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Borderline Interest or Identity?

American and Canadian Opinion on the North American Free Trade Agreement

David M. Rankin

Americans, Canadians, and Liberalized Trade

In Quebec City Canadian and American grass-roots activists recently joined forces in protesting the Summit of the Americas and the extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), consisting of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, to a more encompassing Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Symbolically, protesters clashed with Canadian and American police at the Peace Bridge linking Canada and the U.S. However, despite high profile trade protests in America and Canada, polls continue to demonstrate a general level of Canadian and American public support for the gradual dismantling of regional and global trade barriers.

The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) reports in *Americans on Globalization* that a majority of Americans support the growth of international trade and liberalization.¹ In a February 2000 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 64 percent of Americans thought that free trade with other countries is good for the U.S. Sixty-two percent agreed that U.S. participation in the World Trade Organization is good for the United States, while only 22 percent thought it was bad. PIPA also reports a consistent plurality of Americans have felt that NAFTA has been more beneficial than not for the U.S. since the ratification of the agreement. After the U.S. Congress approved NAFTA, 53 percent of Americans said it was a step in the right direction, according to an NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll in December 1993. A 1999 PIPA poll showed that 44 percent of Americans thought that NAFTA had been good, and 30 percent felt it had been bad for the United States. A 1999 EPIC-MRA poll shows that only 18 percent of Americans would support pulling out of NAFTA.

Canadians appear even more supportive of the idea of free trade and liberal trade agreements. In April 2001 the Center for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) reported in *Trade, Globalization, and Canadian Values* that 65 percent of Canadians support Canada's negotiating new trade agreements with other countries, and 67 percent support a Free Trade Area of the Americas.² On the issue of NAFTA,

an April 2001 National Post/COMPAS survey found that 53 percent of Canadians felt that Canada has benefited from NAFTA, compared to 25 percent who felt that it has not been beneficial.

Canadians and Americans also share similar concerns about free trade and regional trade agreements. Polls in both countries show majorities of Canadians and Americans believe freer trade helps more than hurts domestic companies, yet the respondents also feel that liberalized trade hurts more than helps domestic workers. According to a 1999 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll, 59 percent of Americans believe that "increased trade between the U.S. and other countries" mostly hurts American workers, while 56 percent believe that it mostly helps American companies. A 2001 Crop poll for the CBC and Radio-Canada found more Canadians believe that increased free trade will decrease wages (48 percent) rather than increase wages (25 percent) and eliminate jobs (45 percent) rather than create jobs (37 percent).

Canadians and Americans have shown similar trends in their views of NAFTA and further trade liberalization. There was lukewarm support, if not slight public opposition, when NAFTA was negotiated, with consistent support for the agreement since ratification. What determines Canadian and American public opinion on NAFTA and consequently toward future free trade arrangements? Are there material interests that bind or divide socioeconomic groups across borders? Do evolving feelings of continental attachment draw Canadians and Americans together on NAFTA, or are citizens' views determined by conceptions of national identity? This article examines the relative effects of symbolic predispositions—of national identity—as well as variables of economic self-interest and supranational attitudes on Canadian and American opinion toward NAFTA.

Understanding American and Canadian Opinion on NAFTA

The domestic politics of globalization and regional trade liberalization have received increasing scholarly attention in Canada and the United States, including comparative examination of liberalizing effects within the two nations in the wake of NAFTA.³ However, the comparative study of regional economic liberalization and North American mass publics has been an underdeveloped area of research in part due to the relatively recent construction and public awareness of a North American free trade arrangement. In contrast, the liberalization of European boundaries over several decades has generated rich studies on mass publics in the gradual economic and political integration of nations into the European Union. While the European Union is clearly a more integrated economic and political union of nations than the loosely formed continental free trade area of NAFTA, economic self-interest and cultural perspectives utilized to understand European opinion on regional liberalization of national economic borders provide important insight into public opinion on arrangements like the NAFTA.

An economic self-interest perspective assumes that perceived personal economic cost or benefit derived from regional economic liberalization determines opinion toward related cross-border arrangements and policy.⁴ Gabel argues that citizens formulate opinion along a self-interested dimension and an affective dimension; he concludes that economic self-interest has more significantly influenced European evaluations of regional economic liberalization because supranational affective attachments remain low.⁵ A cultural perspective contends that the economic self-interest model neglects the significant influence of cultural attitudes on opinion toward regional economic liberalization.⁶ According to a cultural perspective, “values and beliefs dispose an individual toward one conclusion or another prior to conscious deliberation, thus preventing completely objective gauging of a situation’s pros and cons.”⁷

In an examination of North American publics, Inglehart, Nevitte, and Basanez find that “free trade does not attract widespread public interest because the general public has suddenly developed a new appreciation for the intricacies of comparative economic advantage.... Free trade galvanizes public concern for a much wider set of issues, such as cultural integrity and national identity.”⁸ They argue that values and supranational affective attachments are more relevant than personal economic evaluation as citizens’ preoccupation with material gain shifts toward postmaterial concerns of cultural autonomy.

This article does not challenge the perspective that supranational attachments are not developed enough to serve as cognitive shortcuts on questions of regional economic liberalization. Instead, it investigates the influence of enduring symbolic predispositions of national identity on opinion toward NAFTA. The theoretical assumptions are based on symbolic politics theory that emphasizes the role of cultural attitudes and predispositions, which contrasts with the self-interest focus on material concern.

Symbolic politics theory presumes that symbolic predispositions are more stable and provide greater explanatory power than self-interest across a range of issues.⁹ Economic self-interest assumes that citizens understand the personal material costs and benefits of policy, but a major concern with this perspective is how citizens with limited attention and political information can consistently formulate opinion on related policy. Citizens commonly need to rely on cognitive shortcuts in policy judgment, many affective in nature.¹⁰

Symbolic processing allows citizens to rely on accessible attitudes symbolically evoked in the policy environment.¹¹ Symbolic predispositions utilized in symbolic processing across policy issues include partisan and ideological identification, as well as ethnic, racial, and national identity.¹² This article explores symbolic conceptions of national identity as especially relevant to Canadian and American opinion on NAFTA, a policy environment with presumably limited public information yet accessible affective symbols.

Borderline Interest or Identity?

Clearly, the political debate over NAFTA in Canada and the United States has addressed the potential domestic economic effects of the regional free trade arrangement. There has been an ongoing debate concerning the real domestic benefits or consequences of NAFTA, yet citizens' perceptions of NAFTA's effects are arguably as important in shaping opinion on it.¹³ NAFTA opponents in both countries warn that trade liberalization threatens domestic jobs, wages, labor standards, and industry as domestic companies relocate to lower wage countries with fewer restrictions, providing domestic pressures on workers to accept lower wages or lose jobs in a less regulated market. Canadian NAFTA opponents express concern over domination by U.S. companies and exports and the inability of smaller Canadian firms to compete in a regional economic space, while American NAFTA opponents express concern over industry and job loss to Mexico and, to some extent, Canada. NAFTA proponents argue that trade liberalization promotes domestic technological development, economic growth, and high tech, higher wage jobs in a more fluid and competitive regional economy. NAFTA proponents also contend that NAFTA is a necessary step in the competition with other more developed regional economic arrangements such as the European Union and toward greater effective participation in the global economy.

From the perspective of economic self-interest, Canadians and Americans would thus be expected to formulate an opinion on NAFTA based on perceived personal material impact of the regional free trade arrangement. In his study of European publics, Gabel used education, income, and occupational skills as proxies for citizens' personal gains or losses due to trade liberalization and regional economic integration. He found citizens with higher education and skilled occupations more supportive of trade liberalization as a group better equipped to compete in an expanded labor market and less vulnerable to related economic adjustments. From the perspective of economic self-interest, the effects of trade liberalization should be similar across advanced industrial democracies. Those with higher educational levels and more marketable occupational skills are better prepared to apply their talents in diverse international settings and to adapt to economic changes in their production sector and region.

This perspective is based largely on the classic Hecksher-Ohlin model in which a relative abundance of skilled American and Canadian workers would benefit from trade liberalization, whereas lower skilled workers in both countries are harmed by the relative abundance of unskilled labor across more liberalized national boundaries.¹⁴ The Hecksher-Ohlin model assumes that factors are mobile between sectors in which a reduction in trade barriers threatens wages and jobs for unskilled workers in all sectors. Thus, actors favored by relative changes should desire increased open-

ness, while disadvantaged groups should support restrictions, subsidies, or protection.¹⁵

According to the Hecksher-Ohlin model, highly skilled Canadians and Americans should fare similarly across borders with regional economic liberalization, but lower skilled workers in both countries would be more threatened by an arrangement like NAFTA. The most competitive and skilled jobs available to a global work force also require the highest levels of specialized education.¹⁶ From the perspective of economic self-interest, then, income, education, and professional status should be positively related to Canadian and American public support for regional free trade. Conversely, the threat of low wage economic competition or job loss from freer trade is generally seen as greatest in the low skill, low wage occupations, and less educated and lower income workers should be less supportive of NAFTA.

Labor unions contend that the import competing industries most vulnerable to freer trade largely employ the semiskilled, assembly line, or blue collar worker.¹⁷ If the perceived economic interests of blue collar workers suffer rather than benefit from trade liberalization, blue collar workers should be less supportive of regional free trade arrangements like NAFTA. Unionized labor supports the belief that a bargaining position with management is substantially weakened as the economy is increasingly liberalized, and the heaviest lobbying effort against NAFTA came from labor unions.¹⁸ Thus, union members should also be expected to be especially sensitive to the potential impact of trade liberalization on their wages and jobs and thus less supportive of NAFTA.

Blue collar workers and traditional union strongholds in midwestern and northeastern American states were regionally affected by foreign automobile and steel import competition in the 1970s and 1980s. With a concentration of Canadian industry, provinces such as Ontario and Quebec have also been geographically situated to feel the effects of liberalized trade. However, cohesive regional industrial interests have weakened with economic restructuring and declining union membership, particularly in the United States.¹⁹ Many former regional industrial centers in Canada and the United States have increasing employment in the service sector, in high skilled and low skilled positions. American "sun belt" and Pacific Rim states, as well as western Canadian provinces such as British Columbia, have been particularly competitive in the high tech export industries and service sector. Conversely, these regions face import and labor competition in less skilled manufacturing industries in lower wage countries, specifically in Asia and Latin America.

With the "new geography" of the information economy, cohesive domestic regional interests have been less likely to form around unified industrial concerns. Many historically manufacturing-based regions in the United States and Canada have moved toward high tech revitalization, while other regions have lagged behind. The rapidly changing geographic diversification of the new economy and mobility of

the highly skilled work force make regional effects less consistent and predictable. In a global economy that favors internationally mobile factors in production and human capital over immobile factors like unskilled labor, mobility is an increasingly important resource with higher educated professionals better prepared to apply their skills across liberalized borders.²⁰ Thus, regional location should be less significant than the portable package of education and skills when it comes to American and Canadian opinion on NAFTA.

An economic self-interest perspective, however, assumes a deliberate calculation of personal costs and benefits that requires political awareness and knowledge counter to findings on mass publics. Economic self-interest has been found to play a role in how Americans view elements of trade liberalization, but economic self-interest is a less than complete explanation for American and Canadian opinion on trade.²¹ Herrmann, Tetlock, and Diascro note that "a judgment that trade policy choices rest almost entirely on idiosyncratic factors and parochial self-interest...is premature."²² They argue that "dispositions and features of the political situation" are more important factors in Americans' trade policy judgment.²³ Mendelsohn and Wolfe contend that, for the Canadian public, "trade is about values as much as it is about economics."²⁴

Citizens are found to access related cultural attitudes on policy issues more readily and demonstrate strong and stable attitudes toward political symbols in the information environment. Thus, the assumptions of symbolic politics theory seem particularly relevant in understanding public opinion on NAFTA, an emotionally charged trade policy issue in which citizens have been less than informed on policy details. Symbolic processing consists of "reflexive, affective responses to remote attitude objects, rather than calculations of probable costs and benefits....The symbolic meaning of an attitude object automatically evokes particular symbolic predispositions and thereby influences evaluations of it."²⁵

The Symbolic Politics of NAFTA

Recent studies of regional and global trade liberalization describes an environment that appears to evoke long-standing symbolic predispositions. Cohen states that "globalization inevitably challenges some of the fundamental values, narratives, and symbols that have held communities together."²⁶ McLaren suggests that "it seems highly likely that EU citizens are reacting to European integration in a symbolic way, in that they have been socialized to accept the power and sovereignty of the nation-state. The idea of European integration as such poses a threat to this important symbol."²⁷ There has also been increasing reference to the symbolic politics of the NAFTA debate, yet still little is known about how symbolic predispositions influence public opinion toward NAFTA.²⁸

National identity is a particularly potent symbolic predisposition when triggered by the perceived effects of regional liberalization on national boundaries. Citrin, Haas, Muste, and Reingold note that the “U.S. foreign policy agenda is increasingly crowded by issues such as immigration or foreign trade and investment that seem likely to engage firmly held mass conceptions of national or group identity.”²⁹ Mendelsohn and Wolfe observe that “the debate over trade is shifting from the economic to the social, and Canadians’ core conceptions of who they are will be brought to bear on these debates.”³⁰

In the symbolic politics of NAFTA, national identity is a critical reference point for Americans and Canadians with limited information about the specifics of trade liberalization. In Canada and the United States there have been varied conceptions of the evolving national identity, and comparative analyses identify common and relevant dimensions of national identity.³¹ Three subdimensions—patriotic, cultural, and sovereign—are evoked in the symbolic processing of the NAFTA. Within the larger construct of national identity there are subdimensions on which individuals possess a weaker or stronger orientation to relevant national symbols. Individuals vary in the affective value attached to national symbols activated in each dimension and demonstrate less or more restrictive conceptions of national identity.

Patriotism is a commonly identified dimension of national identity, composed of emotional attachment and devotion to one’s country and its symbols. A patriotic dimension of national identity also consists of national pride (for example, in being an American or Canadian), love of country, and the desire to be one’s own more than any other nationality. A more restrictive conception of patriotism would be described as the higher value attached to the devotion to one’s country, and a less restrictive conception as the lower value attached to the strict emotional bonds to country. Patriotism has been associated with the shape of foreign policy opinion largely in security matters threatening national survival, but other subdimensions of national identity may also be relevant in how citizens formulate opinion toward transnational economic forces.³²

The liberalization of national borders exposes the nation’s distinctive cultural attributes to diverse linguistic, ethnic, and immigrant influences, which may activate a cultural dimension of national identity in the symbolic processing of NAFTA. For Canadians, Schulman contends, “cultural diffusion provides an incentive against free trade, foreign investment, and integration for nationalists seeking to preserve the purity of national culture.”³³ An ethnocultural or nativist American conception of nationality is the belief that only some races or cultures are truly American, wherein foreign cultural influence is viewed as threatening to the composition of U.S. society.³⁴ Thus, a more restrictive cultural conception of national identity values cultural homogeneity, whereas a less restrictive conception values cultural diversity.

Trade liberalization also penetrates conceptions of sovereignty in the nation’s ability to determine its own course and maintain domestic collective identity and purpose

amidst powerful transnational forces. Trends in regional and global trade liberalization raise questions concerning the nation's geographic, cultural, and political autonomy within national boundaries largely defining the importance of sovereignty in the modern nation-state.³⁵ De Master and Le Roy argue that "the expression of xenophobia in member states of the European Union may represent a response to integration as a form of political transformation threatening the sovereignty of the nation-state."³⁶

While the topic of sovereignty has been a central part of the debate over the liberalizing effect of NAFTA in Canada and the United States, the citizen's conception of sovereignty has not been considered as a relevant comparative dimension of national identity affecting opinion on the trade arrangement.³⁷ However, sovereign conceptions of national identity seem particularly accessible attitudes that are likely evoked in the symbolic processing of an issue like NAFTA. Because steps toward broader trade liberalization threaten traditional conceptions of national identity, citizens with more restrictive sovereign, cultural, and patriotic conceptions of national identity should be less supportive of NAFTA.

NAFTA's perceived impact on domestic culture and sovereignty has been one of the more emotionally charged components of the policy debate, particularly from NAFTA opponents. Cues from political leaders also trigger political predispositions, such as partisan and ideological identification, which function most effectively as information shortcuts when citizens are aware of leadership positions on policy.³⁸ However, research has found little consistent relationship between left-right ideological predispositions and opinion on trade in American and Canadian studies.³⁹ This finding partly reflects the confusing signals at play in a political environment in which liberal and conservative politicians have crossed over ideological lines in support or opposition to trade agreements for various reasons. Such crossing over was particularly evident in the American debate over NAFTA, in which former presidential candidates Pat Buchanan from the conservative right, Ross Perot from the independent center, and Jesse Jackson from the liberal left all expressed vocal concerns to the public about NAFTA. On the other hand, the newly elected Democrats Clinton and Gore were visible public proponents of the free trade agreement, with the support of most Republicans and the opposition of many Democrats in Congress, as well as the opposition of the traditional Democratic ally, organized labor.

In Canada, NAFTA was largely a policy extension of regional trade liberalization from the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA) pushed forward by the right-leaning government of the Tory (Progressive Conservative) prime minister, Brian Mulroney, succeeded briefly in 1993 by Kim Campbell as prime minister and party leader, and then by the Liberal Party prime minister, Jean Chrétien. The Conservative government found supporters for the FTA and later NAFTA among big business, western resource industries, and the province of Quebec. The federal Liberal and New Democratic parties, along with the province of Ontario, organized

labor, and nationalist groups, opposed the FTA and the initial provisions of NAFTA. Traditional ideological divisions remained more consistent in the Canadian debate over NAFTA, in which left-leaning leaders were less likely than right-leaning leaders to support the agreement. Yet the conflicting regional influences of Quebec and Ontario and opposition from more conservative nationalist groups also served to confuse clear-cut ideological stances on the NAFTA in Canada.⁴⁰

The influence of partisan and ideological predispositions on opinion toward trade policies such as NAFTA may also be limited with low levels of political awareness by citizens on free trade agreements in general. Ideological predispositions are more of a factor when public awareness on related policies is higher, and affective attitudes are more influential in policy judgment when public awareness on an issue is low.⁴¹ Conceptions of national identity provide long-standing and accessible predispositions for citizens in the symbolic processing of trade when ideological predispositions and economic self-interest provide less than adequate cognitive guidance in trade policy judgment.

Data and Results

The analysis relies on data drawn from the Aspects of National Identity module of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). ISSP is an international consortium of survey organizations that collect precisely comparable cross-national data on attitudes and values. The ISSP creates a module, often fielded as an add-on to each country's regular survey, using exactly the same question wording, answer categories, and sequencing in all countries. The National Identity module was fielded in 1995–96 in twenty-three countries, including Canada and the United States.⁴²

The Canadian data were collected by the Carleton University Survey Centre from November 1–30, 1995, using stratified multistage random sampling for the five major Canadian regions. Fieldwork methods consisted of self-completion with drop-off and collection. The national sample size for the Canadian component of the ISSP National Identity survey was 1,557 respondents. The U.S. data were collected by the National Opinion Research Center from February to May 1996 and is a full probability sample of the American population. Fieldwork methods consisted of a self-administered supplement completed after the main GSS questionnaire. The national sample size for the American component of the ISSP National Identity survey was 1,367 respondents. There are contextual and data collection variations that may be of slight concern here, but the ISSP is considered a highly reliable source of comparative survey data. The Canadian and American samples utilized here are considered highly representative of each country's population, and, except for purposes of translation, the question wording is identical.

Americans, Canadians, and NAFTA

There has been consistent public support for the idea of freer trade between the U.S. and Canada driven largely by what most Americans and Canadians view as friendly relations between the two countries.⁴³ However, initial Canadian and American support for specific free trade agreements has been lower than public support for general principles of free trade. Canadian public support for the Canada-U.S. FTA and NAFTA were weak at the time they were negotiated, with a dramatic turnaround in support for the free trade agreements over the course of the 1990s. American support for NAFTA followed a similar trajectory, with more ambivalent opinion on the agreement during the policy debate and consistent public support following the ratification of the agreement.

The FTA had much higher salience with the Canadian than with the American public, with greater visible public opposition to the agreement in Canada. The NAFTA received much more public attention in the United States than the FTA, with particular attention drawn to the potential negative effects of Mexican wage and labor competition, as well as immigration from Mexico. The arguments of elite NAFTA opponents were countered by the public pro-NAFTA campaign of the presidential administration and other high profile political leaders, opening the trade policy to public debate in America in ways never before seen.

Still, more Canadians than Americans have been aware of NAFTA. NAFTA has been a less salient issue for Americans. Seventy-four percent of Canadians had heard or read "a lot" (32 percent) or "quite a bit" (42 percent) about NAFTA, compared with forty-three percent of Americans that had heard or read "a lot" (13 percent) or "quite a bit" (30 percent) about it. There were also substantially more "don't know" or uncertain responses from Americans than from Canadian respondents when asked the question: "Generally speaking, would you say that the United States/Canada benefits or does not benefit from NAFTA?" About half of American respondents were uncertain about NAFTA or did not know whether the U.S. would benefit or not from NAFTA, compared with about one-third of Canadian respondents. While uncertainty or ambivalence about trade policy is not uncommon for citizens in Canada or the U.S., the margins are notable and suggest potential differences in the accessibility of the Canadian and American domestic debates over NAFTA. For respondents stating an affirmative negative or positive position, 67 percent of Canadians felt that Canada benefits from being a part of NAFTA, and 58 percent of Americans felt that the U.S. benefits from NAFTA. These results resemble the plurality of support for NAFTA in both publics since the ratification of the agreement.

American and Canadian Conceptions of the Nation

Domestic value perspectives of what government and society should or might do to mit-

igate the influences of trade liberalization may play an important role in how citizens view related trade arrangements. Americans and Canadians are similar in many ways but demonstrate somewhat distinct values related to the government's role in society. There are distinct American and Canadian differences related to values of individualism and egalitarianism.⁴⁴ The American social structure and values foster the free market and competitive individualism. Canadians are found to be more "collectively oriented" than Americans and place a higher value on the groups to which they belong.⁴⁵

Table 1 demonstrates that Americans feel slightly higher affective attachment to the nation than do Canadians, and Canadians are slightly more willing to move outside the country to improve work or living conditions. Americans also appear slightly more patriotic in their devotion to country, yet Canadians are slightly more likely to believe more countries should be like Canada. Both publics demonstrate similar views of their nations' autonomy and sovereignty. Americans are slightly more concerned with foreign purchase of land, perhaps prompted by the high profile Japanese acquisitions of the 1980s. Canadians are more concerned with government support of Canadian films and programs, likely in response to the perceived cultural invasion of the American entertainment industry. Ethnic, linguistic, and immigrant concerns are also important components of these increasingly diverse nations, in which Canadians appear to value immigrant cultural influences as part of the multicultural society slightly more than Americans. Overall, these Canadian and American views cross over in related attitudes toward nationhood, more remarkable in their similarities than in their differences.

Many of the items in Table 1 are sufficiently interrelated to identify several similar underlying dimensions of national identity in Canada and in the United States. Table 2 shows how principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation identified three substantive dimensions for Americans and Canadians from twelve identical items measuring attitudes on nationhood.⁴⁶ All twelve items assessed how highly

Table 1 American and Canadian Views on Nationhood

	Canada	USA
Feel very close or close to Canada/US	74%	81%
Feel very close or close to North American continent	56	59
Very willing or willing to move outside Canada/US	28	16
<u>Agree strongly or agree</u>		
Canada/US a better country than most other countries	77	81
Rather be a citizen of Canada/US than any other country	78	91
World a better place if other countries more like Canada/US	44	40
Canada/US should follow own interests, even if leads to conflict	43	44
Foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in Canada/US	28	33
Television should give preference to Canadian/US films and programs	47	35
Ethnic minorities given government assistance to preserve traditions	19	17
Immigrants make Canada/US more open to new ideas and cultures	79	62
Schools should make greater effort to teach foreign languages	50	61

SOURCE: ISSP National Identity, 1995-96.

respondents agreed or disagreed with each question on a five point scale (1–5) and each factor consisted of three items.⁴⁷ The items were coded so that a lower score indicates a more restrictive and a higher score indicates a less restrictive conception of national identity. The three most substantive factors are defined here as patriotic, sovereign, and cultural conceptions of national identity, accounting for 56 percent of the total variance in each of the American and Canadian samples.

The first factor identified a patriotic conception of national identity for both Canadians and Americans, yet the patriotic dimension of national identity was a slightly more substantive component of an American than Canadian conception of national identity.⁴⁸ The items utilized have been commonly used to define nationalism or patriotism, measuring the value of devotion and loyalty to the nation and the nation’s relative importance, uniqueness, and even perceived superiority.⁴⁹ Patriotism is commonly defined as a central comparative component of national identity involving one’s love for country and its major symbols.⁵⁰

A sovereign dimension of national identity was identified as a second factor for Americans and a third factor for Canadians.⁵¹ The sovereign dimension here measures the value attached to the nation’s autonomy of internal interest, as well as the protection of territorial and cultural symbols from external control and influence. Domestic control over cultural expression is commonly perceived as important as territory in a fluid global media age in which domestic films and programs reinforce symbolic borders held in place by cultural particularity.⁵²

Table 2 Dimensions of American and Canadian National Identity

Items	American			Canadian		
	Patriotic	Sovgn.	Cultural	Patriotic	Cultural	Sovgn.
US/Canada better country than others	.831			.856		
Rather be citizen of US/Canada than other	.696			.775		
World better place if countries like US/Canada	.676			.725		
Foreigners not allowed to buy US/Canada land		.758				.767
TV prefer US/Canada films or programs		.757				.520
US/Canada follow interests even if cause conflict		.563				.558
Help ethnic minorities preserve traditions			.692		.707	
Increase immigrants to US/Canada			.655		.596	
Schools teach more foreign languages			.595		.649	
Eigenvalue	2.6	1.3	1.2	2.1	1.5	1.3
Variance Explained	29%	14%	13%	24%	17%	15%

SOURCE: ISSP National Identity, 1995-96.

NOTES: N= 1,367 American and 1,543 Canadian respondents. The replacement of the missing values with the variable mean may understate the item coefficients and variance explained. Factor loadings less than .40 are not shown in the table above.

A cultural conception of national identity defined a third factor for Americans and a second factor for Canadians.⁵³ Citizens' views of language use, the promotion of minority cultures, and immigration are considered critical elements of the nation's cultural identity, and citizens differ in the value attached to cultural homogeneity and diversity. American conceptions of national identity incorporate assimilation and cultural pluralism with disagreement on how much weight to accord each value and whether government should promote minority cultures.⁵⁴ Based in part on the historic conflict between French and English Canada, the Canadian government has attempted to create a national identity that transcends the linguistic, regional, and ethnic divisions within the Canadian community, making these differences somewhat synonymous with being Canadian.⁵⁵

Overall, the factor analysis results show that patriotism makes up a slightly more substantive component of American conceptions of national identity, whereas sovereign and cultural conceptions are slightly more substantive elements of Canadian national identity. The factors constructed three cumulative scales scored one to fifteen, in which higher values indicate a less restrictive affective orientation on the patriotic, cultural, and sovereign dimensions of national identity. Because less restrictive conceptions of national identity attach higher value to a more fluid, open, and diverse conception of the nation, a less restrictive conception of national identity should be positively related to opinion on the free trade agreement, NAFTA.

Determining American and Canadian Opinion on NAFTA In order to examine the influence of these conceptions of national identity on Canadian and American opinion toward NAFTA, a logistic regression analysis, including independent variables of ideological identification, supranational attitudes, economic self-interest, and other demographic factors, was conducted. The results in Table 3 provide separate analyses of the dependent variable, NAFTA support, in the Canadian and American samples.⁵⁶

Similar to studies of the EU examining the comparative influence of economic self-interest on opinion toward regional trade arrangements, education, income, and occupational status are used here as proxies for perceived personal gains and losses due to trade liberalization. Occupational groups were constructed from the ISSP International Labor Organization descriptions, which provided for occupational skill but not sectoral distinction.⁵⁷ A professional distinction, or white collar workers, includes positions such as scientists, engineers, surgeons, economists, lawyers, journalists, managers, and academics. A service distinction, sometimes referred to as pink collar workers, includes positions such as hospitality and tourism employees, sales and clerical workers, and clerks. A blue collar distinction includes positions such as manual and assembly line laborers and heavy equipment operators. Dummy variables were constructed for socioeconomic and demographic variables with the exception of education and income.⁵⁸ Ordinal level variables measuring affective

Table 3 Logistic Regression of American and Canadian Opinion on NAFTA

Variable	American		Canadian	
Constant	2.47	(1.03)	3.90	(.800)
<u>Occupational Variables</u>				
Professional	.328	(.231)	-.125	(.187)
Blue Collar	-.565**	(.235)	-.085	(.302)
Union Member	-.595*	(.290)	-.324	(.190)
<u>Demographic Variables</u>				
Education	.006	(.132)	.039	(.069)
Income	.001	(.001)	.001	(.001)
Age	-.012*	(.006)	.014**	(.005)
<u>Regions/Provinces</u>				
Northeast US/ Quebec	.356	(.259)	1.38**	(.221)
Southwest US/ Ontario	.065	(.250)	.039	(.209)
Pacific US/ British Columbia	.011	(.269)	-.084	(.215)
<u>Supranational Attitudes</u>				
Transnational Mobility	.044	(.077)	.002	(.058)
North American Closeness	.021	(.073)	.001	(.057)
<u>Political Predisposition</u>				
Left-Right Ideological Orientation	-.230	(.116)	.500**	(.096)
<u>Conceptions of National Identity</u>				
Patriotic (more-less restrictive)	.085+	(.049)	.076*	(.035)
Sovereign (more-less restrictive)	.267**	(.043)	.227**	(.036)
Cultural (more-less restrictive)	.271**	(.049)	.042	(.033)
-2 log likelihood	730.07		1091.26	
Percent correctly predicted	70%		72%	
Nagelkerke r^2	.28		.22	
N	647		994	

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.
 ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, + $p \leq .08$

attachment to the North American continent as well as transnational mobility were included to test if supranational attitudes affect opinion toward NAFTA, while a measure of age was included to examine if younger Americans and Canadians are more predisposed to an economically liberalized North America.⁵⁹ Ideological identification was constructed by an ISSP measurement ranging from citizen identification with left-leaning parties to right-leaning parties, so the measure partly serves as proxy for partisan identification.⁶⁰

Table 3 shows that economic self-interest had a limited influence on American opinion toward NAFTA. Blue collar workers and union members were significantly less likely to view NAFTA as a benefit to the U.S., but there was no significant effect related to education, income, or professional status. Variables of economic self-interest had no discernible impact on Canadian opinion toward NAFTA. With the exception of Quebec, there was no significant regional or provincial effect in this model.

Moreover, there is little evidence here to suggest that increasing supranational affective attachment to a North American space is related to more positive views of NAFTA. The closeness Americans and Canadians feel for the North America continent was not significantly related to views on the regional trade arrangement. A willingness to cross national borders to pursue opportunities also had no effect on views of NAFTA.

There are also some inconsistent effects for Canadians and Americans regarding other variables. Younger Americans were slightly more likely to view NAFTA in positive terms, while younger Canadians were slightly less likely to have a positive opinion of the it. Ideological predisposition appears more accessible on the topic of NAFTA for Canadians than for Americans, in which more conservative ideological identification was positively related to Canadian opinion on NAFTA.

The results indicate that conceptions of national identity provide the most consistent and significant effects on both Canadian and American opinion toward NAFTA.⁶¹ While a cultural conception of national identity was significant only for American opinion on the NAFTA, a less restrictive patriotic conception of national identity had a somewhat significant positive relationship with both Canadian and American views of it. The most notable influence on Canadian and American opinion toward NAFTA is the sovereign conception of national identity. Citizens in both countries who attach less restrictive value to symbols of national sovereignty are more likely to view the liberalizing regional economic space of NAFTA in positive terms.

National identity is a multidimensional psychological construction for citizens, and the results here demonstrate that multiple items of measurement are important to analysis involving influences of national attachment. A single measure of national attachment may provide a convenient comparative device yet underestimate the complex psychological relationship between national identity and trade policy judgment. The examination of comparative cultural influences in the symbolic processing of trade raises important questions concerning the prevailing importance attached to economic self-interest.

Discussion

The results suggest that conceptions of national identity are a more significant comparative influence on Canadian and American opinion of NAFTA than either variables of economic self-interest or supranational attitudes. Economic self-interest is simply not a significant factor in how Canadians view NAFTA. For Americans, economic self-interest is mostly accessible in negative terms; blue collar workers and union members are less likely to see NAFTA as a benefit to the U.S. NAFTA oppo-

nents, ranging from Ross Perot to Pat Buchanan in the contentious political debate over it, served up emotion-laden, threatening images of U.S. workers and union members losing wages and jobs in the “giant sucking sound of the NAFTA.”

Individuals are found to weigh negative information more than positive information when they form impressions of situations, and impressions formed on the basis of negative information tend to be more lasting and resistant to change.⁶² The symbolic economic threat advanced in the NAFTA debate does seem to have resonated with American blue collar workers and union members in ways that the perceived economic benefits of the NAFTA have not with higher-skilled workers or workers altogether in Canada. The AFL-CIO has been a very outspoken critic of NAFTA in America, drawing off of larger systemic concerns of vulnerability within the American working class and union members, which may be less emotionally charged terrain for Canadians. Union membership is still much stronger in Canada, with a “more union-friendly environment in Canada, more cooperative politicians, less hostile employers.”⁶³

On complex issues such as NAFTA, citizens draw on the most accessible attitudes to judge policies. For more informed and aware citizens, the political environment provides ideological and partisan cues; less aware citizens are more likely to rely on more accessible emotionally derived affective attitudes. For Canadians, who were substantially more attentive and aware of NAFTA than Americans, left-right ideological predisposition provided more guidance on how to view it. For a less attentive American public on NAFTA, ideological cueing messages were further confused with unconventional bipartisan elite support and opposition in which the Democratic administration’s vocal support of NAFTA was most visibly challenged by the most liberal Democratic and the most conservative Republican leaders.

On the other hand, Skonieczny points out that “myths that connected the ‘dull’ trade accord to passionate cultural values formed a central component of the NAFTA discourses.”⁶⁴ For example, French nationalist forces in Quebec have argued that continental integration reduces dependence on English Canada. Consequently, many Quebecers have been found to link a North American free trade region with cultural autonomy.⁶⁵

Forces of regional and global trade liberalization trigger symbolic predispositions, as related policies speak to the value citizens attach to symbolic boundaries. For Americans and Canadians who attached a higher value to patriotic components of national citizenship, pride, even superiority, there is less support for the liberalizing forces of NAFTA, which symbolically threatens cohesive national boundaries that reinforce patriotic symbols. Citizens with a less restrictive attachment to patriotic values are somewhat more likely to support NAFTA.

A cultural conception of national identity as conceived here was only significant for Americans. More restrictive cultural values attached to ethnic minority traditions, foreign language, and immigration are negatively related to opinion on NAFTA. The

potential effect of the symbolic imagery and linkage drawn from the domestic NAFTA debates can not be understated where the cultural impact of Mexican migrants resulting from NAFTA became a central part of the U.S. NAFTA debate. However, symbolic cultural linkages are also captured in the sovereign conception of national identity, the most significant influence on both Canadian and American opinion of NAFTA.

The freer movement of goods and services across more liberalized borders touches upon notions, not only of domestic economic control, but also of a nation's cultural autonomy. The former Canadian minister of trade stated: "The massive penetration of the Canadian market threatens the growth of Canada's cultural products which are the major demonstration of our identity as a separate nation."⁶⁶ Thus, Canada insisted that cultural industries, including film, television, and radio broadcasting, not be included in the FTA and NAFTA. As Goff observes, "governments try to use cultural industries to create a bulwark against the erosion of national borders, only to be foiled by the tide of economic liberalization that threatens to engulf the full range of goods and services."⁶⁷

The NAFTA debate has provided certain symbolic predispositions accessible to citizens in both countries, evoking collective values related to the sovereign integrity of the nation. Canadians and Americans who attach less restrictive value to the cultural and economic autonomy of the nation are significantly more likely to embrace regional liberalization under NAFTA. Those citizens embracing more restrictive sovereign conceptions of national identity are significantly less supportive of NAFTA. Goff notes that, "as the distinction of individual state units becomes ambiguous with the integration of capital and commodity markets, states compensate by strengthening the collective identity....Despite the penetration of porous national boundaries by foreign goods, people, ideas, and capital, borders delineate a bounded space in which members share a common idiom."⁶⁸ The results here show that symbolic predispositions of national identity provide an accessible guide for policy judgment on issues of trade liberalization such as the NAFTA which serve to challenge and reconstruct citizens' conceptions of national borders.

Conclusion

As North American leaders continue to pursue regional economic liberalization, it is critical to understand more fully how the participating nations' publics interpret and process related policies. Contentious debates and grass-roots protests surrounding NAFTA and the FTAA in Canada and the United States demonstrate that the mass public can not be ignored by national leaders when considering comprehensive policies toward further trade liberalization. Still, while Americans and Canadians may have some general understanding and basic awareness of the economic effects of

NAFTA, there is little evidence that the nations' citizens significantly weigh perceived personal costs and benefits in policy judgment on the regional free trade agreement. Citizens rely on the most accessible attitudes evoked by the information environment, and symbolic predispositions such as national identity are triggered by the perceived impact of trade liberalization on traditional national boundaries.

Despite regional and global trends that continue to liberalize national economic borders, the national identity remains a potent reference point for citizens, including Americans and Canadians. Supranational arrangements are not yet developed enough in the public mind as viable alternatives to the national construction for supranational affective attitudes to determine opinion on policies of trade liberalization. Citizens depend on the most accessible attitudes, particularly on policy issues for which they have limited information and understanding. The symbol-laden information environment of the NAFTA issue has evoked accessible long-standing predispositions, including conceptions of national identity that allow Americans and Canadians to process the symbolic politics of the NAFTA debate.

NOTES

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46. Factor analysis identifies variables that are correlated and subsets that are relatively independent of one another, and varimax rotation is commonly utilized in the construction of appropriate scales from multiple items in comparative analyses. See, for example, Roel Meertens and Thomas Pettigrew, "Is Subtle Prejudice Really Prejudice?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61 (1997), 54–71.

47. One should caution that the underlying dimensions are a function of the items utilized and may not account for other conceptions of national identity were other items employed. However, the Aspects of National Identity module of the ISSP provides an unusually rich source of nationality items, and exploratory factor analysis was utilized to define the most substantive factors.

48. Question wording for the three items, where 1=agree strongly, 5=disagree strongly: (1) Generally speaking, America/Canada is a better country than most other countries. (2) I would rather be a citizen of America/Canada than of any other country in the world. (3) The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like people in America/Canada. Alpha reliability for an American scale (.75) and a Canadian scale (.68).

49. Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, and Pratto, pp. 108–9.

50. Kathleen M. Dowley and Brian D. Silver, "Subnational and National Loyalty: Cross-National Comparisons," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 12 (2000), 357–71.

51. Question wording for the three items, where 1=agree strongly, 5=disagree strongly: (1) America/Canada should follow its own interests, even if this leads to conflicts with other nations. (2) Foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in America/Canada. (3) American/Canadian television

should give preference to American/Canadian films and programs. Alpha reliability for an American scale (.71) and a Canadian scale (.65).

52. Patricia Goff, "Invisible Borders: Economic Liberalization and National Identity," *International Studies Quarterly*, 44 (2000), 544–49.

53. Question wording for the three items, where 1=disagree strongly, 5=agree strongly: (1) Ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to preserve their customs and traditions. (2) Schools should make much greater effort to teach foreign languages properly. (3) Do you think the number of immigrants nowadays should be, 1=reduced a lot, 5=increased a lot? Alpha reliability for an American scale (.61) and a Canadian scale (.55).

54. Citrin, Haas, Muste, and Reingold, p. 6.

55. Kenneth McRoberts, "Canada and the Multinational State," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 34 (2001), 687–713.

56. The objective is to analyze stated support for or against NAFTA. "Don't knows" and uncertain responses were not included in the analysis. Canadian and American opinion toward NAFTA were both coded as binary variables where 0=Against NAFTA, 1=For NAFTA.

57. Based on the assumptions of the Hecksher-Ohlin model, this study examines occupational skill as a proxy for economic self-interest across sectors. Scheve and Slaughter find that industry of employment is not systematically related to trade policy preferences. Workers in trade-exposed industries, such as textiles and apparel, are not more likely to oppose freer trade when controlled for skill levels.

58. For example, union membership was coded 1 for those indicating they "are a member in a trade union" at present, and 0 otherwise. Pink collar workers were an excluded category in the models. Education was coded as the equivalent of 1=less than high school to 5=college graduate or higher. Income consisted of thirty income levels ranging from \$700 to \$90,000+.

59. North American closeness was measured by the question: "How close do you feel to North America?" 1=not close at all to 5=very close. Transnational mobility was measured by the question: "If you could improve your work or living conditions, how willing or unwilling would you be to move outside America/Canada?" 1=very unwilling to 5=very willing. Age ranged from eighteen to ninety-five.

60. Ideological identification was coded according to ISSP values, where 1=far left, 2=left/center left, 3=center, 4=right/conservative, 5=far right.

61. Standardized logit coefficients were computed in order to determine the relative importance of the variables and are available upon request from the author.

62. Michael D. Cobb and James H. Kuklinski, "Changing Minds: Political Arguments and Political Persuasion," *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 88–121.

63. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*, p. 106.

64. Skonieczny, p. 439.

65. Shulman, p. 376.

66. Archival records of the Canadian Trade Negotiating Office, June 23, 1987.

67. Goff, p. 560.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 538–39.