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Perceptions and assessments of socialism versus the US System: experimental evidence

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ABSTRACT

We address three main research questions in this paper. Do U.S. citizens have a realistic view of the U.S. political and economic system? Do citizens have a realistic view of what socialism looks like in most other Western style democracies? And finally, are differences between perception and reality modified by partisan identification and ideology? We run survey experiments with college students in two national universities located in the South in which we randomly ask respondents to evaluate political and economic systems based on either a label (“Socialism” or “The US System”) or a reasonable description of these systems’ main characteristics. Results. Across all participants, the label “Socialism” is slightly less preferred, but respondents are neutral between descriptions of a Socialist system and the current US system. Partisan and ideological differences are evident, however, as Democrats and Liberals rank the descriptions and labels of each system equally (indicating positive perceptions of Socialism), while Republicans and Conservatives assess the description of Socialism much more favorably than the mere label. Our results suggest that partisans do not simply differ in their evaluation of Socialism, but in the conception of what Socialism is. There also appear to be discrepancies in perceptions among partisans about how the US political and economic system is organized, but surprising agreement in evaluating the system as it exists.

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Survey experiment

There is no shortage of concern in the public square over the perception that young people, and college students specifically, are embracing socialism and becoming more critical of their own country’s political and economic system. Recent *Washington Examiner* articles for example, warned that “Colleges are turning people socialist” and that “Most liberal college students are not proud Americans and support socialism” (Richards, 2021; White, 2019). Fox News reported that “Millennials, Gen Z [are] increasingly comfortable with socialism, Marxism,” (Conklin, 2020) and a 2019 Gallup survey headline reported that “Socialism as Popular as Capitalism among Young Adults in U.S” (Saad, 2019). There does in fact appear to be consistent polling evidence that younger voters are not nearly as skeptical of socialism as older generations, and this also seems to be reinforced by the popularity of figures like Bernie Sanders who at times describes himself as “Socialist” (Shelley & Mitt, 2016).

We are skeptical, however, that current studies of support for socialism among college students accurately reflects their true preferences. The word “socialism” is a loaded term which is sometimes used to describe countries as diverse as Switzerland and North Korea. The economic and political disaster occurring in Venezuela is often attributed almost entirely to “socialism” by conservative pundits and politicians, though socialist leaders in Latin America have had wildly varying results (Toro, 2018). We attempt to gain a more nuanced understanding of how college students feel about

socialist-style economic and political systems relative to that of the United States. In doing so, we take a step back and imagine that college students may not have a particularly strong grasp either of what socialism typically means in a real-world context, nor what our own American system entails in terms of the relationship between market and state provision of goods in society. Anecdotally, this perception is rooted in our collective experience of teaching political science to hundreds of students over several years. Our project is guided, therefore, by three research questions. Do students have a realistic view of our political and economic system? Do students have a realistic view of what socialism looks like in most other Western style democracies? It has become commonplace for political entrepreneurs to seek attention with dire warnings about how growing numbers of young people are attracted to Soviet-style communism and other bogeymen. But these interpretations often hinge on the assumption that when students express favorable opinions of a system described vaguely as “socialist,” they are in fact endorsing the worst real-world political economies of the last half century. This, however, may be far from the students’ intentions.

A third research question asks whether differences between perception and reality are modified by partisan identification and ideology. In the context of political discussions, a gulf often exists between the words people use and the concepts those words represent (Brugman et al., 2019). Ideology plays a powerful role in how individuals interpret information and weigh evidence (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Because American liberals and conservatives tend to use language differently (Mor et al., 2021), we would expect that a word like “socialism” would spark different feelings by ideology.

To be sure, the popularity of socialism as revealed by various surveys can seem quite surprising and alarming to those who view the demise of Soviet Communism as Reagan and Thatcher’s greatest achievement and assume that for today’s students, socialism and Stalin-style communism are essentially interchangeable terms. A 2019 study by the Pew Research Center found that half of all respondents ages 18–29 had a positive impression of socialism, while only about a third of those over 65 did so. The amount of young people with favorable perceptions of socialism (50%) is similar to that of capitalism (52%; Hartig, 2019). In a study conducted for the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC), 64% of Gen Z respondents said they were “somewhat or extremely likely” to vote for a “political candidate who identifies as socialist” (YouGov, 2019). The 2021 American College Student Freedom, Progress and Flourishing Survey found that nearly half of students self-identifying as either “slightly, somewhat, or very liberal” had a “positive view” of socialism, though this may be a low estimate given that respondents were previously informed that one way to think of socialism is a system “in which the types, quantities produced, and prices of goods and services are planned by the government, and property is owned by “society”” (Bitzan & Routledge, 2021). This points to a major issue, however, with topline reports of survey data regarding support for socialism. If students are conceiving of socialism in vastly different ways, then it is not particularly helpful to know that a certain percentage either supports it or not. Bitzan and Routledge (2021) recognize this weakness and so ask students how they conceive of socialism in the first place. A limitation of their approach is that they offer two possible definitions which are quite distinct, and the first one (quoted in the previous paragraph) is far from what can be reasonably described as socialism experienced in this country. Unsurprisingly, only a small percentage of students who think of socialism in this extreme version of central planning have a positive view of it, even among those who identify on the survey as being “liberal” in their political ideology. This raises the question of how useful the definition is in measuring public opinion.

Similarly, VOC reports ominously that 66% of Americans “cannot accurately define socialism” but this failure is perhaps because VOC claims the true definition of socialism is “when the government owns all property and controls nearly 100% of the national economy and makes all important decisions about prices, wages, and job placements.” This description is arguably too extreme even for Venezuela, often cited as the poster child for the dangers of socialism (Stephens, 2019). Little wonder that the vast majority of Americans do not think of socialism this way. A Pew Research study asked respondents the open-ended question “Why do you have a positive/negative view of socialism?” and found that citizens have quite disparate views of what socialism does. A plurality of those with

negative impressions of socialism believes it is detrimental to one's work ethic and promotes dependence on government. Over half of those with a positive view, however, think that socialism actually "builds upon and improves capitalism" and creates more fairness (Doherty et al., 2019). Still, it is not clear from this study what citizens think socialism actually looks like in terms of policy and institutional structure.

We take an experimental approach that we believe improves upon our understanding of how students perceive and assess socialism relative to our own political and economic system. We begin with the assumption that students do not really know very much about what most socialistic systems are like nor do they even have a solid foundation of how capitalistic and government structures work together to provide goods in our own system. Poor knowledge of civics and politics in the United States is well established (Bauerlein & Bellow, 2015; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). We therefore devise a survey experiment that can essentially accomplish two main tasks. First, we want to assess any differences between what students think of when asked about both the US system and socialism versus how they react to reasonable descriptions of these systems. Second, we want to be able to then assess actual preferences between these competing conceptions of political economy. Because students are often exposed to extreme definitions of socialism in the public square, we imagine that for many, particularly conservatives and Republicans, a description of socialism more aligned with the kinds of social democracies in Western Europe will be more appealing to them. Similarly, we suspect that students underestimate the number of socialistic elements we already have built into the American system and imagine that on average, there will be differences in how students perceive of our system by name versus description. Accordingly, we test three hypotheses:

H1: Students exposed to a description of the United States political and economic system will express less support for it than those who are not.

H2: Students exposed to a description of a socialistic system will express more support for it than those asked for their opinion of "socialism."

H3: Differences between perceptions of the systems due to naming versus describing them will be moderated by partisan identification and political ideology.

While the benefit of an experimental method may be questionable here, we believe that this allows us to better assess how the description of these different political and economic systems causes a change in preference, if any, from the baseline preferences elicited by mere labels. Were we to use a non-experimental method, we would then be much more concerned about question ordering, priming effects, and omitted variable bias. Thanks to random assignment we can be confident that if we see differences in how students rate the same system when described or just labeled, that this represents how a reasonable description of socialism or the US system can affect preferences.

Samples

To assess these hypotheses, we conducted web-based survey experiments at two public universities in the south during the spring semester of 2020 for one of the schools and the spring semester of 2021 for both of them. We believe that college students are a theoretically interesting population because as mentioned in the introduction, there has been much media attention paid to the supposed affinity that undergraduates have for socialism. To the extent that our more educated citizens become advocates of socialistic elements we might expect that these will become more prevalent in society. In addition, there is much concern on the political Right that universities are too liberal and that professors are actively indoctrinating students in socialism and other leftist ideas. We are therefore motivated to gain a better

understanding of what this influential demographic for our politics and our economy actually thinks about socialism vis-à-vis our American system. The political culture of the schools is similar in that the website Niche.com ranks these campuses among the lowest in terms of liberal ideology. At both campuses the research design was approved by their respective internal review boards, after which students were recruited for participation via appeals by their professors. The samples produced are diverse, but not random. The spring 2020 experiment at the University of South Alabama produced 620 useable responses followed by an additional 450 in spring 2021. At the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a spring 2021 survey resulted in 357 useable observations. Approximately 9.6% of the sample started the survey but did not answer all of the questions necessary for this analysis. To prevent multiple submissions, Qualtrics places a cookie on a user's browser and rejects participation when it sees the browser a second time.

Summary statistics of demographics are reported in [Table 1](#). The sample is diverse in terms of partisanship with 38% identifying as Democrats, 27% as Republicans, and 35% as Independents. There is similar variation with political ideology, with the sample leaning slightly left (3.7 on a 1–7 scale of conservatism). The sample is racially diverse as 66% of respondents are White, 16% are black, and 18% are from another racial/ethnic minority. Over two-thirds of participants are female, and 18% are political science majors. While this is not a random sample of the college student population, it does not differ substantially in terms of variables that might be confounded with views toward political economy, with one caveat being that we do not have data on family income. For the college population in general, about 25% identify as Conservative while in our sample that number is about 28%. Conversely about 50% of the population identifies as Liberal, while in our sample it is 45% (Abrams & Khalid, 2021). In terms of race, our sample has an overrepresentation of African-Americans (15% versus 10% in the population) and white students (66% versus 55%), with fewer other minorities as expected in the population. The average age of our respondents is 23, and they are fairly evenly distributed among Freshmen (24%), Sophomores (22%), and Juniors (25%), while 16% are Seniors and 13% are graduate students. In terms of gender, our sample has twice as many women as men. While problematic, women do strongly outnumber men 56% to 44% in the U.S. college population (Hanson, 2021), and our results do not change substantively when controlling for gender.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
All Systems	1427	5.238	2.521	0	10
US System Named	374	5.433	2.257	0	10
Socialism Named	334	4.653	3.041	0	10
US System Described	352	5.372	2.08	0	10
Socialism Described	367	5.441	2.568	0	10
US System Named Frame	1427	.262		0	1
Socialism Named Frame	1427	.234		0	1
US System Described Frame	1427	.247		0	1
Socialism Described Frame	1427	.257		0	1
Political Science Major	1324	.181		0	1
Republican	1486	.267		0	1
Democrat	1486	.38		0	1
Independent	1427	.345		0	1
Ideology	1578	3.629	1.685	1	7
Liberal	1427	.456		0	1
Conservative	1427	.28		0	1
Moderate	1427	.263		0	1
Unidentified Institution	1427	.75		0	1
Year of Survey	1427	1.566	.496	1	2
Female	1492	.678		0	1
Age	1492	23.4		18	73

Experiment design

Students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. The first condition we refer to as “US System Named” and respondents were simply asked the following: “Think about the economic and political system we have in the United States (that is, the system in general, not any particular administration). From 0 to 10, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a good system?” A second condition is similar, but students are instead asked about their assessment of socialism: “Some countries follow an economic and political system called socialism (alternatively called “democratic socialism” or “social democracy”). From 0–10, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this is a good system?”¹ We call this condition “Socialism Named.” The next two framing conditions leave out the names of systems and provide only descriptions. The first is meant to describe the political and economic system of the United States:

Imagine a country that provides most goods and services via a market mechanism, including a large degree of private ownership and provision of natural resources, heavy industry, public utilities, transportation and healthcare. This country also has a progressive income tax in which higher brackets of income are taxed at increasing rates so that the national government can provide public goods like national security. These income taxes are comparatively low, as the country offers fewer social welfare benefits than others with similar levels of economic and political development. On a scale of 0-10 . . .

We refer to this experimental condition as “US System Described.” The final condition attempts to maintain as much of the language as possible while drawing essential distinctions between the political and economic system of the US and more socialistic systems such as one might find in Western Europe, and of the kind that some popular Democratic politicians such as Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez applaud. We call this condition “Socialism Described”:

Imagine a country that provides most goods and services via a market mechanism, **while the government owns and manages most** provision of natural resources, heavy industry, public utilities, transportation, and healthcare. This country also has a progressive income tax in which higher brackets of income are taxed at increasing rates so that the national government can provide public goods like national security. These income taxes are comparatively **high**, as the country also offers **more** social welfare benefits than others with similar levels of economic and political development. On a scale of 0-10 . . .

Differences between the last two conditions have been boldfaced for ease of interpretation. Random distribution of the four framing conditions was successful, with percentage rates ranging from 23.4% to 26.2%. Demographic checks across the four sub-samples did not produce statistically significant differences, which can be seen in Appendix [Table A3](#).

Results

The main results of the experiment are reported in [Table 2](#) and [Figure 1](#). We use Ordinary Least Squares Regressions for ease of interpretation and because the dependent variable may reasonably be considered continuous assuming respondents consider each ranking on a 0 to 10 scale to be equidistant. Models treating the dependent variable as ordinal and using logistic regressions do not produce substantively different results. Our models only include the framing conditions as independent variables since the experimental design controls for confounding factors via random assignment. In separate models, we control for Female, Political Science Major, Year, and University, as these factors potentially bias the representativeness of the samples. None of these variables were statistically significant, however, nor did they substantively affect the main findings, so we exclude them here.

¹To clarify, students receiving this condition did not receive alternate versions with the words “democratic socialism” or “social democracy.” The wording in the parentheses was included for all receiving this condition to encourage them to consider the related concept most meaningful or useful to them.

Table 2. Framing effects on system preferences.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	All	Democrats	Republicans	Liberals	Conservatives
Socialism Named	-0.780*** (0.188)	1.580*** (0.246)	-4.575*** (0.352)	1.945*** (0.237)	-4.764*** (0.321)
US System Described	-0.061 (0.186)	0.246 (0.241)	-0.855** (0.342)	0.288 (0.230)	-0.730** (0.308)
Socialism Described	0.008 (0.184)	1.425*** (0.240)	-2.923*** (0.335)	2.094*** (0.234)	-2.940*** (0.298)
Constant	5.433*** (0.129)	5.020*** (0.167)	6.463*** (0.248)	4.760*** (0.160)	6.470*** (0.218)
<i>N</i>	1427	544	355	651	400
<i>R</i> ²	0.017	0.107	0.375	0.165	0.411

Base Category: US System Named.
Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$.

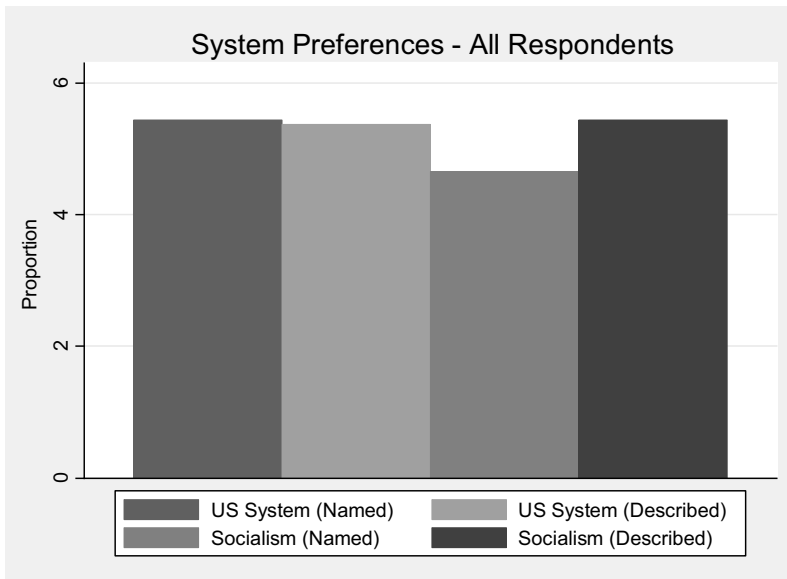


Figure 1. Average rankings of political/economic systems. Respondents were asked on a scale of 0–10 the extent of agreement or disagreement that the system “would be a good one.”

Model 1 includes all respondents and provides evidence to support Hypotheses 2, but not Hypothesis 1. The base category in Model 1 is the US System Named, and the coefficient for US System Described is not statistically significant, indicating that students on average do not perceive or assess the political economy of the United States differently when given a description of it versus asked their impression of it. In Figure 1, however, we can see that there is a noticeable difference between students’ perception of socialism as a term, versus a description of it. The mere term receives an evaluation of about 0.8 pts less than the description, which amounts to a decline of approximately three standard deviations. Interestingly, there is no discernable difference in terms of student preferences between Socialism Described and the US System named, as the coefficient for the former is 0.008, indicating almost no effect of the framing condition when compared to the base category. Similarly, there is no statistically significant difference between student evaluations of the US System Described and Socialism Described. One may be tempted to attribute this to the similarity of the

frames. Perhaps students did not read them carefully enough to notice the important distinctions. The rest of the models refute this, however, and lend support to Hypothesis 3 as subgroups based on Party ID and Ideology clearly responded differently to the description frames.

Figure 2 provides a clear visual representation of just how differently Democrats and Republicans responded to the framing conditions. Model 2 of Table 2 indicates that Democrats ranked Socialism Described 1.4 pts ($p < .01$) higher than US System Named, while Model 3 shows that Republicans ranked the former three points ($p < .01$) lower than the latter. An even starker difference can be seen between liberals and conservatives in Models 4 and 5. Here, ideology is measured as a binary indicator – respondents are either Liberal or not, Conservative or not. While Liberals on average prefer Socialism Described by two points ($p < .01$), Conservatives prefer the US System Named by 3 points ($p < .01$). Interestingly, Models 3 and 5 indicate that there is mixed support for Hypothesis 1, but only among Republicans and Conservatives. That is, both Republicans and Conservatives assess the US System differently depending on whether they are asked about it by name or by its description. In both models the description frame causes a statistically significant decrease in support. Democrats and Liberals, however, show no differences in their perceptions of the US System as named versus described.

A similar distinction can be seen with the frame conditions regarding socialism. In Figure 2, we see that for Democrats, the average rating of the US System Named and Described are essentially the same, as are the ratings of Socialism Named versus Socialism Described. The slight differences are not statistically significant. For Republicans, however, the differences are notable. Figure 3 shows marginal

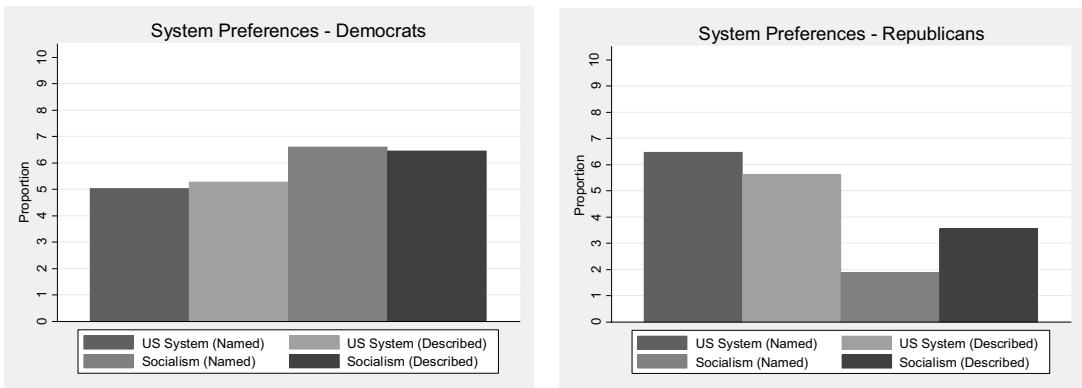


Figure 2. Average rankings of political/economic systems, by Party ID. Respondents asked on a scale of 0–10 the extent of agreement or disagreement that the system “would be a good one.”

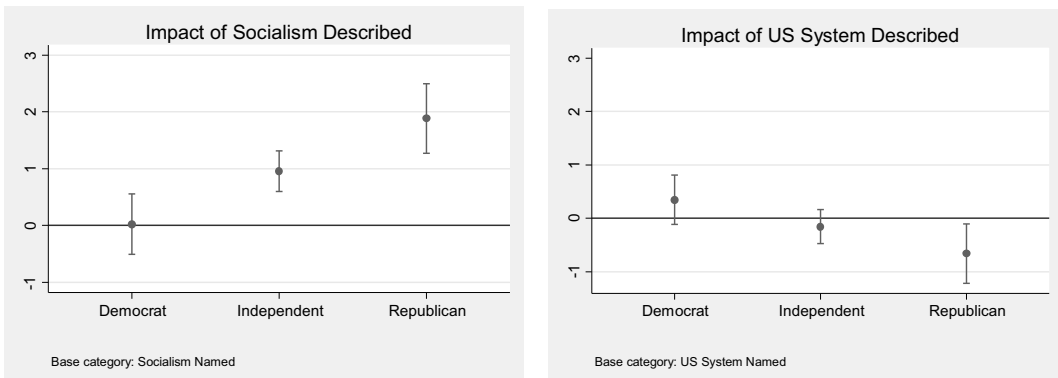


Figure 3. Marginal effects plots, by Party ID. The dots indicate the difference between respondents’ agreement that the system would be good when given a description versus a simple label, conditioned by partisan identification.

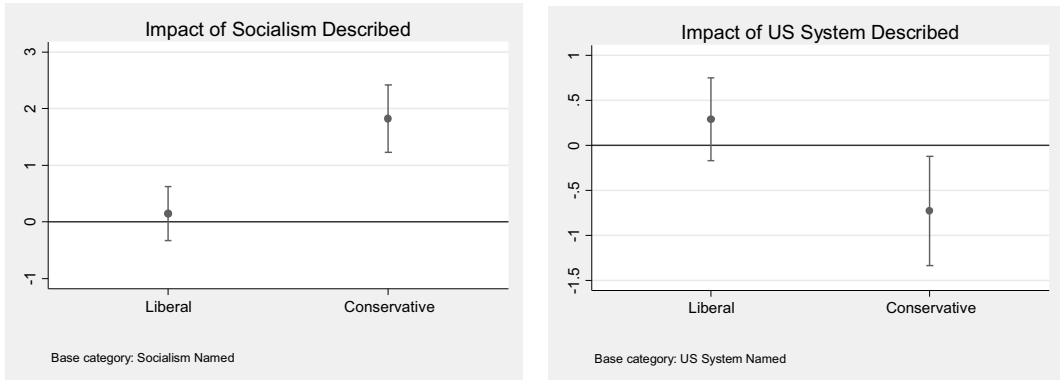


Figure 4. Marginal effects plots, by ideology (binary). The dots indicate the difference between respondents’ agreement that the system would be good when given a description versus a simple label, conditioned by political ideology.

effects of the description frames when compared against the frames with just the names of the systems. We see that for Democrats the effects of naming both the US system and Socialism are no different from their descriptions, while for Republicans the effect of the US System Described frame is negative and significant ($p < .01$) and the effect of the Socialism Described frame is positive and significant. In fact, Republicans rate socialism about two points higher when given a description of it than when asked their impression based on the word itself.

Figures 4 and 5 show the same type of marginal effects, but this time conditioned on political ideology. The results are similar to those based on Party ID, as no differences are discerned among Liberals while strong distinctions emerge among conservatives. The sizes of the effects are also comparable. In Figure 5, ideology is measured as an ordinal scale from 1 (Very Liberal) to 7 (Very Conservative). Here we see that the description frames only have a statistically significant effect among weak Liberals, while such effects are clearly seen among Moderates and Conservatives. Among the most Conservative, Socialism Described is rated more than two points (or over 20%) higher than Socialism Named.

Finally a notable consensus emerges between Republicans and Democrats that may not be expected in this era of so much reported polarization. Figure 6 indicates that when partisans are given an unnamed description of the US political and economic system, their average differences are so slight as to be statistically insignificant. This suggests that in theory, Republicans and Democrats have similar



Figure 5. Marginal effects plots, by ideology (ordinal). The line indicates the difference between respondents’ agreement that the system would be good when given a description versus a simple label, across categories of political ideology.

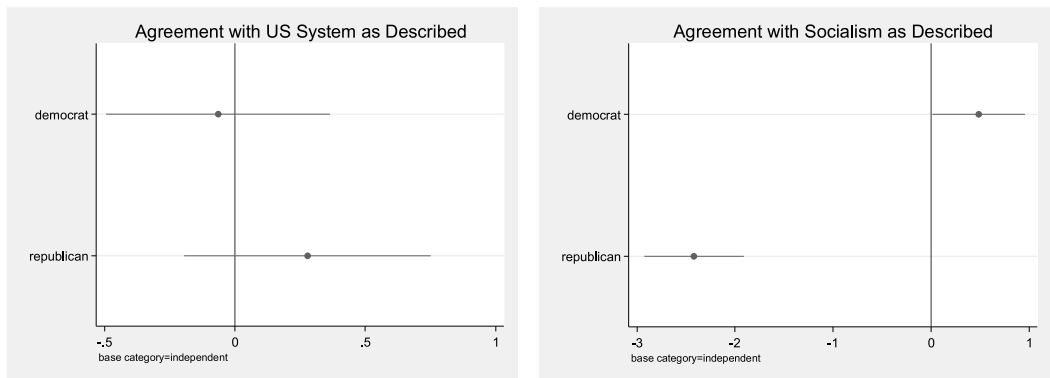


Figure 6. Agreement with systems as described, by Party ID. These coefficient plots indicate similar evaluations among partisans of the US System as described, but clear differences in their assessment of Socialism described.

preferences for the way in which our political economy is organized. This consensus does not exist, however, regarding socialism. Even when described without being named, Republicans rank socialism more than two points lower than Democrats do. Still, this is a much less stark difference than the more than four points that separate these two groups when asked for their impression of socialism based on the name only. The results described here are not substantively different when we analyze the samples individually by school. Ideological and partisan affiliation predict the same basic reactions to the framing conditions. Once exception are Independents. Though the direction of the effects are identical in both samples, the size and level of statistical significance differ. Split sample results can be seen in Appendix [Tables A1 and A2](#).

Limitations

While we are confident that our experimental design yields results that provide a more accurate and nuanced picture of how students perceive of and assess socialism versus the US system, there are nevertheless a number of limitations to the study. First, we have only tested the hypotheses among students from two college campuses and we cannot confidently generalize these results to a national population of university students. It is worth reminding the reader, however, that these students come from more conservative environments than average, and so we might reasonably interpret that the level of support for socialism is probably an under-estimation. At the same time, however, a more conservative sample is also likely to demonstrate stronger differences in their perceptions between Socialism Named versus Socialism Described, and so perhaps we would not see as strong an effect among Republicans and Conservatives in a more representative sample.

Another limitation is that we are making an assumption that if on average, students rank a system similarly when named versus being described, this indicates that the description fits closely with the name in the minds of the respondents. While we believe this is a fair assumption, we cannot be sure this is actually the case. It is possible, for example, that Democrats rank Socialism Named and Socialism Described the same because they happen to approve of the system as we describe it to the same degree that they approve of socialism as they conceive it, however different these may be. If this is what is happening, then it would not be fair to conclude that Democrats and liberals have a more realistic understanding of what socialism and the US system are than Republicans and Conservatives do. We can still, however, conclude that providing Democrats and liberals with a reasonable definition of socialism as it exists will not increase their preference for it.

Finally, the contributions of this paper are largely contingent on the extent to which the reader accepts that our descriptions of the US System and Socialism are reasonable. Naturally, there are myriad ways one could choose to describe these two phenomena. We believe that our descriptions capture the essential elements of the interplay between market and government forces in providing a range of public and private goods, but it is certainly possible that different emphases and different phrasings could elicit inconsistent effects. The fact that our results are not affected by the year in which the survey was administered, nor do they differ substantially across campuses give us assurance that the frames are effective as conceived. In particular, readers may object that our version of a socialist system is too innocuous. We would respond, however, that to the extent that socialism is a potential system taking hold in the United States in the near future, our description is much more useful than those in other surveys that treat socialism as an extreme form of complete central planning.

In the future we plan to expand this research by incorporating alternative definitions of socialism and in particular to investigate more closely the variations in redistributive mechanisms that may affect support for different systems. For example, we would like to know if students respond to the idea of redistribution consistently, or does the type and manner of redistribution matter? That is, are students more open to redistribution when the goods are available to all (such as in public goods) and/or when they are the likely recipients (such as club goods like college education).

Conclusion

This paper provides a novel approach to understanding an important phenomenon related to college students and their political preferences. While there is much fear-mongering in partisan circles about how students are embracing socialism and why this represents an existential threat in the future, our current understanding of these preferences is largely based on surveys that do not adequately capture what students think about socialism as it might realistically develop in the United States, nor do they contextualize these attitudes in terms of what students think about our own system as it actually exists. By using an experimental method we are able to measure the effect of describing the essential elements of systems on students' preferences for these systems. Even if one does not accept a causal inference here, we are providing useful descriptive evidence of the components of partisan preferences for socialism and our mixed system in the US. As Gerring (2012) and Munger et al. (2021) observe, description is an important if often underappreciated area of political science research.

This project produces some useful findings. First, we confirm prior research in showing that on average, socialism is fairly popular among college students, and is competitive with preferences for the US system. While the word socialism itself still has a negative connotation, on average, the effect is rather small, and is almost exclusively present among Republicans and Conservatives. While it is no surprise to find that those on the right politically assess socialism less favorably than the left, we also find that this is not simply a function of different preferences, but largely born out of different conceptions of what socialism is. To a lesser extent this is also true about the American system. When provided anonymous descriptions of the political and economic systems, Republicans and conservatives like the US less and socialism more. Democrats and liberals, on the other hand, are indifferent between labels and definitions, indicating that partisans are interpreting these terms quite distinctly. This apparent gap in definitions renders civil debate much more difficult and could be contributing to distrust and polarization.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix

Table A1. Framing effects on system preferences (by school and ideology).

	U of S AL Liberals	U of NC Liberals	U of S AL Moderates	U of NC Moderates	U of S AL Republicans	U of NC Republicans
Socialism Named	1.598*** (0.463)	2.327*** (0.391)	-1.340** (0.570)	-1.485** (0.590)	-3.724*** (0.516)	-4.978*** (0.724)
US System Defined	0.476 (0.438)	0.804** (0.407)	-0.830 (0.610)	0.385 (0.624)	0.276 (0.516)	-0.264 (0.724)
Socialism Defined	2.167*** (0.453)	2.824*** (0.395)	-0.445 (0.573)	0.490 (0.642)	-2.098*** (0.497)	-2.853*** (0.695)
Constant	4.833*** (0.320)	4.596*** (0.270)	5.870*** (0.440)	5.565*** (0.425)	5.692*** (0.347)	6.478*** (0.445)
<i>N</i>	195	204	115	86	140	67
<i>R</i> ²	0.133	0.247	0.053	0.144	0.359	0.481

Base Category: US System Named.

Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A2. Framing effects on system preferences (by school and Party ID).

	U of S AL Democrats	U of NC Democrats	U of S AL Independents	U of NC Independents	U of S AL Republicans	U of NC Republicans
Socialism Named	1.422*** (0.455)	1.925*** (0.420)	-1.357** (0.533)	-0.324 (0.567)	-3.838*** (0.605)	-4.146*** (0.989)
US System Described	0.465 (0.472)	0.673 (0.436)	-0.350 (0.537)	0.472 (0.603)	0.188 (0.563)	-0.368 (0.926)
Socialism Described	1.327*** (0.460)	2.054*** (0.399)	0.658 (0.540)	1.579** (0.638)	-1.875*** (0.555)	-2.291** (0.880)
Constant	5.022*** (0.322)	4.875*** (0.273)	5.632*** (0.382)	5.111*** (0.426)	5.360*** (0.419)	6.368*** (0.561)
<i>N</i>	172	156	155	148	112	52
<i>R</i> ²	0.074	0.188	0.090	0.069	0.363	0.307

Base Category: US System Named.

Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A3. Randomization check by school (multinomial logit).

	(1)	(2)
	U of NC	U of S AL
US System Defined		
Female	0.182 (0.319)	0.457 (0.319)
White	-0.135 (0.315)	-0.172 (0.303)
Republican	-0.422 (0.572)	0.649 (0.423)
Democrat	-0.505 (0.360)	-0.506 (0.356)
Ideology	-0.025 (0.129)	-0.223 (0.121)
Constant	0.067 (0.547)	0.615 (0.585)
Socialism Named		
Female	-0.182 (0.306)	-0.122 (0.300)
White	-0.220 (0.302)	0.325 (0.313)
Republican	-0.950* (0.569)	-0.094 (0.426)
Democrat	-0.543 (0.343)	-0.075 (0.355)
Ideology	-0.006 (0.122)	-0.049 (0.119)
Constant	0.481 (0.521)	0.072 (0.596)
Socialism Defined		
Female	-0.204 (0.310)	0.112 (0.301)
White	-0.109 (0.309)	0.108 (0.304)
Republican	-0.057 (0.561)	0.394 (0.412)
Democrat	0.097 (0.357)	-0.152 (0.354)
Ideology	-0.036 (0.128)	-0.077 (0.118)
Const	0.044 (0.545)	0.144 (0.586)
<i>N</i>	356	437

Base Category: US System Named.
Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$.