

# Political Attitudes and the Ideology of Equality: Differentiating support for liberal and conservative political parties in New Zealand

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A new scale summarizing the central and core elements of a social representation of individual versus group-based entitlement to resource-allocations in New Zealand (NZ) is presented. Item content for the *Equality Positioning Scale* was drawn from qualitative analyses of the discourses of NZ's citizens, its political elites, and the media. As hypothesized, equality positioning differentiated between Pakeha (NZ European) undergraduates who supported liberal versus conservative political parties. People who positioned equality as group-based tended to support the Labour and Green parties and those who positioned equality as meritocracy tended to support the National and NZ First parties. Regression models predicting political party support in the two months prior to the 2005 NZ general election demonstrated that the effects of equality positioning on political party preference were unique, and were not explained by universal (Study 1: Big-Five Personality, Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, liberalism-conservatism) or culture-specific; (Study 2: pro-Pakeha ingroup attitudes, support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism) indicators derived from other theoretical perspectives. Taken together, these findings indicate that the *Equality Positioning Scale* provides a valid and reliable measure that contributes to models of the psychological and ideological bases of voting behaviour in NZ. Moreover, our findings suggest that the positioning of equality provided an axis of meaning that aided in the creation and mobilization of public opinion regarding resource-allocations, land claims, affirmative action programs, and a host of other material issues in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ election.

There has been considerable political debate regarding issues of who gets what in contemporary New Zealand (NZ) society. Such debate is often characterized by an underlying tension between contrasting ideologies of equality. On the one hand, some definitions prescribe that equality should be based on principles of meritocracy that emphasize the individual's freedom to pursue economic self-interest and the right to have their worth determined based solely upon their individual merit.

On the other hand, some definitions emphasize that equality should consider group differences, whereby it may be necessary to allocate resources on the basis of group membership in order to reduce categorical disadvantages experienced by some groups within society.

As various commentators have suggested, the positioning of equality provided a central axis that organized much of the political debate regarding tax cuts, the role and function of the

Treaty of Waitangi, and affirmative action policy in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ general election (Johansson, 2004; Kirkwood, Liu, & Weatherall, 2005; Sibley, Robertson, & Kirkwood, 2005). Consistent with these observations, we argue that ideologies of equality and issues of who gets what were central to the NZ 2005 election campaign in much the same way that ideologies of national security and the war on terrorism were central to election campaigns in the United States (US) that occurred at around the same time. However, as Jost (2006) concluded in a recent summary, although trends in the ideologies that govern voting behavior and political attitudes are often commented upon anecdotally, systematic quantitative research validating such observations remains limited. This is particularly true of the NZ context.

The present research addresses this lacuna and explores the impact of the ideological positioning of equality on the political party preferences of the majority ethnic group in NZ (Pakeha, or NZ Europeans<sup>1</sup>) in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ general election. In order to examine this issue, we present a new measure of individual differences in value framing, which we term *Equality Positioning*. The *Equality Positioning Scale* is intended to summarize the central and core elements of an ideology of equality and entitlement and is developed for use in the NZ socio-political environment specifically. The items contained in the

scale are adapted from a variety of NZ-specific sources, including both our own earlier qualitative work (e.g., Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006), and the insightful and content rich qualitative work on race talk of Nairn and McCreanor (1990, 1991), Wetherell and Potter (1992) and others, as well as political speeches made in the years preceding the 2005 NZ general election (e.g., Brash, 2004).

We present two independent studies that explore the reliability and predictive validity of our measure by assessing the degree to which equality positioning differentiated between support for liberal (Labour and the Greens) versus conservative (National and NZ First) political parties in the two months leading up to the 2005 NZ general election. Moreover, we examine the degree to which equality positioning provided unique information predicting participant's voting preferences that could not be explained by (a) universal predictors of political orientation (Big-Five personality, Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, self-labelled liberalism-conservatism), and (b) other culture-specific constructs (pro-NZ European/Pakeha ingroup attitudes, support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism). Taken together, these studies provide a snapshot of the psychological and ideological motives associated with political party preferences in NZ during the 2005 election campaign.

### *Political Ideology in the New Zealand Context*

NZ, like the United States (US), holds liberal democratic values anchored in ideals of freedom and equality as central to nationhood (Liu, 2005). NZ was the first country in the world to introduce universal suffrage, was one of the first welfare states, and New Zealanders have a tradition of protest against anti-egalitarian regimes. There are two major political parties in NZ, the Labour party (traditionally the major liberal party), and the National party (traditionally the major conservative party). In the 2005 NZ general election, these two parties achieved a remarkably similar endorsement from the nation, with Labour receiving 41.1% of the nationwide vote, and National coming

in a close second with 39.1%. The next two highest ranking parties were the NZ First party (another conservative party) with 5.7%, and the Green Party (a liberal party that focuses on environmental issues) with 5.3% (Henry, 2005). With the support of a number of smaller parties (primarily the Greens), Labour formed their third consecutive government – an unprecedented achievement for a Labour party.

Research indicates that support for the National versus the Labour party differs amongst middle income voters (the majority of the NZ population) because of perceived ideological differences. Support for smaller and more extreme parties, in contrast, tends to be governed more directly by economic self-interest. Analyses of a random sample of voters conducted in 1997 indicated, for example, that the belief that people (both oneself and others) have the ability to determine their economic situation (and the related implication that equality is most appropriately defined as meritocracy) predicted increased support for National versus Labour (Allen & Ng, 2000). Furthermore, just as Wilson (2004) has shown that National party parliamentarians ascribe less importance to equality than their Labour counterparts, New Zealand voters tend to show the same pattern of preferences, with Labour party voters endorsing the general concept of equality significantly more than National party voters (Wilson, 2005).

The Labour agenda over the last few years has been marked by an egalitarian disposition toward government spending and legislation. For example, one of Labour's high profile policies during their term in government in 2000 was the 'Closing the Gaps' policy, which focused on identifying and addressing areas in which Maori (the indigenous peoples of NZ) were underperforming relative to Pakeha. Maori are disadvantaged relative to Pakeha on most indicators of social and economic well-being; Maori form 16% of the total population and 50% of the prison population; they earn 16% less income, and their life expectancy is 8 years lower (The Social Report, 2005). However, following concerted expressions of opposition from other political parties,

and a significant number of mainstream (primarily Pakeha) New Zealanders, the policy was dropped, and reference to 'Closing the Gaps' removed from policy initiatives.

A common argument mobilised by members of the opposition when arguing against 'Closing the Gaps' was that government resources should be allocated on the basis of need rather than ethnic group membership, and that the policy implemented by the Labour government was effectively advantaging Maori over other New Zealanders. Dr. Don Brash, the leader of the National Party at the time of the 2005 election, mobilized similar discourses framing equality as meritocracy in his Nationhood speech delivered to the Orewa rotary club in early 2004. Brash (2004) argued, for example, that "We are one country with many peoples, not simply a society of Pakeha and Maori where the minority has a birthright to the upper hand, as the Labour Government seems to believe." Here we see the emphasis placed on treating all people equally as individuals, and the related implication that not to do so would be unjust and unfair to other individuals (presumably because they do not have 'a birthright to the upper hand'). It is somewhat ironic however, that constructing opposition to policy by arguing that it is antiegalitarian (that all New Zealanders should be treated the same) is inconsistent with survey results suggesting that belief in the importance of equality as a general principle is actually positively correlated with support for policies based on distributive justice rules, such as 'Closing the Gaps' (Wilson, 2005).

### *The Ideology of Equality*

The above analysis of political ideology and related discourse emphasizes that terms such as 'Equality' can be used to refer to distributive justice rules that emphasize individual merit (the merit principle) or rules that consider target group membership. As numerous researchers have noted, the value of equality has the potential to cut both ways depending upon how notions of fairness are positioned to legitimize or oppose the allocation of resources, outcomes, or other treatments that consider or are seen to be otherwise contingent upon group membership

(Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976; McConahay, 1986). At one extreme, equality may be constructed as meritocracy, whereby outcomes or treatments that consider group membership as a criterion are framed as biased and potentially discriminatory toward individuals who belong to other (typically majority) groups (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Arriola & Cole, 1991). Instead, the notion of equality-as-meritocracy emphasizes individual merit (performance and ability) as the governing factor that should determine issues of who gets what. Conversely, in situations where there is a gap between minority and majority group members in terms of social and/or economic wellbeing, distributive justice rules that consider minority group membership may be a viable means of increasing social equality. Presumably, it was observations of this latter type that led the Labour government to propose their 'Closing the Gaps' policy initiative in the first place.

Research in both NZ and Australia has shown that people tend to emphasize notions of equality-as-meritocracy when expressing opposition toward affirmative action and reparation in natural discourse. Such discourses typically argue that the consideration of group membership as a criterion for determining resource allocations may constitute preferential treatment or even reverse discrimination (Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Every, 2005; Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Rapley, 1999; Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006). Discourses of this type are often unmarked and position affirmative action as a form of 'preferential treatment' that subverts the principle of meritocracy and may divide people along ethnic lines (or other relevant stratification ideologies). As various studies have shown, people also often raise concerns that affirmative action may risk an increase in social unrest and thus exacerbate rather than reduce prejudice (Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; see also Fraser & Kick, 2000; Riley, 2002, for similar discursive analyses conducted in other countries). Such observations emphasize the polemic way in which

value descriptions can be positioned in order to manage ideological dilemmas resulting from discrepancies between the allocation of material resources and existing social inequality (Billig, 1991; Myrdal, 1944).

In a recent study examining equality framing in NZ, Sibley, Liu, and Kirkwood (2006), for example, presented undergraduate students with an actual proposed change to university affirmative action policy, which was framed in terms of either remedial action (which apportioned blame based on historical grievances and inequality) or bicultural partnership (which emphasized the need for a mutual partnership between Maori and Pakeha). Irrespective of framing condition, Pakeha students endorsed societally elaborated 'standard' discourses that positioned equality as being based solely on individual merit (i.e., grades) and opposed policies that also included ethnic group membership as a criteria used to govern resource allocations (i.e., targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities). A central theme underlying such discourses was that scholarships for Maori students were unfair to other individuals who did not belong to that ethnic group. However, when faced with the bicultural partnership frame, many students did make concessions regarding symbolic aspects of the partnership between Maori and Pakeha (they nevertheless continued to oppose resource allocations for Maori, however). When it comes to realistic issues (in the sense of their relevance for material outcomes and resource allocations), the discursive positioning of equality forms a culturally sanctioned repertoire for managing debate and building consensus of opinion (and it seems, opposition) toward policy that includes distributive rules contingent upon group membership.

#### *Overview of the Present Studies*

We aimed to (a) develop a self-report measure assessing the degree to which individuals adopt a prescriptive norm in which equality is positioned as being based on individual- versus group-merit, and (b) examine the predictive validity of this measure for understanding differences in political party preference. Consistent with

the societally elaborated standard discourses of equality identified by Sibley, Liu, and Kirkwood (2006) in work assessing opposition to affirmative action programs, we define this measure of equality positioning as assessing the degree to which people construe equality as meritocracy, that is, as being based solely on individual merit; versus the degree to which people construe equality as a process whereby it may sometimes be necessary to allocate resources on the basis of group membership rather than individual merit per se in order to redress categorical disadvantages currently experienced by ethnic minorities. We argue that equality positioning in the NZ context constitutes an *ideology*, as defined by Rokeach (1968, pp. 123-124), who argued that "an *ideology* is an organization of beliefs and attitudes—religious, political, or philosophical in nature—that is more or less institutionalized or shared with others, deriving from external authority".

Political debate in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ elections centered on a number of issues. Not surprisingly, much of the debate was ideological in nature, at least to the extent that different political parties and politicians sought to promote their own policies and denigrate those of their opponents through reference to ideological differences. To the extent that the positioning of equality as individual- versus group-based provided an axis of meaning that aided in the creation and mobilization of public opinion in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ election, individual differences in equality positioning should (a) differentiate between support for political parties understood to be more liberal (Labour and the Greens) and those understood to be more conservative (National and NZ First). Specifically, we hypothesize that people low in equality positioning will express increased levels of support for the Labour and Green parties, whereas people high in equality positioning will display the opposite trend and express increased support for the National and NZ First parties. Furthermore, to the extent that equality positioning exerts a unique effect on political attitudes

that is not due to stable underlying individual differences, such as openness to experience or support for tradition, we hypothesize that (b) equality positioning should predict unique variance in political party support not explained by other universal and culture-specific predictors.

## STUDY 1

In Study 1, we first controlled for Big-Five personality measures of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. We considered it parsimonious to control for the effects of personality on political preference before entering more ideologically-oriented constructs given that (a) personality (in particular Openness to Experience) predicts lower levels of support for more conservative political parties in the US (e.g., Jost, 2006); and (b) personality is most appropriately modeled as a casual antecedent of ideological attitudes (Duckitt, 2001).

We next entered the broad-bandwidth ideological attitudes of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1996) as predictors of political preference. Together, SDO and RWA cast a wide ranging net that predicts variation in most domains of prejudice and related intergroup and political attitudes (Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006). The geneses of SDO and RWA are quite different, however. SDO arises from perceptions of the social environment as a competitive dog-eat-dog world, and predicts domains of prejudice motivated by the desire for group dominance. RWA arises from perceptions of the social environment as dangerous and threatening, and predicts domains of prejudice motivated by the desire for social conformity, control, and ingroup cohesion (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). SDO and RWA should therefore tend to predict political conservatism and support for hierarchically organized social structures for different reasons: SDO for economic and dominance oriented-reasons associated with free market capitalism because such economic conditions foster hierarchical social structures; RWA for the collective

security that is perceived to be provided by policies that emphasize and maintain the traditional values, norms, and mores of the ingroup.

Finally, we also controlled for participant's self-placed level of liberalism versus conservatism. Jost (2006) has reported that in the US, asking participants to rate themselves in terms of liberalism versus conservatism using a simple one-item scale consistently predicts support for the Democratic versus the Republican party at levels that exceed  $r = .90$ . Thus, it appears that self-placement on this scale provides an important and extremely strong predictor of voting preference in some nations. We therefore deemed it important to include and control for this construct when developing models predicting political party support in the NZ context.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 259, NZ born undergraduate students who participated for partial course credit and who self-identified as NZ European/Pakeha (the majority ethnic group in NZ). Participants (62 males and 197 females) ranged from 18-55 years of age ( $M = 20.08$ ,  $SD = 4.77$ ). This research was conducted in July 2005, approximately two months before the NZ general election which occurred in September 2005. All participants were NZ citizens who were 18 years of age or older, and were thus eligible to vote in the upcoming election.

### Materials and Procedure

Participants rated their support for the four largest political parties in NZ at the time: Labour, National, the Greens, and NZ First on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly oppose) to 6 (strongly support). These items were administered using the following instructions: 'Please indicate how strongly you support/oppose each of the following political parties in the upcoming NZ election.'

SDO was measured using 10 balanced items from the SDO<sub>6</sub> (Pratto et al., 1994: items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 16). RWA was measured using a shortened set of 10 balanced items from Altemeyer's (1996) scale

(items: 13, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 32, and 34). Items were rated on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Big-Five personality markers were assessed using the 50-item version of the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999). Ten items assessed each of the five personality dimensions: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience. Items were administered using standard instructions (Goldberg, 1999), and were rated on a scale ranging from 0 (very inaccurate) through the midpoint of 3 (neither inaccurate nor accurate) to 6 (very accurate).

Consistent with Jost (2006), we included a single item assessing participants' self-reported placement on a scale ranging from 0 (liberal), through the mid-point of 3 (moderate) to 6 (conservative). This item was administered using the following instructions: 'Often, people use the terms "liberal" or "conservative" to describe their political beliefs. How would you rate yourself in these terms?'

Equality positioning was measured using the 8 items shown in Table 1. These eight items were adapted from a variety of sources, primarily recent NZ political speeches (e.g., Brash, 2004) and qualitative responses and summaries of responses described in earlier work on 'race talk' in NZ (e.g., Kirkwood et al., 2005; Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Items were also revised to give a balanced number of pro- and contrait statements, as the discourses from which items were adapted tended to be protrait in nature. Items were rated on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated increased endorsement of ideologies positioning equality and fairness as being based on individual (rather than group) merit. As shown in Table 1, exploratory factor analysis indicated that the items assessing equality positioning all loaded on a single dimension (factor loadings  $> .74$ ). Interpretation of the scree plot also supported a unidimensional solution,

as the eigenvalues displayed a steeply decreasing trend that levelled out after the first value (eigenvalues: 5.02, 1.02, .43, .39, .33). This unidimensional solution accounted for 62.79% of the total variance in item ratings, and as shown in Table 2, was normally distributed (*kurtosis* = -.17, *skewness* = -.19) and internally reliable ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

## Results

### Associations Between Equality Positioning and Political Party Preference

Descriptive statistics and correlations between self-identified Pakeha respondents' levels of equality positioning, SDO, RWA, self-labeled liberalism-conservatism, Big-Five personality markers, and support for NZ political parties are shown in Table 2. Equality positioning was negatively correlated with support for the Labour and Green parties,  $r(257) = -.25, p < .01$ ;  $r(257) = -.30, p < .01$ , respectively; and positively correlated with support for the National and NZ First parties,  $r(257) = .33, p < .01$ ;  $r(257) = .19, p < .01$ . These results indicate that Pakeha who believe that

equality should be determined solely by individual merit and that ethnicity should *not* be a factor in determining the fairness of resource allocations tended to support the National and NZ First parties and oppose the Labour and Green parties. Pakeha who tended to agree with statements such as 'true equality can only be achieved once we recognize that some ethnic groups are currently more disadvantaged than others', in contrast, were more likely to support the Labour and Green parties, and oppose the National and NZ First parties.

Equality positioning was also weakly to moderately positively correlated with SDO,  $r(257) = .20, p < .01$ , and RWA,  $r(257) = .27, p < .01$ . Equality positioning was also moderately positively correlated with self-labeled levels of conservatism (versus liberalism),  $r(257) = .29, p < .01$ . As expected, SDO, RWA, and self-labeled conservatism were also all moderately negatively correlated with support for the Labour and Green parties, but positively correlated with support for the National and NZ First parties (see Table 2). Furthermore, equality positioning was not significantly

correlated with any of the Big Five factor markers;  $r$ 's ranged from -.09 to .12.

### Unique Effects of Equality Positioning on Political Party Preference

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine the shared and unique variance in support for political parties predicted by Big Five personality markers (Step 1), SDO and RWA (Step 2), self-labeled liberalism-conservatism (Step 3), and equality positioning (Step 4).

As shown on the top left side of Table 3, the linear combination of Big Five personality markers entered at Step 1 failed to significantly predict variance in support for the Labour party (*adjusted*  $R^2 = .02, F(5,253) = 2.12, p = .06$ ). The entry of SDO and RWA at Step 2 predicted an additional 11% of the variance in support for the Labour party controlling for the Big Five,  $\Delta R^2 = .11, F_{change} = (2,251) = 15.92, p < .01$ , bringing the *adjusted*  $R^2$  for the model up to .12. The direction of these effects indicated that people lower in RWA tended to express increased support for the Labour party. The entry of self-

Table 1. Item content and factor loadings for the Equality Positioning Scale

	The Equality Positioning Scale	
	Study 1	Study 2
1. We are all one nation and we should all be treated the same. No one should be entitled to anything more than the rest of us simply because they belong to one particular ethnic group.	.84	.78
2. It is wrong for any one minority to be provided with additional resources because of their ethnicity. Equality means treating <i>all</i> people equally <i>regardless</i> of whether they identify as Maori, NZ European, Asian, or any other ethnic group currently living in New Zealand.	.83	.83
3. We should provide additional resources and opportunities to ethnic minorities with a history of disadvantage in order to promote genuine equality in the future. ( <i>r</i> )	.81	.86
4. True equality can only be achieved once we recognize that some ethnic groups are currently more disadvantaged than others and require additional assistance from the government. ( <i>r</i> )	.81	.84
5. Given that the economic playing field in New Zealand is not truly level, it is only fair to provide disadvantaged ethnic minorities with additional resources in the here and now so as to make things more equal in the long term. ( <i>r</i> )	.78	.81
6. Everyone should be judged <i>solely</i> on their individual merits. People should <i>not</i> be given additional rights simply because of their ethnicity, even if they do belong to a 'disadvantaged' group.	.77	.79
7. We are all New Zealanders and the law should <i>not</i> make provision for minority groups because of their ethnicity.	.77	.78
8. The government should devote extra resources to disadvantaged ethnic groups in order to help them overcome the effects of past discrimination and inequality. ( <i>r</i> )	.74	.79

Note. Study 1:  $n = 259$  self-identified Pakeha, Study 2:  $n = 150$  self-identified Pakeha. (*r*) = item is reverse coded so that a low score on this item (e.g., a rating of 0) was coded as a high score (e.g., a rating of 6), and vice-versa.

labeled conservatism at Step 3 failed to predict additional variance in support for the Labour party,  $\Delta R^2 < .01$ ,  $F_{change} = (1,250) = 2.28$ ,  $p = .13$ . However, as predicted, the entry of equality positioning at Step 4 predicted an additional 3% of the variance in support for the Labour party above and beyond all other predictors,  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F_{change} = (1,249) = 10.37$ ,  $p < .01$ , yielding an *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> of .16 for the final model. Put another way, equality positioning was uniquely associated with support for the Labour party. The direction of this effect indicated that people who scored higher on equality positioning (and thus tended to construe equality as meritocracy) were more likely to oppose the Labour party in the upcoming election.

As shown in the top right side of Table 3, equality positioning also predicted unique variance in support for the National party, however, the effects of equality positioning were in the opposite direction to those observed when predicting support for the Labour and Green parties. Instead, those who scored higher on equality positioning (and thus tended to construe equality as meritocracy) were more likely to express support for the National party in the upcoming election. The linear combination of Big Five personality markers (entered at Step 1) significantly predicted 9% of the variance in support

for the National party (*adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .09,  $F(5,253) = 6.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the entry of SDO and RWA at Step 2 predicted an additional 14% of the variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .14$ ,  $F_{change} = (2,251) = 24.03$ ,  $p < .01$ , with people higher in SDO and RWA expressing increased support for the National party. Together, the Big Five, SDO and RWA predicted nearly a quarter of the variance in support for the National Party, *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .23. Self-labeled conservatism (entered at Step 3) also predicted a large portion (6%) of additional variance in support for the National party,  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F_{change} = (1,250) = 21.94$ ,  $p < .01$ , with people who considered themselves more conservative expressing increased support for the National party. Finally, equality positioning predicted an additional 2% unique variance in support for the National party in addition to that already predicted by other variables,  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $F_{change} = (1,249) = 8.59$ ,  $p < .01$ , yielding an *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> of .31 for the final model.

As also shown in Table 3, equality positioning also predicted unique variance in levels of support for the Green party. These trends were similar to those observed when predicting support for Labour. Inspection of the regression model predicting support for the NZ First party (presented in the lower right side of Table 3) suggested

that the origins of support for this party differed somewhat from those of the other three political parties. Support for the NZ First party was motivated primarily by the combination of stable regularities in personality and high levels of RWA. Equality positioning failed to predict additional variance in support for this party.

**Discussion - Study 1**

Study 1 demonstrated that equality positioning differentiated between Pakeha who supported political parties understood to be more liberal (Labour and the Greens) or more conservative (National and NZ First), with those low in equality positioning tending to support the Labour and Green parties and those high in equality positioning tending to support the National and NZ First parties. Importantly, the differential associations between equality positioning and increased opposition to the Labour and Green parties, and increased support for the National party were unique. That is, equality positioning predicted variance in levels of support (or the lack thereof) for the Labour, Green, and National parties that could *not* also be attributed to measures of personality, SDO, RWA, or self-labeled liberalism-conservatism.

Equality positioning did not, however, predict unique variance in

Table 2. **Study 1:** Descriptive statistics and correlations between Equality Positioning, SDO, WA, liberalism-conservatism, Big Five personality markers, and support for NZ political parties two months prior to the 2005 general election.

Scale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Equality positioning													
2. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	.20*												
3. Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	.27*	.33*											
4. Liberalism-Conservatism	.29*	.24*	.50*										
5. Extraversion	.01	.04	.09	.10									
6. Agreeableness	-.03	-.35*	-.04	-.08	-.26*								
7. Conscientiousness	.12	.01	.16*	.19*	.14*	.12							
8. Neuroticism	-.05	-.12	.02	.08	-.21*	.13*	.06						
9. Openness to Experience	-.09	-.27*	-.31*	-.22*	-.28*	.25*	.01	.02					
10. Support for the Labour Party	-.25*	-.09	-.27*	-.19*	.15*	.00	.04	-.12	-.11				
11. Support for the Green Party	-.30*	-.25*	-.32*	-.33*	-.02	.07	-.07	-.00	.17*	.28*			
12. Support for the National Party	.33*	.35*	.40*	.44*	-.06	-.10	.20*	-.02	-.17*	-.38*	-.31*		
13. Support for the NZ First Party	.19*	.23*	.35*	.23*	.02	-.02	.05	-.03	-.24*	-.17*	-.13*	.33*	
<i>M</i>	3.53	2.63	3.06	3.47	2.44	4.39	3.39	3.22	3.93	3.31	3.02	3.13	2.00
<i>SD</i>	1.19	.84	.94	1.27	.98	.71	.81	.97	.72	1.44	1.63	1.62	1.49
Skewness	-.19	.31	.26	-.01	.35	-.72	.05	.24	-.06	-.26	-.10	-.24	.11
Kurtosis	-.17	-.16	-.09	-.22	-.15	1.17	-.23	-.25	-.14	-.20	-.59	-.73	-.54
$\alpha$	.91	.84	.83	-	.90	.82	.80	.87	.80	-	-	-	-

Note. \* =  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 259$  self-identified Pakeha university students for all correlations. Scores for all variables ranged from 0 to 6.

Table 3. Study 1: Hierarchical regression analyses predicting support for NZ political parties two months prior to the 2005 general election.

		Support for Labour Party			Support for National Party		
		$\beta$ (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>adj.</i>	$\beta$ (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>adj.</i>
Step 1	Extraversion	.09 (.09)	1.42		-.16 (.10)	-2.83*	
	Agreeableness	.06 (.13)	.87		-.05 (.13)	-.78	
	Conscientiousness	.11 (.11)	1.85		.14 (.11)	2.52*	
	Neuroticism	-.12 (.09)	-1.94		-.06 (.09)	-1.01	
	Openness to Experience	-.22 (.13)	-3.37*	.02	-.05 (.13)	-.81	.09*
Step 2	SDO	-.01 (.11)	-.08		.18 (.12)	2.92*	
	RWA	-.27 (.11)	-3.83*	.12*	.15 (.11)	2.27*	.23*
Step 3	Liberalism-Conservatism	-.06 (.08)	-.93	.13	.26 (.08)	4.15*	.29*
Step 4	Equality positioning	-.20 (.07)	-3.22*	.16*	.16 (.08)	2.93*	.31*

  

		Support for Green Party			Support for NZ First Party		
		$\beta$ (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>adj.</i>	$\beta$ (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>adj.</i>
Step 1	Extraversion	.03 (.11)	.49		-.04 (.10)	-.61	
	Agreeableness	.00 (.15)	.07		-.07 (.14)	-1.02	
	Conscientiousness	.00 (.12)	.02		.00 (.11)	-.04	
	Neuroticism	-.00 (.10)	-.08		-.04 (.09)	-.66	
	Openness to Experience	.06 (.15)	.86	.02	-.15 (.14)	-2.26*	.05*
Step 2	SDO	-.11 (.13)	-1.70		.11 (.12)	1.60	
	RWA	-.13 (.12)	-1.86	.11*	.24 (.11)	3.31*	.13*
Step 3	Liberalism-Conservatism	-.18 (.09)	-2.62*	.14*	.04 (.08)	.55	.13
Step 4	Equality positioning	-.19 (.08)	-3.09*	.17*	.08 (.08)	1.23	.13

Note. Analyses were based on data from 259 self-identified Pakeha university students; standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), standard errors (SE), and *t*-values displayed for the Step 4 model. The adjusted *R*<sup>2</sup> (*R*<sup>2</sup> *adj.*) is displayed for each step, the significance of the *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> indicates whether the linear combination of variables entered at that step predicted significant additional variance in the dependent measure of interest (rather than whether the overall model was significant at each step). \**p* < .05.

support for the NZ First party. Levels of support and opposition for this party were instead predicted solely by Big Five personality markers (primarily low Openness to Experience) and high levels of RWA. More generally, these results point to an intriguing pattern suggesting that a substantial portion of the degree to which people supported or opposed the National and NZ First parties was due to individual differences in personality and global ideological attitudes indexed by SDO and RWA. Variation in the degree to which people supported or opposed the Labour and Green parties, in contrast, was mostly unrelated to personality, and was predicted primarily by ideologically-oriented constructs (cf. Allen & Ng, 2000; Jost, 2006).

## STUDY 2

The results reported in Study 1 indicate that equality positioning reflects a content rich and socially elaborated ideology governing how people think about meritocracy and the entitlement of group versus individual-based resource-allocations. This ideology is not reducible to more universal and broad-bandwidth measures of personality or ideological attitudes, and the inclusion of equality positioning in models of political party preference in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ elections significantly increased the predictive power of such models (for the Labour, Green and National parties). Our second study aimed to replicate and further examine the unique effects of equality positioning on political party preference in the months leading up to the 2005 NZ general election. Whereas Study 1 controlled for arguably universal (non-culture-specific) predictors of political

party preference (namely SDO, RWA, Big Five personality markers, and self-labeled liberalism-conservatism), Study 2 controlled for a different set of predictors that have been shown to relate to attitudes toward ethnic groups and bicultural policy in NZ *specifically* (in addition to also controlling for SDO and RWA). Namely, we controlled for pro-majority (i.e., pro-Pakeha) ethnic group attitudes and attitudes toward the symbolic principles of biculturalism.

Pro-majority ethnic group attitudes have been shown to predict increased levels of anti-minority ethnic group attitudes in both NZ (Duckitt & Parra, 2004) and elsewhere (Duckitt, Callaghan, & Wagner, 2005). Given that equality positioning is distinct from more generalized pro-ingroup ethnic attitudes, it should predict unique variance in political party preference once such attitudes have been controlled. Attitudes toward the symbolic principles

of biculturalism, in contrast, assess the degree to which people are supportive of the incorporation of Maori values and culture into mainstream (primarily Pakeha) NZ culture and national identity. Sibley and Liu (2004, in press); Sibley et al. (2005); and Sibley, Wilson, & Robertson (2007), have argued that attitudes toward the symbolic aspects of biculturalism are distinct from attitudes toward material interests relating to bicultural policy, at least in contexts like New Zealand where biculturalism is part of the national ideology for governance. If attitudes toward the symbolic and resource-specific aspects of biculturalism are indeed distinct from one another, then equality positioning (which assesses attitudes toward the allocation of material resources) should predict additional variance in political party preference once attitudes toward the symbolic principles of biculturalism have been controlled.

**Method**

*Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 146 NZ born undergraduate students who participated for partial course credit and who self-identified as NZ European/Pakeha. Participants (53 males and 93 females) ranged from 18-55 years of age ( $M = 21.38$ ,  $SD = 4.55$ ). As with Study 1, this research was conducted in July 2005, approximately two months before the general election which occurred in September 2005. All participants were

NZ citizens who were 18 years of age or older, and were thus eligible to vote in the upcoming election.

*Materials*

SDO was first measured using the full 16-item SDO<sub>6</sub> scale (Pratto et al., 1994). RWA was measured using a shortened set of 16 balanced items from Altemeyer's (1996) scale (items: 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 34). Positive intergroup attitudes toward Pakeha were assessed using 8 items from Duckitt and Parra's (2004) NZ ethnic attitude scale.

Attitudes toward the symbolic principles of biculturalism were assessed using the 5-item scale developed by Sibley et al. (2005). This scale assessed that degree to which people were supportive of the incorporation of Maori values and culture into mainstream (primarily Pakeha) NZ culture and national identity.

Equality positioning and political party support were measured using the scales described in Study 1. As shown in Table 1, exploratory factor analysis indicated that the items assessing equality positioning all loaded on a single dimension (factor loadings > .78). Interpretation of the Scree plot supported a unidimensional solution, as the eigenvalues displayed a steeply decreasing trend that levelled out after the first value (eigenvalues: 5.36, .95, .41, .37, .31). This unidimensional solution accounted for 65.74% of the

total variance in item ratings, and was normally distributed ( $kurtosis = -.31$ ,  $skewness = -.24$ ) and internally reliable ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

All items were rated on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Political party support was assessed using the scales described in Study 1.

**Results**

*Associations Between Equality Positioning and Political Party Preference*

Correlations between self-identified Pakeha respondents' levels of equality positioning, SDO, RWA, support for biculturalism in principle, pro-majority ethnic group attitudes and support for NZ political parties are shown in Table 4. Consistent with Study 1, and as shown in Table 4, equality positioning was negatively correlated with support for the Labour and Green parties,  $r(144) = -.50$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r(144) = -.33$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively; and positively correlated with support for the National and NZ First parties,  $r(144) = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r(144) = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ . As with Study 1, these results indicate that the equality positioning scale differentiated between Pakeha who supported political parties understood to be more liberal (Labour and the Greens) or more conservative (National and NZ First) political parties.

Table 4. **Study 2:** Descriptive statistics and correlations between Equality Positioning, SDO, RWA, pro-majority ethnic group attitudes, biculturalism in principle, and support for NZ political parties two months prior to the 2005 general election.

Scale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Equality positioning									
2. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	.26*								
3. Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)	.14	.44*							
4. Support for biculturalism in principle	-.38*	-.40*	-.18*						
5. Pro-majority ethnic group attitudes	.55*	.46*	.33*	-.51*					
6. Support for the Labour Party	-.50*	-.21*	-.26*	.31*	-.34*				
7. Support for the Green Party	-.33*	-.29*	-.36*	.30*	-.37*	.52*			
8. Support for the National Party	.38*	.30*	.25*	-.29*	.43*	-.50*	-.39*		
9. Support for the NZ First Party	.31*	.32*	.25*	-.31*	.43*	-.19*	-.19*	.47*	
<i>M</i>	3.65	1.60	1.83	4.03	3.12	3.37	3.11	2.84	2.26
<i>SD</i>	1.22	.86	.82	1.24	.71	1.32	1.56	1.56	1.50
Skewness	-.19	.33	.28	-.54	-.04	-.49	-.42	-.21	.12
Kurtosis	-.32	-.32	.41	.24	.15	-.05	-.21	-.71	-.47
$\alpha$	.92	.90	.89	.87	.72	-	-	-	-

Note. \* =  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 146$  self-identified Pakeha university students for all correlations. Scores for all variables ranged from 0 to 6.



Equality positioning was moderately positively correlated with SDO,  $r(144) = .26, p < .01$ , however it was not significantly correlated with RWA in this sample,  $r(144) = .14, p = .10$ . Equality positioning was also moderately negatively correlated with support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism,  $r(144) = -.38, p < .01$ . Equality positioning was strongly positively correlated with Pakeha pro-ingroup ethnic attitudes,  $r(144) = .55, p < .01$ . As expected, SDO, RWA, and pro-majority ethnic attitudes were also moderately negatively correlated with support for the Labour and Green parties, and positively correlated with support the National and NZ First parties, whereas support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism displayed the opposite pattern of correlations (see Table 4).

**Unique Effects of Equality Positioning on Political Party Preference**

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine the shared and unique variance in political party preferences predicted by SDO and RWA (Step 1), pro-majority ethnic group attitudes (Step 2), support for biculturalism

in principle (Step 3), and equality positioning (Step 4).

As shown on the top left side of Table 5, the linear combination of SDO and RWA entered at Step 1 predicted 7% of the variance in support for the Labour party ( $adjusted R^2 = .07, F(2,143) = 6.03, p < .01$ ). The entry of pro-majority ethnic group attitudes at Step 2 predicted an additional 6% of the variance in support for the Labour party,  $\Delta R^2 = .06, F_{change} = (1,142) = 9.55, p < .01$ , bringing the  $adjusted R^2$  for the model up to .12. The entry of support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism at Step 3 predicted an additional 3% of the variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .03, F_{change} = (1,141) = 4.33, p < .05$ , bringing the  $adjusted R^2$  for the model up to .14. Finally, as predicted, the entry of equality positioning at Step 4 predicted an additional 14% of the variance in support for the Labour party above and beyond all other predictors,  $\Delta R^2 = .14, F_{change} = (1,140) = 27.60, p < .01$ , yielding an  $adjusted R^2$  of .28 for the final model. As with Study 1, the direction of this effect indicated that people who scored higher on equality positioning (and thus tended to construe equality as meritocracy) were more

likely to oppose the Labour party in the upcoming election.

As shown in the top right side of Table 5, equality positioning also predicted unique variance in support for the National party, however, the effects of equality positioning were in the opposite direction to those observed when predicting support for the Labour and Green parties. Those who scored higher on equality positioning (and thus tended to construe equality as meritocracy) were more likely to express support for the National party in the upcoming election. The linear combination of SDO and RWA entered at Step 1 predicted 9% of the variance in support for the National party ( $adjusted R^2 = .09, F(2,143) = 8.49, p < .01$ ). The entry of pro-majority ethnic group attitudes at Step 2 predicted an additional 10% of the variance in support for the National party,  $\Delta R^2 = .10, F_{change} = (1,142) = 17.22, p < .01$ , bringing the  $adjusted R^2$  for the model up to .19. The entry of support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism at Step 3 failed to significantly predict additional variance,  $\Delta R^2 < .01, F_{change} = (1,141) = .76, p = .39$ . Finally, as predicted, the entry of equality positioning at Step 4

Table 5. Study 2: Hierarchical regression analyses predicting support for NZ political parties two months prior to the 2005 general election.

		Support for Labour Party			Support for National Party		
		$\beta$ (SE)	t	$R^2$ adj.	$\beta$ (SE)	t	$R^2$ adj.
Step 1	SDO	.03 (.13)	.30		.08 (.17)	.87	
	RWA	-.19 (.13)	-2.39*	.07*	.10 (.16)	1.22	.09*
Step 2	Pro-majority ethnic group attitudes	.03 (.18)	.29	.12*	.22 (.22)	2.14*	.19*
Step 3	Biculturalism in principle	.13 (.09)	1.55	.14*	-.05 (.11)	-.56	.19
Step 4	Equality positioning	-.45 (.09)	-5.25*	.28*	.21 (.11)	2.34*	.21*

  

		Support for Green Party			Support for NZ First Party		
		$\beta$ (SE)	t	$R^2$ adj.	$\beta$ (SE)	t	$R^2$ adj.
Step 1	SDO	.04 (.16)	-.39		.11 (.16)	1.17	
	RWA	-.26 (.16)	-3.17*	.14*	.08 (.16)	1.00	.11*
Step 2	Pro-majority ethnic group attitudes	-.11 (.22)	-1.05	.19*	.26 (.22)	2.48*	.19*
Step 3	Biculturalism in principle	-.11 (.11)	1.25	.19	-.08 (.11)	-.92	.20
Step 4	Equality positioning	-.18 (.11)	-2.05*	.21*	.10 (.11)	1.16	.20

Note. Analyses were based on data from 146 self-identified Pakeha university students; standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), standard errors (SE), and  $t$ -values displayed for the Step 4 model. The adjusted  $R^2$  ( $R^2$  adj.) is displayed for each step, the significance of the  $adjusted R^2$  indicates whether the linear combination of variables entered at that step predicted significant additional variance in the dependent measure of interest (rather than whether the overall model was significant at each step). \*  $p < .05$ .

predicted additional variance (3%) in support for the National party above and beyond all other predictors,  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F_{change} = (1,140) = 5.50$ ,  $p = .02$ , yielding an *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> of .21 for the final model.

As shown on the lower left side of Table 5, equality positioning also predicted unique variance in levels of support for the Green party. These results were similar to those predicting support for Labour. Inspection of the regression model predicting support for the NZ First party (presented in the lower right side of Table 5) suggested that the origins of support for this party differed from those of the other three political parties. In short, Pakeha who supported NZ First were motivated primarily by RWA and SDO combined with high levels of pro-ingroup ethnic attitudes. Equality positioning failed to predict additional variance in support for NZ First beyond that already predicted by the SDO, RWA, and pro-majority ethnic group attitudes.

## Discussion - Study 2

Pakeha who were low in equality positioning were more likely to support the Labour and Green parties whereas those high in equality positioning tending to support the National party. These differential associations were also unique. That is, equality positioning predicted variance in levels of support (or the lack thereof) for the Labour, Green, and National parties that could *not* be attributed to measures of SDO, RWA, pro-majority ethnic group attitudes, or attitudes toward the symbolic principles of biculturalism. As with Study 1, equality positioning did not, however, predict unique variance in support for the NZ First party. Support for NZ First was instead predicted solely by SDO, RWA, and pro-majority ethnic group attitudes.

As expected, Pakeha who positioned equality as meritocracy under one nation where all people are treated as individuals also tended to demonstrate more positive pro-ingroup evaluations, as indexed by agreement with Likert items from Duckitt and Parra's (2004) scale, such as "NZ Europeans/Pakeha through hard work and perseverance developed this country and are entitled to their greater material prosperity". This is consistent

with Verkuyten (2005), who observed that majority group members who showed strong ingroup identification were more supportive of assimilation-type policies which frame everyone as being equal as individuals and thus de-emphasize recognition of minority group identities. Furthermore, equality positioning exerted unique effects on political preference that could not be explained by such pro-ingroup evaluations.

## General Discussion

In two studies, equality positioning differentiated between people who supported liberal versus conservative political parties in NZ. The differential associations between equality positioning and political party support were also unique, and could *not* be attributed to more universal (personality, Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, self-labelled values) or culture-specific (pro-Pakeha ingroup attitudes, support for the symbolic principles of biculturalism) constructs. It is important to note that these analyses examined the effects of personality and ideology within the individual. It is *not* the case that some people's voting preferences are governed solely by personality, whereas other people are governed solely by ideology. Rather, our results indicate that ideology and personality effects on voting behaviour operate simultaneously within the individual to predict support for different political parties in the NZ environment.

The findings provide good evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of our measure of equality positioning and indicate that the scale provides important information that increases the accuracy of models predicting voting behaviour in NZ. The strong and unique predictive utility of equality positioning in this context most likely occurred because the ideological positioning of equality as individual-versus group-based provided an axis of meaning that aided in the creation and mobilization of public opinion in the months leading up to the election. It seems that one of the main (perceived) ideological distinctions between Labour and National in this election was the emphasis placed on distributive justice rules that emphasize individual merit

(the merit principle) or rules that considered target group membership, or to use Rokeach's (1973) parlance: Freedom versus Equality. Our measure tapped specific elements of a wider social representation of these contrasting ideological positions, both of which are framed as promoting 'Equality', but may lead to quite different outcomes.

The Equality Positioning Scale (shown in Table 1) provided an internally reliable and normally distributed measure assessing the degree to which New Zealanders believe that equality should be determined on the basis of group versus individual merit. The scale was balanced, and analyses indicated that con- and pro-trait item aggregates were strongly negatively correlated prior to the con-trait items being reverse scored (*r*'s of around -.70). Furthermore, all items loaded strongly on a single underlying dimension. These findings suggest that the positioning of group- versus individual-based merit reflect opposing aspects of a single underlying ideological continuum, rather than distinct albeit correlated belief dimensions, at least in the NZ context. Thus, it is unlikely that New Zealanders will tend to endorse allocations on the basis of both individual and group merit; rather our results indicate that these two positions are mutually exclusive, and individuals will be more likely to adopt one of these ideological positions at the expense of the other.

It is interesting, however, that discourses positioning equality as group-based (such as those reflected in the con-trait items contained in the scale) seem to occur relatively *infrequently* in public discourse and media (and should presumably, be less heavily anchored and more malleable to change; Liu & Sibley, 2006). Indeed, qualitative research in NZ has commented upon the scarcity of socially elaborated discourses that may be used to promote biculturalism and resource-allocation on the basis of ethnic group membership in everyday talk (e.g., Kirkwood et al., 2005; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Tuffin, Praat, & Frewin, 2004). Nevertheless, when asked to respond to items assessing such discourses people can readily do so, and the manner in which they respond is strongly consistent with their level of agreement with items assessing

more readily apparent discourses of equality positioning to which they have presumably had greater exposure: those positioning equality as meritocracy.

The Equality Positioning Scale was developed based upon qualitative analyses of NZ discourse, with the aim of providing a measure of ideological positioning that was relevant and directly applicable to the NZ context. The positioning of equality appears to be a relatively universal ideology, however, and many studies have identified similar discourses in measures of racism, sexism and political ideology in other countries (Sears & Henry, 2005; McConahay, 1986). For example, the symbolic and modern racism scales developed in the US contain a blend of items assessing belief in meritocracy and individualism (akin to those contained in our scale) and items that assess generalized negative affect toward minority groups (namely African Americans). Consider, for example, the similarity between items contained in the Equality Positioning Scale and the following item from the Symbolic Racism Scale developed for use in the US: "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites". Such observations emphasize the cross-cultural generality of ideologies of equality and their implications for intergroup and, in particular, race relations. They suggest that the positioning of equality as meritocracy in the NZ context may be similar in its form and function to discourses of symbolic and modern racism identified in the US. The positioning of equality may function as a mechanism that justifies and maintains social inequality between ethnic groups in NZ in much the same way that symbolic and modern racism are theorized to legitimize social inequality between African Americans and Whites in the US.

### *Causes and Consequences of Equality Positioning*

To whom does the positioning of equality as meritocracy most appeal? Our findings indicate people high in SDO and RWA were more likely to position equality as meritocracy, as were Pakeha who expressed more positive pro-ingroup attitudes (and presumably identified more strongly with their

ethnic group), perceived themselves to be more conservative (versus liberal), and opposed the incorporation of Maori values and culture into mainstream (primarily Pakeha) NZ culture and national identity at the symbolic level. However, equality positioning was not significantly associated with measures of personality, indicating that the degree to which people were extroverted versus introverted, agreeable versus disagreeable, emotionally labile versus emotionally stable, conscientious versus disorganized, or open versus closed to new experiences, was unrelated to the degree to which they adopted a prescriptive belief positioning equality as being based on individual (rather than group) merit.

Why are some people more likely to position equality as meritocracy, and what implications does the adoption of such prescriptive beliefs have for intergroup relations in NZ? The aforementioned pattern of associations suggests that individual differences in equality positioning are the product of ideologically-based goals and motives, rather than being directly influenced by personality. Ostensibly, agreement with items from the Equality Positioning Scale that started with statements such as: 'We are all one nation and we should all be treated the same...' and 'We are all New Zealanders...' reflect a discourse of equality for all under one nation and one common law regardless of ethnicity, class or creed. However, meta-analytic averages combining the effect sizes from both studies indicated that Equality Positioning was moderately positively correlated with both SDO (*weighed*  $r = .25$ ) and RWA (*weighed*  $r = .23$ ).<sup>2</sup> As noted earlier, SDO and RWA provide reliable indicators of two distinct dual processes that form the motivational basis for many different forms of prejudice, negative intergroup attitudes, and system justifying ideologies (Duckitt, 2001). Ironically, people who tended to *agree* with statements from the SDO scale reflecting the belief that social inequality is not really such a bad state of affairs, such as: 'Its OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others' and 'Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups', *also* tended to be more likely to position equality as meritocracy.

Although correlational in nature, these results are consistent with previous research examining the ideologies surrounding affirmative action in the US (e.g., Hayley & Sidanius, 2006; Federico & Sidanius, 2002). Our results indicate that both the competitive-driven motivation for group dominance and superiority indexed by SDO and the threat-driven motivation for collective security and social cohesion indexed by RWA may predict the endorsement of ideologies that support the status quo and that facilitate the maintenance of existing social inequality. Hence, we theorize that the emphasis placed on the need for one nation under one common law where all people are treated 'equally' by people who are high in SDO occurs because such discourses facilitate the maintenance of hierarchical social structures and social inequality (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This is not to say that all people who position equality as meritocracy are motivated by racism or group-dominance related motives (Sibley & Liu, 2004). It does, however, suggest that (a) majority group individuals who *are* motivated by such goals will be among those who are most ardent in positioning equality in this manner, and (b) that shared endorsement of such ideologies by a wide segment of society may engender systemic levels of social inequality.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we presented a new measure of equality positioning and demonstrated that our measure differentiated between support for liberal and conservative political parties in NZ, even after a host of other universal and culture-specific predictors had been considered. We contend that equality positioning reflects a socially elaborated discourse that is anchored within broader notions of liberal democracy and freedom for all (Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006). The culture-specific positioning of equality-as-meritocracy may have allowed political elites and their constituents to express opposition to resource allocations favoring minority groups in the NZ context while still maintaining discourses of plausible deniability in much the same way as symbolic racism is thought to operate within the United States (Sears & Henry,

2005; see also Liu & Mills, 2006). In this way, the NZ-specific (re-)formulation of equality positioning assessed here may have provided an axis of meaning that aided in the creation and mobilization of public opinion regarding resource-allocations, land claims, affirmative action programs, and a host of other material issues leading up to the 2005 NZ general election (Liu, 2005; Sibley et al., 2005) – and, as our results indicate, the mobilization of public opinion in this way exerted unique effects on political party preference that were not reducible to universal and broad-bandwidth measures of personality, ideological attitudes, or attitudes toward biculturalism and ethnic group relations in the NZ context.

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**Notes**

1. There is currently considerable debate in New Zealand regarding the most appropriate name for New Zealanders of European descent. Although New Zealand European is the most popular term (Liu et al., 1999), Pakeha is the term that most strongly implies a relationship with Maori and hence seems most appropriate for this paper.
2. It is worth noting that analyses of the combined data from studies one and two indicated that SDO was significantly *positively* correlated with the protrait item aggregates assessing equality positioning (i.e., the aggregate of those items where agreement indicated the positioning of equality as meritocracy) and significantly *negatively* correlated with contrait item aggregates (i.e., the aggregate of those equality items where agreement indicated the positioning of equality as group-based),  $r(403) = .12, p = .02$ ;  $r(403) = -.19, p < .01$ , respectively. Thus, the association between SDO and equality positioning was not driven solely by the association between SDO and the endorsement of only those items positioning equality-as-meritocracy. People high in SDO were also just as likely to disagree with items positioning equality as group based.

**Keywords:** politics, voting, ideology, social policy, affirmative action, discourses of racism, biculturalism, intergroup relations.