

## Strategies for transnational comparison of secondary aspects: a case study

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### Abstract:

This paper aims at outlining a strategy for comparing secondary aspects in international comparative research based on national election studies (or similar sources). Secondary aspects encompass all variables that are not central to the basic research, from control variables to components of lateral or dismissed models. This paper retraces the strategy used in operationalizing an indicator for authoritarianism on the basis of a total of 16 studies covering four party cases (*Vlaams Blok*, Scottish National Party, *Plaid Cymru*, *Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern*) in three countries (Belgium, United Kingdom and Germany) and over a decade of inquiry (1991-2003).

The paper will first put the research situation into perspective before identifying the distinct challenges that arose through variation between national questionnaires and within the national questionnaires over time. It will then focus on the retrieved data structure and their anticipated proprieties before elaborating the chosen path to ensure comparability. Specific Multiple Correspondence Analysis was chosen as the method of analysis and its results will be presented in some detail. Finally the relevance for other situations will be assessed.

## ***Introduction***

The use of someone else's data to support own research is always a very dissatisfying situation as one is bound by outside decisions and visions, by interpretations and theories that are not one's own and external control that may come with the force and cruelty of divine judgement or nature's wrath. Still the situation can remain manageable if all participants share the belief in the importance and centrality of the issue at hand. If the point you want to clarify is not that important to you and if during your research you get the feeling that the initial researcher did not care that much either, all ingredients for a piece of absurd theatre are there to pick up and stew together. This paper will give an account of such a situation that produced a satisfactory outcome despite all the awkwardness involved. The general setting was a research on regional party voters in Western Europe that sustained a baseline model of voting as an implicit falsification device. This baseline model required an indicator of authoritarian personality traits in accordance with some lateral thinking in this baseline model. The construction of a composite, internationally comparable indicator of authoritarianism was the core of our research. In this paper we will first give a general impression of the research conducted and the party cases included before we turn to some more substantial aspects of initial research design and the position of authoritarianism in this initial model. This will help us assess the clear functions that the result of our work should perform and its position in the general research. We will then turn to the major practical issues the subject of authoritarianism carried, which can be considered typical of lesser components of mainline questionnaires. This will be followed by a condensed description of the specific rendering of the main concepts in the twelve surveys we chose for secondary analysis that will lead us to the search for an adequate tool to craft our indicator. We will review the implications of some forms of data treatment on the expected result and develop a strategy that matches data integrity, functional requirements of the final product and necessary work to the database. The decision ultimately went for a Specific Multiple Correspondence Analysis which we will briefly outline on the basis of the data transformation carried out. We will succinctly review the use of the compound indicator

Finally we will formulate some general considerations for this type of work.

## ***The general research project***

Let us first briefly outline the initial research which was the context of the bit of research that initiated some reflection on those aspects that are peripheral to the data producers and the data users but still sufficiently important to be included in research. The context of the work on authoritarianism was a research to map the structure of ethno-regional party electorates in Western-Europe. It was designed as a secondary analysis of national election surveys or equivalent data of comparable type over the period 1991 to 2003 (a complete list of surveys used is to be found in the appendix). The research was centred on four cases (with a fifth case stub for means of comparison) which were selected to cover a wide array of ethno-regional parties and a period of a bit over ten years (1991-2003) that ensured a smoothing of period effects, reduced impact of generational replacement and a larger case count from available research.

The four cases were the Scottish National Party as a regionally large party, which at the time of enquiry (for technical reason 1997 to 2003 in the United Kingdom) was the largest opposition party in the Scottish Parliament with a theoretical chance of forming a government one day (which it did after the 2007 elections). Nationally this party was a minor player in Westminster without governmental perspective or blackmail potential. On De Winter's (1994, De Winter, Türsan, 1998) scale of ethno-regional parties it ranks as a euro-federalist party, which means that it advocates the independence of Scotland but within the European Union as a general framework (this is official party policy since the late 1980s). In most general policy areas the SNP is social democratic close to old Labour policies.

The second party was Plaid Cymru in Wales. This regionally medium sized party was a potential junior partner in Welsh politics and still had a special voter base, at it was only in the process of breaking out of the historical strongholds of the Welsh Language and Culture in Western and Northern Wales. Nationally it was even weaker than the SNP, with most of its public visibility deriving from extra-parliamentary action. On de Winter's scale of ethno-regional parties it technically would be euro-federalist too, if one only considers their programme. De facto their political action would more readily qualify them as an autonomist party, which asks for some self rule on cultural and internal matters, with some aspects of a national-federalist party in the long term, demanding for Wales the same frame that Scotland

already achieved in 1999. On general issues Plaid Cymru is an example of a new left party with historically strong environmentalist positions.

The third party was the Vlaams Blok (all measures were taken before it changed into the Vlaams Belang) in Flanders. Regionally and nationally this party was medium to large in size (particularly due to the divided Belgian party systems) but with absolutely no potential for accession to government at any level as all major parties ostracized it. On De Winter's scale it ranges as separatist party as it advocates the split up of Belgium and a completely independent Flanders. In general politics it is an extreme-right-wing populist party with strong xenophobic rhetoric and a slate of racist policies that led to its dissolution and reforming in 2004 as Vlaams Belang. It is a kind of border case as it clearly includes some reference to ethno-regional politics but is mainly analysed and understood through the prism of extreme-right-wing populism.

The fourth party was at first designed to be a negative case or at least a neutral case but in light of archive work, programme and policy analysis and finally voter analysis turned out to fit much better into the framework than anticipated and has thus become the fourth full-fledged case in the research: the Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU) in Bavaria. This party is special as it is very closely associated to the CDU the general Christian Democratic Party in Germany and thus would not seem likely to be an ethno-regional party. It is generally analysed as a classic conservative party and as a simple regional component of the CDU. Our analysis put us on the path of taking more seriously the regional claims the party makes and try to add a secondary dimension of an ethno-regional party. On the regional level it is Bavaria's natural governing party that has only been out of office for three years since the Second World War and enjoying a dominance over the regional party system second only to the Japanese LDP in the 55-system. On the federal level the CSU has always been very closely associated to the CDU and thus has shared positions in government and opposition without completely negating its individuality as its regional parliamentary group and its ministers are not bound to toe the line of the larger sister party. If we applied De Winter's scale to the CSU it would rank as a national-federalist party aiming at a maximum of decentralisation in order to ensure the survival of the specific Bavarian people. On general policy the CSU is a main-line conservative and Christian-democratic party slightly more to the right than the CDU.

As the CSU became a potential positive case Scottish Labour was used as a clear negative case for comparison. Although generally in favour of devolution Scottish Labour remains

only a subsidiary of the Westminster party and official leadership remains in England. Scottish Labour has no autonomy of policy from the centre, nor ideological differences. Its members tend to be slightly to the left of the English party, but its Members of Parliament absolutely toe the party line.

### ***Model building***

The research design postulated two baseline models for the interpretation of voting patterns. If one of these two could be deemed satisfactory without inclusion of ethno-regional party specific variables and interpretations, then the party would be a negative case. If no party would require these variables, there would not be any meaningful category of ethno-regional parties on the electoral side. On the other side if the electorates were indistinguishable from the electorate of Scottish Labour, there would not be any distinctive dimension to ethno-regional party either. The first baseline model was a Michigan type analysis relating to social class, occupation and other hard socio-demographic variables. The protocol of research was a specific multiple correspondence analysis (cf. Le Roux, Rouanet 2010) followed by a hierarchical classification of the individual respondents inside the specific parties. The result was that neither did any ethno-regional party have a specific class pattern nor did their interclass profile differ fundamentally from Scottish Labour. The second model was based on the approaches of value-based voting (cf. inter alia Van Deth, Scarbrough, 1995), with the standard model enriched by aspects that seemed potentially relevant to the understanding of the different parties and specifically their ethno-regional nature. Following precedent research we chose to include a module on value change in the ethno-regional model and theory with the extension of the concept of Rooted Cosmopolitan (Tarrow, 2005). We naturally included specific measures for regional identity and nationalism as far as available. Because of the extreme-right-wing nature of the Vlaams Blok a thorough module was carried on xenophobia and authoritarianism and special attention was devoted to political efficacy and participation which already were part of the natural value voting model. In the following pages we would like to show which issues had to be solved in order to accomplish a satisfactory inclusion of this data into our analysis which in the original datasets as well as our research was only secondary.

## Issues in authoritarianism research

The first major issue that our research encountered was the subject itself, or more specifically its operationalization. What is authoritarianism? And more importantly: how is it measured meaningfully in an international context?

Authoritarianism has the single most important advantage of being a relatively old concept that nonetheless remains largely accepted in a single way. Based on the seminal work of Adorno et al. in the 1940s (published in 1950) the general description of the phenomenon remains unaltered. The authoritarian personality is a general mindset that heavily relies on the legitimising force of hierarchy and obeisance to provide structure and meaning. The authoritarian person values order and the absence of change in his environment and is generally suspicious of everything that is different from his image of normality. Difference or deviance is unacceptable to him. These traits have historically been associated with fascism and the initial research was carried out in this optic, but since the 1940s this direct association has faded, although it remains a pillar in the analysis of extreme right-wing populism (Mayer 1999, Klandermans, Mayer, 2006), where we came into contact with it. It seems not to have evolved much in recent years and has not sparked debates on its content. This international consensus has been essential in allowing authoritarianism to be treated in the analysis, as the effort involved in theoretical reconstruction would not have been warranted by the anticipated usefulness of its inclusion.

The good theoretical basis was mirrored by the dire condition of the empirical apparatus. The original research was carried out on a very specific population without large testing. All testing occurred on the Pacific Coast of the United States during the later stages of the Second World War. Most of it was carried out in California, with some inroads into Oregon and to a lesser extent Washington State. The inmate and psychiatric ward population that was surveyed was not included in the construction and validation of scales and did not participate in any significant numbers. The general population surveyed was exclusively white and mostly member of the middle class either as university student or member of select social clubs, although there are some exceptions with classes surveyed that contained sizeable veteran populations (at the end of the war) or some questionnaires that were filled in vocational training courses. The gender balance was generally lopsided and included fewer instances of mainly female respondent groups. The general conclusion is that the items that were selected were only tested on a very restricted social group and cannot be assumed to be

useful to the general US population at the time and even less internationally. A direct reuse of the initial testing is thus prevented.

A second issue is the multiplicity of scales and forms that were employed without one being proclaimed to be the one and only. Although the F-scale is the best known others especially the E-scale are more useful if the aim is not fascism but general authoritarian views (even the AS-scale sometimes is more interesting). If this were not enough even individually the scales are too long to be reused, all being in the low double-digits. For a secondary aspect short modules could have been carried through, long one only survive if they are at the heart of the research.

The third round of issues arises from the age of the initial research and the inevitable item rot that has taken place since. Groups like the Zootsuiters the initial questionnaire referred to are presently so rare to come by that one needs a good dictionary or an encyclopaedia to understand who they were. The most important change involves race relations. The United States of the initial research was still a segregated country where black and white people were rigorously kept apart and the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling was still a decade away and although the heyday of lynching had passed the issue still remained present enough to be warranted a relatively neutrally termed item. Finally the country still was mentally at war and thus issues relating to the soon to be vanquished enemies and the draft were much more present than half a century later. Today most of these items are unusable.

The final issue is more practical. All items on the initial research were arranged as authoritarian statements that had to be rated on a six-position Likert scale. There are several risks. The most prominent is the response set that infects too long and too monotone batteries. The other is the problematic nature of six position Likert scales as the difference between the two low intensity responses is tenuous and sometimes these responses seem completely random on ideological items. This has led to their discontinuation and replacement by four or five (including a neutral point) position versions in the social sciences although they remain state of the art in psychology. The strategy to assign the median score to non-response is also very questionable in the light of Michelat and Thomas' (1966) work that showed that on subjects with strong social control non-response is often a cypher for a suppressed opinion.

All these issues have contributed to the absence of any trace of universal measurement devices and have led to a variety of approaches to the nature of authoritarianism.

## **Authoritarianism in the questionnaires**

The Belgian approach to secondary aspects is the broad inclusion of minor modules. For authoritarianism this meant that a brief apparatus of two to three items was carried in all four surveys. In accordance with general standards each item had to be rated on a five point Likert-scale. One item was present in all surveys: In order to solve our problems we should first get rid of all immoral people. This item can be directly traced back to the development of the E-scale in Adorno's work. Two other items that were important in the development of the F-scale were included in three out of four surveys: "A child has to learn to respect for authorities" which was dropped in the last survey and "We do not need laws, we need strong leaders" which was not included in the first survey.

The Germans had a keener interest in Adorno's work for different reasons. Apart from investigating for traces of fascism half a century after Nazism, they were twofold and both linked to the Reunification. On the one hand the re-emergence of Germany as a major power at the heart of Europe after forty years of being the stage for the first skirmishes of the coming East-West war had sparked concerns throughout Europe on the return of German hegemonic desire and the mindset that had underpinned these policies in the first half of the twentieth century. On the other hand the early nineties saw resurgence in xenophobic violence throughout Germany that culminated in a latter day pogrom in Rostock in 1992 against asylum seekers and former GDR contract workers. As the three surveys we used were imbedded in a project that aimed at tracing the reunification process in voting terms a lot of space was devolved to items derived from Adorno's work. Two major modules were carried, one was centred on xenophobia and racism (which we operationalized in a composite indicator on sentiment towards immigrants) and one on authoritarianism and chauvinism, which was closer to the items in the other surveys and thus was the starting point of our research. The surveys had a stable questionnaire, thus all six items in the module were carried in all three instances. The form was the standard Likert-5 responses to a statement. All statements were oriented in the same way. The response set still remains relatively low. Three items are almost directly derived from Adorno's final scales: "We should have the courage to

have a strong sense of nationality” that taps into jingoist nationalism, “Group interests should be subordinate to general welfare” which taps into collectivist and conformist creeds and “A dictatorship is a better type of state” which is a mere reformulation of the Belgian item on strong leaders in place of laws. Of the three other items two are classic German items that interpret German historical experiences in a more direct way than Adorno’s F-scale while the third one is a development to tap into East German experiences. The first item is “National-socialism also had its good aspects” asking straightforward if anything in Nazism is thought redeemable and the second “Without Jew extermination Hitler would be remembered as a great statesman” which implies that only the holocaust is to be condemned in Nazism. The new item is “Socialism was a good idea but suffered from bad execution” which tries to mirror these items for those who experienced socialism to offer them the opportunity to redeem the ideology without having to embrace the material shortcomings.

In the United Kingdom the situation was much more complex as the traditional authoritarianism module was deeply involved in the 2001 breakup of questionnaire development tradition and even before was one of the modules that were the least appreciated and often relegated into the mailback questionnaire. Out of nine surveys two did not carry any useful item that could be connected to authoritarianism. A single item was carried in all remaining surveys: “Censorship is necessary to uphold moral standards” this is one of the original Butler and Stokes questionnaire and loosely connected to Adorno’s work, although it is only intermittently present and does not correspond to any final scale item, even though its results were fine. Six out of seven surveys carried an item that is at the core of Adorno’s analysis: “Youth does not respect enough traditional values” which closely taps into the educational aspects of Adorno’s work. Two other interesting items were carried by the same three surveys and tapped into the lust for revenge against deviant behaviour: “the death penalty should be restored” and “criminals should face stiffer sentences”. The latter mirrors closely the work of Adorno while the former has been used as shorthand in different European countries since the war (although with diminishing return once the death penalty became definitively defunct in Western Europe).

## Data structure and treatment

To sum up the state of data the adjective complex would be a mild understatement. A search for a direct functional equivalent was bound to fail as no clear line emerged from the questionnaires and items could be found all over the space Adorno's work and definitions encompassed. The size of this space and the absence of rigorously tested and approved module has contributed to this situation and when authoritarianism is mentioned in questionnaire documentation it is referred to in the national context: Right wing populism in Belgium, Reunification in Germany and a general lack of saliency in the United Kingdom. At the same time all questionnaires directly refer to the notion of authoritarianism either in their documentation or in the privileged research that was the result of these surveys.

The national and international dimensions of these issues remain unscathed as these notions remain visible in most research on extreme right-wing movements.

We can thus assume that in their national context the different modules adequately measure phenomena that those best informed of the national context consider to be authoritarianism. As this measure was only a small part of our general research we took the original researchers' results at face value which is reasonable considering their knowledge and experience. With this configuration of no internationally exportable items the safest way to insure a reasonable degree of comparability was to opt for the construction of distinct national indicators and compare the relative positions. As our research could profit from the longer series and the cumulated datasets we opted to construct these indicators ourselves instead of using the preconstructed ones that some surveys provide, as not all surveys contained a preconstructed indicator and there would have been comparison issues to be sorted out between only partially congruent indicators.

In order to achieve national composite indicators one major issue had to be overcome: Non-response codes. Most traditional forms of indicator construction use a form of listwise exclusion that in our setting would have excluded about 70% of respondents across the board. This would have depleted our effective case count for ethno-regional voters close to the line of complete statistical insignificance and was too high a price to pay for a minor component part of a baseline explanatory model. But how did such a mortality rate come into being? Non-response had three additional sources to the normal form of non-response, the individual item non-response: The first and most important source for non-response was survey item

non-response. As only the German questionnaire was fully static, both other countries suffered from some items being dropped in surveys, that cut into the lateral dimensions in order to reduce size and hit a relevant item in the process. These cases should be included and the national indicator still be maintained to prevent the aforementioned issues of comparability.

The second source were issues of survey module non-response that arose in two different ways. In the British case two surveys simply dropped the issue of authoritarianism altogether while in the Belgian case the 1991 survey reacted to fieldwork feedback that because of the perceived length of the questionnaire elder people tended not to complete the whole questionnaire by dropping a series of questions in the Flemish version for respondents over 65 years of age. The module on authoritarianism was among the many victims of this move that reduced the effective case count. Still these individuals must not be dropped from the analysis as their positions on other issues and the relationships between those may yield important information.

The third source were issues of module non-response induced by survey design. The issue arose in several British surveys that pushed the authoritarianism items into the mail back questionnaire that was handed to the respondents at the end of the interview proper asking them to send it back later. The return rate is reasonably high (running at or above 70%) but still the resulting module non-responses would seriously dent the sample size and virtually all more central aspects to our research were in the core questionnaire, thus the loss of information would have been more important than the effort to control for these non-responses.

The most straightforward approach would have been the use of a factor analysis or perhaps a lighter principal component analysis but both generally operate on a listwise exclusion base for invalid scores. A possible solution would have been to use imputation for the invalid scores either in its simplest forms by assuming the score to be the average or median score of valid votes or by more sophisticated forms either through pairing with otherwise identical respondents or complex estimation models. These models bear the advantage of rescuing the most standardized modes of data treatment but with the importance of at least isolated non-response in this situation a sloppy implementation would have multiplied the danger of artefacts. A waterproof implementation of imputation would have surpassed the scope of our research as authoritarianism was only a minor component of the setup and a ramshackle

version bore risks to the research greater than any use derived from the analysis could compensate for. Thus this type of approach was discarded.

Another issue to tackle were inaccuracies in the item scales either as Guttman effects (Guttman 1941, Michelat, Thomas, 1966) or interval magnitudes in Likert scales (Lebart, 1992, Le Roux, Rouanet, 1994) both are major risks to data integrity and should not be discounted too lightly as both can seriously damage the resulting scale.

The search for a method that could tackle scale inaccuracies and account for missing data on individual and systemic scale led us to Specific Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Le Roux Rouanet, 2010) that although initially designed for unscaled variables does a very fine job in creating reliable descriptions of datasets with short Likert scales.

As MCA projects a cloud of respondent points and gives the best n-dimensional description of these points we can address Guttman and interval issues without having to develop prior models to be tested. The specific variant has the added possibility of neutering those dimensions that we do not wish to include in the analysis without dropping the cases that score on these scales. The particularity of an MCA cloud and vector system compared to a factor analysis is that not each item has a dimension but that every accepted response has its own binary dimension (false=0 and true=1) which leads to much higher dimensional clouds but which also permits to just freeze out the invalid data without completely dismembering the model. Thus we were able to consider the clouds of cases only on the active dimensions and seek their description. As the mathematical formalism requires at one point a division by an argument that is positively dependent on the frequency of the response, rare responses have a major pulling power that should be monitored. We thus recoded some scales in order to group responses that were given by less than 5% of the valid respondents with their neighbouring modality.

The ability to solve our main issues comes at a price: there is no meaningful way of direct international comparison on the basis of the raw data. We only receive an n-dimensional description of relations between individuals (and responses). With some restriction in interpretation and a bit of results analysis we can arrive at a satisfactory solution.

The restriction is the decision not to compare scores but only the position a respondent has in comparison to his or her national context, this could have been a sacrifice if authoritarianism had been the core of our argument but for a secondary aspect a short cardinal scale may be sufficiently accurate to judge the pertinence of the authoritarianism argument.

The analysis is a bit more complex and involves some old techniques. The first step is the determination of relevant dimensions needed to describe the cloud. The Scree-test is still the simplest method available to judge this (Cattell, 1966). The geometric strategy is to use a chart of the eigenvalue contained in each extracted dimension and look for the scree (the cut-off point of the talus). The analytically exact formulation resides in the second and third derivative function of the curve fitted to the eigenvalues (or in the initial formalism on the latent roots curve). Unless one is confronted with a very complex case the geometric solution is as good as the analytical with much less effort.

Once the number of relevant dimensions is determined the main contributors to this dimension have to be determined. Technically it is the assessment of the quality of reproduction of the responses (initial dimensions) onto the new dimensions. Once the main contributors have been determined the nature of the extracted dimension can be assessed. If theoretically close responses gather on one (preferably extreme) point of the dimension and their opposites on the other, than the dimension can be assumed to represent a reasonably good fit for a measure of this theory. Guttman effects can be detected if high-intensity responses of either type gather on one end of the spectrum and low intensity responses on the other. The intervals between the different responses sort themselves on the spectrum, giving sometimes insights into response patterns especially in cases of high social control as Michelat and Thomas have shown in their work on nationalism and chauvinism (1966).

## **Results**

In our analysis all three national samples had two-dimensional solutions to the scree-test that confirmed our concern for Guttman effects as in all three cases the second dimension clearly showed signs of horseshoe curves that are characteristic of these situations. The main dimensions that seemed dominant in the eigenvalue plots were relatively clear measures of authoritarianism as operationalized through available items.

The Belgian case had the high intensity authoritarian responses on the one end of the spectrum and the anti-authoritarian on the other with the other modes aligned in between with strongly variable intervals. The most interesting feature was that although the cut-off between responses always was between the high and low intensity authoritarian response, the items did not exactly lie on top of one another as the desire for strong leaders even in mild form was markedly close to the authoritarian pole.

The German case was slightly different as the primary dimension was dominated by the high intensity anti-authoritarian responses, which is clearly attributable to the radical force of the stimuli that made silent approval an impossible option. The cut-off point is between high and low intensity anti-authoritarian responses, mirroring some results of Michelat and Thomas' (1966) work that showed that a low level disagreement for racist positions was in fact the socially acceptable way of expressing racist leanings.

The British situation is the inverse of the German. The informational dimension is dominated by the high intensity authoritarian responses to every single item while their opposite the most portent modes are the low level anti-authoritarian response or the neither-nor option. This indicates a large acceptance of the propositions as no ideologically coherent refusal can be measured. This can be partially attributed to the relatively benign items used (except perhaps for the death penalty).

From these results we considered that the analytically most useful analysis would be to recode the individual scores into a simple five point scale that would give for all respondents with at least one valid answer their position in quintiles of respondents on the authoritarianism dimension we extracted from our data. This scale was analogous to those that were included in the main analysis and thus had few chances of distorting the results through over or underweight (in MCA the number of modalities has a direct effect on the weighting of a variable in the analysis). The information conveyed is limited, but we can be certain that it is real information and not just white noise squared.

If we had had more static modules a hierarchical scale construction would have been realistic and more able to transport detailed information, but original collectors were not sufficiently attached to our specific line of research (especially the comparative aspects) and thus this road was closed. In case of a major component of our model it would have been useful to realise a complete factor-analysis with prior treatment of all forms of non-response to compare the results and especially their reliability, but as it only represented a minor component and that we needed a scale we could trust without having to guess on the appropriateness of four or five data replacement routines, this was clearly out of scope.

The final indicator was not exactly balanced in the analysis and thus was still able to influence the cloud created in the major analysis as we calibrated our five groups on the entire respondent population while the final model only included the voters of specific parties, thus

enabling a comparative view of the party supporters' distribution on their national continuum of authoritarianism.

## ***Concluding analysis***

This experience tells us that two things are paramount to establish comparability of secondary aspects of research from survey to which these aspects were also secondary at best: confirm a common theoretical basis for all surveys and match the tools used to the effort needed and the results expected.

The importance of theoretical harmony between initial surveys is the only option to circumvent extensive functionality testing of items. In case of a common base all items are phrased in the language of a single theory and are connected to points in the theory all other researchers could understand and presumably accept. Absence of this common language of research does not preclude comparison but demands major efforts. First the items have to be reviewed in opposing lights and woven into either one of the existing theories or into a new one to be built before equivalence testing can be undergone. This is only realistic if the secondary researcher is a specialist in the field (to rebuild theories) and the subject matter is of central importance (work). In our case we could assume that all modules have already been tested against the historical standard by the initial collectors and that thus the items were adequate measures in the national context.

The matching of aspiration and effort is the other keystone. The researcher must never lose sight of the analysis' finality. We require an adequate measure of a certain variable that is truthful and integrates into the main analysis. We cannot endanger the reliability of the major analysis with a faulty variable but we can neither have our entire work consumed by a single variable. In our case this meant refusing to drop two thirds of cases in a factor analysis of list-wise exclusion, which would have yielded an inadequate measure but at the same time not engaging in elaborate response imputation which would have had the potential of binding almost unlimited resources and of flawing the analysis through artefacts. Specific Multiple Correspondence Analysis was an almost perfect match for our situation. Other situations will require different solutions or at least variants.

Besides these two keystones some pillars of secondary research should not be forgotten although they are neither specific to this type of work nor do they bear the potential of introducing covert flaws in the analysis. The first pillar is extensive work on the datasets and their documentation. This often tedious and, depending on documentation quality, sometimes frustrating work is the only way of doing a clear appraisal of data quality and peculiarity and the thoughts and motivations of those who created it. The second is a sense of humility in the face of seemingly exact data. Do not overstretch the explanatory power of your dataset especially if it underwent transformations. Always allow for some noise and fuzziness in the use of such derived data, and only if minor deviations cannot in firm the model is it ready to be used. This can prevent the keystones and the whole analysis from tumbling down in cross examination.

## **Appendix**

### **Data References:**

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## Data Structure:

Excerpt from summary table of items included in the analysis by survey

	VCUG 2002	VCUG1998	VCUG 1994	BNES 2003	BNES 1999	BNES 1995	BNES 1991	BES 1997	SRS 1997	SSAS 1999	SSAS 2001	SSAS 2003	WRS 1997	WAES 1999	WES 2001	WLTS 2003
<b>Authoritarianism</b>																
Child has to learn to respect for authorities					X	X	X									
To solve problems get rid of immoral people				X	X	X	X									
Need for strong leaders				X	X	X										
Censorship is necessary to uphold moral standards								X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Youth don't respect enough traditional values								X	X	X		X	X	X		
restore death penalty								X			X	X				
Stiffer sentences for criminals								X			X	X				
We should have the courage to have a strong sense of nationality	X	X	X													
Group interests should be subordinate to general welfare	X	X	X													
Dictatorship better type of state	X	X	X													
Socialism was good idea but bad execution	X	X	X													
National socialism had its positive aspects	X	X	X													
without jew extermination Hitler would be remembered as a great statesman	X	X	X													

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