*) to 5 (*Strongly For Mr. Trump*).

The second page of the Trump Values Similarity Test asked respondents to indicate their agreement with 30 attitudinal statements designed to measure underlying values (see Table 3 for list of statements). These 30 items come from a 200 item proprietary measure of 10 core human values. The 10 values are based on the Motives, Values, and Preferences Inventory (Hogan & Hogan, 2010). They are: Recognition – The desire to be famous, known, and well-recognized; Power – The desire to take charge, compete, and win; Hedonism – The desire to seek pleasure and enjoy the finer things in life; Altruism – The desire to help others, particularly the less fortunate; Affiliation – The desire to spend time with people and build social networks; Tradition – The desire for consistency, conformity, and structure; Security – The desire to avoid risk and protect oneself from harm, particularly financially; Commerce – The desire to make money and become wealthy; Aesthetics – The desire for beauty and cultural pursuits; Science – The desire to employ evidence-based decision-making. The 30 items chosen here were selected to be maximally representative of the full inventory with 3 items selected from each of the 10 values.

2. Results⁵

The descriptive statistics for the three political attitude variables and the 10 value scales are displayed in Table 1. The internal consistencies for the value scales ranged from 0.12 to 0.83. Although some are low, it is important to keep in mind that items were selected to maximize scale breadth and not depth. Thus, it was expected that these scales would have low internal consistencies. More importantly, internal consistencies only reflect scale reliabilities when (a) the underlying scale is unidimensional and (b) the items are randomly drawn from the population of items. Neither of these is true in this case, thus the internal consistencies should not be interpreted as reliabilities and the presence of low internal consistency for these scales does not

⁴ Of the 1824 participants reporting age, 65 reported being below age 18. As all participants were anonymous, I elected to include all participants regardless of age, even if not of legal voting age.

⁵ All analyses were conducted using R (R Core Team, 2017) and relying on functions available in the ‘ppcor’ (Kim, 2015), ‘psych’ (Revelle, 2017), and ‘multicon’ (Sherman & Serfass, 2015) packages. Data and .R script for analyses are available at <https://osf.io/3jafm/>.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7248789>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7248789>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)