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The relationship between issues and individuals' left-right orientation

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Abstract

The major body of the literature about individuals' left-right orientation assumes that individuals' values and attitudes towards different issues will, besides other factors, determine their position in the left-right dimension. Regarding values, it is assumed that these are stable over (a long period of) time and hence, affect individuals' left-right orientation. But as issue preferences change over time, cross-nationally and in their importance for individuals, the relationship between issues and left-right orientation is less clear. We argue and show with data from the European Social Survey (2002/03) of the Netherlands that the relationship between the opinions about or the attitude towards issues and left-right orientation is moderated by issue salience which means the importance people assign to the issues. Those which are important for them affect their left-right orientation, while they may use the latter to form an opinion about an issue which is not important for them.

Introduction

Ever since Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) the ideology is seen as a key influential factor on political behaviour. Downs' rich theoretical discussion on party compartment includes its dependence on (voter's) ideology:

“In a world beclouded by uncertainty, ideologies are useful to parties as well as to voters. Each party realizes that some citizens vote by means of ideologies rather than policies; hence it fashions an ideology which it believes will attract the greatest number of votes.” (Downs 1957: 100)

Based on rational choice theory, Downs explains that with ideology “a voter can save himself the cost of being informed upon a wider range of issues” and “since it is much cheaper to keep informed about ideologies than about issues, from then on [once he knows which party's ideology is more beneficial for him] he does the former as a rational short cut to the latter” (Downs 1957: 98-99).

In subsequent literature great importance is attached to shortcuts, abstract concepts, and other heuristic aids as they serve individuals for their orientation in the world of politics. Heuristics are described as problem-solving strategies (often employed automatically or unconsciously) which serve to “keep the information processing demands of the task within bounds” (Abelson and Levi 1985: 255; Lau and Redlawsk 2001: 952). Among the most prominent of these devices are ideological labels (Zechmeister 2006: 151), and the most common concept used across (Western) democracies is the left-right dimension. On the one hand, it helps people to make up their mind about political issues, government performance and politicians, and finally to come to a voting decision (Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Hinich and Munger 1994; Knight 1985; Popkin 1991). A person could simply choose the position –policy position or in terms of political actors the opinion about these- that is most similar to his or her more general ideological stand (Jacoby 1991: 179). On the other hand, it has a communication function for the political systems: politicians can transmit information by structuring their ideas, policies and own position in the political spectrum along this dimension. The concept is attractive because “in a mass communicating world characterized by mass politics a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability represents an almost unbeatable combination” (Sartori 1976: 342). It provides the most prevalent symbolic foundation of the ideological space (Badescu and Sum 2005: 1) and as Hix finds “on a functional level, the left-right is a

remarkable invention, in that it enables politics to be simplified into either a dichotomy or a single continuum” (Hix 1999). Finally, “the left-right dimension is also valuable and versatile since so many experts, journalists and citizens employ it daily” (Grendstad 2003: 1).

Conceptualisation of individuals’ left-right orientation

Recalling Inglehart and Klingemann’s seminal article (1976), there are three components of the left-right concept: 1) the social, 2) the partisan and 3) the value, issue-based or ideological component¹. The social component refers to individuals’ location in a social surrounding which corresponds with their social identity and their left-right orientation (Freire 2008: 5). The partisan component refers to individuals’ ideological orientation towards political parties. The final component shall be the focus of this study: value, issue-based or ideological component which refers to the link between values or attitudes towards issues and the left-right self-placement (Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Huber 1989). We followed the literature by calling those variable sets “components”, however, this term is rather misleading as the term “component” implies being a constituent part of the left-right ideology but the three variable sets do not form individuals’ left-right orientation but are variables that are somehow related with the concept.

Values and issues

Many researchers have argued that values are the ultimate underpinnings of attitudes, that they are relatively stable and thus lend constancy to evaluations and behaviour (Feldman 2003: 479). In a causal sense they are prior to issue preferences and left-right orientation, i.e. values affect both. The literature in the field does not emphasize the differences between values, attitudes and issue preferences. In fact the terms are used alternating (Milic 2008). Values are seen as base for attitudes and issue preferences which lead many to use the latter to draw conclusions about the underlying values. However, not all issues serve every time as indicators for values. In particular in empirical research, scholars have to bear in mind that given issue preferences may be ad hoc reactions to the current political debate but do not actually reflect an underlying value. We therefore argue that it is crucial to distinguish between values and issue

¹ Freire (2008) constrains this consistency only to Western Europe.

preferences. For its remainder the term issue will be used when we refer actually to an issue preference.

Issues and left-right orientation

Once the distinction between issues and values is taken into account, the relationships to individuals' left-right orientation have to be reconsidered. Values are supposed to be stable over a long time and hence will affect the left-right orientation but the relationship between issues and left-right orientation is less clear.

In empirical research, scholar usually regress the left-right orientation on issues in order to explain the meaning or detect the salience of the left-right concept. For example, Knutsen (1995b) regresses the left-right self-placement on religiosity, left-right materialist and the "new" materialist/post-materialist orientations and shows that new meanings are added to old ones. Potter (2001) finds that the meaning of left and right is expanded to include issues surrounding post-materialism and European integration. By doing so, all these kind of studies contain the assumption that not only issues affect the left-right orientation but that these effects are also the same for all people. We formulate this as a null hypothesis of this study:

H_{0a}: Issues determine individuals' left-right orientation and the effects are the same for all people.

As initially described ever since Downs (1957), ideology is seen as a key factor influencing political behaviour as it is much cheaper for voters to be informed about ideologies than about an infinite number of issues. This implies that once people have found their left-right orientation, they will use it to form opinions about issues. Thus this hypothesis contains the opposite causal relation as stated before.

H_{0b}: Individuals' left-right orientation determines their opinion about issues.

As the arguments for either of the two directions of causality are reasonable one may conclude that effects in both directions can occur even though we do not know for which issues which effects will occur. Therefore we formulate this as the third null hypothesis:

H_{0c}: The relationship between individuals' left-right orientation and issues can be reciprocal.

Beware that this does not mean that we believe that for an issue both effect will occur but if we specify a model with reciprocal causal relationships we can allow for effects in both directions.

It is also important to realize that in these alternative null hypotheses the assumption is made that the effects which will be found are the same for all people. We believe that this assumption is very unlikely. We assume that not all issues are equally important for all people, we expect that the relationship of issues and left-right orientation is a function of the importance people assign to the issues.

This is in line with the study of Carsey and Layman (2006) who find that party identification (which is similar to ideology considered a heuristic) and issue preferences can both cause changes in each other depending on the awareness and salience of issues. Regarding the relationship of left-right orientation and issues we argue that individuals will be more aware about those issues which they consider important and hence, will not need their left-right orientation as shortcut to form an opinion about them. People who consider an attitude or issue to be very important to them personally, care deeply and are especially concerned about it (Krosnick 1988). This motivates them to seek relevant information for this attitude or issue (Berent and Krosnick 1993; Zaichkowsky 1985) and to think about that information (Berent 1990). Consequently they are more aware about those issues and therefore they will have more influence on their behaviour.

The information people find also contains an ideological attribution as it is ideologically framed by its source or sender. For example, when people seek for information about the issue of immigration, they encounter the discourse of political actors whose positions in the left-right dimension are known. In this way, they perceive an anti-immigrant discourse of right-wing political actors and an opposed discourse of left-wing political actors. Thus, whatever opinion people support, they know where this is to be found or placed in the political spectrum. Consequently, people who do find the issue important may also take over the position on the political spectrum connected with this issue. Therefore, it can be expected that people will base their position on the left-right scale on those issues which are important to them.

H₁: Individuals' left-right ideology will be determined by issues which are important to them.

But as people vary in the issues which are important to them, we argue that not all issues affect the left-right orientation equally for all people.

H₂: The relationship between issues and left-right ideology is *not* the same for all people.

Thereby, we are not interested in why some issues are important and other not for people but only how this affects the relation between issue preferences and left-right orientation.

As mentioned initially, individuals can use ideology as a shortcut to reduce information and decision costs (Downs 1957; Kahneman et al. 1982; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Popkin 1991; Sniderman et al. 1991). If they do so, we expect that the left-right ideology will affect their issue preferences. They might use that ideology to substitute information they do not have available and make up their mind about an issue which is not important for them by using their left-right position.

H₃: People can use their left-right orientation in order to form an opinion about issues which are not important for them.

As individuals are dealing with an indefinite number of issues, this could lead to a cross-pressure situation. Lazarsfeld et al. (1968) introduced the concept of cross-pressure in order to explain voting behaviour whereby any social category could be thought of a “pressure” upon the political behaviour of category members. As individuals can be members of several categories, those pressures can be complementary or opposing. The latter case is called cross-pressure and the consequence can be political instability, withdrawal or ambivalence (Horan 1971: 651; Meffert et al. 2004). Applying this to the left-right self-placement we suggest that people may assign importance to opposed issues which thus provokes a cross-pressure situation, and leads to political instability and makes expectations impossible.

H₄: If people face a cross-pressure situation, it is unclear what determines their left-right position.

To sum up, we argue that the relationship between issues and left-right orientation is moderated by the importance people assign to the issues. We suggest that issues which are seen as salient by people will determine their left-right orientation meanwhile they may use the latter to form an opinion about those issues which are of less importance to them. Whereby what is considered to be an important issue can vary from person to person.

Case selection

We will employ the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 1 (2002/03) of the Netherlands². We opt for the Netherlands for two reasons: 1) It has been a consolidated democracy for a considerable time and so its citizens are familiar with the left-right concept. 2) It has a multi-party-system in which the political parties and their supporters cover the whole left-right dimension (see Appendix 1) and we can also observe a broad variety of left-right self-placement among the Dutch population (presented in Figure 1). Inglehart and Klingemann (1976: 246) expect the left-right dimension “to play a relatively prominent role where there is a multiplicity of salient political alternatives”. These characteristics are not only a particularity of the Netherlands but as we are interested in studying the relationship between issues and left-right ideology for individuals the case selection only matters to the extent that it satisfied the characteristics mentioned above. Moreover, around the time of the survey, there was an observable highly polarizing political discussion in Dutch society (as described below) which makes the Netherlands an interesting case to study this more general phenomenon.

In the ESS people are asked about their left-right orientation by the question:

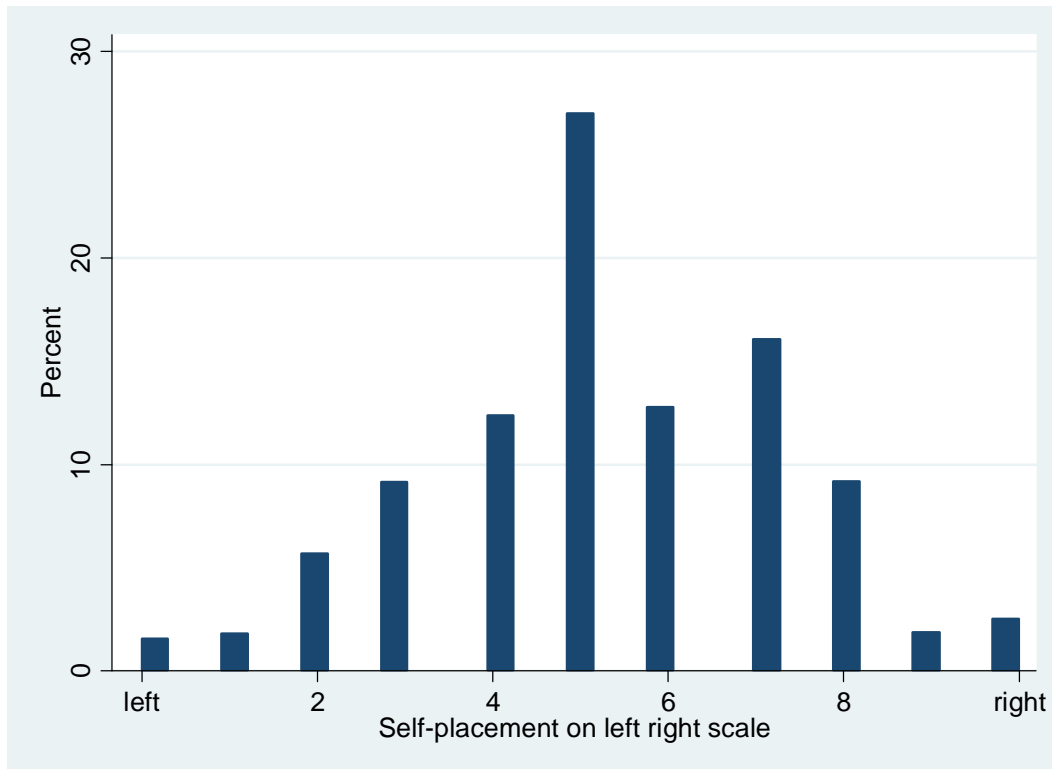
In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?
(LRSCALE)

The distribution of the people's self-placement on this left right scale is presented in Figure 1.

² As we are interested in the systematic differences among individuals, testing the hypotheses with data from a single country shall be satisfied.

ESS Round 1: European Social Survey Round 1 Data (2002). Data file edition 6.1. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

Figure 1: Left-right self-placement of Dutch population



Issue selection

Already Inglehart and Klingemann find that it is “difficult to list all the important political issues, for they are numerous and often fleeting (...) and issues change not only in saliency; they may even change polarity in relation to the left-right dimension” (1976: 257). Out of an infinite number of issues for which we could test their relationship with the left-right ideology, we choose the issue of income equality, the attitude towards immigration and towards homosexuals’ lifestyle. Thus we are choosing old and new issues. Scholars agree that the essence of the left-right ideology was at least at one point in time the disagreement over the scope of government intervention in the economy (Downs 1957; Lipset et al. 1954). We capture this by the question:

*Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:
The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.*

The answer categories are 1 Agree strongly, 2 Agree, 3 Neither agree nor disagree, 4 Disagree, 5 Disagree strongly. (EQUALITY)

Whether the issue of immigration is an element of the left-right dimension is questionable but it was politicised by Dutch political parties which could be separated in those which support immigration and those who are pronounced against it. Consequently, the electorate can also be separated along this issue (see also section 4 on the increasing importance of the immigration issue). We opt for the following question:

Would you say that the Netherlands' cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?

The answer categories range from 0 Cultural life undermined to 10 Cultural life enriched (IMMI).

Finally, we select the issue of homosexuals' lifestyle because it is a very recent but relevant issue as in 2001 the Netherlands were the first country in the world to allow same-sex marriage. This issue is not the most politicised as the majority of Dutch people thinks that same-sex marriage is a good thing or take a neutral position, and only 11% think it would be a bad thing (Keuzenkamp and Bos 2007: 33).³ We employ the following question:

Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish.

The answer categories are 1 Agree strongly, 2 Agree, 3 Neither agree nor disagree, 4 Disagree, 5 Disagree strongly. (GAY)

In summary, we selected one issue, income equality, which at least used to be the main element of the left-right ideology. Whether the second issue, immigration, is an element of the left-right ideology is controversial but it disunites political parties and their electorate for at least the last decade. Finally, we opt for a very recent issue, homosexuals' lifestyle, which does not disunite the Dutch population very much.

Issue salience and its measurement

There is a long ongoing discussion about how to measure issue preferences and salience. One school of thought argues that people indeed have true, overwhelmingly stable attitudes and that fluctuations are attributed to measurement error (Achen 1975; Erikson 1978, 1979; Judd et al. 1981; Judd and Milburn 1980). The opposing school argues that individuals do not have meaningful attitudes and only answer when asked out of politeness (Converse 1964). Thus their answer does not reflect anything else than

³ The *Cultural Changes in the Netherlands* survey asked in 2002: 'Gays are today officially allowed to marry. Do you think this is a good thing, a bad thing or does it make no difference?' 11% of respondents stated this was a bad thing, while 35% took a neutral position.

the most accessible thoughts in their minds. Or they may even use the questionnaire to decide what their attitudes are (Bishop et al. 1980; Feldman 1990; Zaller 1984).

The most appropriate question to measure subjective issue importance is certainly a direct question. To the knowledge of the authors, in the European context only one survey contained this question, the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 1998:

“I now mention to you a number of issues. Could you indicate for each of these issues how important or unimportant it is for you?”

Unfortunately this survey does not contain further questions which would allow us to test the elaborated hypotheses.

Due to the lack of data scholars principally employ a question similar to the following one:

What do you think/as far as you are concerned what is the most important problem/issue facing this country today?

This question is highly problematic as a measure of importance of issues for people as outlined by Wlezien (2005) and Johns (2008).

Thus due to the lack of data, we will operationalise issue salience by separating the sample along two issues for which we have reason to believe that they are highly relevant for the Dutch at the beginning of the new century: (income) equality and immigration.

We operationalise the importance of income equality for people by considering memberships of trade unions or similar organizations. Trade Union members band together in order to achieve common goals, so *per se* income equality at least among them is an important issue for trade union members. The question asked is

Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation?

We group the answer categories “yes, previously” and “no” as “no” together, and obtain so a binary variable with the categories “being a member” or “not being a member” as by becoming a member a person already indicates that the issue is important for him/her.

The second issue we use is the attitude towards immigration because of the highly polemic political debate at the time. In the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study’s pre-election survey (2002) the issue of integration of asylum seekers and foreigners was mentioned by 40% of the respondents as one of the most important national problems which on average gave it the third place in the ranking. The discussion on immigration and especially on the integration of immigrants from Islamic countries in the

Netherlands had revived after the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC on 11 September 2001 (Lucardie and Voerman 2002: 1038). The public debate had focused on the growing presence of Muslim immigrants, who were not sufficiently ‘integrated’ into Dutch society, at least according to many observers. This debate was heated up furthermore by the statements of Pim Fortuyn whose popularity increased rapidly during the year 2001. The former sociology professor at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam had already gained a reputation as an independent critic of the political establishment through his columns in the weekly *Elsevier* newspaper. In his columns, he had criticized European integration and the poor integration of immigrants in Dutch society, in particular Muslims. Already in 1997 he published a book warning against the ‘islamisation’ of the Netherlands.⁴ In November 2001 Pim Fortuyn was elected by a large majority (394 out of 455 votes) as party leader of the newly formed *Leefbaar Nederland (LN)*. General election polls at the beginning of November indicated that LN might expect 6 to 8 seats, by the end of the month already 10 seats, two months later 16 seats, and in February over 20 seats. Pim Fortuyn’s popularity was the reason for the increase in support which was also demonstrated in the local elections: Fortuyn was on the list of candidates for the local elections of *Leefbaar Rotterdam*⁵ which won with 35 % of the votes and became so the largest party in the municipal council of the second largest city in the Netherlands.

The election campaign was characterized by the anti-Islam/anti-immigrant-discourse by Fortuyn. After referring to Islam as a backward culture, the LN dismissed him and he founded his own (party) list, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF)*. Many voters transferred their support from LN to LPF. One week before the elections, Pim Fortuyn was murdered. Even though, the LPF, not yet a proper political party and its leader and only well-known candidate killed, received on the election day (15 May 2002) 17% of the votes which made it the second largest party in the parliament with 26 seats. This is the most spectacular result a new party achieved in the Netherlands; the largest number of seats a new party had previously won were 7 by the D66 in 1967 (Irwin and Holsteyn 2003).

⁴ Pim Fortuyn, *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur: Nederlandse identiteit als fundament* (Against the Islamisation of Our Culture), Utrecht: A.W. Bruna (1997).

⁵ The various “livable” parties were independent of the national party LN and were not branches of or otherwise formally bound to this national party.

The summary of the events which took place just shortly before the fieldwork of the ESS Round 1 shows that the issue of immigration, the integration of (Islamic) immigrants and the acceptance of asylum seekers became increasingly relevant in the political debate in the Netherlands. According to Irwin et al.'s study (2003: 43) on the LPF and its supporters, the opinions of the electorate remained the same over the last elections, so there was no change in the demand but in the supply, i.e. the parties voters can choose. For example, 37% of the LPF voters are those who feel as many as possible asylum seekers should be sent back to their country of origin. So this new party might have caught an old issue but it brought it into the focus of public attention and made it - at least for some people - socially acceptable to be against immigrants.

Given these circumstances we assume that the issue of immigrants was important to the majority of the Dutch population; not only for those who were against immigration but also those who were against the anti-immigration movement. As the debate in the Netherlands focused in particular on Islamic immigrants we choose a question which especially asks for the attitude towards immigrants from countries outside of Europe:

To what extent do you think the Netherlands should allow people from the poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here?

The answer categories are: 1 allow many to come and live here, 2 allow some, 3 allow a few, or 4 allow none. As they do not offer a neutral position, we group 1 and 2 together as people who have a positive attitude towards immigrants, and 3 and 4 as those with a negative attitude.

Table 1 presents the resulting separation of the sample along these the answers to these two questions as well as some characteristics of the groups. We find that each of these four groups cover the whole spectrum of the left-right dimension. Figure 4 presents the distribution for each group. In all groups people use the entire left-right spectrum to place themselves, yet averaging over all people in each group the group means are close to the centre of the left-right scale.

T-tests confirm that the mean differences in left-right self-placement are statistically significant with the exception of group 1 and 3 which are those who do not allow immigration from poorer countries outside of Europe. People in group 1 are on average older than people in the other groups which is also confirmed by a t-test. Finally, the mean differences in education level are statistically significant. This shows

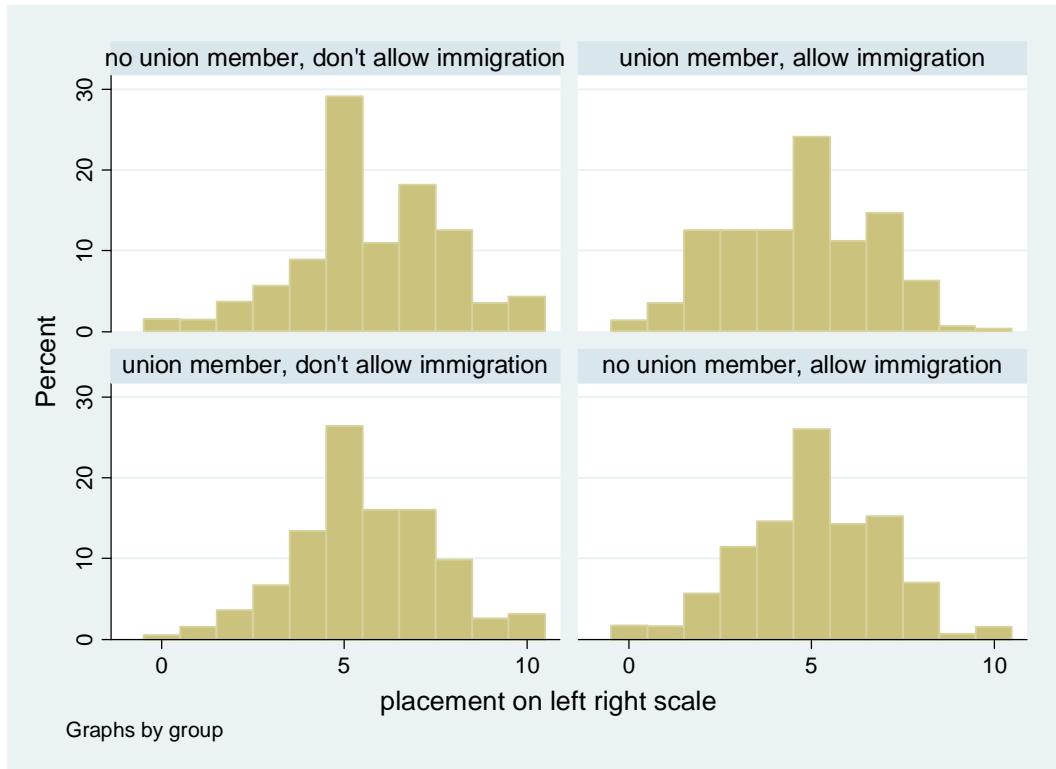
that people who do not allow immigration have on average lower levels of education. Given these differences, we control for the effect of age and education.

Table 1: Separation of the sample and means of group characteristics with missing in brackets

	Against immigration from poorer countries outside Europe		Allowing immigration from poorer countries outside Europe
Not a member of Trade Union or similar organisation	815 (35 %)	number of observations	1,003 (43%)
	5.76	mean left-right scale	5.07
	1952	mean year born	1956
	5.23	mean education level	6.41
	(6.38%)	(missing)	(3.19%)
	(1)		(4)
Member of Trade Union or similar organisation	200 (9 %)	number of observations	293 (13%)
	5.57	mean left-right scale	4.67
	1955	mean year born	1954
	6.02	mean education level	7.15
	(3.3%)	(missing)	(2.39%)
	(3)		(2)
Missing			53
Total number of observations			2,311

Left-right scale from 0 left to 10 right and education level from 1 not completed primary school to 14 second stage of tertiary education

Figure 2: Histogram of left-right self-placement in each group



Specification of the hypotheses

The theoretically elaborated hypotheses are as follows specified for the four groups: As argued before, the issues which are important for people will affect their left-right orientation and there is variation in the issues which are important to people. According to our operationalisation the issue of immigration should be important for everyone and the issue of income equality particularly for trade union members. Thus the specified hypotheses are:

H₁₁: The attitude towards immigration will affect the left-right orientation of everyone who is not facing cross-pressure due to being a trade union member but being against immigration.

H₁₂: The positive attitude towards income equality will affect the left-right ideology of trade union members who are allowing immigration (group 2).

For those people who are trade union members but are against immigration (group 3) we expect hypothesis H₄ to apply. We suppose they will face a cross-pressure situation due to their principle support of equality but not yet when it comes to immigrants and that it will be unclear what determines their left-right position.

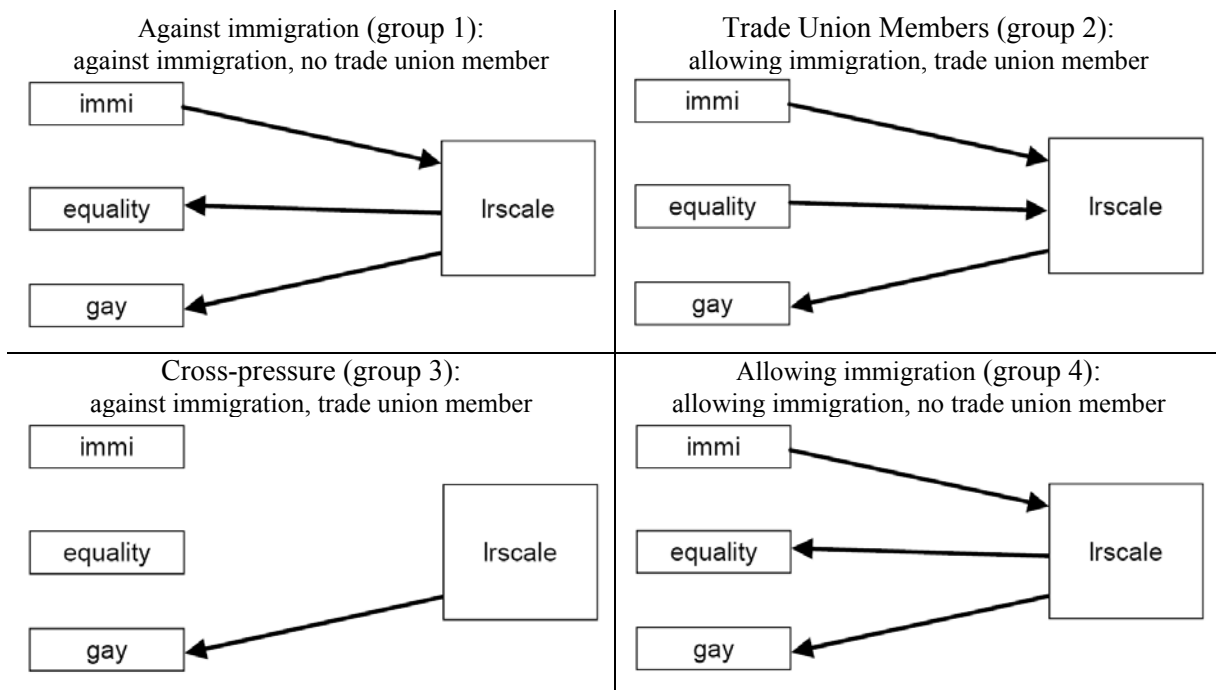
As argued, people can also use the left-right orientation to make up their mind about issues which are of less importance for them. As we have no indication of the importance people assign to the issue of homosexuals' lifestyle, and likewise not for the importance people who are not trade union members assign to the issue of equality we expect hypothesis H₃ to apply.

H₃₁: People can use their left-right orientation to form an opinion about the issue of homosexuals' lifestyle.

H₃₂: People who are not trade union members can use their left-right orientation to form an opinion about the issue of income equality.

The so specified relationships between left-right orientation and issue preferences are illustrated for each group in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Illustration of the relationship between issues and left-right ideology for each group as expected



This figure shows clearly the different relationships we expect for the people in the different groups.

Elaboration of the models

We will first test the null hypotheses H_{0a}, H_{0b} and H_{0c} which are suggested in the literature. According to H_{0a} Model 1 contains effects from the issues to the left-right orientation. According to H_{0b} Model 2 contains effects from the left-right orientation to the issues and according to H_{0c} Model 3 has reciprocal causal relations between left-

right orientation and issues. In all three models all effects are equal for all people. Model 3 is from a point of view of identification problematic but not impossible to solve (Bollen 1989). A simple solution is to introduce for each endogenous variable one exogenous which only affects this endogenous variable (Saris and Stronkhorst 1984). This approach will lead to an overidentified model so even if some extra effects have to be introduced or some effects are not strong enough the model remains in general identifiable. Based on this argument we introduce for each endogenous variable an exogenous variable which we think has especially effect on that endogenous variable.

We suppose that having an immigrant as friend will mainly have an effect on the attitude towards immigration. Thus, for the variable IMMI we use the variable IMMIFRIEND as exogenous variable which is measured by the following question:

“Do you have any friends who have come to live in the Netherlands from another country?” The answer categories are 1 Yes, several, 2 Yes, a few, 3 No, none at all.

We expect religiousness to be an exogenous variable for the variable GAY which is measured by the question: *“Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?”* The answer categories range from 0 not at all religious to 10 very religious. (RELIGION). The reasoning for this selection is that homosexuality is not compatible with (most) religions.

The variable INCOME measured as the household income in the ESS is introduced as the exogenous variable for the endogenous variable whether the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels (EQUALITY) as poorer people are more inclined to rely on the government.

Finally, the Ganzeboom International Socio-economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) will be employed as the exogenous variable for individuals' left-right ideology (LRSCALE).

The descriptive statistics of the groups showed that people who allow immigration have higher levels of education than the others, and that people who are against immigration are older than the others. According to previous research education and age have an impact on the left-right ideology: the relation between issues and left-right ideology should be conditioned by political sophistication (Dalton 2000; Sartori and Sani 1983) as issues cannot have a relation with left-right self-identification “while disbelieving the voter's aptitude to give the terms “left” and “right ” a substantial meaning” (Milic 2008: 3). Furthermore, it was found that the younger age groups are more leftist than the older, and that the younger and older cohorts are more leftist,

meanwhile the middle aged are more rightist (Knutsen 1995a). Therefore, we control for the effect of age and education by introducing them into the model as correlated with the other exogenous variables and affecting all endogenous variables. Age is measured by year of birth, and education by the level and years of education.

The Methodology

Given that the specified models are special cases of a so called Structural Equation Model (SEM) we will estimate and test the models using SEM software, in particular the Maximum Likelihood estimator of LISREL 8.51 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2001). We correct for measurement error which means that we make a distinction between the given answer to a question (the observed variable) and the real value (the unobserved or latent variable). The difference between the two is measurement error (Sarlis and Gallhofer 2007: 183). The size of the measurement errors for the different variables is estimated using different procedures. For details we refer to Appendix 3.

The testing procedure used in this study is as follows: In a first steps we test the model with only direct effects from issues to left-right orientation for all respondents at the same time, then the one with only direct effects from left-right orientation to issues is tested and finally model 3 with reciprocal causal relationships. All three models are tested by using the Multiple group option of Lisrel and restricting the effects to be equal across groups as it is assumed that the relationships are the same in the four specified groups. If one of these models is accepted, the respective null hypothesis could not be rejected. Yet as elaborated in the previous parts we believe that these models are incorrect and thus will be rejected because we expect different models to apply for the different groups. We expect that the direction of the causal relationships between issues and left-right self-placement is moderated by issue salience. Therefore, if the previous models are rejected, we will test the models as theoretically elaborated above.

In order to evaluate whether a model fits to the data we will report the chi² test and the RMSEA although it has been shown that these commonly used evaluation procedures for structural equation models cannot be trusted as the test statistics and Fit indices do not take the power of the test into account, the test statistics are affected by characteristics of the model which have nothing to do with misspecifications in the model and are unequally sensitive for different misspecifications (Sarlis, Satorra and Van der Veld 2009). Instead we will rely on the JRule software (Van der Veld et al. 2008) based on the procedure developed by Sarlis, Satorra and Van der Veld (2009).

They propose using the Modification index (MI) as test statistic for detection of misspecifications (expressed as expected parameter change (EPC)) in combination with the power of the MI test. In this way they specify four situations for which the decision concerning the presence or absence of misspecifications can be made (Saris et al. 2009: 579). This is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Decisions to be made in the different situations defined on size of the modification index (MI) and the power of the test

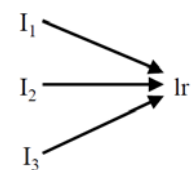
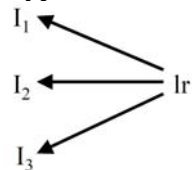
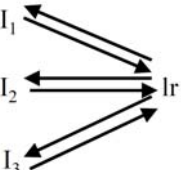
	High power (>.8)	Low power (<.8)
Significant MI	Inspect Expected Parameter Change (EPC)	Misspecification present
Nonsignificant MI	No misspecification	Inconclusive

If a misspecification has been detected we will introduce step-by-step the theoretically reasonable adjustments suggested by JRule and only after no more reasonable misspecifications are suggested we will eliminate the non-significant effects.

Findings

The results of the test of the null hypotheses are presented in Table 2. The chi2 statistic indicates that models have to be rejected while the results for the RMSEA are not clear. However, as explained, we rely on the JRule software. All three models are based on the assumption that the effects between the endogenous variables are the same across the groups. but as JRule detects for each model in each group misspecifications in all effects between the endogenous variables the models are detected to be seriously misspecified. Thus the null hypotheses have to be rejected. People with different characteristics do not have the same relationship between their left-right orientation and their issue preferences.

Table 2: Unstandardized solutions for Model 1, 2 and 3

Effect		hypothesis H _{0a}	hypothesis H _{0b}	hypothesis H _{0c}
				
immi	→ lrscale	-.22*		-.22*
immi	← lrscale		-.09	-.11*
equality	→ lrscale	.18*		.93*
equality	← lrscale		.55*	-.24*
gay	→ lrscale	.11*		.13
gay	← lrscale		.33	.10*
Fit of the model	χ^2	638.39	603.35	574.11
	df	135	135	132
	p-value	.00	.00	.00
	RMSEA	.063	.06	.059

We continue the analysis by considering the theoretically elaborated models for each group individually as presented in Figure 3. The results are shown in Table 3 under the heading “Model 4” for each group. For each group JRule detects misspecifications which do not allow accepting the theoretically elaborated models.⁶

The results for the adjusted models with respect to the effects of the endogenous variables are presented in Table 3 under the heading “Model 5”. The extra effects of the exogenous variables are presented in Appendix 4. Note that these extra effects had very little effect on the relationships between the endogenous variables in all groups.

⁶ Note that Table 3 only contains the misspecifications found between the endogenous variables while in the analysis also the relationships with the exogenous variables were included

Table 3: Unstandardized, statistical significant estimators with standardized coefficients in brackets

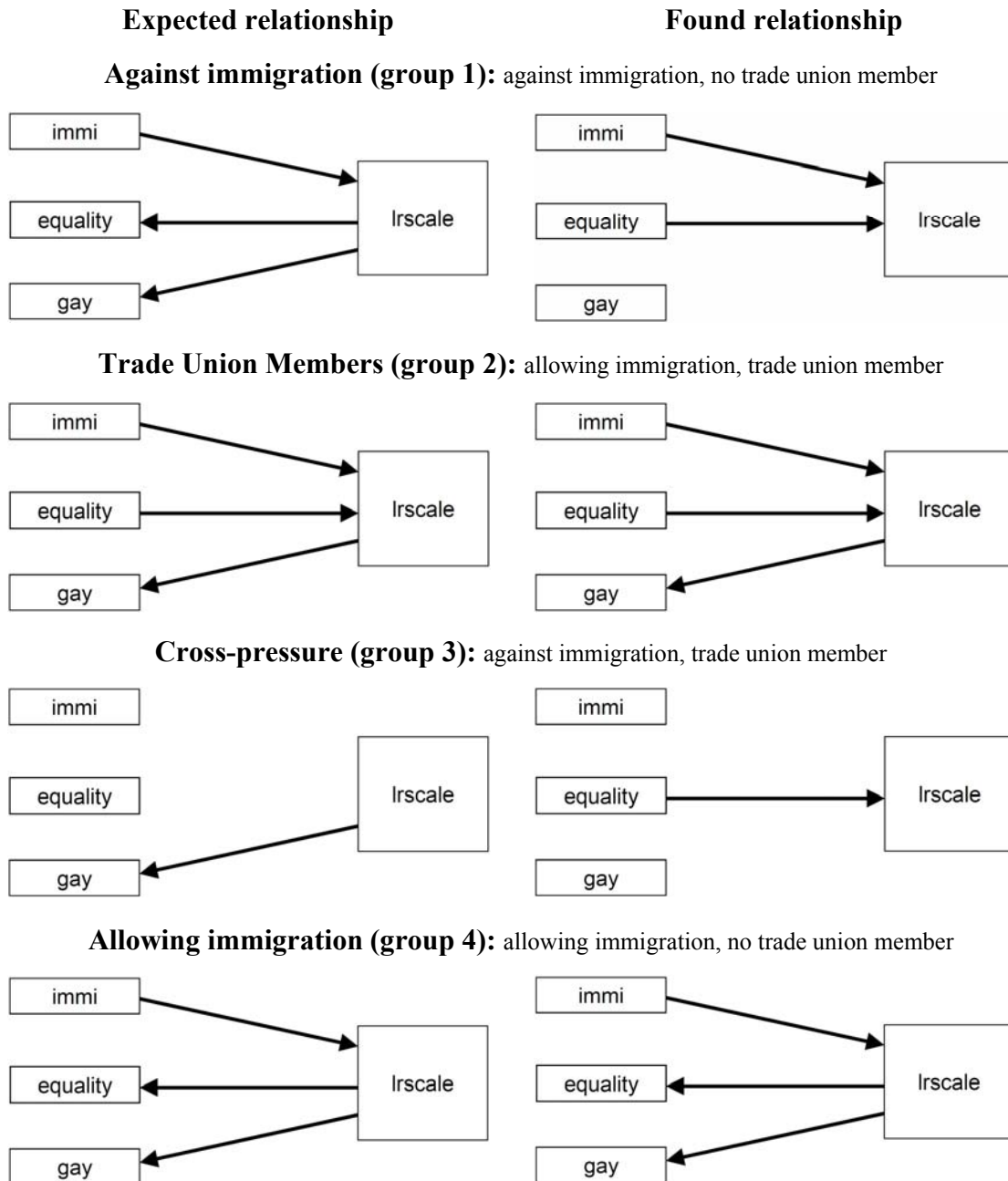
Effect	Against immigration (group 1): against immigration, no trade union member		Trade Union Members (group 2): allowing immigration, trade union member		Cross-pressure (group 3): against immigration, trade union member		Allowing immigration (group 4): allowing immigration, no trade union member		
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	Model 4	Model 5	
immi → lrscale	-.19* (-.20)	-.22* (-.24)	-.55* (-.51)	-.54* (-.52)			-.38* (-.37)	-.39* (-.37)	
immi ← lrscale									
equality → lrscale		.50* (.34)	.93* (.59)	.87* (.56)		.53* (.39)			
equality ← lrscale	.18* (.26)						.26* (.36)	.24* (.34)	
gay → lrscale									
gay ← lrscale	.09* (.16)		.18* (.45)	.22* (.52)	.09 (.17)		.17* (.33)	.14* (.26)	
Fit of the model	χ^2	98.72	80.81	48,86	54.4	96.02	94.71	73.17	47.07
	df ⁷	23	30	23	32	27	36	22	26
	p-value	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0
	R ² of lrscale	.04	.27	.50	.73	.05	.16	.16	.28
	RMSEA	.06	.05	.06	.05	.11	.09	.05	.03
	JRule misspecifications in endogenous variables	equality → lrscale gay → lrscale					equality → lrscale equality ← lrscale		
N (% of sample)	857 (36%)		293 (12%)		200 (9%)		1.003 (43%)		

* statistical significant

⁷ In the adjustment of the models (model 5) we added necessary coefficients for the exogenous variables (in particular the effect of religion, see Appendix 4) and omitted others which were not significant. The same is true for the control variables. This explains the difference in degrees of freedom between model 4 and 5.

It appears clearly that the modified models 5 fit the data better than the theoretical elaborated models 4: the traditional fit indices are improved and more important, JRule did not indicate any further corrections of the model and the explained variance of the left-right orientation increased in all groups. The differences in the relationships between the expected and found models are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Comparison of expected and found relationship between issues and left-right orientation



The most important finding of this final analysis is that there are indeed different models for each group. Thus, we cannot reject hypothesis H₂ that the relationship between issues and left-right ideology is not the same for all people.

Besides the cross-pressure group for which we already anticipated that we would not find a clear pattern, the attitude towards immigration does affect the left-right orientation in all other groups. This supports our assumption that the issue of immigration was a crucial issue at the time for many people in the Netherlands. Thus we cannot reject hypothesis H₁₁ that the attitude towards immigration will affect the left-right orientation of everyone who does not share the characteristics of being a trade union member and against immigration. Neither can we reject hypothesis H₁₂ that the positive attitude towards income equality will affect the left-right ideology of trade union members who are allowing immigration (group 2). Consequently the more general hypothesis H₁ that individuals' left-right ideology will be determined by issues which are important to them cannot be rejected either.

People who allow immigration (group 2 and 4) use their left-right orientation to form an opinion about the issue of homosexuals' lifestyle. People who are against immigration (group 1 and 3) do not rely on this heuristic, in fact we do not find any relation between this issue and left-right orientation. Those people have on average also a lower level of education. But whether the attitude or the education level are the reasons for the non-existing relationship goes beyond the scope of our study. With our analysis we can merely find that the hypothesis H₃₁ that people can use their left-right orientation to form an opinion about the issue of homosexuals' lifestyle cannot be rejected for some people. In a similar way, hypothesis H₃₂ that people who are not trade union members can use their left-right orientation to form an opinion about the issue of income equality cannot be rejected for some people, namely those who allow immigration and are not trade union members (group 4). Given these findings, we cannot reject the more general hypothesis H₃ that people can use their left-right orientation in order to form an opinion about issues which are not important for them.

Finally, we have to reject hypothesis H₄ that if people face a cross-pressure situation, it is unclear what determines their left-right position. In our analysis the left-right orientation of trade union members who are against immigration (group 3) is determined by their opinion about income equality. It seems that these people weight

the issue income equality more heavily than the issue of immigration determining their position on the left-right scale. This could not have been predicted in advance.

Discussion

In this study we intended to shed light on the relationship between individuals' left-right orientation and issue preferences. Departing from two contradicting theories, that people will base their left-right orientation on issue preferences but that the latter determines the former, we tested either of these directions of causality and both at the same time. None of these models fit the data, and thus the null hypotheses had to be rejected. We expected these results as we argued that the relationship of left-right orientation and issues is not the same for all people and would be moderated by issue salience. Salient issues have more influence on individuals' behaviour and we argued and found that issues which are important for individuals have an effect on their left-right orientation; meanwhile they may use their orientation as a heuristic to form opinions about issue which are of less importance to them. Thus, we find contradicting models to those in the literature, different models for different people, and that the relationship between issues and left-right orientation is moderated by issue salience.

This variation has implications for the study of political behaviour. The strength of the left-right ideology at the individual level is seen at its simplicity: the ratio between its relatively narrow information base versus its wide explanatory scope (Grendstad 2003: 17). In empirical research, individuals' left-right self-placement is used as an independent predictor in a wide range of models, including those of partisanship and voting behaviour (Potter 2001). It appears to be a major predictor of one's voting decision, and it was found that its importance increased in many countries over recent decades (Eijk et al. 2005; Franklin et al. 1992; Gunther and Montero 2001). However, those models of voting usually assume that all voters make up their mind in the same way and consequently fit one single causal structure (Rosema 2006: 474). The alternative is the "assumption of causal heterogeneity": that voters might use several heuristics to come to a voting decision (Rivers 1988; Sniderman et al. 1991). Our finding make the causal structure even more fragmented as the use of a single heuristic, the left-right ideology, is based on different variables for different people and is moderated by issue salience.

However, this does not narrow the explanatory power of the left-right orientation for the study of political behaviour but scholars should be attentive that the issues that

explain left-right orientation may not be the same issues for all people, and that even if they are similar their effects on individuals' left-right orientation may vary. As reasoned initially a differentiation between values and issues is crucial, and while we expect values to be stable over time, we know that issues change through time, across countries and among individuals also due to issue salience. And taking the other sets of variables into account as well, the social and partisan variables, we can expect even more variation on the individual level which makes generalisations of the reasons why people place themselves on the left-right scale very difficult. Further research should take this into account and moreover, it should be extended to other countries and include a direct measure of issue salience.

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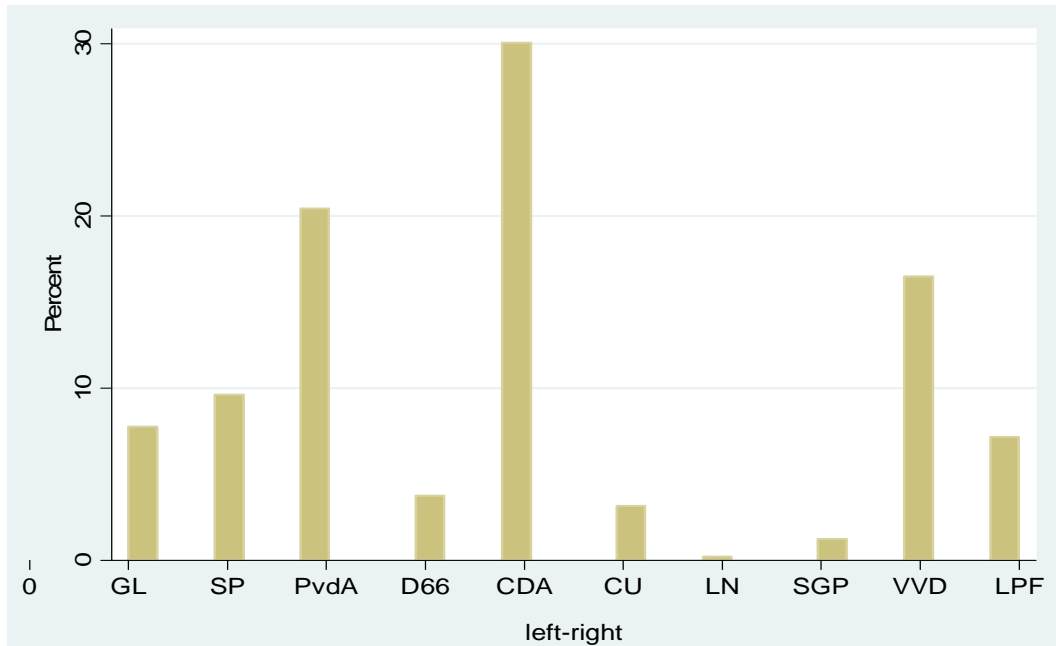
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Appendix

Appendix 1: Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties? Which one?



Source: ESS Round 1, graphical illustration based on the average party positions on the left-right scale as ranked from left to right by respondents of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2002-03 (in Appendix 2)

Appendix 2: Average party positions on the left-right scale as ranked by respondents of the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2002-03

	Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Green Left	GL	1528	3.315	1.464
Socialist Party	SP	1495	3.361	1.856
Dutch Labour Party	PvdA	1530	4.432	1.593
Democrats 66	D66	1503	5.439	1.542
Christian Democratic Party	CDA	1526	7.299	1.506
Christian-Democratic Union	CU	1391	7.567	2.085
Livable Netherlands	LN	1452	7.756	1.961
Reformed Political Party	SGP	1367	7.827	2.253
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	VVD	1520	8.027	1.692
List Pim Fortuyn	LPF	1496	8.557	1.958

Appendix 3: Measurement error

The variances of the measurement errors for all variables with the exception of education have been introduced in the model as fixed parameters. As there are two indicators for education in the ESS we do not need to estimate the quality of those but introduce both (Ganzeboom 2009). The fixed parameters were estimated using different procedures. For the International Socio-economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI),

INCOME and AGE the quality coefficients given by the literature (Alwin 2007; Ganzeboom 2005) are used. For the other variables the quality has been predicted using the Survey Quality Prediction software (SQP) (Oberski et al. 2005) based on the work of Saris and Gallhofer (2007). The quality coefficients used are presented in the table below. The error variance has been shown to be equal to (1 minus the quality) times the variance of the observed variable.

	Quality coefficient	Source	Error variance for each group			
			1	2	3	4
Endogenous variables:						
EQUALITY	0.918	SQP	.18	.16	.2	.18
IMMI	0.591	SQP	2.14	1.41	2.84	1.58
GAY	0.873	SQP	.18	.15	.2	.17
LRSCALE	0.714	SQP	1.96	1.71	2.34	2.14
Exogenous variables:						
IMMIFRIEND	1	SQP	0	0	0	0
RELIGION	0.62	SQP	5.06	4.86	5.47	6.17
INCOME	0.9	Alwin (2007)	.82	.81	.91	.84
ISEI	0.83	(Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996)	.73	.77	.9	.9
YRBRN	1	Alwin (2007)	0	0	0	0

Appendix 4: Effects of the exogenous variables - unstandardized, statistical significant estimators with standardized coefficients in brackets

			Against immigration (group 1): against immigration, no trade union member	Trade Union Members (group 2): allowing immigration, trade union member	Cross-pressure (group 3): against immigration, trade union member	Allowing immigration (group 4): against immigration, no trade union member
isei	→	left-right self-placement (lrscale)				
immifrnd	→					
income	→					.18 (.26)
religion	→		.29 (.35)	.26 (.34)		.25 (.33)
isei	→	immigration (immi)				
immifrnd	→		-.48 (-.20)	-.33 (-.17)		-.41 (-.22)
income	→					
religion	→					
isei	→	income equality (equality)				
immifrnd	→					
income	→		.19 (.37)		.15 (.26)	
religion	→					
isei	→	homosexuals' lifestyle (gay)				
immifrnd	→					
income	→					
religion	→		.17 (.38)			.13 (.32)
education	→	lrscale				
	→	immi	.38 (.22)	.57 (.43)	.43 (.23)	.28 (.25)
	→	equality			.19 (.17)	.21 (.25)
	→	gay				
age	→	lrscale	.12 (.15)			
	→	immi				.15 (.19)
	→	equality				
	→	gay				.04 (.09)