Personal values and support (or not) for the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement

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This paper examined whether personal values and empathy and systemising traits relate to support levels for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) in New Zealand. Two hundred and seventy respondents from New Zealand completed a 61-item questionnaire which measured self-rated knowledge and support for the TPPA, Schwartz Values, and Empathy and Systemising Quotients. Little to no self-rated knowledge of the TPPA strongly predicted neutrality in support levels for the TPPA. People who rated power and achievement highly tended to support the TPPA; those rating benevolence and universalism highly tended to oppose it. Higher levels of systemising were related to higher levels of self-rated TPPA knowledge, but empathy was only weakly associated with opposition to the TPPA. Overall, our results show that people's values are important in indicating support or opposition to trade deals, and perhaps need to be taken into account by those proposing or opposing the deals.

 Keywords: Schwartz Values; empathy; international trade; TPPA; CPTPP.

In this study, the personal values of Schwartz's value inventory and personality traits of empathy and systemising were measured and then used to predict people's self-reported knowledge and support (or otherwise) for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

Trade and the TPPA

Free trade in its simplest form is the buying and selling of goods and services between countries without the governments applying tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions which may disadvantage either country from conducting business in the other (Saggi & Yildiz, 2011). Multilateral trade agreements aim to free trade amongst three or more nations and are complex and take time to negotiate. The TPPA is one such multilateral free trade agreement and, at the time of the research, involved 12 countries, including New Zealand.

Ever since Adam Smith (1776) presented his division of labour theory and David Ricardo (1821) detailed the comparative advantage of trading between countries, modern economists have thought free trade is good (e.g. Whaples, 2009). However, the enthusiasm of economic experts is often not shared by the general public (e.g. Evans & Kelley, 2002; Mayda & Rodrik, 2001; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001), and a number of suggestions have been put forward as to why the views of economic experts and the general public might differ (e.g. Baron & Kemp, 2004; Kemp 2007; Sapienza & Zingales, 2013). Given this background, it is perhaps unsurprising that the TPPA deal reached on 5 October 2015 was received with little enthusiasm in New Zealand (and many other countries). For example, in New Zealand, a 3 News Reid Research poll from November 2015 reported that 54% opposed the TPPA, while 34% supported it and 12% were undecided (Sabin, 2015). An earlier poll by Colmar Brunton in September 2015 had more undecided respondents, with 32% saying they 'Don't Know', 24% saying 'Should Sign' and 44% saying 'Shouldn't Sign'.

Different views of the TPPA were widely reported in the media. Generally, supporters emphasised the economic (and to some extent social) benefits that would result from the reduction of foreign tariffs and quotas. Opposition focussed initially on the secrecy in which the negotiations were carried out (Sapienza & Zingales, 2013). After the text became public, issues such as increased cost of medical drugs, extensions to copyright, the empowerment of corporations, and restrictions on the sovereignty of the New Zealand government were often raised (e.g. McQuillan, 2016). A very brief survey carried out by two of the present authors at the end of 2015 indicated that secrecy, possible unemployment, medical drug costs, and sovereignty were the most important issues for those opposing. This survey also indicated that self-confessed knowledge of the TPPA was often low.

Trade and personal values

Thus, there were a number of good reasons why people might support or oppose the TPPA. However, given the relative lack of public knowledge of the issue, the sheer complexity and length of the agreement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016), and the politicised nature of the debate, it is likely that people's support or opposition was often based on a fairly simple evaluation of whether the TPPA appeared to be compatible with their values. For example, one later protester's placard read: "We care about other people" (Truebridge, 2016). Given that the values and traits of individuals affect decision-making processes in a number of ways, and given the variety of people's responses to the TPPA, it seemed worthwhile to consider whether there might be a relationship between people's values and their support or opposition to the agreement. Could it be then that people opposed the TPPA because they felt it contradicted their values?

For examining values, the Schwartz (1992, 1994b) value inventory was used in the present study. This inventory follows Schwartz's (1992, 1994a) theory of basic values in positing ten distinct values which are universally recognised across all cultures. These ten values form something of a continuum, with certain values being compatible and closely related (e.g., achievement and power); while other values are opposed to one another (e.g., conformity and self-direction).

Figure 1. A representation of the 10 Schwartz values. Adapted from Schwartz (2012).

A common way of depicting Schwartz values is shown in Figure 1. The closeness of the values within the circle coincides with the motivations which underlie those values. The closer together any two values are within the circle, the more compatible their underlying motivations are (Schwarz, 1994b; Datler, Jagodzinski, & Schmidt, 2013). Schwartz's value inventory has been shown to be structurally similar across a wide array of culturally diverse groups and nations (Fontaine, Poortinga, Delbeke, & Schwartz, 2008; Schwartz, 2005). This research suggests that there is a universal organization of underlying human motivations. But while the structure and nature of values may be universal, the relative importance that individuals attribute to different values can vary considerably (Schwartz, 2005; Fontaine et al., 2008; Anyzova, 2014).

While no known studies to date have examined the relationship between the values of individuals and their support or opposition to trade or trade agreements, personal values have been found to relate to people's economic and political opinions. For example, Rathbun, Kertzer, Reifler, Goren, and Scotto (2016) found that individuals who rated the values of self-transcendence higher (universalism, benevolence) were also more likely to favour international cooperation which promotes the welfare of others. They argued that people take foreign policy personally, and the values which form the basis of an individual's beliefs and behaviour in daily life are the same values used to shape foreign policy preferences.

One study of fair trade consumption connected individual values with people's behaviour in day to day life. Doran (2009) found that intermittent buyers of fair trade products tended to rate benevolence higher than that of regular fair trade buyers; whereas regular fair trade buyers were more likely to rate universalism higher. In the present study, which looks at New Zealanders and their support or opposition for the TPPA,

it seemed possible that those who place more importance on conformity, tradition, and security would be more likely to support the TPPA, as these values emphasise group survival under a common purpose (Rathbun et al., 2016), while those who rate universalism and benevolence higher might be more inclined to oppose the TPPA, for example, because they may see the TPPA as a means to exploit cheaper labour (cf. Kemp, 2008).

Empathy and systemising

These considerations also suggested it might be worthwhile to look at individual differences in empathy. The Empathy Quotient (EQ) and Systemising Quotient (SQ) measure two different psychological dimensions of an individual's persona (Baron-Cohen, 2009). Empathising in this framework is the motivation and ability to identify the mental state of others and to respond within a spectrum of appropriate emotions, whereas systemising can be thought of as the ability to analyse and understand the various processes which make a system work, so its behaviour can then be predicted and controlled (Auyeung, Allison, Wheelwright, & Baron-Cohen, 2012). These two individual difference measures are to some extent thought to be opposed (Baron-Cohen, 2004; Russell-Smith, Bayliss, Maybery, & Tomkinson, 2013).

The EQ and SQ scales have their origins in autism research and measuring differences between males and females (Baron-Cohen, Richler, Bisarya, Gurunathan, & Wheelwright, 2003; Baron-Cohen, 2004, Russell-Smith, et al., 2013; Samson, 2012), but they have also been used more generally. For example, Danno and Taniguchi (2015) found that drivers with higher EQ scores experience fewer traffic accidents and may be better at identifying hazards. While to our knowledge the scales have not been previously used to trade attitudes, empathy is linked to altruism (Feldman Hall, Dalgleish, Evans & Mobbs, 2015), and there is a relationship between altruism and views of trade between countries (Baron & Kemp, 2004; Kemp, 2007, 2008). It is possible then that a direct relationship may exist between empathy and people's perceptions of the TPPA. Someone with an empathy bias might view the TPPA negatively, while an individual with a systemising bias might view the TPPA positively because the emphasis is not on the social aspects but on the abstract processes of how business and trade operate.

Hypotheses

Psychological studies of international trade are relatively rare and this paper aimed to address at least one of the gaps in the current literature. A number of specific hypotheses were offered:

H1: Respondents' support for the TPPA would be related to their self-rated knowledge of the TPPA, with those who had limited or no knowledge of the TPPA more likely to be neutral in their TPPA support.

H2: Respondents who placed more importance on the self-transcendence values such as universalism and benevolence would tend to oppose the TPPA.

H3: Respondents with high empathy would oppose the TPPA. Systemisers were thought more likely to support it.

Jono Bannan, Simon Kemp, Zhe Chen

Method

Respondents and procedure

A total of 270 respondents completed the questionnaire, either by using online Qualtrics software or by filling out an equivalent hardcopy version on paper. Respondents had to be over 18 and living in New Zealand at the time of completing the questionnaire. Forty-eight student respondents were recruited from the Psychology 105 participation pool and were given a 1 % credit towards their final grade for completing the survey. The other respondents were recruited from the general public using a variety of methods, including advertisements posted on various Facebook Group pages. It is likely that some Facebook groups were biased either towards (e.g. Network NZ Business Community) or against (e.g. It's Our Future. Kiwis concerned about the TPPA) the TPPA.

Of the total respondents, 53 % were female. There were 222 respondents from the general population (51 % female), and 48 student respondents (63 % female). Respondents were classed into one of six age brackets with 73 (64 % female) aged between 18 to 24, 42 (60 % female) aged between 25 to 34, 55 (42 % female) aged between 35 to 44, 40 (63 % female) aged between 45 to 54, 33 (42 % female) aged between 55 to 64, and 27 (33 % female) aged 65 or over.

The responses were collected between May and August of 2016. Thus, at the time of the survey the details of the finalised agreement were publicly available in New Zealand.

Questionnaire

The research was approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. A single questionnaire was used. Information about the respondents' gender and age group was collected. They were asked to rate their own knowledge and support of the TPPA on 11-point scales, ranging from 0 (no knowledge at all; extremely strongly against) through 5 (average; neutral) to 10 (extremely knowledgeable; extremely strongly for).

The personal values of respondents were measured using the 10-item Short Schwartz Value Survey (SSVS). The SSVS was designed to measure the 10 different values (Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-Direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security) described by Schwartz's value theory (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005; Schwartz, 1992). Respondents assessed each value by rating a single item. Each item had a brief clarification of the value in question with synonyms in parenthesis next to the value [e.g., Power (social power, authority, wealth), Self-Direction (creativity, freedom, curiosity, independence, choosing one's own goals)]. Respondents then rated the importance of each value as a "life guiding principle" in their lives on a non-symmetrical 9-point scale ranging from 0 (opposed to my principles), 1 (not important), through 4 (important), to 8 (of supreme importance.

The next part of the questionnaire consisted of 47 items designed to measure the participants' empathy and systemising. All 47 items were answered on a four-point scale (Strongly agree, Slightly agree, Slightly disagree, Strongly disagree), and were randomised differently on each electronic questionnaire, while two versions of the hardcopy questionnaire were produced with different item orders. The scales used in this study were the 22-item Empathy Quotient (EQ-Short) and a 25-item Systemising Quotient (SQ-Short) (Baron-Cohen et al. 2003; Wakabayashi, Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Goldenfeld et al., 2006). Just under half of the items required reverse coding. Sample items for the EQ-short were "I am good at predicting how someone will feel" and "I can't always see why someone should have felt offended by a remark" (reverse scored). Items in the SQ-short included "I find it difficult to read and understand maps" (reverse scored) and "When I look at a building, I am curious about the precise way it was constructed". Wakabayashi et al.'s (2006) principal component and factor analyses indicated that the 22-item EQ-Short and 25-item SQ-Short strongly correlated with longer versions, and they reported Cronbach alphas of .90 for the EQ-Short and .89 for the SQ-Short.. Cronbach alphas from the present study were .88 (EQ) and .86 (SQ).

Results

This section presents firstly the results regarding knowledge and support for the TPPA as well as overall responses to the SSVS and the EQ and SQ. Relationships between the TPPA measures and the SSVS, EQ and SQ measures were examined using Pearson correlations. Finally, two multiple regression analyses predicted support for and knowledge of the TPPA from the demographic variables (gender and age) and significant predictors from the earlier correlational analyses.

Table 1. Percentage of the sample for each knowledge and support rating for the TPPA.

Rating	Knowledge	Support
0 (no knowledge/extremely against)	7.4	21.5
1	10.0	11.1
2	13.3	12.6
3	12.2	4.8
4	6.3	8.1
5 (average knowledge/neutral)	17.0	23.0
6	8.5	6.3
7	14.1	1.5
8	7.8	6.7
9	1.9	3.0
10 (extremely knowledgeable/extremely for)	1.5	1.5

The mean self-reported knowledge of the TPPA was 4.3 (*SD* = 2.6), while the mean support was 3.4 (*SD* = 2.8). Frequency distributions of the responses to the two variables are shown in Table 1. Note that very few respondents claimed much knowledge of the TPPA. For the support variable it is noteworthy that there were more against than for the agreement, but there were also a large number of neutral respondents. One might expect that neutral respondents would be more likely to claim little knowledge of the TPPA and Figure 2 shows that this was true for the sample. On average, women (*M* = 3.9) claimed less knowledge than men (*M* = 4.7; $t(268) = 2.26$, $p = .025$), and on average they were less supportive of the TPPA (Female *M* = 3.0; Male *M* = 4.0; $t(268) = 2.83$, $p = .005$).

Figure 2. Average knowledge rating of those against (Support < 5), neutral towards (Support = 5), and for the TPPA (Support > 5). Analysis of variance shows significant differences among the knowledge ratings ($F(2, 267) = 22.7$, $p < .001$).

Table 2 shows the average importance ratings given to each of the 10 values for the SSVS, and the Pearson correlations of each value with the TPPA knowledge and support ratings. To control for rating bias in the Short Schwartz Value Survey, the correlations were obtained after standardising the value scores for each individual. In this procedure, the average of all 10 values was calculated for each respondent, giving a mean rating score for each individual, and this was then subtracted from their rating for each of the 10 values.

Table 2. Average Short Schwartz Value Scale importance ratings (with Standard Deviations) and Pearson correlations between the value ratings and the TPPA support and knowledge ratings.

Value	Average	Support (r)	Knowledge (r)
Power	3.3 (2.1)	.33*	-.01
Achievement	5.0 (2.0)	.27*	-.01
Hedonism	4.1 (2.1)	.10	-.07
Stimulation	5.1 (1.9)	.03	.10
Self-direction	6.4 (1.5)	-.23*	.25*
Universalism	6.2 (1.9)	-.44*	.21*
Benevolence	6.8 (1.5)	-.40*	.10
Tradition	5.0 (2.1)	-.04	-.17*
Conformity	4.8 (2.1)	.15*	-.23*
Security	5.3 (2.0)	.16*	-.12

Note. * $p < .05$, two-tailed.

As the table shows, there were moderately strong relationships between some of the respondents' SSVS importance ratings and their support or otherwise for the TPPA. Seven of the ten values correlated significantly with TPPA support. In particular, people who did not support the TPPA were likely to rate universalism ($r = -.44$) and benevolence ($r = -.40$) as very important; people who did support it were more likely to rate power ($r = .33$) and achievement ($r = .27$) highly. There were also significant correlations between the knowledge ratings and the value ratings, although these were

less pronounced.

Table 3 shows the mean EQ and SQ scores (scored similarly to Baron-Cohen et al, 2003). The scores across gender were consistent with previous studies (Baron-Cohen et al., 2003; Baron-Cohen, 2004, Russell-Smith et al., 2013): Males generally scored higher on the systemising quotient ($M = 25.5$) and females higher on the empathy quotient ($M = 26.3$). The table also shows that more empathetic people (as measured by their EQ score) were a little less inclined to support the TPPA ($r = -.15$), while systemisers were quite strongly inclined to claim knowledge of it ($r = .40$).

Table 3. Average Empathising Quotient (EQ) and Systemising Quotients (SQ) (with Standard Deviations) and Pearson correlations between these quotients and the TPPA support and knowledge ratings.

Quotient	Average	Support (r)	Knowledge (r)
EQ	24.1 (8.7)	-.15*	.05
SQ	22.5 (9.3)	-.11	.40*

Note. * $p < .05$, two-tailed

We also conducted two multiple regressions, one to predict knowledge of the TPPA and one to predict support for the TPPA. A single simultaneous multiple regression was calculated for both variables. The regression for knowledge of the TPPA used age, gender, SQ score, self-direction, universalism, tradition and conformity as independent variables, following the criterion that only psychological variables with significant bivariate correlations would be entered. The independent variables accounted for 23.0 % of the variance in knowledge ($F(7, 262) = 11.2$, $p < .001$), and significant ($p < .05$) beta-weights were obtained for the variables of SQ score ($\beta = .32$), age ($\beta = .16$), and conformity ($\beta = -.15$).

Independent variables were chosen for the regression predicting support for the TPPA using the same criteria except that claimed knowledge of the TPPA was also included. Thus, the following predictor variables were included: age, gender, knowledge, power, achievement, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, security, EQ, and knowledge. Together these accounted for 28.5 % of the variance in support ($F(11, 258) = 9.4$, $p < .001$). Significant beta-weights (in decreasing order) were obtained for universalism ($\beta = -.21$), achievement ($\beta = .18$), benevolence ($\beta = -.15$), conformity ($\beta = .14$), power ($\beta = .14$), and gender ($\beta = -.13$). Note that knowledge had no independent effect, as might be predicted from Figure 2: Those who claimed to know more were less neutral, but might be either for or against the TPPA.

Discussion

Summary of findings

Overall our respondents were more opposed to the TPPA than for it. Hence our sample of respondents reasonably

reflected slightly earlier polls conducted in New Zealand that consistently found a majority opposing the TPPA (Sabin, 2015; Colmar Brunton, 2015). In line with our first hypothesis, respondents with minimal knowledge of the TPPA also tended to declare neutrality on the support scale, being neither for nor against the TPPA. It is thus possible that with further time there would have been a change of views, because presumably some people who knew little at the time of the study would have learnt more and then abandoned neutrality in one direction or the other. Incidentally, it is worth noting that overseas polls on the TPPA also found higher opposition than on other trade issues (e.g. Bloomberg 2016).

The average importance rankings for the ten values on the Schwartz's value inventory were consistent with previous research (see Fontaine et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2012). On average, our respondents ranked benevolence, self-direction, and universalism as their most important values, while power was ranked as the least important. Respondents' empathy and systemising measures were similar to those from previous studies (see Baron-Cohen et al., 2003).

Values related to both TPPA variables. Knowledge increased with increasing importance of self-direction and universalism and decreased with increasing tradition and conformity. Support for the TPPA increased with higher rated power, achievement, security and conformity, and, consistent with the second hypothesis, decreased for those assigning greater importance to universalism, benevolence, and self-direction. People who scored higher on the empathy quotient were less supportive of the TPPA, although the relationship was not strong, but, contrary to hypothesis three, systemisers were not more likely to support it. On the other hand, how much a respondent claimed to know about the TPPA was strongly related to his or her systemizing quotient in both the correlation and regression analyses. Overall, the correlational results indicate that values were quite strongly related to whether one supported TPPA or not; the empathy and systemizing quotients were not.

The regression analyses reinforce this conclusion. The predictor variables in combination explained 28.5 % of the variance in the TPPA support variable, and five values were significant independent predictors (as shown by the β-weights). Thus, it appears that people's attitudes to the TPPA really were partly predictable from their values.

The regression analysis also shows that claimed knowledge of the TPPA and support (or not) for it were predicted by quite different sets of variables. This result extends even to the demographic variables: Middle-aged and older people claimed more knowledge of the TPPA but age did not predict support; women were more likely to oppose the TPPA but gender did not predict claimed knowledge. Note, too, that self-reported knowledge did not influence support. The implication of these results is that the more people claimed to know about the TPPA, the stronger their opinion became, either in favour of, or in opposition to, the TPPA.

Limitations and further research

The present study was limited in a number of ways. While self-report measures of knowledge have been commonly shown to highly correlate with objective measures (Cockshell & Mathias, 2014; Taubman, Eherenfreund, & Prato, 2016), some testing questions to gauge respondents' knowledge of the TPPA might have added validity to the knowledge measures, albeit at the cost of increased length to the questionnaire.

The trait measures (EQ and SQ) employed here did not turn out to be important predictors of TPPA support, but it is possible that personality measures such as the Big Five (e.g. McCrae & Costa, 1987) might be. While it is difficult to see why extraversion would matter, openness to experience or agreeableness, for example, might well relate to trade attitudes.

Other inclusions for future research on specific agreements might include a measure of attitude to free trade generally (e.g. Baron & Kemp, 2004; Mayda & Rodrik, 2005). This is particularly true because much of the opposition to the TPPA arose not out of hostility to free trade generally but from opposition to particular features of the agreement. Many felt the agreement gave undue weight to corporations, provided for over-long rights to intellectual property, and was likely to increase medical costs (Labonte, Schram, & Ruckert, 2016). The extension of copyright that was part of the TPPA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016), for example, could more easily be viewed as a restriction of trade rather than an extension of it. Unfortunately, at the time the research was planned it was not clear that such features would be part of the TPPA.

The dynamic environment of world politics presents a challenge for research looking at any specific free trade agreement. At the time of the present study, it looked highly likely that the TPPA would be ratified by the 12 signatory countries. However, President Trump's election resulted in the withdrawal of the USA from the agreement. In February 2018 it looked as though the remaining 11 countries, including New Zealand, would all ratify a somewhat revised TPPA called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It would not be safe to conclude that the attitudes of New Zealanders to the TPPA at the time of the study we carried out would hold concerning the CPTPP in early 2018. It could be, for example, that more people might support it because the new agreement is at least a little different to the original one. However, other people, whose views about the TPPA might have derived from their overall political stance (e.g. oppose TPPA if you are on the political left) might now support it because US President Trump did not, or because two of the parties in the new government (Labour and New Zealand First) have now joined National in supporting the CPTPP. Such considerations indicate both that it might have been useful to include measures of political affiliation, and that longitudinal research on trade attitudes would be valuable. Incidentally, it is worth noting here that the effect of gender found in this study might be explicable in terms of general political orientation: Women in New Zealand have often been found to be more left-wing politically (e.g. Greaves, Robertson, Cowie, Osborne, Houkamu, & Sibley, 2017).

Implications

One way to think about the implications of our results is to consider how a movement either supporting or opposing the TPPA or CPTTP might use them to further its aim. It is clear

that simply distributing information is likely to have little value. There was little relationship between self-claimed knowledge and stance on the TPPA, perhaps because for most people the full nature and scope of the agreement was too complex to be understood anyway. Those opposing it could claim the moral high ground in stressing that opposition was consistent with universalism and benevolence. Those supporting it might rally others to their cause by questioning whether opposing the deal really is consistent with these values.

Whether the particular relationships between attitudes to the TPPA and attaching high importance to a particular set of values would be closely replicated for other trade agreements is debatable. Our view is that they probably would not. On the other hand, although different values might come to the fore for different free trade agreements, we expect that the most fundamental conclusion indicated by the present research would probably generalise. This is simply that the values people hold are important for what they think about trade, and that these values do need to be taken into account in negotiating trade deals or, indeed, a range of other international agreements.

Conclusions

Attitudes to the TPPA were found to be little influenced by how empathetic or systemizing people were, but were quite strongly related to the types of values they hold dear. People who supported the TPPA attached importance to the values of power, achievement, and (to a lesser extent) conformity and security. Those opposing it thought universalism, benevolence, and (to a lesser extent) self-direction important. An obvious recommendation is that the values people hold, and not just their narrow self-interest, could be taken into greater account in advocating trade deals.

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