

**MA TE MATAURANGA KA MOHIO MA TE MOHIO KA TUTUKI**

**WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES UNDERSTANDING.**

**WITH UNDERSTANDING COMES APPLICATION**

**WORKING PAPER 7**

**COMMUNAL NORMS (PRACTICAL SELF/ INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION)**

**IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC?**

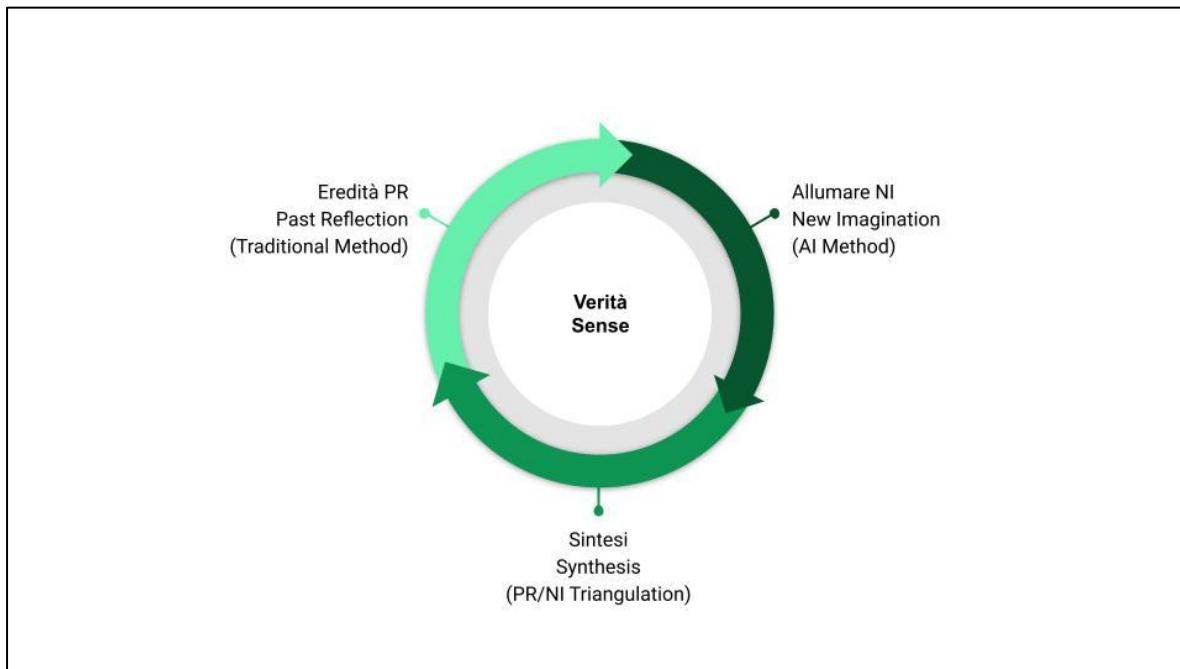
**2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Disclaimer: The findings expressed about Donald Trump in this research are expressed through the analysis of a dataset collected from USA voters. They are the views expressed by these voters. These findings do not represent my personal views or the views of my employer or any organization with which I am affiliated. My statements are made in my research capacity, using my own time and resources. Titles and affiliations are provided for identification purposes only and do not imply endorsement for or by any organization. The political participation of the author of this research is in the New Zealand Electoral Voting system only.

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## VERITÀ SENSE AI APPROACH

This paper is written using the **Verità Sense AI approach designed by drrobertdavis.com**. The name "Verità Sense AI" presents a distinctive option for an artificial intelligence platform focused on qualitative data analysis, combining linguistic elements that convey truth-finding capabilities with modern technological positioning.



"Verità Sense AI" combines three powerful conceptual elements that together create a coherent and meaningful identity. "Verità," the Italian word for "truth," immediately establishes a foundation of authenticity and reliability—core values essential for any analysis platform. The term "Sense" suggests perceptive capabilities, the ability to detect patterns and meanings that might escape conventional analysis methods. This aligns perfectly with the promise of AI-enhanced qualitative analysis: technology that can understand and interpret nuanced human expressions and unstructured data. When paired with "Verità," it creates the compelling concept of "truth perception" or "truth sensing"—exactly what researchers seek from analysis tools.

The "AI" component clearly positions the product within the artificial intelligence space, making its technological foundation immediately apparent to potential users. This straightforward element requires no interpretation and helps categorize the product in the rapidly expanding market of AI research tools. The initial 3 components of Verità Sense are:

1. Eredità PR Past Reflection (Traditional Method)
2. Allumare NI New Imagination (AI Method)
3. Sintesi Synthesis (PR/NI Triangulation)

The essential conjoint place of these components is the researcher. The source of the data: from direct interview to machine created. Quality in. Quality out. Ma Te Matauranga Ka Mohio. Ma Te Mohio Ka Tutuki (Creating Knowledge. Designing Understanding. Cocreating Application)

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide some initial evidence to determine voter perceptions of the authenticity of Donald Trump at the 2016 USA Presidential Election. The leadership brand Trump (DJT). This paper posits a model that authenticity is a voter experience. It is a cognitive event of a voter who consumes presidential leadership. Hence, authenticity can be manipulated in different contexts (e.g., digital environments). Authenticity, while believes in what is real and original; this is entirely real but also subjective. Subjectivity based upon the context of the voter as a hermeneutic interpretive state.

These series of papers will cover different aspects of the result in a phased output process. It is hypothesized that when consumers engage in the consumption behavior of the political brand (e.g., Trump), authenticity is a multidimensional experience conceptualized and defined as: iconic, identification, practical/impersonal, production/situation, social, moral, pure approximate and virtuous-self, forms of the authentic experience.

### For COMMUNAL NORMS:

Overall, trump rates highly in terms of communal norms role in self-authentication (56%). For voters being part of the Trump group is important reflection of who they are and their self-image. They are proud of this group and its accomplishment. They are protecting of this group. If Trump is insulted. They are insulted. But they don't appear to see the Trump group being the same as other groups they are part of. There is a sense that even though communal norms play an important role in the consumption of Trump and self-authentication, this finding may not appear with other groups. In contrast, outside of the Trump group may see themselves as more of an individual.

The data revealing that 56% of Trump supporters derive self-authentication through communal norms highlights the unique role of his leadership in shaping group identity. Supporters view affiliation with the "Trump group" as a core component of their self-image, marked by intense pride and defensive loyalty. This stems from **collective narcissism**-a belief in the group's exceptionalism-and **identity fusion**, where personal and group identities merge. Insults to Trump are perceived as personal attacks, triggering protective responses rooted in emotionally charged narratives of existential threat (e.g., "America First"). Unlike other affiliations (e.g., religious or professional groups), Trump's **authority-ranking relational model** frames politics as a zero-sum battle, elevating this communal bond above all others.

This exclusive communal identity fosters polarization, as supporters compartmentalize their self-concept: fiercely communal in politics but individualistic elsewhere. The Trump group operates as a "prosthetic identity," where policy wins are internalized as personal victories, while failures are blamed on external enemies. Such dynamics erode cross-group empathy, normalize anti-democratic measures to "protect" the group, and amplify receptivity to authoritarian appeals. Unlike pluralistic communities, where overlapping memberships encourage compromise, Trump's leadership entrenches divisive us/them binaries. This singular focus on defending communal integrity against perceived threats underscores the challenges of fostering social cohesion in politically fragmented societies.

To test the hypothesized model, 600 usable responses were collected using a questionnaire with randomly randomized questions for each respondent, deployed through Qualtrics to their USA consumer panel who were voters in the 2016 USA Presidential Election. In the sample used for this analysis related to Donald Trump, 238 usable responses were used representing voters who indicated that "I VOTED FOR THE FOLLOWING Presidential Candidate in the 2016 USA Presidential Election", that is, Donald Trump. The macro dataset included the collection of data on both Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton. The data collection

was funded by Massey University (New Zealand) and was approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval NO. 4000018813). The data collection and initial study was academic and non-commercial in nature. The data collection collaborated with Dr Suze Wilson.

This model and questionnaire is based on the conceptual and measurement model of authenticity published by Robert Davis, Kevin Sheriff, Kim Owen, Conceptualizing and Measuring Consumer Authenticity Online, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Volume 47, 2019, Pages 17-31, ISSN 0969-6989, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.10.002>.

This model, data and measurement outcome using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) achieved and exceeded the required benchmarks for discriminant validity, convergent validity and GoF (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012, Hair et al., 2010, Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996; Bacon et al., 1995; Browne and Cudek, 1993, Bentler, 1990). In this study common method bias was measured using the Harman's single factor test (20–24% of the variance can be explained by the single factor). The test is below the accepted threshold of 50%. The common latent factor (CLF) approach was used to measure the common variance of all the model's observed variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The comparison of the standardized regression weights of the non-CLF vs CLF model computed that all were well below 0.200 with the exception of two observed items with differences of 0.253 and 0.212. Therefore, with an acceptable Harman's single factor test and a CLF test with 41 observed variables below the threshold, it is concluded that there is no common method bias.

This dataset is unpublished and is available for further academic publication and/or commercial application. The model, research method and data are Copyright the intellectual property of Dr. Robert Davis. If the results in this paper are to be quoted and/or published in any ways then they must; (1) contact Dr Robert Davis for written approval to publish and (2) effectively cite Dr, Robert Davis at [drrobertdavis.com](http://drrobertdavis.com) in the publication.

**Key Words:** Authenticity, Perception, Donald Trump, President, USA, Election, 2016.

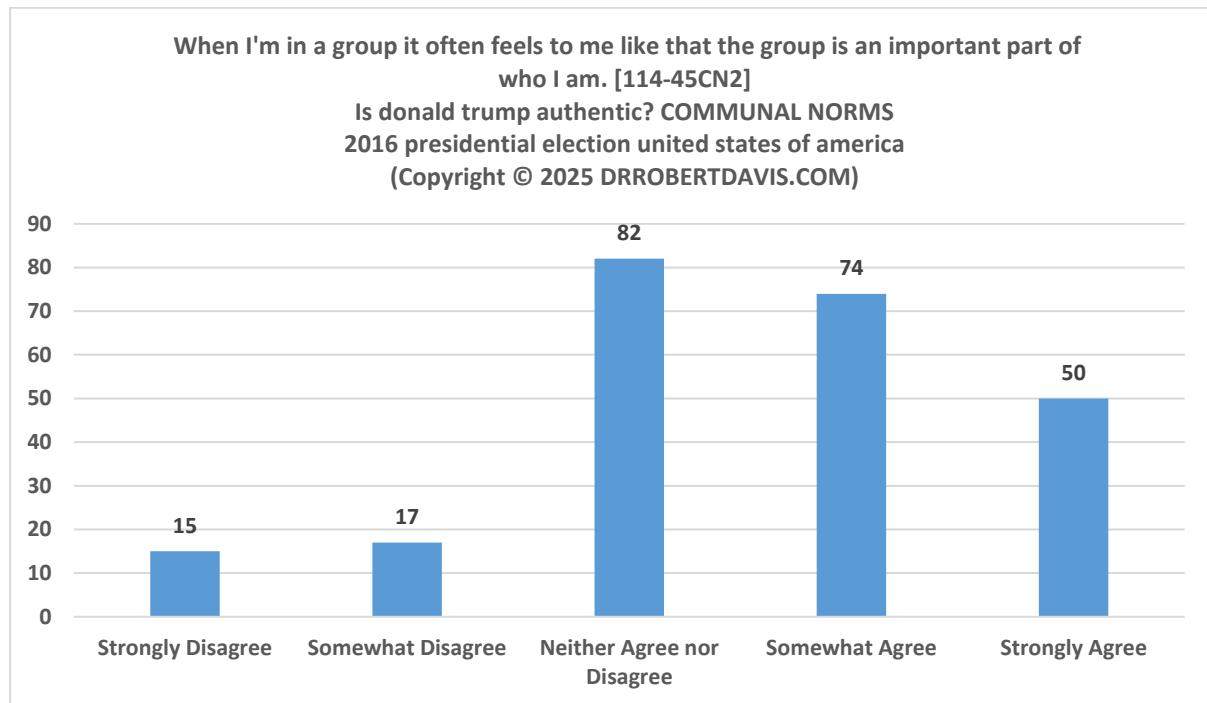
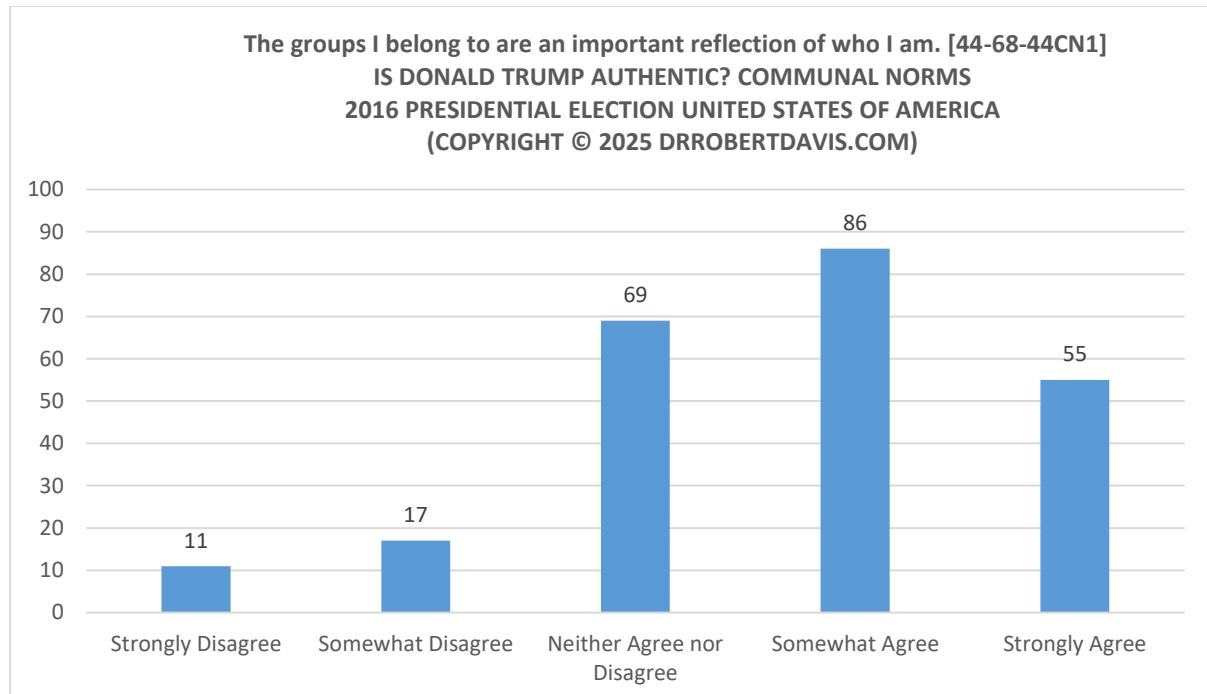
## RESULTS

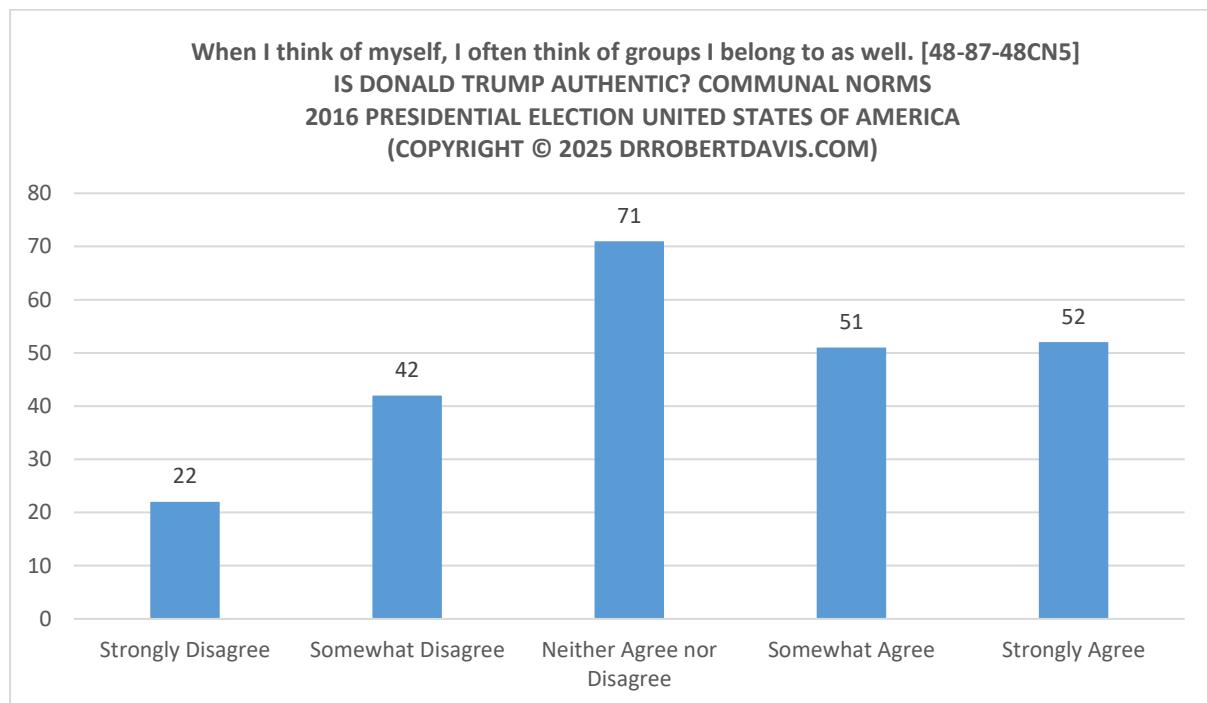
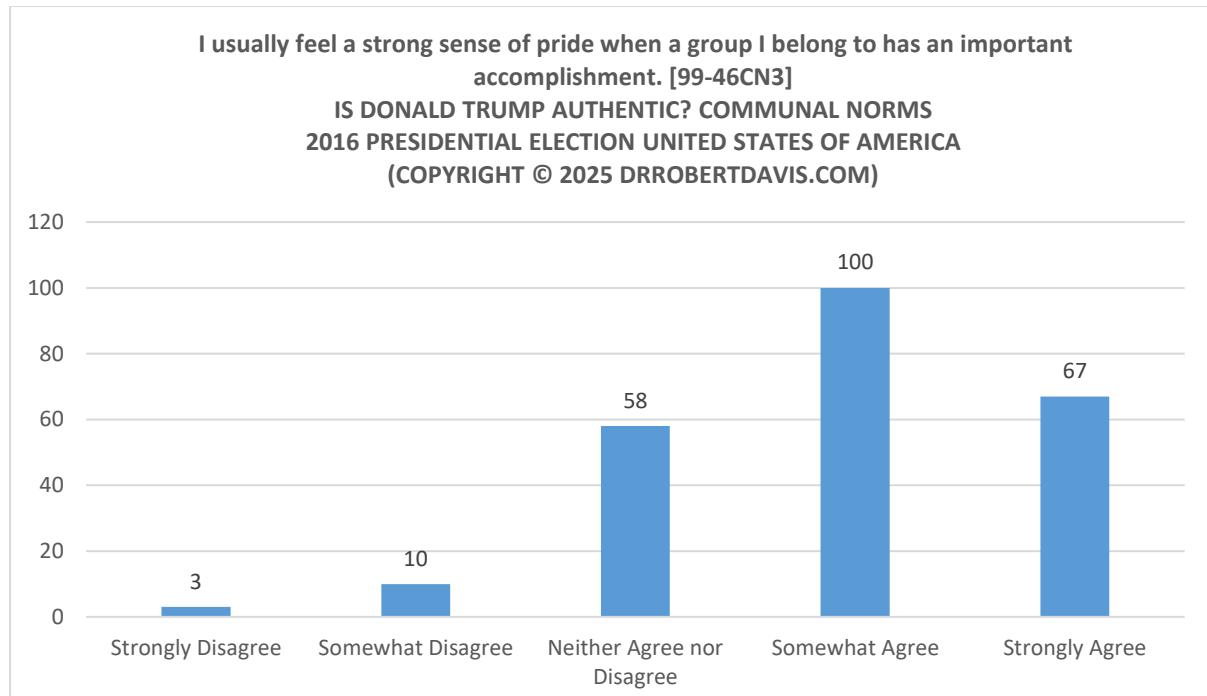
### COMMUNAL NORMS (PRACTICAL SELF/ INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION)

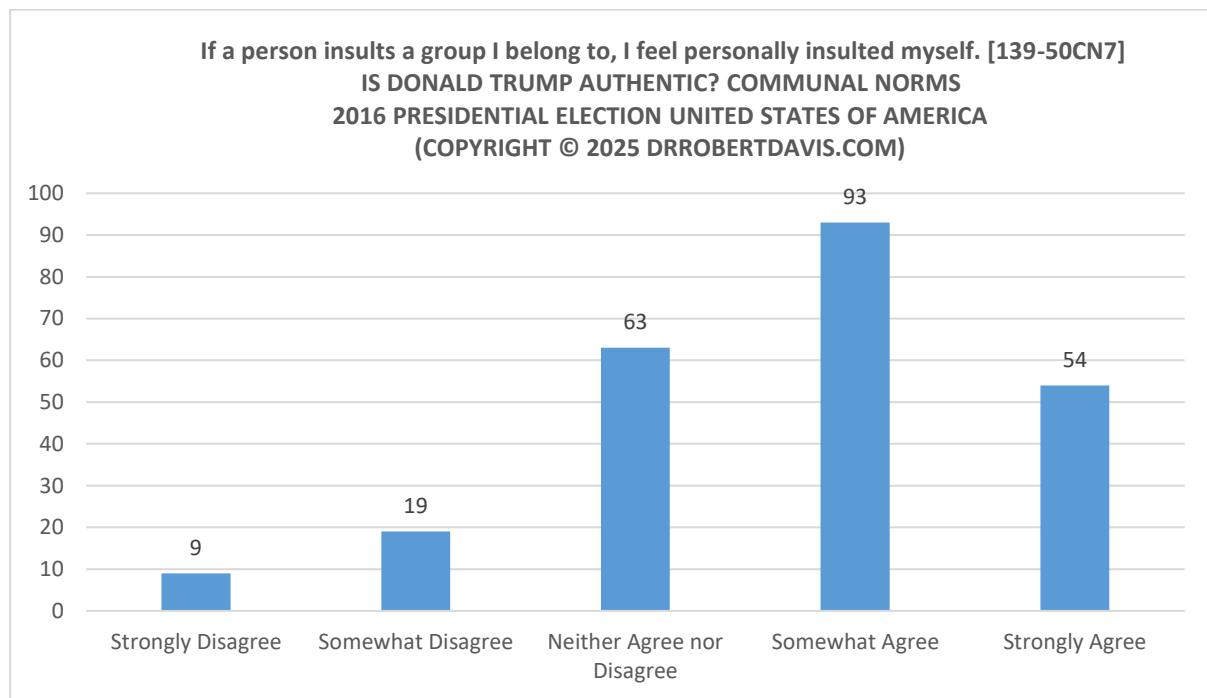
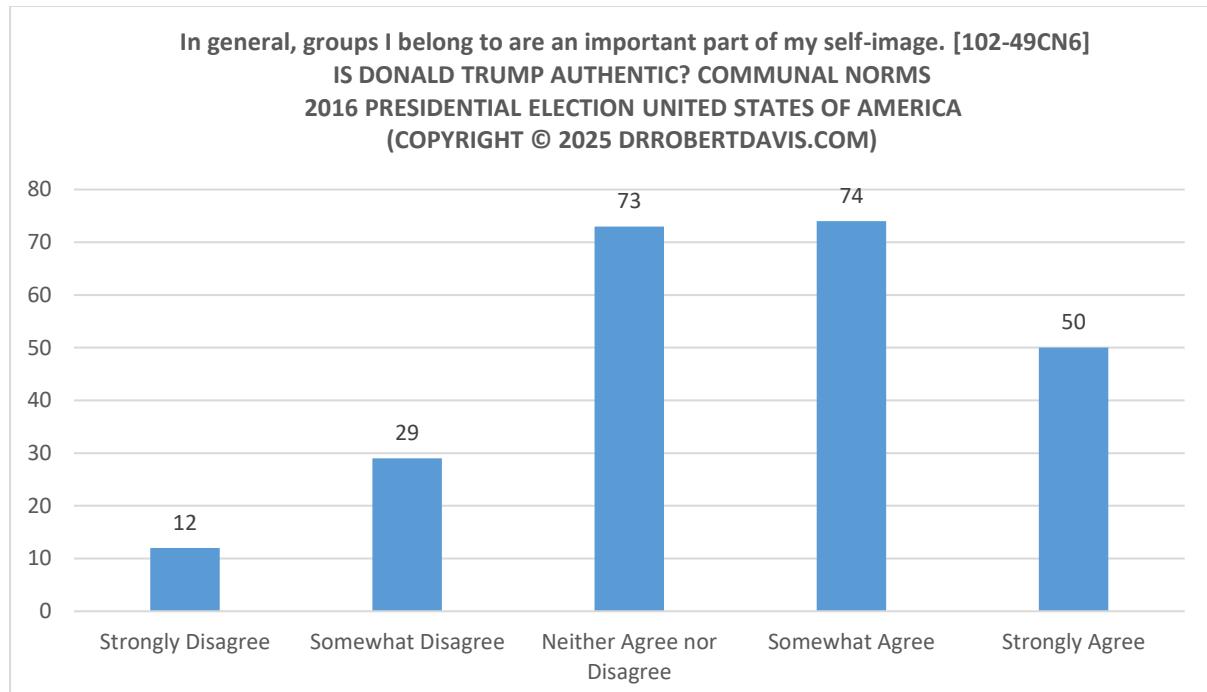
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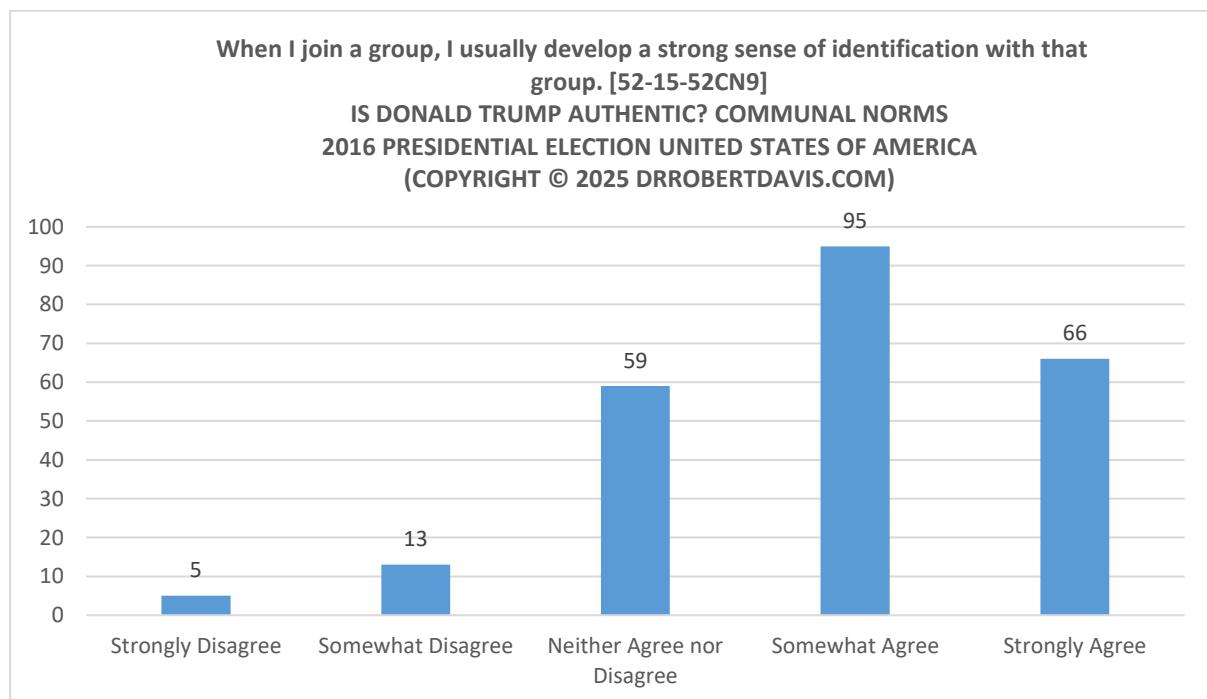
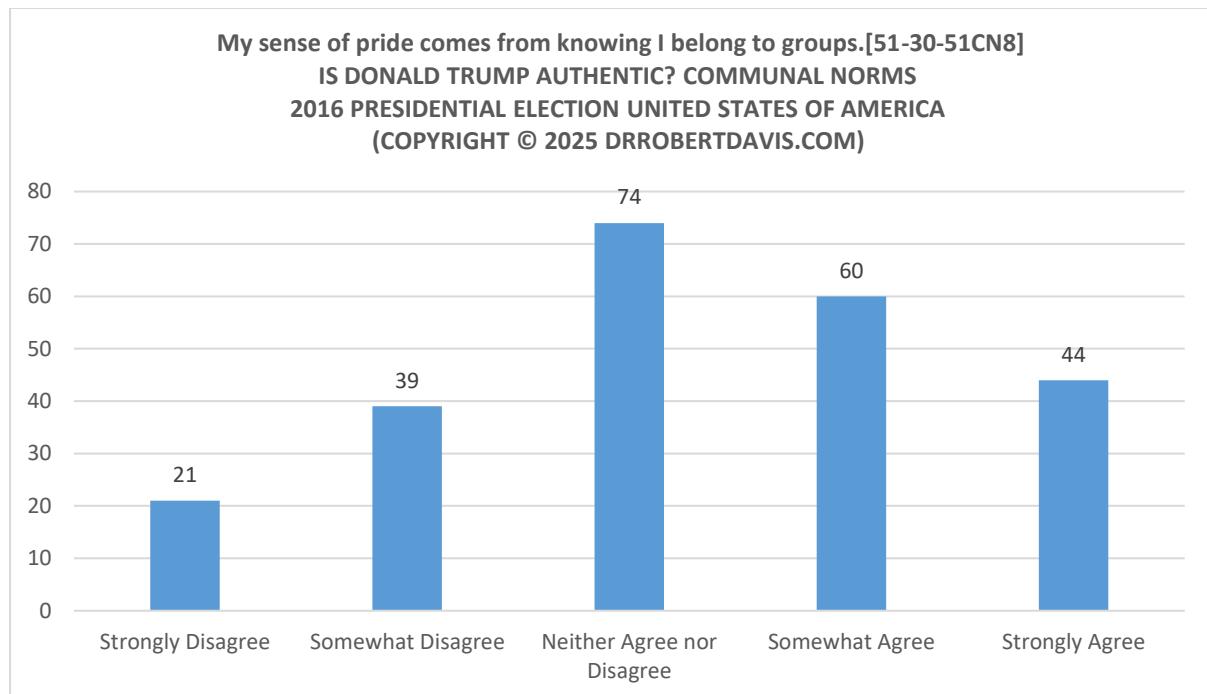
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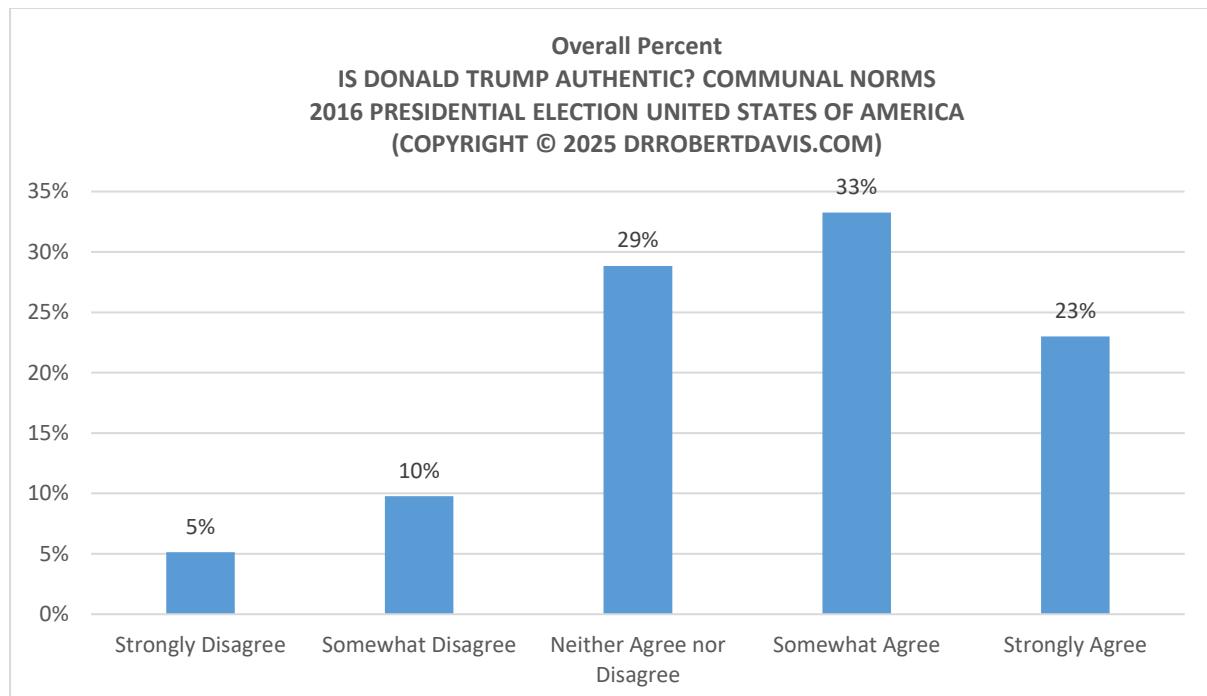
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## RESULTS INTERPRETATION: (PRACTICAL SELF/ INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION) <sup>i</sup>

### **The Trump Group as a Singular Nexus of Communal Identity and Self-Authentication**

The finding that 56% of Trump supporters derive self-authentication through communal norms tied to his leadership underscores the unique psychological architecture of his political movement. This phenomenon reflects a convergence of collective narcissism, identity fusion, and relational models that distinguish Trump-aligned communal norms from other group affiliations. Below, we dissect the mechanisms behind this exclusivity and its implications for intergroup dynamics.

#### **Collective Narcissism and Exceptionalist Identity**

##### *Inflated Group Valuation and External Validation*

Trump's leadership activates collective narcissism-a belief in the group's exceptionalism that demands external recognition [26] [27] [28]. Supporters view the "Trump group" as a transcendent entity requiring vigilant defense against perceived slights (e.g., critiques of Trump's policies or character) [29] [30]. This contrasts with other group memberships (e.g., occupational, religious), where validation needs are less acute. The 56% figure reflects this narcissistic investment: the Trump identity becomes a master status, overriding competing affiliations in self-concept salience [31].

##### *Asymmetric Group Loyalty*

While supporters exhibit fierce loyalty to the Trump group, they do not extend this intensity to other affiliations. This asymmetry stems from Trump's authority-ranking relational model, which frames politics as a zero-sum battle for communal survival [32]. By contrast, non-political groups (e.g., hobby clubs) operate via equality-matching or market-pricing models, requiring less emotional investment. The result is a hierarchical identity structure where Trump-related norms dominate cognitive and affective resources [33].

#### **Self-Authentication Through Defensive Polarization**

##### *Identity Fusion and Perceived Threats*

Trump supporters experience identity fusion, where personal and group identities merge [34]. Insults directed at Trump are processed as self-threats, triggering defensive reactions (e.g., dismissing criticism as "fake news") [35] [29]. This fusion is reinforced by Trump's rhetoric, which weaponizes communal norms against out-groups (e.g., framing immigration as cultural invasion) [36] [30]. Non-Trump groups lack comparable mechanisms for threat amplification, resulting in weaker authentication effects.

##### *Emotional Distress as Cognitive Glue*

Negative emotions like anger and anxiety-linked to populist support [37]-intensify in-group cohesion. Trump's discourse activates these emotions by emphasizing existential threats (e.g., "American carnage"), creating a feedback loop where distress validates communal norms [37] [38]. Other groups, lacking such emotionally charged narratives, fail to elicit comparable self-authentication.

## Contrasting Self-Concepts: Communal vs. Individual

### Trump Group as Extended Self

For supporters, the Trump group functions as a prosthetic identity—an externalized component of selfhood [34]. Achievements attributed to Trump (e.g., tax cuts, Supreme Court appointments) are internalized as personal victories, while failures are externalized as sabotage by elites or "deep state" actors [31] [39]. This prosthetic dynamic is absent in non-political groups, where accomplishments remain disaggregated from the self.

### Contextual Identity Shifting

Outside the Trump group, supporters adopt more individualistic self-concepts. This bifurcation reflects identity compartmentalization, where political affiliation operates under communal norms while other roles (e.g., parent, employee) follow exchange norms [40] [41]. For example, a Trump supporter might demand strict immigration laws (communal) but negotiate workplace benefits transactionally (exchange). Such compartmentalization prevents norm spillover, preserving the Trump group's uniqueness.

## Implications for Democratic Discourse

### Erosion of Cross-Group Empathy

The Trump group's exceptionalism inhibits perspective-taking with out-groups. Collective narcissism correlates with schadenfreude toward perceived rivals (e.g., cheering economic struggles in Democratic cities) [30], undermining solidarity. This contrasts with pluralistic communities where overlapping memberships foster empathy.

### Vulnerability to Authoritarian Appeals

The fusion of selfhood and Trumpian norms creates receptivity to anti-democratic measures that "protect" the group [26] [32]. Supporters may endorse norm violations (e.g., overturning elections) if framed as defending communal integrity [29]. Non-Trump groups, lacking comparable identity stakes, show greater adherence to institutional norms.

## Conclusion

The 56% self-authentication rate among Trump supporters reveals a communal norm system distinct from other group affiliations. Driven by collective narcissism, identity fusion, and emotionally charged threat narratives, the Trump group functions as a singular locus of selfhood. This exclusivity poses challenges for democratic cohesion, as it entrenches divisive us/them binaries while insulating adherents from countervailing influences. Future research should explore whether similar dynamics emerge in non-Western populist movements or if Trump's leadership represents a unique case of identity commodification.

## THE INTERPLAY OF COMMUNAL NORMS, SELF-VERIFICATION, AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN VOTER COGNITION

The relationship between communal norms, political leadership, and individual self-concept formation represents a complex intersection of social psychology, political cognition, and relational theory. When voters engage with leaders like Donald Trump, their cognitive processing of communal norms-shared expectations about how group members should behave for collective benefit-interacts with psychological drives for self-verification and identity coherence. This report synthesizes foundational theories from social psychology, political discourse analysis, and relational models to explain how communal norms underpin voters' assessments of leadership efficacy, legal frameworks, and interpersonal authenticity.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Communal Norms**

#### *Communal vs. Exchange Relationships (Clark & Mills)*

Communal norms originate from the distinction between communal relationships (prioritizing mutual care and responsiveness to needs) and exchange relationships (governed by quid-pro-quo reciprocity) [1] [2]. In communal frameworks, individuals derive satisfaction from meeting others' needs without expecting direct repayment, fostering trust and collective identity [3] [4]. For example, families operate on communal norms by default, whereas transactional business relationships align with exchange norms [5] [1].

When applied to political leadership, voters steeped in communal norms evaluate leaders based on perceived adherence to group welfare rather than individualistic gains [4] [1]. A leader's policies on healthcare, immigration, or economic redistribution are assessed through the lens of whether they strengthen communal bonds or fragment them into transactional exchanges [2] [6]. Donald Trump's rhetoric emphasizing "America First" and border security, for instance, appeals to voters who interpret communal norms as requiring protection of in-group resources from perceived external threats [7] [8].

#### *Self-Verification Theory (Swann)*

Self-verification theory posits that individuals seek confirmation of their self-concepts-positive or negative-to maintain cognitive coherence [9] [10]. People with negative self-views may paradoxically prefer interactions that validate those views, as inconsistency generates psychological discomfort [10] [9]. In political contexts, voters gravitate toward leaders whose messaging reinforces their preexisting beliefs about societal roles and personal identity [11] [8].

For instance, a voter who self-identifies as a "patriotic traditionalist" may find Trump's emphasis on national pride and cultural preservation self-verifying, even if critics label such rhetoric divisive [7] [8]. This alignment between leadership rhetoric and self-concept allows voters to authenticate their identity within the communal framework, interpreting laws and policies as extensions of their validated self-view [10] [1].

### **Political Cognition and the Role of Leadership**

#### *Relational Models Theory (Fiske)*

Fiske's relational models' theory identifies four frameworks for social coordination: communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing [5] [2]. Communal sharing, characterized by undifferentiated group membership and shared

resources, is particularly relevant to voters assessing leadership through a communal lens [5] [2]. Leaders who frame policies as enhancing communal unity (e.g., infrastructure projects “for all Americans”) activate this model, while those emphasizing meritocracy or market competition align with market pricing [5] [2].

Trump’s leadership style often blends authority ranking (positioning himself as a decisive “strongman”) with communal sharing (framing policies as protecting the in-group) [5] [7]. His supporters may cognitively reconcile this duality by interpreting strong authority as necessary to preserve communal norms against perceived threats [11] [7]. For example, strict immigration laws are rationalized not as punitive measures but as defenses of communal integrity [8] [6].

#### *Political Discourse and Cognitive Schemas (van Dijk)*

Van Dijk’s work on political cognition highlights how leaders’ discourse shapes voters’ mental models of society [11]. By invoking symbols like “law and order” or “economic revival,” Trump constructs narratives that align with communal norms of safety and prosperity [11] [8]. Voters then use these schemas to evaluate the legitimacy of laws, asking: Do these policies reinforce our communal identity, or do they undermine it? [11] [6].

For example, Trump’s emphasis on deregulation resonates with voters who view government overreach as a violation of communal autonomy [7] [2]. Conversely, opponents may frame the same policies as eroding communal safeguards (e.g., environmental protections), illustrating how communal norms are contested rather than static [6] [2].

#### **Self-Authentication Through Legal and Social Evaluation**

##### *Moral Foundations Theory (Haidt)*

Moral foundations theory identifies six intuitive ethics shaping political judgments: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, and liberty/oppression [7]. Communal norms often prioritize loyalty and authority, explaining why voters may support leaders who defend traditional institutions (e.g., law enforcement) despite controversies [7] [8].

Trump’s focus on loyalty (“draining the swamp”) and authority (“law and order”) taps into these foundations, allowing supporters to authenticate their self-concept as defenders of communal stability [7] [8]. Laws perceived as upholding these values—such as harsh sentencing guidelines or expanded police powers—are cognitively framed as moral imperatives rather than punitive measures [7] [11].

##### *Cognitive Dissonance and Norm Reinforcement*

When confronted with information contradicting their communal norms (e.g., evidence of presidential misconduct), voters may engage in motivated reasoning to reduce cognitive dissonance [12] [10]. Self-verification drives this process: accepting dissonant information threatens self-concept coherence, leading individuals to dismiss critiques as “fake news” or partisan attacks [10] [12]. By doubling down on communal allegiances, voters reinforce their identity while legitimizing leadership actions that outsiders view as norm-violating [11] [8].

For example, Trump’s attempts to overturn the 2020 election were framed by supporters as defending communal norms of electoral integrity, despite lacking evidence [11] [7]. This illustrates how communal norms, once internalized, become lenses for interpreting legality itself [2] [1].

## Implications for Democratic Engagement

### Erosion of Exchange Norms in Polarized Contexts

In highly polarized environments, communal norms can overshadow exchange norms, reducing willingness to compromise [1] [2]. Voters may perceive bipartisan negotiation as betrayal of communal identity, incentivizing leaders to adopt rigid stances [7] [11]. Trump's rejection of "weak" deals (e.g., the Iran Nuclear Accord) exemplifies this dynamic, framing inflexibility as communal loyalty [7] [8].

### Reconstructing Communal Boundaries

Leaders like Trump often redefine communal boundaries by excluding perceived outsiders (e.g., undocumented immigrants, "socialists") [8] [6]. This exclusionary communalism fosters in-group cohesion but risks marginalizing dissenters [2] [5]. Voters seeking self-authentication through such narratives may support laws that codify these boundaries, such as voter ID requirements or language-based citizenship tests [11] [6].

### The Role of Media Ecosystems

Digital media amplifies self-verification by curating content that reinforces communal norms [12] [11]. Algorithms prioritizing engagement drive voters into echo chambers where Trump's messaging is incessantly validated, deepening cognitive alignment between self-concept and leadership narrative [12] [8]. This ecosystem transforms legal and political debates into existential struggles for communal survival, further entrenching divisive norms [11] [7].

## Conclusion

The construct of communal norms in voter cognition is underpinned by a synthesis of relational theory (Clark, Mills, Fiske), self-verification (Swann), and political discourse analysis (van Dijk). When assessing leaders like Donald Trump, voters employ communal norms to evaluate laws and policies as extensions of their self-concept, seeking validation of their identity as group members. This process, while fostering coherence and predictability, risks polarizing societies by framing governance as a zero-sum conflict between irreconcilable communal visions. Future research should explore interventions to reintroduce exchange norms in politicized contexts, balancing communal identity with pragmatic cooperation.

## THE ROLE OF POLITICAL COGNITION IN SHAPING COMMUNAL NORMS

Political cognition—the mental processes through which individuals acquire, interpret, and act on political information—serves as a foundational mechanism for the formation and reinforcement of communal norms. These norms, defined as shared expectations about acceptable behavior within a group, emerge from the interplay of individual cognitive biases, collective identity formation, and socio-political discourse. By analyzing how voters process information about leadership, laws, and societal roles, this report elucidates the causal pathways through which political cognition structures communal norms, particularly in polarized environments.

## Theoretical Foundations of Political Cognition and Communal Norms

### Relational Models and Social Coordination

Political cognition operates within frameworks outlined by relational models' theory, which posits that social interactions are governed by four primary modes: communal sharing, authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing [13]. Communal sharing, characterized by collective identity and undifferentiated group membership, directly

influences how individuals interpret leadership and policy. For example, voters who prioritize communal sharing may evaluate laws based on their perceived contribution to group cohesion rather than individual merit. This cognitive framing reinforces norms of mutual obligation, as seen in communities where policies supporting universal healthcare or education are viewed as moral imperatives [14] [15].

#### *Motivated Reasoning and Belief Alignment*

Motivated reasoning, the tendency to process information in ways that align with preexisting beliefs, plays a pivotal role in norm formation [16] [17]. When individuals encounter political discourse-such as Donald Trump's emphasis on border security or "America First" policies-they selectively assimilate evidence that validates their communal identity. For instance, supporters of restrictive immigration policies may dismiss critiques as partisan attacks, interpreting such laws as necessary to preserve cultural integrity [18] [19]. This cognitive bias solidifies norms around in-group protection, often at the expense of dissenting perspectives.

#### *Social Identity and Group Polarization*

Social identity theory explains how individuals derive self-concept from group membership, leading to the internalization of norms that distinguish "us" from "them" [15] [19]. In contexts like Malappuram District, India, where religious and ethnic identities dominate voting behavior, political cognition reinforces norms of communal solidarity through ritualized practices (e.g., land purchases within ethno-religious enclaves) [14] [15]. These norms become self-perpetuating, as deviation risks ostracization or loss of status within the group.

### **Cognitive Mechanisms in Norm Development**

#### *Information Filtering and Echo Chambers*

Digital media ecosystems exacerbate norm entrenchment by algorithmically curating content that aligns with users' political identities [20] [21]. For example, voters who consume right-leaning media may encounter narratives framing climate change skepticism as a marker of group loyalty, particularly among farmers [19]. Over time, repeated exposure normalizes these views, transforming individual skepticism into a communal norm. Conversely, progressive echo chambers may valorize environmental activism, fostering norms of sustainability within their cohorts.

#### *Authority Legitimization and Leadership Cues*

Leaders act as cognitive anchors, shaping norms through rhetorical framing and policy priorities. Donald Trump's leadership style, which blends authority ranking (e.g., "law and order" rhetoric) with communal sharing (e.g., "protecting American jobs"), primes supporters to view legal frameworks as tools for preserving traditional hierarchies [13] [18]. This dual framing legitimizes norms such as deference to executive power and distrust of bureaucratic institutions, which are then codified through voter-supported policies like expanded presidential pardons or reduced regulatory oversight.

#### *Moral Foundations and Normative Justification*

Moral foundations theory identifies loyalty, authority, and sanctity as key drivers of conservative political cognition, while progressives prioritize care and fairness [22] [23]. These moral intuitions underpin communal norms by providing ethical rationales for specific behaviors. For instance, communities emphasizing loyalty may normatively justify strict immigration laws as defenses against cultural "contamination," whereas those prioritizing care may advocate for refugee protections [18] [23].

## Case Studies in Norm Formation

### Malappuram District: Communal Politics as Cognitive Blueprint

In Kerala's Malappuram District, religious identity dictates voting patterns, with political parties tailoring platforms to align with Muslim and Hindu communal norms [14]. Voters here cognitively map policies onto sectarian interests-e.g., supporting subsidies for religious schools or opposing gender-neutral inheritance laws. Over decades, this alignment has institutionalized norms of identity-based representation, marginalizing secular or cross-communal candidates.

### Chilean Olla Común: Biopolitics and Communal Resistance

The olla común (community kitchen) in Chile exemplifies how crisis-driven political cognition can forge new norms [24]. During economic collapses or pandemics, participants in these collectives cognitively reframe food sharing as resistance to neoliberal austerity, transforming a survival tactic into a norm of mutual aid. This cognitive shift challenges individualistic market paradigms, fostering solidarity as a communal obligation.

### Bavarian Farmers: Climate Skepticism as Group Identity

Bavarian farmers' resistance to climate policies illustrates how motivated reasoning and social identity converge to produce anti-environmental norms [19]. Perceiving climate regulations as threats to their livelihoods, farmers cognitively dismiss scientific consensus, reinforcing a group norm of skepticism. This norm is further validated through peer networks and agricultural lobbies, creating a feedback loop that resists policy change.

## Implications for Democratic Governance

### Norm Rigidity in Polarized Societies

When political cognition becomes tightly coupled with communal identity, norms acquire a rigidity that stifles compromise. For example, U.S. debates over gun control or abortion often devolve into existential conflicts, as each side views concession as betrayal of core values [17] [21]. This dynamic erodes exchange norms (e.g., bipartisan negotiation), replacing them with zero-sum communal contests.

### Algorithmic Amplification of Normative Divides

Social media platforms, by prioritizing engagement over accuracy, amplify extreme positions that resonate with communal identities [20] [25]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-vaccine narratives flourished in communities valuing liberty over care, normalizing vaccine hesitancy as a marker of in-group allegiance [17] [25]. Such algorithmic sorting entrenches norms that diverge sharply from scientific or institutional consensus.

### Interventions for Normative Flexibility

Addressing norm polarization requires interventions that decouple political cognition from identity threat. Strategies include:

1. Reframing Policies: Presenting climate action as compatible with agricultural traditions (e.g., regenerative farming) to reduce cognitive dissonance among sceptics [19].
2. Cross-Group Dialogue: Facilitating interactions between polarized communities to humanize out-groups, as seen in peacebuilding initiatives in sectarian conflicts [15] [23].

3. Media Literacy Education: Training individuals to recognize motivated reasoning in their information consumption, thereby weakening echo chambers [16] [20].

## **Conclusion**

Political cognition serves as the cognitive infrastructure through which communal norms are constructed, validated, and perpetuated. By filtering information, legitimizing authority, and moralizing group interests, it transforms individual beliefs into collective expectations. In an era of escalating polarization, understanding these mechanisms is critical for fostering norms that balance communal cohesion with democratic pluralism. Future research must explore how institutional designs—from electoral systems to algorithmic transparency—can mitigate the fragmenting effects of identity-driven cognition.

## WHY IS AUTHENTICITY IMPORTANT IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP? <sup>ii</sup>

The aim of this research is to measure the perception of authentic political leadership (Singh, Ratchford, & Prasad, 2014; Ertimur and Gilly, 2012). In contemporary politics, perceived authenticity has emerged as a critical factor in political leadership, influencing voter trust, election outcomes, and democratic accountability. Research shows authenticity has become as important as traditional leadership qualities like competence and integrity in shaping public perception of politicians.

Perceived authenticity significantly influences voting behavior. When politicians are seen as authentic, voters are more likely to support them at the ballot box [3]. This author argues that:

1. This relationship is especially pronounced among voters who explicitly value authenticity as an important factor in their decision-making.
2. Recent elections demonstrate this effect: Donald Trump's perceived authenticity advantage contributed to his 2024 presidential victory, while Kamala Harris faced criticism for an "authenticity gap".
3. Similarly, Ed Davey's success in expanding Liberal Democrat representation in the 2024 UK election has been attributed to his authentic self-portrayal.

Political authenticity comprises three key dimensions that voters evaluate:

1. Consistency - Politicians appear authentic when their actions align with their stated views over time and they fulfill campaign promises regardless of political pressure [2] [5]. Research shows candidates who consistently implement their campaign promises are considered more authentic than those who renege under pressure [3].
2. Ordinariness - Leaders are perceived as authentic when they appear down-to-earth and unlike typical politicians [2] [4]. This dimension contradicts the image of calculated politicians acting on strategic motives rather than true convictions [5].
3. Immediacy - Authenticity is associated with spontaneity and actions driven by personal convictions rather than strategic calculation [5]. Politicians seem authentic.

Authenticity is particularly important for citizens with lower levels of political trust [4]. In an era of declining faith in political institutions, authenticity offers a pathway to reconnect with disillusioned voters. Those who distrust traditional politics place greater emphasis on politicians being "in touch with ordinary people" rather than displaying conventional political attributes like being "clever" or "dressing well" [4].

The growing importance of authenticity reflects a broader shift in political culture:

1. Rejection of traditional political performance - Citizens increasingly distrust polished, scripted political communication, preferring leaders who break with conventional political norms [4].
2. Rise of populism - Populist leaders like Trump, Duterte, and Bolsonaro have capitalized on authenticity by positioning themselves as political outsiders who represent "common folk" against corrupt elites [4].
3. Diversified authenticity styles - Different authenticity strategies can succeed, from populist outsiders to "everyday celebrity politicians" like Boris Johnson or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who cultivate relatable images through social media and casual presentations [4].

Authentic leadership enhances effectiveness by increasing followers' identification with leaders [1]. When politicians are perceived as true to themselves, it helps citizens connect with their message and vision, potentially improving governance outcomes through stronger leader-follower relationships. Perceived authenticity has become a crucial dimension of political leadership that can determine electoral success, enhance voter trust, and strengthen democratic accountability in an era of increasing political skepticism.

### **ONLINE INFLUENCES <sup>iii</sup>**

It is crucial to develop a model of authenticity in political leadership that considers online voter behavior. Voters struggle to determine whether a leader is genuine through traditional means. While offline, voters can directly interact with politicians at events and personally experience their authenticity through face-to-face engagement [4] [10], online they must rely on mediated experiences of authenticity-created through social media, videos, and digital interactions-to drive their political support [2] [3].

Although political authenticity has been extensively studied in political science literature, there's limited work conceptualizing and measuring authentic experience in digital contexts [3] [4]. Little is known about how online political authenticity relates to established concepts like voter decision-making and engagement behavior [7], including how candidates' personal brand, communication style, and community interaction affect perceptions. This knowledge gap creates confusion for both researchers and campaign strategists [3].

What's concerning is that misunderstanding digital authenticity creates opportunities for manipulation and misrepresentation in political spaces [11] [12]. Online, politicians and voters are separated physically and temporally, with limited opportunities to build genuine relationships [7]. The digital environment's anonymity gives rise to potential deception, making it difficult for voters to distinguish between truly authentic candidates and those merely performing authenticity [3] [7].

Research shows that citizens judge politicians' authenticity based on three key dimensions: ordinariness (appearing down-to-earth), consistency (alignment between actions and views), and immediacy (seeming unscripted) [4] [5] [10]. Perceived authenticity significantly influences voting intentions and is especially important to citizens with lower political trust [10]. In political contexts, authenticity is a multidimensional experience that emerges through various forms of engagement-including how candidates present themselves as ordinary people unlike typical politicians, demonstrate consistency in their values, and engage directly with voters through seemingly unscripted interactions [10]. Politicians increasingly use social media for self-presentation techniques to appear genuine to constituents [2], yet these efforts may be perceived differently based on factors like gender and communication style [2]. This complex relationship between political authenticity and voter behavior demands further investigation, particularly as AI and deepfake technologies threaten to erode trust in digital political communication [11] [12].

### **DEFINING AUTHENTICITY <sup>iv</sup>**

Authenticity is defined as the consumers' experience of authentic consumption (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). See Table 1. Beverland (2005) argues that consumers are offered authenticity through sincere messages to convince them rationally and experientially of the item's commitment to tradition, passion for craft, and production excellence. Authenticity is a subjective evaluation of genuineness attributed to an object by a consumer (Napoli, et al., 2013). Tourists collecting artefacts believe that the authenticity of an item is found in the article being constructed by a craftsman of a particular tribe and being for a specific purpose,

whereas others find authenticity in mass produced (iconic) representations of the original object (Cohen and Cohen, 2012).

Authenticity may be based on sincerity, innocence and originality (Fine, 2003), or being simple, honest and natural (Boyle, 2003). It may be related to the genuineness, reality, or truth of the object or experience (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). It can be based on a product being true to its heritage, using traditional modes of production (Beverland, 2005).

Furthermore, authenticity can infuse the item or experience with a set of values that differentiate it from other, more commercialized, brands. Grayson and Martinec (2004) demonstrate that, ultimately, consumers use different cues to assess different kinds of authenticity for different effects (p.297). For example, drawing on historical associations, authenticity has been shown to be central to consumer roles within subcultures, for example as experienced in classic car clubs (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006). Historical associations have also been found in communication strategies building brand authenticity with luxury wine makers (Beverland, 2005).

Therefore, the authentic consumption experience is a multi-dimensional construct made up concurrently of various states of consciousness (sub-constructs). For example: existential, (intra-personal and interpersonal) (Wang, 1999), iconic, indexical and hypothetical (Grayson and Martinec, 2004), self-referential and hyper-authentic (Rose and Wood, 2005), objective and constructive (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006), pure, approximate and moral (Beverland, et al., 2008), control, connection and virtue (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), and hot and cool (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). This definition is supported in different contexts, such as goods and services (Bruner, 1994; Grayson and Martinec, 2004), food and beverage (Beverland, 2005; Beverland, et al., 2008), tourism (Cohen, 1988; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999), reality television (Rose and Wood, 2005), subcultures (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006), and advertising (Chiu, Hsieh, and Kuo, 2012).

Table 1 shows the sub-constructs that define authenticity in the conceptual model. Based upon this table and citations it is summarised that in the online consumption experience consumers need to feel connection to the original time of manufacture through the brand (*Time Origin*). Online consumption experiences also revolve around connection and identification with everyday people through the community (*Everyday People*). Often consumers on and offline through the service will seek positive first hand experience of the item to assist them in achieving personal goals of practical self-authentication (*First Hand Experience*). The community's independent judgment will also assist this process of self-authentication (*Independent Judgment*). They are then able, through focusing on the brand consumption, to make judgements about performance or best value for money (*Instrumentality*) and community interactions to allow for required standards to be tested (*Verification*).

Personal self-authentication is achieved by focusing on the service market leader (*Ubiquity*), its community (*Brand Proximity*) and its shared laws of governance (*Communal Norms*). Consumers online tend to create experience from the brand situation and production through their experience of the brand's script (*Scripted Narrative*), fantasy image (*Situation Fantasy*) and product experience (*Self-Relevant Goals*). Online, consumers need to make judgements about the authenticity of the original article through the brand (*Objective*). The service helps in this process as it often projects onto the brand imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, and powers (*Constructive*). Consumers also project their own values onto the brand (*Consumer Values*) and brand values assist the consumer to achieve moral self-authentication (*Brand Values*). Authentic brand consumption experiences are enhanced when the consumer feels involved with the creators of the brand (*Commitment to Tradition*) and its place of manufacture (*Place of Origin*). Authenticity is supported if the brand is guaranteed to be genuine (*Guarantee of Being Genuine*) and often the online service itself

has official laws of governance (*Universal Norms*) as well as community-based morals that are consistently applied (*Purity of Motive*).

**TABLE 1. DEFINING AUTHENTICITY**

Type	Construct	Definition	Authors
Iconic: Authentic reproduction of the original.	Time Origin	A feeling of connection to the original time of manufacture.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
Identification: Identifying elements of authenticity in fantasy.	Everyday People	Consumers connect/identify with everyday people.	Rose & Wood (2005)
Practical Self/Interpersonal Self-Authentication: Where self-referential behaviors reveal the consumers true self.	First Hand Experience	A positive first hand experience of the item assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	Beverland and Farrelly (2010)
	Independent Judgment	The independent judgment of other consumers of the item assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Instrumentality	Best performing or best value for money item or experience assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Verification	Testing to establish that required standards are met assists consumers to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Ubiquity	Mainstream, mass brands, or a "market leader" assist the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	
	Brand Proximity	Being close to you or part of your social community assists the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	Leigh, Peters, & Shelton (2006)
	Communal Norms	Laws that govern the community's Behaviour in everyday life assist the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	
	Scripted Narrative	Scripted narrative assists the consumer to construct production authenticity.	

Production/Situation: Consumers blend situations and production to construct authenticity from fantasy.	Situation Fantasy	Fantasy situations provide the consumer indexical elements with which he/she can construct situation authenticity.	Rose & Wood (2005)
	Self-Relevant Goals	Self-relevant goals of a product/experience assist the consumer to construct situation authenticity.	
Social: Use of product symbolism or self-efficacy to construct authentic personal or social identities.	Objective	Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of the original article.	Leigh, Peters, & Shelton (2006)
	Constructive	Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto objects in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc.	
Moral: Iconicity or indexicality to show higher moral status.	Consumer Values	Consumer values mirrored in the brand.	Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink (2008)
	Brand Values	Brand values assist the consumer to achieve moral self-authentication.	
Pure Indexical: A factual or spatio-temporal connection to history and commitment and feeling to the original place of manufacture.	Commitment to Tradition	Love of the craft, process, or the involvement of the creators in the production process.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
	Place of Origin	A commitment too, and feeling for, the original place of manufacture.	
	Guarantee of Being Genuine	An in-situ guarantee of genuineness provided by a recognized authority.	Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink (2008)
Virtuous Self: Personal goals of virtuosity in self-authentication	Universal Norms	Laws that govern societies, these standards override other considerations.	Beverland and Farrelly (2010)
	Purity of Motive	Consistent application of a set of morals.	

## RECENT WORK ▼

Several recent academic papers have explored different aspects of authenticity across various disciplines:

1. 2024 Papers:

- "Identifying AI-Generated Research Papers: Methods and Considerations" examines techniques for distinguishing between human-authored and AI-generated academic content, including textual analysis, metadata examination, and content evaluation methods [1].
- "Brand Authenticity: A 21-Year Bibliometric Review" analyzes 880 articles (2003-2023) showing increasing publication trends and identifying research clusters in tourism, food/retail, and marketing/management [2].
- "AI vs. AI: The Detection Game" evaluates the capabilities of AI content detection systems in identifying whether texts were written by humans or AI, with particular focus on academic integrity applications [3].

2. 2023 Papers:

- "From authentic assessment to authenticity in assessment" discusses conceptual challenges in assessment planning within education [5].
- "Always-on authenticity: Challenging the BeReal ideal of 'being real'" examines the social media app BeReal and questions its claims of providing a uniquely authentic platform experience [6].

3. 2022 Papers:

- "Craving alter real authenticity through the post-postmodern lens" investigates tourists' attitudes toward "alter real authenticity" (altered reality) from a post-postmodern perspective [7].

4. 2021 Papers:

- "The Essence of Authenticity" expands the "3C-view" of authenticity (consistency, conformity, and connection) by adding a fourth dimension-continuity-creating a "4C-model" that approaches authenticity as a developmental process rather than a static state [8].

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