

Evaluation of Response Behavior on Open-ended Questions: Who Took the Burden to Answer on the Meaning of Left and Right?

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Mitglied der

Left-Right in Political Science Research

- Left-right dimension central element of political science research.
- Facilitates citizens' political orientations and decision-making processes in a complex world.

Research Background

High cognitive burden to answer open-ended questions

1. Understanding & interpretation; deduction of intend
2. Information retrieval
3. Translation into answer and wording

Reasons for Answering the Open-Ended Questions on the Meaning of Left & Right

1. Personality traits: extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism
2. Cognitive abilities: education, political knowledge, and political socialisation background
3. Motivational aspects: political interest and survey participation willingness
4. Left-right self-placement

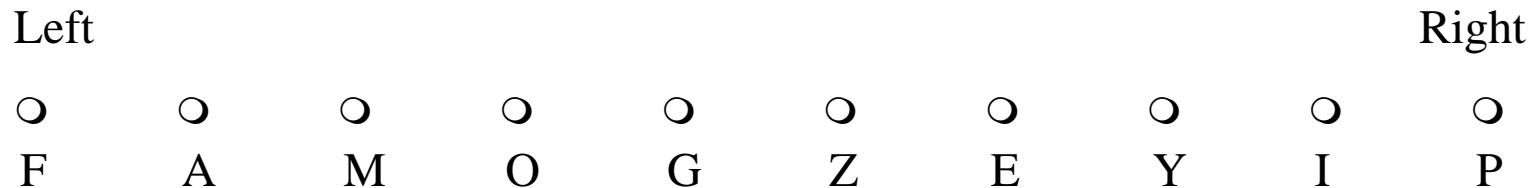
The German General Social Survey (ALLBUS)

- German, continuous academically-driven social survey;
- Founded in 1980 and run as biannual survey;
- Face-to-face interviews;
- Target population: adults of any nationality residing in Germany;
- Random sample of persons registered at place of residence;
- Focus on some main topics + ALLBUS standard BV;
- ALLBUS 2008 main topic: political attitudes and behavior.

Left-Right Self-Placement and Open-Ended Questions

Many people use the terms “left” and “right” when they want to describe different political views.

Here we have a scale which runs from left to right. Thinking of your own political views, where would you place these on this scale?



Could you tell me what you associate with the term “left”?

And could you tell me what you associate with the term right”?

Regression

	<i>personality</i>	<i>cognitive</i>	<i>motivation</i>	<i>self-</i>
	<i>traits</i>	<i>abilities</i>		<i>placement</i>
Personality Traits				
Extraversion	.91*	.96	1.00	1.00
Neuroticism	1.04	1.06	1.07	1.04
Conscientiousness	1.08	1.08	1.09	1.08
Openness	.70***	.82***	.86**	.86**
Agreeableness	.96	.97	.98	.99
Cognitive Abilities				
General school education		1.30***	1.24***	1.21***
Political knowledge		1.48***	1.34***	1.26***
Socialization (East)		2.00***	2.24***	1.89***
Socialization (outside of Germany)		0.77	0.81	0.88
Motivation				
Political interest			1.42***	1.29***
Survey participation			1.13*	1.12
Left-right Self-placement				
Left orientation				2.05***
Right orientation				.84
Left-right self-placement				6.79***

Nagelkerke's R²

Personality:	.04
Cogn. abil.:	.17
Motivation:	.19
Selfplacement:	.28

Regression differentiated by respondents' ideological orientation

	Respondents' Orientation at the Left-right Scale	
	Left	Right
Personality Traits		
Extraversion	.78	.94
Neuroticism	.88	1.08
Conscientiousness	.88	1.16
Openness	1.10	.90
Agreeableness	1.10	.70*
Cognitive Abilities		
General school education	1.28	1.14
Political knowledge	1.06	1.49*
Socialization (East)	3.04**	1.34
Socialization (outside of Ger.)	1.37	0.85
Motivation		
Political interest	1.62*	1.20
Survey Participation	1.32	.96

Conclusion (1)

Indicators influencing response behavior

- Cognitive abilities: formal education, political knowledge and political socialisation;
- Motivational aspects: political interest;
- Placement on the left-right scale:
 - Placement in general
 - Placement at the left vs. the right side of the scale

Conclusion (2)

Potential reasons for unexpected effects of personality traits on response behaviour

- Open-minded respondents with artistic interests and active imagination might be bored by answering open-ended questions.
- Validity of the measurement instrument.
- Survey response behavior is a rather specific behavior. Broad personality traits may not be as predictive as narrower personality traits.

Thank you for your attention

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