

Individualism, collectivism, and voting behaviour: A follow-up study into political values

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The constructs of *individualism (I)* and *collectivism (C)* originated in Western political philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; however, there has been little or no research into how these constructs may fit within a modern political framework. Triandis (1995) and his colleagues have conducted a wealth of research into the constructs of individualism and collectivism generally comparing different cultural groups and values. Individualism is often linked with liberalism, which embraces the ideals of maximising the freedom of the individual, whereby through collectivism individuals gain freedom by both forming and submitting to the common will. Triandis also adds another dimension to the I-C construct: that is *horizontal* and *vertical* social relationships. A horizontal society aspires to the values of equality and little differences in social ranking; whereas a vertical society accepts, or even embraces, ranking and hierarchy. Although little empirical evidence exists, it has logically been assumed that these cultural values correspond with political ideologies.

Previous research has found that right of centre voters (i.e. Liberal Party) endorsed individualism, vertical individualism over left of centre voters (i.e. Australian Labor Party (ALP)) (Beccaria, Baczynski, & McIlveen, 2008). An exit poll at the March 2008 Toowoomba Council elections used a survey of voting behaviour, and a modified 20-item Individualism and Collectivism (I-C) scale. Seventy-three voters participated, although voters of minor parties were excluded due to their small numbers, leaving 57 who voted for the Liberal – National Coalition in Australia (Coalition) or the ALP. The reliability of the I-C Scale has been notably variable for different samples; and the scale was further modified to gain adequate reliability (around = .6) for this study. Results generally replicated the previous study, where Coalition voters endorsed more individualism than ALP voters, in particular more vertical individualism. ALP voters endorsed more horizontal collectivist values than LP voters.