

Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

- Distinguishing Between a Holistic and a Situation-Specific Approach

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Abstract

Bobbio's influential proposition states that the left-right dimension is based on an egalitarian value conflict. Yet little research has examined how this idea should be applied to effectively explain left-right classifications. This paper tests whether Bobbio's framework is most effectively applied to situations considered individually, or if it is better applied through a holistic approach that considers the outcomes of groups in greater society. This was studied through surveys in the Netherlands and Sweden where 442 respondents were asked to classify policy proposals in an experimental design. Respondents were asked to classify policies aimed at outcome equality in specific situations. Half of the respondents classified proposals that would support groups that can be understood as reaching lesser outcomes in greater society as well as in the specific area. The other half classified similar policies aimed at outcome equality in specific situations – but which would benefit groups that can be understood to generally be reaching better outcomes in greater society. Most respondents considered the former proposals to be left wing, while most of the latter proposals were considered right wing. Together with explanations from respondents of why they classified the proposals as either left or right, the results indicate that a policy does not automatically become left wing if it advocates for outcome equality in a specific situation. This result suggests that situation-specific outcome equality alone cannot explain left-right classifications.

Introduction

The left-right dimension of politics is arguably one of the most important political heuristics in Western societies (Mair, 2014: 333; Huber and Inglehart, 1995), and may continue to be in the future. Yet, even though Jost (2006: 654), for example, lauds the left-right dimension as having been the best analytical tool for classifying political attitudes “for more than 200 years,” the debate about *why* policies are classified as either left or right continues (Rosas and Ferreira, 2013). As Sartori (1990: 161) points out about what is generally considered by citizens as left or right:

“To explain the economic meaning of left does not explain the political meaning of left. Hence the critical question is: what is ‘left’ in political matters?”

Even though it may be less clear what constitutes left in non-economic areas compared to what constitutes left in economic areas, there are numerous policies that experts consider to be left or right that are non-economic, such as feminism, environmental (green) politics and military policy (Polk et al., 2017; Finer, 1987; Lesschaeve, 2016; Petersen, Slothuus and Togeby, 2010). Understanding why policies are classified as either left or right is valuable to political scientists who use the left-right dimension as an analytical tool. It could also be beneficial to voters to understand what the commonly used language of left and right means.

Bobbio (1996) argues that whether a policy is considered left or right depends on how egalitarian the policy is. Other theorists share Bobbio's general view that the battle over equality is the main dividing line between the left and the right, although these authors have slightly differing propositions compared to Bobbio's framework (e.g., Laponce, 1981; Lukes, 2003; Noël and Thérien, 2008). There are also authors postulating an underlying value dimension that differs from Bobbio's in that they believe that another value distinguishes left

from right (e.g. Silverman, 1985). Bobbio's argument nevertheless maintains a central position in the literature on the essential character of the left-right dimension. It has been debated among political scientists (e.g. Rosas and Ferreira, 2013), used for scaling parliamentary parties (Jahn, 2011) and is one of the most cited of propositions stipulating a value conflict distinguishing *left* from *right*.¹ The idea is fairly straightforward in its application: more outcome equality² should by definition lead a policy to be classified as more left-wing.

Yet, this is more complicated than it may seem, as Bobbio's formula for left-right classifications lacks full specification of how it should be applied to specific policy proposals. More specifically, it is unclear whether Bobbio's framework should be applied to situations with or without considering how affected groups are performing in greater society. A policy proposal aimed at equalising outcomes between group A and B (where group A is doing better) in a specific area should be classified as left according to Bobbio. However, it is unclear whether such a policy would be classified as left if the benefitting group (group B) is already generally having better outcomes in society than group A. Is the policy in that particular case still considered to be left-wing? Specifically, using Bobbio's framework groups like men/white/heterosexual/rich individuals can be argued to in general be reaching better outcomes in Western societies compared to women/non-white/non-heterosexual/poor individuals respectively, especially in terms of power and wealth.³ Yet, there are situations where men/white/heterosexual/rich individuals are reaching less valuable outcomes compared to their respective counterparts. It is thus unclear whether a policy aimed at equalising outcomes in these situations will be still be considered left wing, or whether this changes citizens' left-right interpretations and categorizations. This can be understood as an issue of

¹ Downs' (1957) theory of left-right competition is more often cited, but arguably is of a different (deductive) order and less relevant for the debate on what left and right really in practice stand for (ibid: 116).

² Bobbio does not use the specific term *equality of outcome*.

³ The latter groups also tend to be associated with the left rather than the right (Laponce, 1981).

whether Bobbio's outcome equality should be understood as particular and situational, or more overall and holistic where groups' general standing in society is more important. Clarifying this issue, this paper is aimed at providing an enhanced understanding of how Bobbio's framework would have to be applied to be an effective tool for left-right classifications of policy proposals.

A Value Underlying the Left-Right Dimension

The left-right dimension is commonly used as an analytical tool by political scientists, perhaps most often through the Median Voter Theorem (Hotelling, 1929; Black, 1948; Downs, 1957). In this spatial model, political competition is one-dimensional and political actors are placed along an ideological continuum, where it is meaningful to talk of 'moving' to the left or right. The degree to which it is meaningful depends on the context. Nevertheless, the left-right dimension in Western societies is the "most detectable and constant way in which not only mass publics but also elites perceive politics," according to Sartori (2005: 69). The language of left and right is consequently widely understood by most citizens in Western countries (Mair, 2009). Some authors posit that the left-right language is a shorthand for a one-dimensional political value conflict. That such a value dimension would consist of an egalitarian one is the most popular of these proposals. The idea dates back to Lipset et al.'s (1954: 1135) assumption that "by left we shall mean advocating social change in the direction of greater equality—political, economic or social; by right we shall mean supporting a traditional more or less hierarchical social order, and opposing change toward equality." Rokeach (1968) similarly outlines an ideological continuum where egalitarianism is the main dividing value. He illustrates his position by placing ideologies on a horizontal egalitarian scale, and a vertical authoritarian-libertarian scale. Communism and anarchism are equally egalitarian, but opposite on the vertical (authoritarian-libertarian) dimension. The same

happens on the far right side with fascism and libertarianism.⁴ Analyses of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Lenin's *Collected Works*, Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* and some anarchist socialist writers, concur with the two-value model (Rokeach, 1968). Subsequent text analyses by Rous and Lee (1978) also support Rokeach's model.

An egalitarian value dimension underlying the ideological continuum is an established idea in the literature. Yet, different authors have their own versions. Laponce (1981) propose that the left-right dimension is connected to two different dimensions: an egalitarian and a religious one (where the right is more religious and more hierarchical). Bobbio (1996) rejects this proposition and claims that only the egalitarian dimension holds, with the left being more outcome egalitarian than the right. Lukes (2003) in turn argues that Bobbio's point, while mainly correct, is too simplistic. Instead, the left is engaged with what Lukes called the "Principle of Rectification" and the right is defined by its resistance to this principle. Noël and Thérien (2008) reject these approaches altogether, and specifically Bobbio's claim that the right is less egalitarian than the left. Instead, they claim that the divide is constituted by a fundamental difference in the type of equality where the right emphasize equality of opportunity, and the left promotes equality of outcome. The left is therefore not more egalitarian.

Of these different propositions, Bobbio's is dominant and likely the one most often examined in other studies. However, these studies draw different conclusions. Jost et al. (2003) find evidence strengthening Bobbio's argument while Thorisdottir et al. (2007) and Weber (2012) find little evidence to support it. However, it should be noted that Thorisdottir et al. (2007: 186) and Weber (2012: 107) utilize survey questions about equality of opportunity to test Bobbio's hypothesis. It can therefore be questioned if this captures the

⁴ Rokeach does not state however that the egalitarian dimension *is* the left-right dimension, even though this is implicit in his analysis.

essence of Bobbio's argument since he was more concerned with outcome equality (Bobbio, 1996: 60-64).

Bobbio's Framework

To understand Bobbio's proposition, it is necessary to clarify *how* a value dimension would underlie the left-right dimension. Especially crucial is the difference between what is *classified* as left and right compared to an *underlying left-right value dimension*. Specific policies, parties and values can be classified by individuals as being more or less left/right. These classifications often differ to some extent, depending on the context and question wording. However, there are clear patterns. Some research suggests that there are issue dimensions associated with the left-right dimension in most contexts, such as a socio-economic dimension, a secular/religious dimension, a materialist/post-materialist dimension and a socio-cultural value dimension (e.g., Knutsen, 1995; Freire, 2015). These studies suggest that these dimensions are not orthogonal to the left-right dimension, but instead often (strongly) correlate with what is generally considered left and right.

What is in practice classified as left and right is different from an underlying dimension, which is proposed as a *value conflict*. This value conflict in turn is correlated with manifest classifications of left and right. Bobbio (1996: 38) suggests that while there are many issue dimensions that correlate with the left-right dimension, there is a least common denominator in one central value that always correlates. Thus, if an object (e.g. a party, a policy proposal, an individual) is considered to be more left than another object, then the left wing object should be more egalitarian than its more right wing counterpart.

This correlation continues to exist because there is a value difference between left and right politics according to Bobbio. In this respect, Bobbio (1996: 68-69) contrasts Rousseau and Nietzsche by stating that Rousseau believed that people are born equal, but

society causes people to become less equal. The stark differences in for instance power and wealth between citizens that Rousseau saw in the 18th century were according to him not drawn from natural inequalities, but rather from inequalities created in and through society. In contrast, Nietzsche believed that people are born unequal, but society attempts to push its citizens to be more equal than they essentially are, for example through herd morality and ideas in religion.

To some extent these positions form two extremes and most people's opinions fall somewhere in between these extremes. Economic issues are clear examples for Bobbio's framework since the right wing is generally willing to accept more economic inequality than the left. This argument according to Bobbio extends to other issues as for example the left is generally less willing to accept inequalities in outcomes between men and women. Bobbio specifies this more general argument (1996: 60-61) as he outlines more precisely how a proposal becomes considered left or right:

“The concept of equality is relative, not absolute. It is relative to at least three variables which have to be taken into account every time the desirability of equality or its practicability are discussed: (a) the individuals between whom benefits and obligations should be shared; (b) the benefits or obligations to be shared; (c) the criteria by which they should be shared. In other words, once the principle of equality has been accepted, no proposal for redistribution can fail to respond to the following three questions: Between whom?, Of what?, On the basis of which criteria?”

Thus equality can be measured through these three variables. Figure 1 provides a simplified version of the framework. The x-axis represents the (a)-variable in Bobbio's framework, i.e. “the individuals between whom benefits and obligations should be shared.” The more people

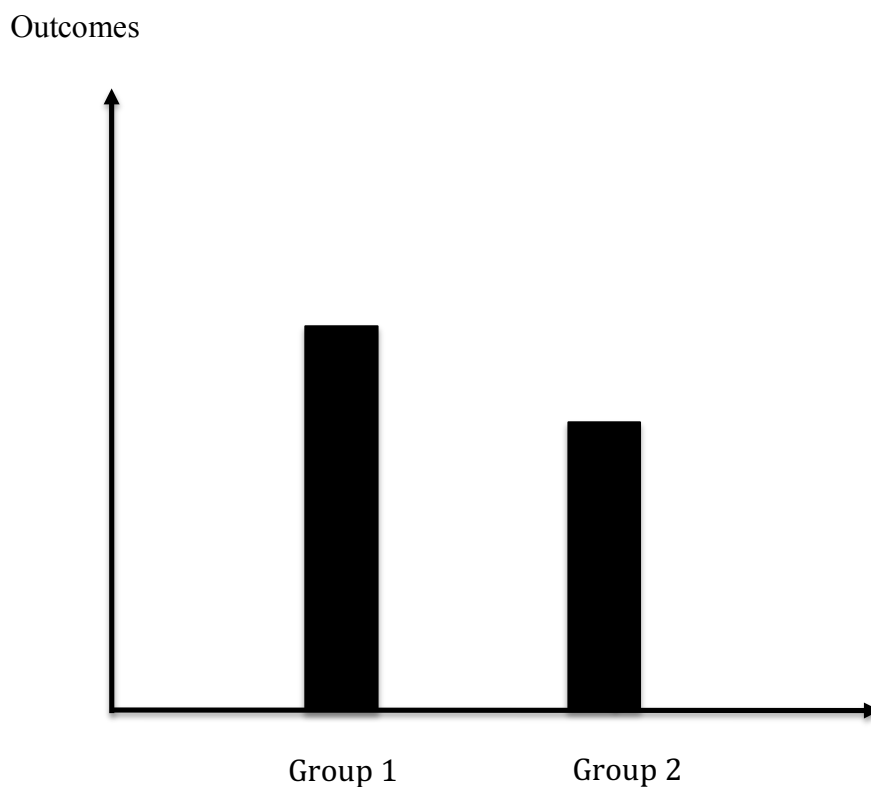
Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

that are included in the redistribution, the more egalitarian the proposal is. To simplify this variable, I only consider two groups at the time. The y-axis represents the (b)-variable in Bobbio's framework, i.e. "the benefits or obligations to be shared." To Bobbio (1996: 68), the higher the "worth of the benefits shared", the more egalitarian the proposal is. This means that if a policy proposal suggests a redistribution of a country's entire wealth, then it is more egalitarian than the same proposal suggesting a redistribution of half the country's wealth. This can also relate to other things except for wealth; in fact, it can relate to *anything of value*. Thus, the y-axis is determined by what value people consider (that which is to be/not to be redistributed) to have. To define what people value is not necessarily an easy enterprise. I use Phillips (2004: 6) definition of outcome equality as concerning "the broad spectrum of resources, occupations, and roles," to provide a definition that fits with the spirit of Bobbio's argument. The last variable (c) represents the question of *why*, or as Bobbio puts it "on the basis of which criteria." This is not included in the simplified model of Figure 1.

Still, it is unclear in Bobbio's writings whether his framework should be applied to every situation individually or if each situation should be considered in light of greater society. In *Left and Right* Bobbio (1996) describes specific situations that are isolated, seemingly suggesting that every situation in itself can be more or less egalitarian. However, this easily leads to some counter-intuitive examples. For example, since white individuals are underrepresented in the National Basketball Association (NBA) in the U.S., a proposal to increase outcome equality in basketball by helping more white people reach the NBA would have to be considered left-wing. Yet, this seems counter-intuitive and some political commentators in American civil society have noted that it is doubtful that the American Left would support such proposals (Hughes, 2018). For Bobbio's framework to nevertheless explain this case, the option is to instead view outcome equality through a more holistic perspective. Such a holistic approach would suggest that each policy should be considered in

light of greater society. A policy to increase the number of white players in the NBA might not be considered left wing, because helping white individuals in one area will also help them in greater society in net gains⁵. If white individuals are already overall doing better in society as a whole, then they represent Group 1 in Figure 1 in greater society but Group 2 in the same figure in the specific situation of the NBA.

Fig. 1. Equality of Outcome Between Two Groups



From the discussion above I hypothesize that citizens view left and right through the more holistic approach rather than through a narrower perspective, resulting in two hypotheses. The first is aimed at testing whether left-right classifications change when a different group benefits, *ceteris paribus*, even when the proposal promotes outcome equality (in a specific area). This can be interpreted as testing whether the holistic perspective has an *influence* on left-right classifications. The second hypothesis is aimed at testing whether the situational or

⁵ This assumes that all individual situations can be added together into a grand sum, which is the *total societal outcomes*.

the holistic approach weighs more for left-right classifications. For Bobbio's framework, the hypotheses are aimed at examining whether situational outcome equality is enough to describe left-right classifications, or if the framework must incorporate a holistic approach. In sum, H1 tests if the holistic approach is a factor at all and H2 tests whether it is more important than situational outcome equality for left-right classifications.

H1: Policies that promote outcome equality in specific situations where this would benefit men/white/heterosexual individuals, will be considered more right wing than similar policies that benefit women/non-white/non-heterosexual individuals.

H2: Policies that promote outcome equality in specific situations where this would benefit men/white/heterosexual individuals, will be considered right wing.

Methodology

How individuals and experts comprehend the left-right dimension is often regarded as a valid measurement of left-right positions (e.g., Steenbergen and Marks, 2007; Jou and Dalton, 2017), and asking citizens to classify items as left or right is an opportunity authors have seized upon when studying the topic. Laponce (1981) asked students in Canada, the U.S. and France to classify items such as “worker” and “Jesus” on a left-right scale, Freire and Belchior (2011) had respondents from Portugal classify political policies and Bauer et al. (2016) utilized open-ended questions to investigate what left and right mean to citizens in Germany. Likewise, in this study the hypotheses were tested through analysis of data collected in an online survey (see Appendix B). Respondents in the Netherlands and Sweden were asked to classify policy proposals onto a left-right scale. The survey was distributed through Facebook and any person could take the survey once. Therefore, the sample was not

random and consequently not representative of each country, limiting the scope of statistical generalization. This study nevertheless allows gaining relevant insights into how the effects of different respondent characteristics in the specific sample population may have changed classifications to the left or the right.

The Netherlands and Sweden were selected because they have some differences in their historical backgrounds of the left-right dimension. The class dimension as well as religiosity generally correlate with the left-right dimension (Laponce, 1981) and both these dimensions have been tied to left-right politics in Sweden and the Netherlands; the Swedish left-right dimension has been more tied to the class dimension while in the Netherlands it has been more tied to religious concerns historically (Demker, 2015; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990: 223). Notably, these differences seem to have lessened over time (ibid). The case selection nevertheless provided an opportunity to examine left-right classifications in two contexts that have differences in left-right associations. This is of interest because Bobbio's writings on the left-right dimension are applicable to "say the least, throughout Europe and Latin America plus, generally speaking all Anglosaxons [sic] countries" according to Gianfranco Pasquino (quoted in Svensson, 2009: Appendix 3). If Bobbio was correct, then the same results should be found in Sweden and the Netherlands.

In the survey respondents were asked to classify eight policy proposals on a nine-point left-right scale. All policy proposals addressed issues that have unequal outcomes. These proposals were part of two *sets* of proposals. The first four proposals constituted Set 1. These proposals were designed to provide examples of when we would expect Bobbio's framework to do well. They called for redistribution between two groups (or extensions of rights/welfare) where left parties have often taken the position that Bobbio's framework would predict, i.e. the one leading to a more egalitarian outcome.⁶ These were proposals

⁶ Even though it may seem as if these examples present clear outcome egalitarian/inegalitarian proposals, it is possible even for these proposals to argue in the opposite direction from an egalitarian viewpoint. In fact, it is

Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

where women, poor people, refugees, and homosexual individuals are/would be doing worse than men, rich, native Dutch/Swedish and heterosexual individuals respectively in terms of outcomes. These proposals were taken from or inspired by real-world policy proposals in either Swedish or Dutch politics.⁷ Note however that these proposals did not provide tests of the hypotheses, but were useful to see how well left-right classifications between the countries converge and can be utilized as baselines and points of comparison for Set 2 proposals.

The second set (Set 2) of proposals contained the experimental part of the survey. This set had two types of policies (A and B). One type per category in four categories making a total of eight Set 2 policies in each country.⁸ Each respondent was only able to classify a single proposal per category and this policy (A or B) was randomly assigned. Thus, a respondent who was asked to classify a 2B policy proposal in the *Men/Women*-category, was not asked a 2A policy proposal in that same category. Responses to the two policy proposals were thereby not affected by each other.

Each policy proposal in Set 2 began with a description of an outcome inequality, followed by a statement that this should be addressed by supporting the disadvantaged group in that specific situation. 2A proposals were similar to Set 1 policy proposals in that women, non-white and non-heterosexual individuals would benefit from more outcome equality in these issue areas. The same types of results were thus expected for these policy proposals as

difficult to imagine a proposal that could not be criticized as diminishing equality in one way or another. Take for example the first proposal in Table 4 (“The government should spend less money on refugees and more on citizens of this country”). This proposes a redistribution from a group with less resources to one with more, seemingly inegalitarian. However, it has for example been argued by Geert Wilders that supporting refugees in the Netherlands is detrimental to LGBTQ-rights (Mepschep, 2009). Thus, less support for refugees could be argued to be beneficial for homosexual individuals (I will not address the validity of this argument in this paper). Proposal three in Table 4 (“There are fewer women than men on the boards of directors in publicly traded companies in this country. These companies should therefore be mandated by law to have 50% of each gender”) similarly has been argued against on egalitarian grounds as being counter-productive to achieve gender equality (Adaktusson, 2017). This illustrates how difficult it is to find policy proposals, which can be considered as *only* egalitarian or *only* inegalitarian. However, since these first four policy proposals are only for illustration of Bobbio's general argument, it is not an issue for the hypothesis testing.

⁷ These proposals do not always originate from parliamentary parties. Furthermore, they are all to some extent slightly more extreme than policy proposals from current parliamentary parties.

⁸ The *Rich/Poor* category was excluded because no suitable example could be found where rich people had lesser outcomes compared to the poor in a major societal area.

for the proposals in Set 1. However, the roles were reversed in 2B proposals. In these proposals men, heterosexuals and white individuals respectively have lesser outcomes than their counterparts. The only relevant difference between 2A and 2B proposals was which group would benefit from the policy, meaning that the difference in left-right classifications should only stem from the change of the benefitting group. This provided a test for the first hypothesis. The situations were highly similar, but the opposite group would benefit from a more outcome egalitarian policy. For the second hypothesis, the goal was to see whether it was the inequality itself that mattered, or whether it was the groups that benefit that mattered more – which could reflect a more holistic and comprehensive view on outcome equality.

The factual statements in the proposals were researched but all of them could not be fully confirmed. Even though they are most likely to be true, it is difficult to know the ethnical overrepresentation of certain groups in sports since there are no or insufficient statistics on this topic. The sources for each claim (see footnotes to the tables) provide the best indications available. For the purposes of the study, however, the crucial aspect is that the respondents perceived and believed that the statements were true.⁹ Table 1 and 2 exhibit the first two proposals, which address four proposals specific to each country, because the Netherlands and Sweden differ in these areas to some extent. However, the proposals are functionally equivalent and allow for comparison between the two countries.

⁹ Respondents were able to provide comments to two of their left-right classifications. Only one comment stated that the respondent did not believe that the statement was factually true. The respondent was not excluded from the study.

Table 1. Set 2 – Survey Questions Specific to Sweden

<i>Set</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Policy Proposal – Sweden</i>
2A	White/Non-White	“Swedes with a Swedish background are overrepresented in the SHL (Swedish Hockey League) compared to Swedes with an immigrant background. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of Swedes with an immigrant background in the SHL” ¹⁰
2B		“Swedes with an immigrant background are overrepresented in the Swedish Basketball League compared to Swedes with a Swedish background. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of Swedes with a Swedish background in the Swedish Basketball League” ¹¹
2A	Men/Women	“Girls receive lower test scores on Högskoleprovet ¹² than boys. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing girls’ test scores, and focus less on increasing boys’ test scores” ¹³
2B		“Boys receive lower grades than girls in high schools in this country. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing girls’ grades, and focus less on increasing boys’ grades” ¹⁴

The order of the white/non-white and the men/women categories was randomized for respondents in each country. Following these two proposals respondents were asked to classify two proposals in the American context¹⁵, meaning that respondents in the Netherlands and Sweden were subjected to the exact same proposals (see Table 3). At the end of the survey respondents were asked to fill in their left-right position, age, gender, class, education, and interest in politics.

¹⁰ Svenska Dagbladet (2012).

¹¹ Karlsson and Stenström (2002).

¹² Högskoleprovet is a test administered by the *Swedish Council for Higher Education* (a government agency). The test score can be used to access higher education.

¹³ Stage (2005).

¹⁴ Skolverket (2012).

¹⁵ These proposals were selected due to the lack of other suitable examples in the Dutch and Swedish contexts. However, because these proposals relate to the U.S., it cannot be deciphered whether respondents classified the proposals according to their understanding of left and right in the U.S. or their own country.

Table 2. Set 2 – Survey Questions Specific to the Netherlands

<i>Set</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Policy Proposal – The Netherlands</i>
2A	White/Non-White	“Individuals with a Dutch background [autochtonen] are overrepresented in the Dutch men’s national field hockey team compared to individuals with a non-Dutch background [allochtonen]. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of individuals with a non-Dutch background [allochtonen] in the men’s national field hockey team” ¹⁶
2B		“Individuals with a non-Dutch background [allochtonen] are overrepresented in professional Dutch kickboxing compared to individuals with a Dutch background [autochtonen]. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of individuals with a Dutch background [autochtonen] in Dutch kickboxing” ¹⁷
2A	Men/Women	“Male students are overrepresented in the natural sciences at Dutch universities compared to female students. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the amount of female students in the natural sciences” ¹⁸
2B		“Female students are overall overrepresented at Dutch universities compared to male students. Because of this, the Government should put efforts into increasing the amount of male students at Dutch universities” ¹⁹

¹⁶ De Graaf et al. (2011)

¹⁷ Legendijk and Gossink (1995).

¹⁸ Universitairmasters.nl. (n.d.).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Table 3. Set 2 – Survey Questions in Both Sweden and the Netherlands

<i>Set</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Policy Proposal</i>
2A	Heterosexual /Non- Heterosexual	This proposal concerns the United States. “Heterosexual characters are overrepresented in Hollywood films compared to LGBTQ characters. Because of this, the American government should put efforts into increasing the percentage of LGBTQ roles in Hollywood movies” ²⁰
2B		This proposal concerns the United States. “Homosexual teachers are overrepresented in post-secondary education in America compared to heterosexual teachers. Because of this, the American government should put efforts into increasing the percentage of heterosexuals teachers in post-secondary education in America” ²¹
2A	White/Non- White	This proposal concerns the United States. “White people are overrepresented in the NHL (National Hockey League) compared to black people. Because of this, the American government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of black people in the NHL” ²²
2B		This proposal concerns the United States. “Black people are overrepresented in the NBA (National Basketball Association) compared to white people. Because of this, the American government should put efforts into increasing the proportion of white people in the NBA” ²³

Proposals in Set 2 were aimed to only address the egalitarian part of Bobbio’s framework and the aim was to exclude other elements in these survey questions. Such elements could

²⁰ Smith, Choueiti and Pieper (2017).

²¹ Tilcsik, Anteby and Knight (2015).

²² Sommerstein (2015).

²³ Lapchick and Balasundaram (2017).

otherwise be used as heuristics for respondents when they assessed the proposals. Unfortunately, government intervention was a variable that was difficult to exclude in these cases. The right is often more prone to avoid government intervention (Downs, 1957), especially in the economic sphere (e.g. laissez faire), and thus was an element that was beneficial to exclude. This issue could not be entirely solved because the policy proposals required an actor in order to be qualified as policy *proposals*. The government therefore figured in all proposals. This likely made it harder to find empirical support for the second hypothesis (H2), as the government intervention variable may have biased the responses to the left. For the first hypothesis (H1) this did not have an effect since this variable was the same in both 2A and 2B proposals.

To better understand how respondents classified proposals, two open-ended questions were added after the first two Set 2-proposals. Respondents were asked to motivate why they had chosen their specific left-right classification. The answers were classified into different categories through an inductive process. The focus was to find categories that would explain broader patterns of why respondents classified policies as they did, which could be relevant for the hypotheses.

Survey Results

A total of 442 respondents (225 in the Netherlands and 217 in Sweden) participated in the survey. Approximately as many men as women answered the survey and the left-right self-placement in both countries approximated normal distributions, with 4.0 being the mean left-right self-placement. More descriptive statistics can be found in Appendix A.

Table 4. Set 1 – Left-Right Classifications in the Netherlands and Sweden²⁴

Classified as	Netherlands /		Sweden		<i>Did not know/ want to say</i>
	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>		
Proposal					
“The government should spend less money on refugees and more on citizens of this country” ²⁵	7% / 6%	7% / 10%	86% / 81%	0.5% / 2%	
“There are fewer women than men on the boards of directors in publicly traded companies in this country. These companies should therefore be mandated by law to have 50% of each gender on their boards of directors”	88% / 81%	6% / 13%	5% / 6%	0% / 1%	
“Homosexual couples should not be allowed to get married”	7% / 9%	21% / 10%	60% / 75%	12% / 6%	
“The poorest 20% should receive lower taxes, while taxes should be raised on the top 20% to make up the difference in revenue”	89% / 89%	4% / 5%	6% / 5%	0.5% / 1%	

N Netherlands: 225; N Sweden: 217.

Results of Set 1 proposals in Table 4 show results in line with Bobbio's proposition.²⁶ The largest group percentage for each question is highlighted in bold, and the results are displayed with the Dutch results above the Swedish results for each question and category. Respondents were in large agreement about in which category the proposals should be put, and few respondents chose the *do not know/do not want to answer*-option. In this sense, respondents in both countries show a remarkably similar understanding of left and right.

²⁴ On the nine-point scale, 1-4 were coded as Left, 5 as Centre and 6-9 as Right. Percentages are rounded to nearest integers, except for percentages between 0 and 1% (where 0.5% was used when applicable). Results were tested for their robustness by coding the centre as 4-6, but no proposal that had been classified as left became classified as right, or vice versa.

²⁵ The proposal suggests a redistribution of wealth, from one group to the other and thus, it does not include two different elements/policy proposals.

²⁶ More detailed statistics on the classifications of each proposal can be found in Appendix A. The exact wording of the proposals exhibited in Table 1-4 can be found in Appendix B.

The results for Set 2 proposals shown in tables 5, 6 and 7 provide tests of hypotheses 1 and 2. The results support H1. When (2B) proposals benefitted men/white/heterosexual individuals, even though they were aimed at outcome equality in the specific area, they were classified as *more* right wing compared to their respective 2A proposal where women/non-white/non-heterosexual individuals would benefit. The mean left-right classification for 2A proposals was 3.1 while the mean for 2B proposals was 5.5. The difference between the two averages is statistically significant, with a p-value below 0.01.

Table 5. Set 2 – Netherlands Specific Proposals

Proposal	Classified as	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Did not know/ want to say</i>
A. More female students in the natural sciences		74%	17%	5%	5%
B. More male students at universities		40%	30%	17%	13%
A. More individuals with a foreign background in field hockey		80%	7%	3%	11%
B. More individuals with a Dutch background in kickboxing		35%	10%	34%	21%

N: 225.

Table 6. Set 2 – Sweden Specific Proposals

Proposal	Classified as	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Did not know/ want to say</i>
A. Increase women's test scores		50%	21%	5%	25%
B. Increase men's grades		24%	18%	37%	21%
A. More individuals with a foreign background in ice hockey		64%	11%	5%	20%
B. More Swedes with a Swedish background in basketball		24%	8%	43%	25%

N: 217.

Table 7. Set 2 – Proposals Specific to the U.S.

Proposal	Classified as	Netherlands / Sweden			
		<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Did not know/ want to say</i>
A. More non-heterosexual characters in Hollywood movies	82% / 78%	7% / 5%	3% / 4%	7% / 13%	
B. More heterosexual teachers in post-secondary education	33% / 18%	13% / 12%	42% / 50%	12% / 20%	
A. More black players in the NHL	76% / 70%	7% / 12%	4% / 4%	14% / 15%	
B. More white players in the NBA	32% / 15%	12% / 15%	49% / 45%	7% / 26%	

N Netherlands: 225; N Sweden: 217.

Hypothesis 2 stipulates that since the 2B proposals supported individuals with a general advantage in society (men/white/heterosexual individuals), even though they were aimed at increasing outcome equality in a specific area, respondents would classify them as right wing. This hypothesis receives mixed support. Indeed, six out of eight 2B proposals were considered right wing. However, one was classified by a plurality of respondents as left wing (that the Government should aim to increase the number of male university students) and one proposal was being classified as equally left and right (that the Government should support Dutch citizens with Dutch backgrounds (autochtonen) in kickboxing).²⁷ Background variables that could affect classifications were subsequently examined in multiple regression analyses, where each proposal's left-right classification was the dependent variable.

²⁷ The country comparison works well for all proposals except for the country specific men/women proposals that shows a substantive difference between the proposals. In Sweden it was stated that the the Government should help men/women more and the other group *less*. In the Netherlands (and in all the other proposals in both countries) it was only stated that the group with lesser outcomes should be supported more. In fact, one respondent in Sweden noted that this specific feature of the proposal changed his/her left-right classification from left to right. This probably makes the country comparison in the men/women-category less fruitful. However, it is noteworthy that the white/non-white category specific to each country (questions that should be comparable) did not produce the same answer in the Netherlands as in Sweden.

In most models, the majority of these variables had no significant effect, or a significant but substantively very small effect (with few exceptions). However, respondents' left-right self-placements had a significant and substantial effect on the left-right classifications of most proposals, especially in the Netherlands. For the proposals in Set 1, this affected the proposal to ban homosexual marriage the most. However, the effect was fairly small and even if all left-wing individuals were excluded, the proposal to ban homosexual marriage would remain classified as right wing in both countries. This is however not true for all proposals in Set 2. Right wing respondents classified 2B proposals as more left wing compared to respondents who identified themselves as left wing, as is exemplified in Table 8. Since there were more left wing respondents, it cannot be excluded that this might have skewed the results for 2B proposals to the right in both countries. Table 8 exhibits the regression models for two of the proposals for illustration: increasing the amount of white people in the NBA and increasing the amount of heterosexual teachers in higher education. These 2B proposals were chosen because the questions were the exact same in each country and respondents from both countries could therefore be included, increasing the amount of data for the regression models. The other regression models are found in Appendix A.

Table 8. OLS Regression Analyses Explaining LR-Classifications

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	
	<i>White NBA Players</i>	<i>Heterosexual Teachers</i>
Intercept	8.330*** (1.509)	8.267*** (1.386)
Left-Right Self-Placement	-0.407*** (0.104)	-0.431*** (0.094)
Female	-0.366 (0.367)	0.389 (0.373)
Age – Young	-0.020 (0.421)	0.447 (0.441)
Age – Old	1.157 (0.706)	1.540** (0.650)
Class – Low	-0.428 (0.612)	-0.708 (0.582)
Class – High	-0.637 (0.473)	-0.625 (0.538)
University Education	0.413 (0.428)	0.403 (0.412)
Not Interested	0.366 (0.577)	-0.775 (0.525)
Very Interested	0.304 (0.400)	-0.080 (0.409)
Dutch Respondent	-0.558 (0.544)	-1.086** (0.509)
N	168	165
R ²	0.170	0.225
Adjusted R ²	0.117	0.174

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Age – Young = 15-25. *Age – Old* = above 45. Both age categories measured against the middle range respondents (age 25-45) as the reference category.

Class – Low = Working class. *Class – High* = Upper middle class and upper class. Both class categories were measured against middle class respondents (excluding upper middle class respondents).

Not Interested and *Very Interested* were measured against respondents somewhat interested in politics.

Female, *Dutch Respondent* and *University Education* are dummy variables reflecting gender, nationality and whether the respondent has a bachelor's degree or more. Six individuals with other gender identities than male or female were left out of these specific regression models.

The number of respondents were reduced because some respondents chose the *do not know/do not want to answer*-option instead of providing a left-right classification for the dependent variable.

All variables fulfilled the criteria for regression analysis.

Explanations Provided by Respondents

To better understand the classifications respondents were asked to explain their reasoning after the proposals relating to each specific country (two proposals per respondent). These answers to open-ended questions may provide an understanding to why respondents chose

their classifications. About half of the respondents provided explanations for their classifications. Some of these were short and concise, while some provided in-depth understandings of respondents' thought-processes. The answers were coded into different categories by first using an inductive approach to identify suitable categories before conducting a final coding.

There were 406 comments explaining classifications of four proposals (the two country-specific proposals in each country), 184 in Sweden and 222 in the Netherlands. The most common reasoning (125 comments) for respondents' classifications were based on what they thought political actors would think about the proposals. It seems as if respondents were often inclined to base their answers on what they believed parties, "the left" and "the right" in general as well as what left/right wing individuals would say about the propositions. Respondents also often referred to their own intuition, with some stating that a proposal "felt" left or right.

Apart from this more general comment, two main reasons for respondents left-right classifications emerged: *equality* and *government intervention*. Equality was mentioned in 118 comments as the reason for the classification, compared to government intervention which was mentioned in 98 comments. Respondents who mentioned government intervention as a reason for their classification were more likely to classify both 2A and 2B proposals as left compared to other respondents. The mean classification of 2B proposals for this group was 3.6, compared to 5.5 for all respondents. This difference is likely the consequence of the explicit motivations in the comments, with these respondents equating government intervention with left wing politics. It seems as if government intervention has a clear left-wing connotation and possibly had the effect of making left-wing classifications more

likely.²⁸ This would have made it more difficult to find support for H2 and it is possible that more conclusive support for H2 would have been found if it had not been for this element.

A majority of the longer answers that discussed the difficulty of classifying 2B proposals, discussed the issue at hand: should we classify a policy based on equality in a specific area or by considering which group is benefitting? There were 31 comments that explicitly identified the problem discussed in this paper (of which 29 were in response to 2B proposals), and they serve as a valuable insight to answering the underlying research question. The following two quotes illustrate the answers. The first in response to supporting individuals with a Swedish background in Swedish basketball, and the second in response to the proposal to support more men accessing Dutch universities.

“Left to me is not about shifting from minority to equality, but to prioritize the least privileged compared to the most privileged, which is often achieved by equalizing differences. An immigrant in Sweden generally has less privileges compared to a native Swede, and thus, this is more aligned with right wing politics where the native Swede is prioritized compared to immigrants.”

“Interesting proposal! I think it is ‘left’ as it strives for more equality and I associate less government intervention with the right. However, ‘standing up’ for men is at the same time something that is associated with ‘the right’ (like Forum voor Democratie).”

A majority of respondents (14) discussing this problem classified the 2B proposal as right, while six respondents chose left, six centre and three selected the *do not know/do not want to*

²⁸ It should be noted that a handful of comments discussed both equality and government intervention as reasons for their classifications, but not in the usual direction (e.g. that outcome equality and government intervention belongs on the right). These comments were excluded from this analysis since they did not reflect the measured reasoning, i.e. that egalitarian concerns and government intervention reflect left wing policies.

answer-option. This highlights that even among the respondents who recognised the explicit issue at hand, there was no clear consensus on how to classify the proposal. They leaned toward classifying the proposal as right, similarly to other respondents, but the numbers are too small to draw inferences. The only consensus among these respondents was that both approaches are valid considerations for left-right classifications, and situational outcome equality alone cannot explain left-right classifications.

Discussion and Conclusion

The left-right dimension is an elusive concept, and political scientists continue to disagree about what the dimension describes. It is nevertheless used as an analytical tool that serves citizens and experts well. There is an intuitive understanding of the concept without corresponding scientific knowledge. This gap in the research is visible in the lack of systematic hypothesis testing of existing ideas in the literature. This paper has aimed to begin bridging this gap by clarifying how Bobbio's framework should be tested in such inquiries, because of its central position in the literature on the essential character of the left-right dimension. To test whether equality is the criterion that separates left from right wing politics, it is important to know how the framework should be applied. In this endeavour, this paper has specifically dealt with the issue of whether to apply the framework to specific situations in isolation, or by considering outcome equality in greater society.

From the empirical evidence presented in this paper, it seems as if the situational approach to implementing Bobbio's framework is insufficient on its own in explaining left-right classifications. Bobbio's framework would thus have to incorporate the holistic approach to explain left-right classifications, at least in some instances. However, it is not clear whether outcome equality in a specific area, or if outcome equality as a whole in society is the most important factor for left-right classifications (even though the empirical evidence

in this paper tends to support the latter). Two different interpretations of these results would fit with Bobbio's framework and allow it to sustain explanatory value. The first is fairly simple: both situational and holistic outcome equality could be important to Bobbio's framework. This is possible, as both types of equality fit with Bobbio's writings. It does however complicate matters as it is not clear when one or the other is more important or applicable.

From the results, it does not seem to be possible that situational outcome equality alone can explain left-right classifications. However, holistic outcome equality could, by using a second interpretation of the results; when the motivation behind the proposal is taken into account, holistic outcome equality is more important. A Dutch right wing individual who had chosen the *do not know/do not want to answer*-option stated the following when asked to classify the proposal to help men enter Dutch universities:

"This is difficult to say, the motivation behind the proposal (equality if it comes from the left, men' rights as a reaction against feminism if it comes from the right) says more than the statement itself."

If this respondent is correct, then a proposal to elevate a group such as men in an area where they have lesser outcomes can be both left and right wing, depending on the motivation behind the policy. If the actor suggesting the proposal is intent on creating equal outcomes in greater society, then a proposal that helps a privileged group should be classified as left. However, if it is a way to advance the interests of already privileged groups then it should be classified as far right wing.²⁹ This reasoning would again reflect a holistic view of equality,

²⁹ I write *far right* because many respondents noted that these proposals were not in line with liberal or centre right wing ideas, but are more similar to what would be propagated by far right parties such as Forum voor Democratie or the Swedish Democrats (Polk et al., 2017).

rather than situational because what is considered left or right is tied to outcome equality in greater society, rather than in each specific situation.

The idea hinges however on that white/men/heterosexual individuals are indeed in practice privileged, which for instance the far right does not necessarily agree with. The opposite idea that white people and men are persecuted and/or disadvantaged has been suggested by the far right in Sweden, the Netherlands, and in the U.S.. To name a few examples from each country; in the U.S., some on the far right have embraced the idea that there is a “war” against men (Sommers, 2000; Jashinsky, 2018). In the Dutch newspaper NRC, historian Van Creveld (2013) argued that men have been – and have always been – disadvantaged compared to women. Similarly, the Swedish Democrats in Sweden put up a motion in the Swedish parliament to work against the “hostility against Swedish people” (Bieler and Lång, 2014) and Kent Ekeröth (MP for the Swedish Democrats) described the hostility against Swedish people as more prevalent than racism against minorities during a parliamentary debate (Riksdagen, 2014).

The political disagreement over which group is privileged creates issues for Bobbio’s argument. It seems that Bobbio’s framework cannot ignore the holistic part of equality – sometimes it weighs more than situational equality. Yet at the same time, for the holistic perspective to be accurate it must be established that white/men/heterosexual individuals are overall doing better in society in terms of outcomes. To establish this as a fact is therefore a challenge for anyone who attempts to prove Bobbio’s framework to be true, especially since people like Van Creveld have argued the opposite. This means that any holistic application of Bobbio’s argument must be argued for.

This paper has attempted to understand how Bobbio’s egalitarian idea could be applied to explain left-right classifications. Further research is needed to better comprehend how the framework should be applied. Thereafter it may be tested against competing

Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

explanations of left-right classifications. This research is much needed since the lack of a consensus on the meaning of left and right means that political scientists are not necessarily talking about the same meaning when using the concepts. An example of one such issue is the operationalization of the left-right concept that only considers economic policies (e.g. Bankert, Huddy and Rosema, 2016: 125), whereas the left-right dimension is not only confined to the economic domain. A better understanding of the left-right dimension would prevent such scholarly disagreements. From a societal point of view, it is also imperative to better understand the left-right dimension because it is often used as a heuristic. Citizens who use the concepts without a clear understanding of their meanings may be hampered both in political discussions as well as at the voting booth. It is therefore important that political scientists continue their attempts of understanding the political dimension, which by citizens paradoxically is used to simplify politics.

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Appendix A – Supplementary Statistics

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Netherlands		Sweden	
<i>Interval</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Range</i>
Left-Right Self-Placement	4.182	1-9	3.932	1-9
<i>Categorical</i>	<i>N</i>		<i>N</i>	
Men	92		108	
Women	124		96	
Other	3		3	
<i>Ordinal</i>	<i>N</i>		<i>N</i>	
Age – 15-25	131		41	
26-35	68		88	
36-45	4		25	
46-55	8		26	
56-65	8		21	
66+	1		6	
Working Class	23		28	
Middle Class	67		115	
Upper middle/Upper class	121		58	
No University Education	54		67	
University Education	166		139	
Not Interested	21		37	
Somewhat Interested	84		110	
Very Interested	116		60	

N Netherlands: 225; N Sweden: 217.

Regression Tables

Age – Young = 15-25. *Age – Old* = above 45. Both age categories measured against the middle range respondents (age 25-45) as the reference category.

Class – Low = Working class. *Class – High* = Upper middle class and upper class. Both class categories were measured against middle class respondents (excluding upper middle class respondents).

Not Interested and *Very Interested* were measured against respondents somewhat interested in politics.

Female, *Dutch Respondent* and *University Education* are dummy variables reflecting gender, nationality and whether the respondent has a bachelor's degree or more. Six individuals with other gender identities than male or female were left out of these specific regression models.

The number of respondents were reduced because some respondents chose the *do not know/do not want to answer*-option instead of providing a left-right classification for the dependent variable.

All variables fulfilled the criteria for regression analysis.

Table 10. Set 1 – OLS Regression Analyses Explaining LR-Classifications

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
	<i>Refugees</i>	<i>Homosexual Marriage</i>	<i>Gender Quota</i>	<i>Redistribution – Rich to Poor</i>
Intercept	7.976*** (0.653)	8.908*** (0.828)	3.270*** (0.643)	1.674** (0.672)
Left-Right Self-Placement	-0.122*** (0.045)	-0.285*** (0.058)	0.046 (0.044)	0.098** (0.046)
Female	-0.062 (0.170)	0.147 (0.220)	0.004 (0.174)	0.016 (0.167)
Age – Young	-0.170 (0.200)	-0.122 (0.259)	-0.301 (0.195)	-0.104 (0.204)
Age – Old	0.478 (0.317)	0.060 (0.409)	-0.100 (0.312)	0.218 (0.326)
Class – Low	-0.461* (0.265)	-0.245 (0.337)	-0.063 (0.261)	0.053 (0.275)
Class – High	-0.307 (0.237)	-0.253 (0.307)	0.284 (0.233)	0.016 (0.243)
University Education	0.135 (0.193)	0.333 (0.246)	-0.308 (0.190)	-0.069 (0.198)
Not Interested	-0.130 (0.253)	-0.414 (0.338)	0.409 (0.250)	0.474* (0.264)
Very Interested	0.076 (0.187)	0.251 (0.241)	0.043 (0.183)	0.274 (0.191)
Dutch Respondent	-0.118 (0.249)	0.709** (0.318)	0.051 (0.245)	0.132 (0.258)
N	390	357	390	387
R ²	0.051	0.116	0.034	0.027
Adjusted R ²	0.026	0.090	0.008	0.001

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Table 11. Set 2 Netherlands – OLS Regression Analyses Explaining LR-Classifications

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
	<i>Female Students in the Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Male Students at Universities</i>	<i>Foreign Background in Field Hockey</i>	<i>Dutch Background in Kickboxing</i>
Intercept	5.587*** (1.099)	5.436*** (1.528)	3.799*** (1.281)	5.531** (2.217)
Left-Right Self-Placement	-0.118 (0.084)	-0.222* (0.130)	-0.248** (0.095)	-0.453** (0.179)
Female	-0.385 (0.320)	-0.506 (0.486)	-0.159 (0.384)	0.082 (0.693)
Age – Young	-0.280 (0.350)	-0.227 (0.475)	-0.053 (0.365)	0.429 (0.706)
Age – Old	-0.436 (0.658)	1.679** (0.774)	-0.878 (0.613)	2.059 (1.731)
Class – Low	0.091 (0.645)	-1.305 (0.828)	0.421 (0.645)	1.585 (1.333)
Class – High	0.252 (0.344)	-0.193 (0.438)	-0.315 (0.379)	-0.724 (0.660)
University Education	-0.535 (0.395)	0.371 (0.467)	0.263 (0.419)	0.556 (0.744)
Not Interested	0.428 (0.521)	0.958 (0.789)	-0.258 (0.517)	-0.908 (1.624)
Very Interested	-0.351 (0.328)	0.327 (0.505)	0.228 (0.371)	0.158 (0.703)
N	101	81	90	77
R ²	0.076	0.154	0.143	0.2
Adjusted R ²	-0.016	0.047	0.047	0.093

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Table 12. Set 2 Sweden – OLS Regression Analyses Explaining LR-Classifications

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>			
	<i>Male Students – Test</i>	<i>Female Students – Grades</i>	<i>Foreign Background in Ice Hockey</i>	<i>Swedish Background in Basketball</i>
Intercept	4.079*** (1.168)	4.572*** (1.275)	3.421** (1.389)	5.227*** (1.678)
Left-Right Self-Placement	0.098 (0.113)	0.091 (0.119)	-0.064 (0.119)	-0.195 (0.183)
Female	-0.124 (0.433)	-0.791 (0.476)	0.719 (0.504)	-0.213 (0.626)
Age – Young	-1.651*** (0.566)	0.432 (0.537)	-0.165 (0.591)	0.277 (0.718)
Age – Old	-0.242 (0.505)	0.419 (0.580)	0.721 (0.595)	0.890 (0.733)
Class – Low	0.182 (0.704)	0.364 (0.651)	0.353 (0.689)	-1.776* (1.060)
Class – High	-0.514 (0.463)	-0.450 (0.515)	0.295 (0.513)	0.236 (0.702)
University Education	-0.131 (0.530)	0.987** (0.493)	-0.945* (0.546)	1.167* (0.696)
Not Interested	-0.214 (0.682)	-0.853 (0.583)	0.888 (0.742)	-0.095 (0.838)
Very Interested	0.520 (0.471)	0.417 (0.564)	0.882* (0.502)	-1.342* (0.699)
N	74	76	74	72
R ²	0.149	0.181	0.147	0.210
Adjusted R ²	0.030	0.069	0.026	0.095

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Table 13. Set 2A U.S. – OLS Regression Analyses Explaining LR-Classifications

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	
	<i>Black Ice Hockey Players</i>	<i>Non-Heterosexual Movie Characters</i>
Intercept	2.962*** (1.018)	2.733** (1.106)
Left-Right Self-Placement	-0.116* (0.068)	0.051 (0.071)
Female	-0.078 (0.263)	-0.310 (0.255)
Age – Young	-0.291 (0.302)	0.012 (0.288)
Age – Old	-0.013 (0.495)	0.728 (0.490)
Class – Low	0.559 (0.405)	0.586 (0.425)
Class – High	0.301 (0.395)	0.042 (0.336)
University Education	-0.087 (0.307)	-0.274 (0.304)
Not Interested	0.180 (0.404)	-0.330 (0.425)
Very Interested	-0.114 (0.287)	0.231 (0.270)
Dutch Respondent	0.295 (0.380)	0.362 (0.385)
N	165	177
R ²	0.039	0.046
Adjusted R ²	-0.023	-0.012

Note: *p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Fig 2. Respondents' Left-Right Self-Placements

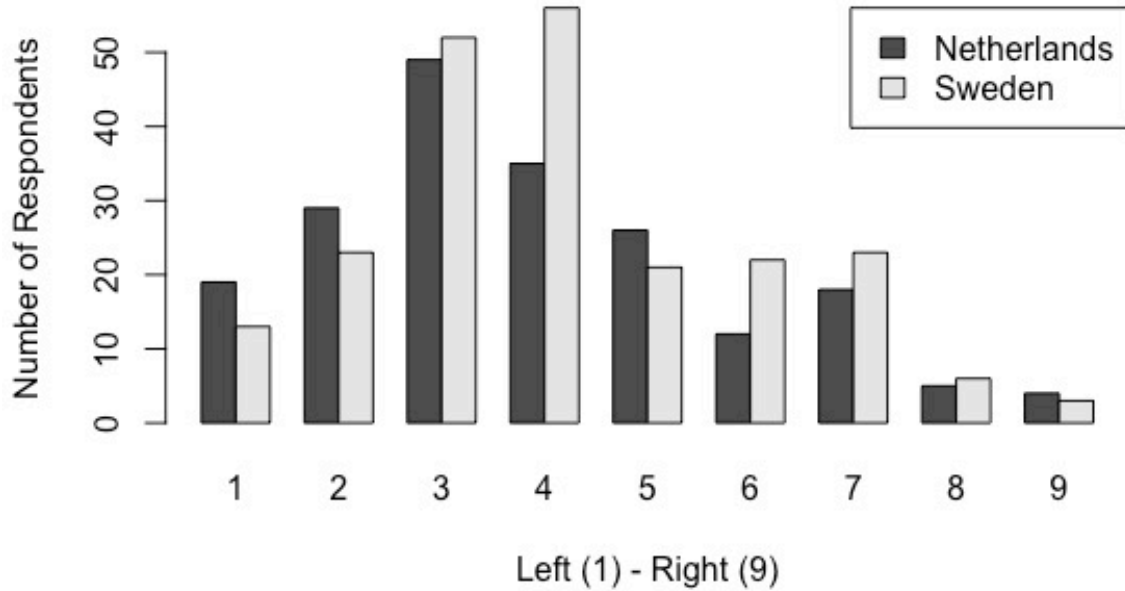


Fig 3. Spend More on own Citizens, Less on Refugees

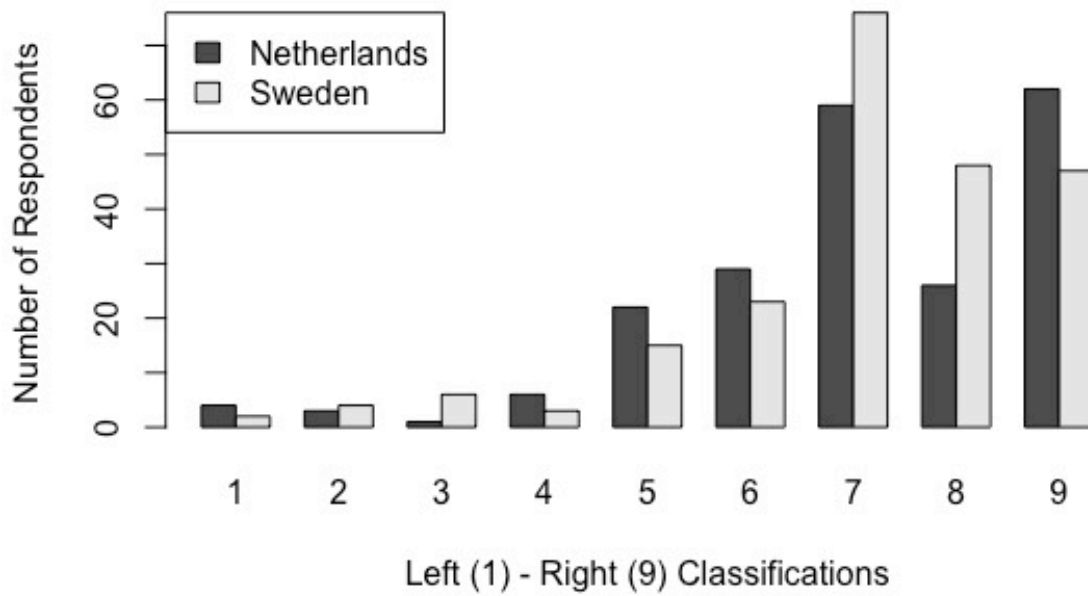


Fig 4. Ban Same-Sex Marriage

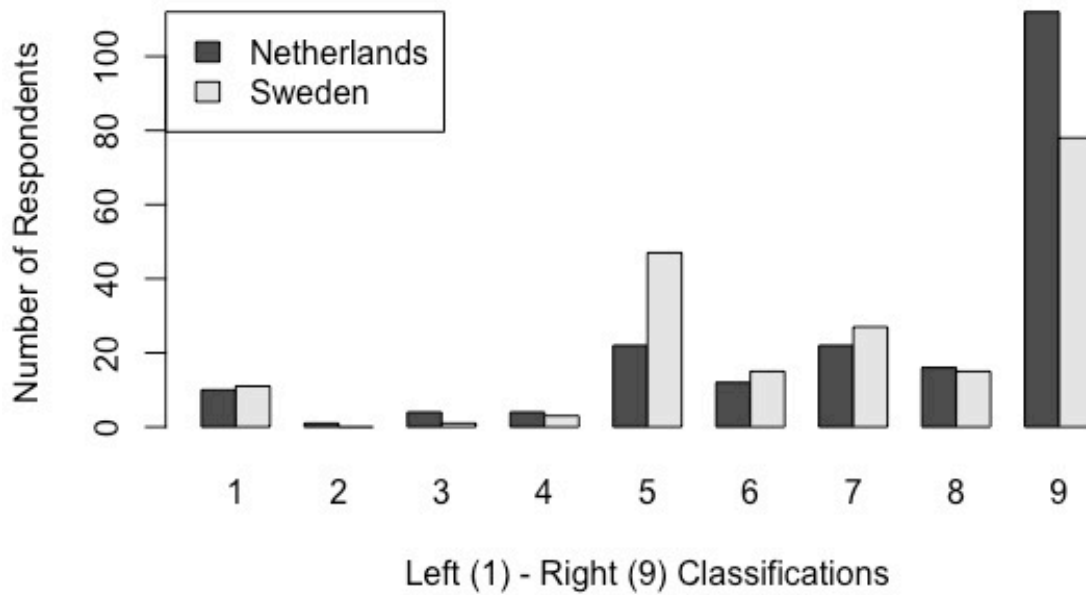


Fig 5. Gender Quota for Boards of Directors

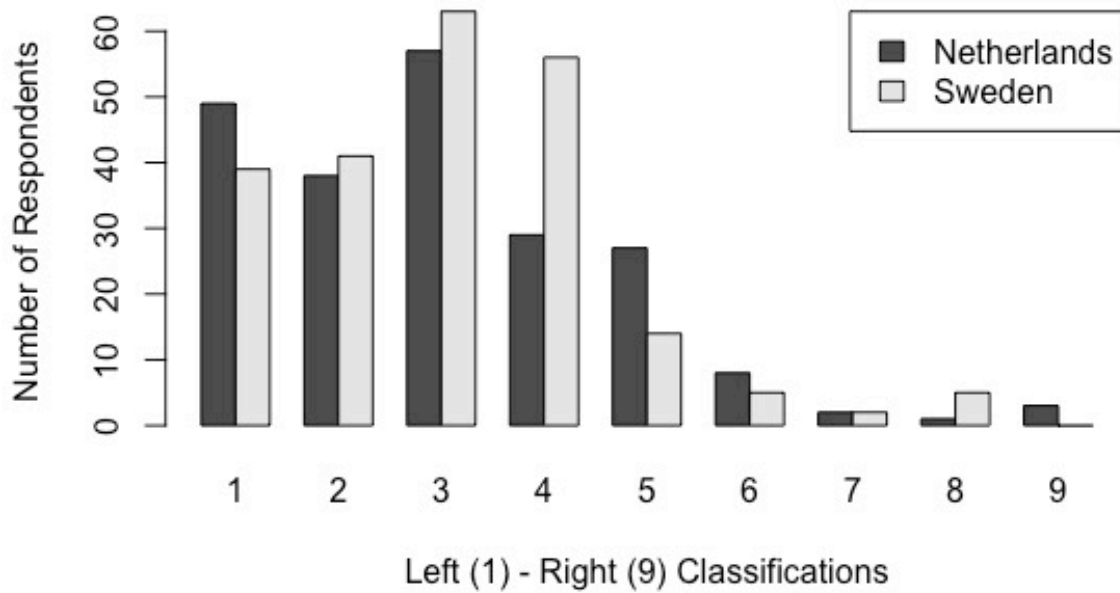


Fig 6. Tax the Poor Less, and the Rich More

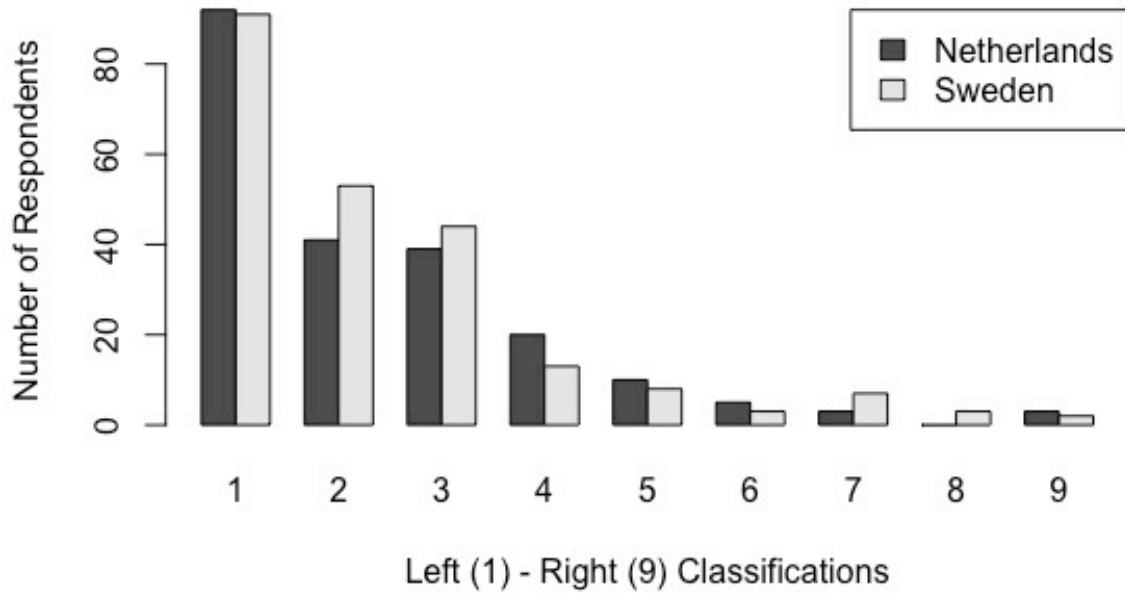


Fig 7. The Netherlands – More Allochtonen in Field Hockey

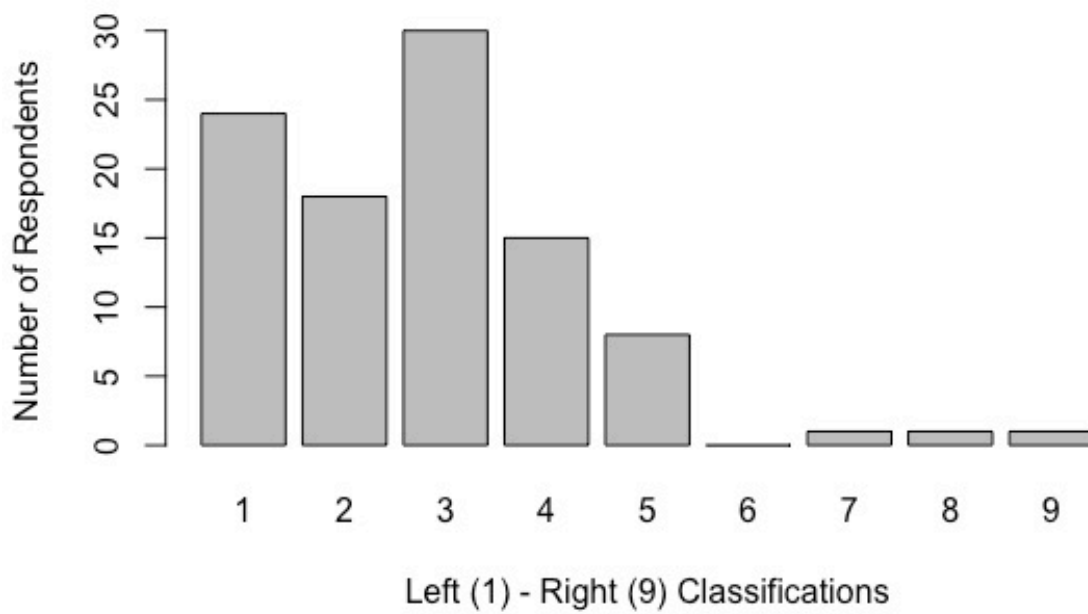


Fig 8. The Netherlands – More Autochtonen in Kickboxing

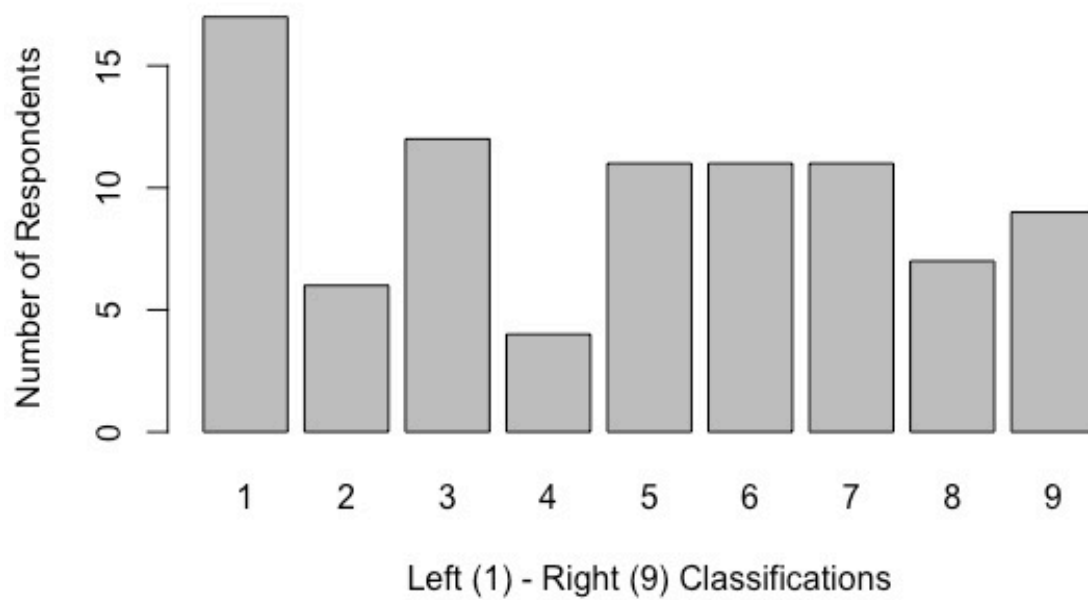


Fig 9. The Netherlands – More Female Students in the Natural Sciences

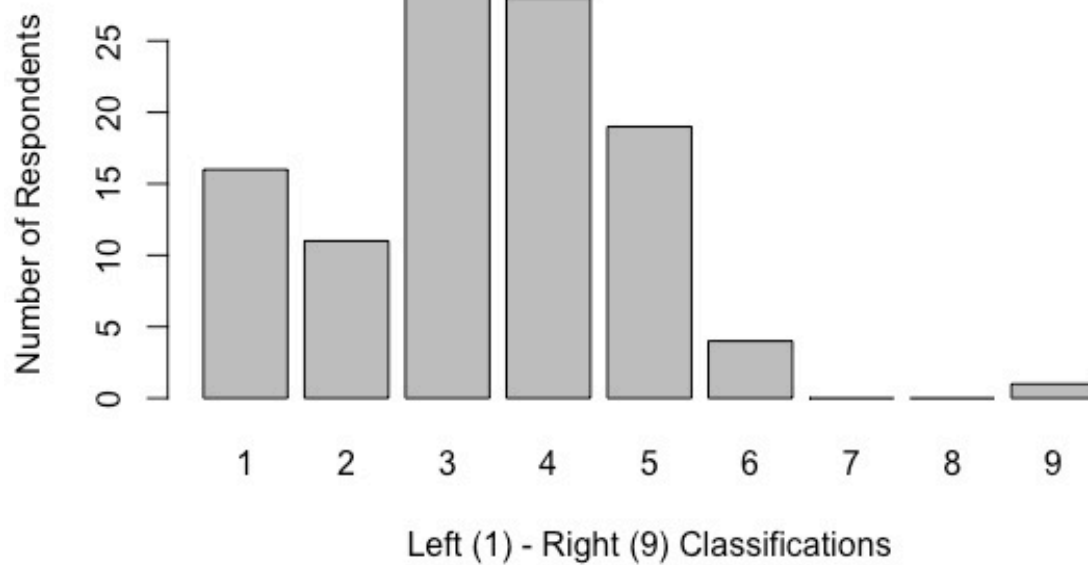


Fig 10. The Netherlands – More Male Students at Universities

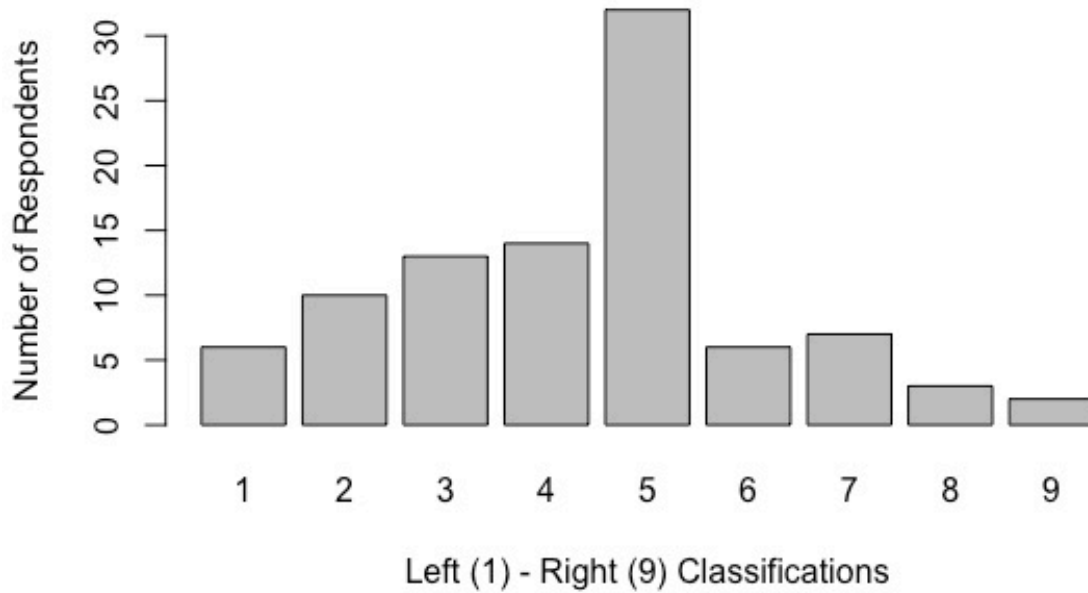


Fig 11. Sweden – Increase Girls' Test Scores

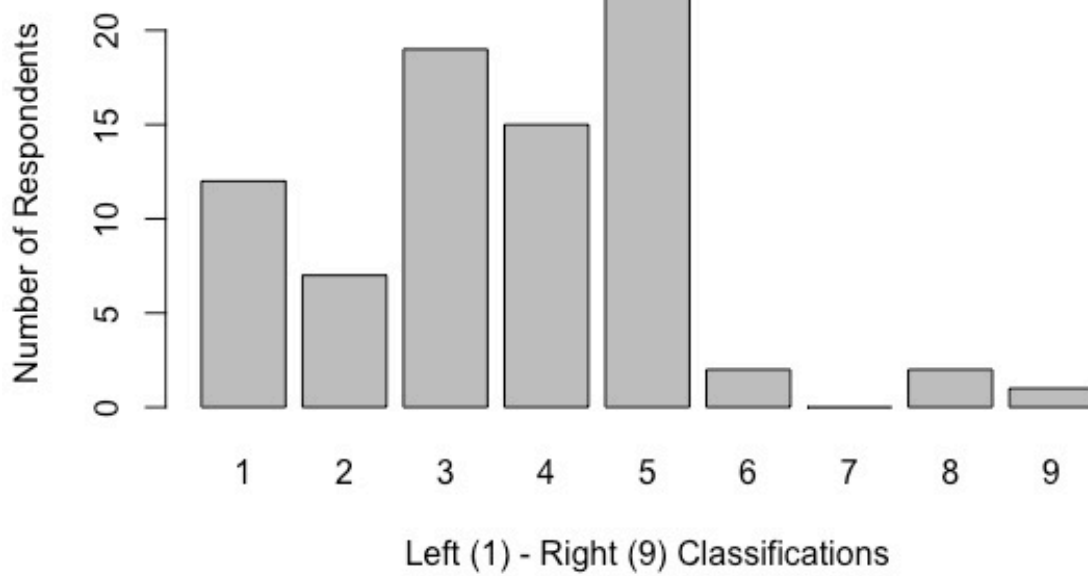


Fig 12. Sweden – Increase Boys' Grade

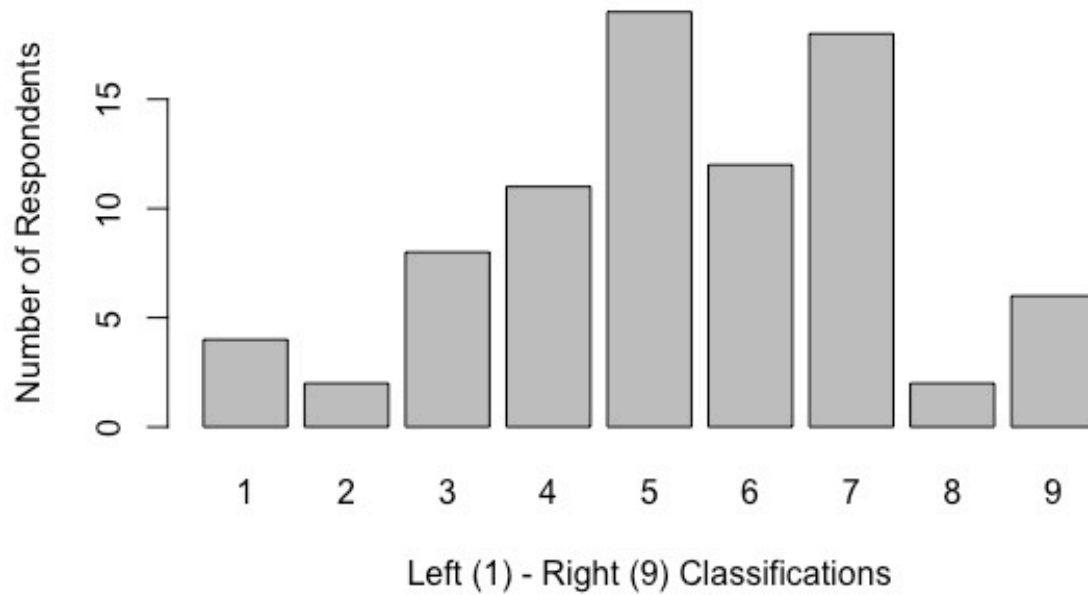


Fig 13. Sweden – More Players with an Immigrant Background in Ice Hockey

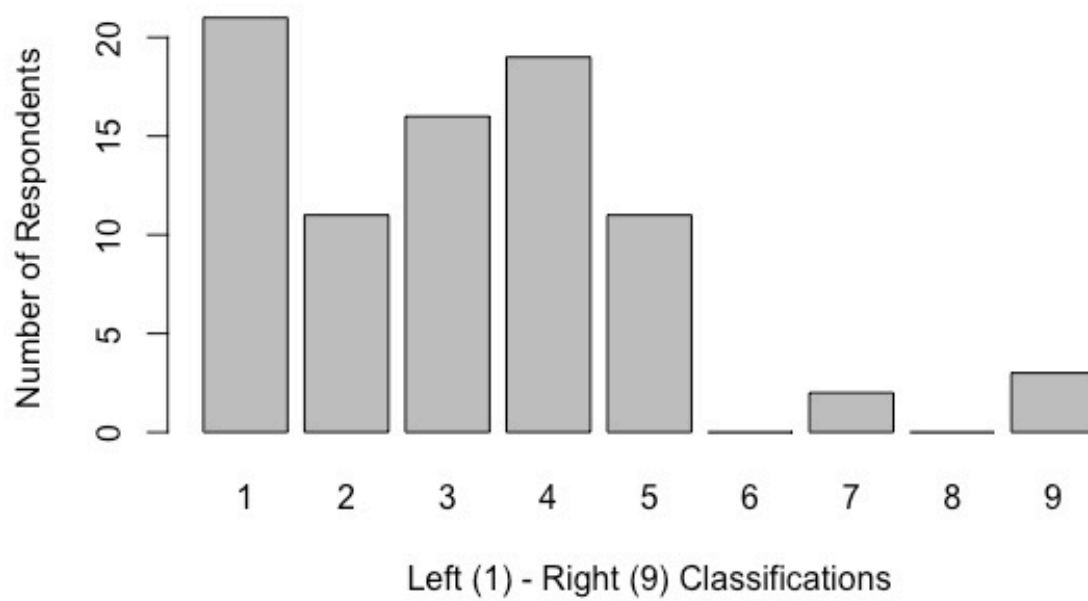


Fig 14. Sweden – More Players with a Swedish Background in Basketball

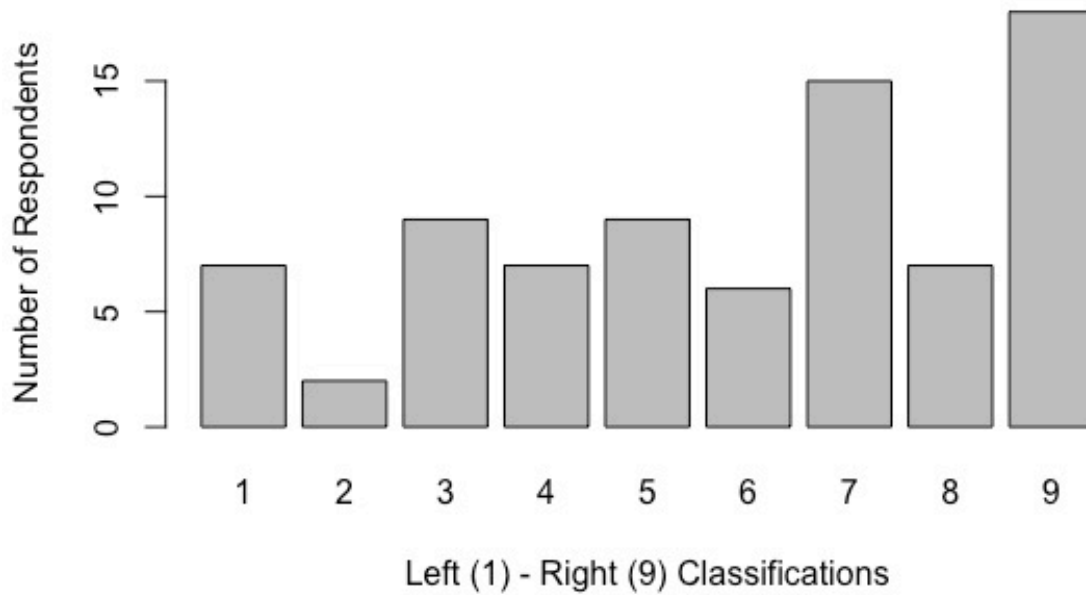


Fig 15. More Black Players in the NHL

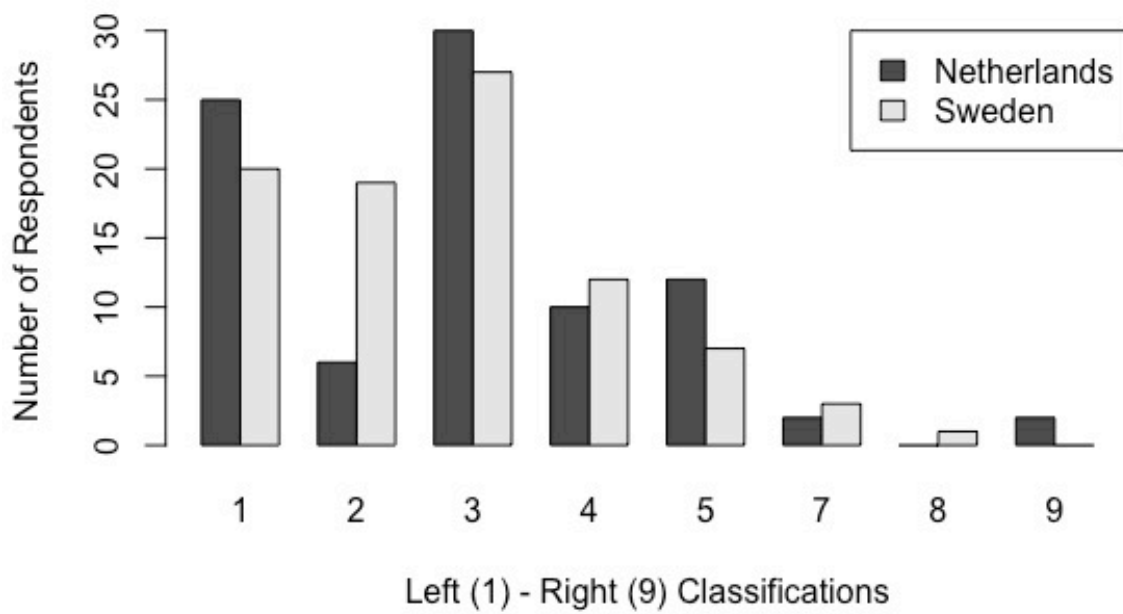


Fig 16. More White Players in the NBA

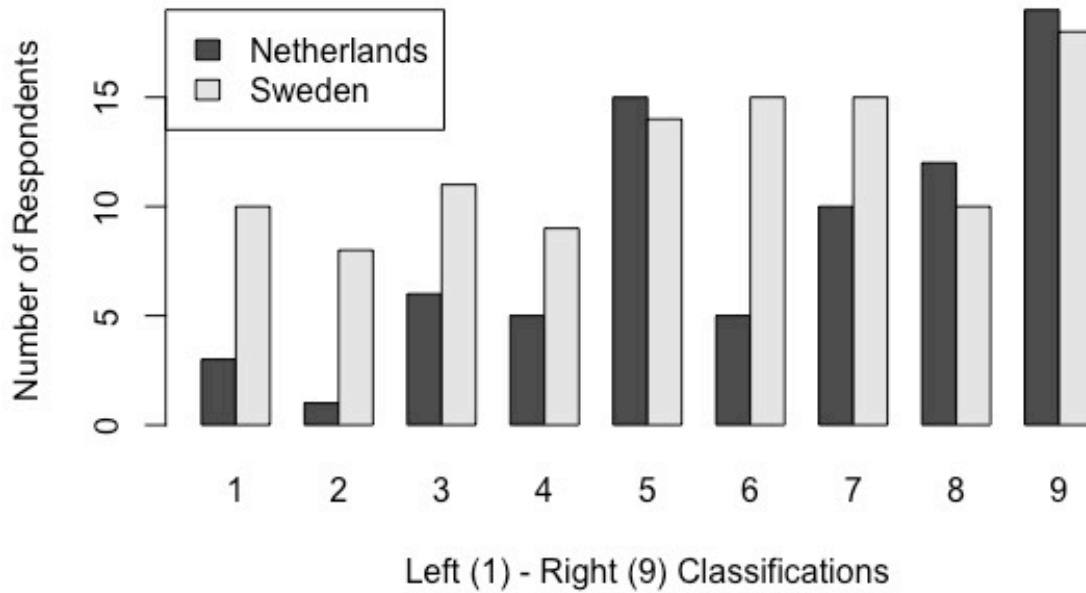


Fig 17. More LGBTQ Roles in Hollywood Movies

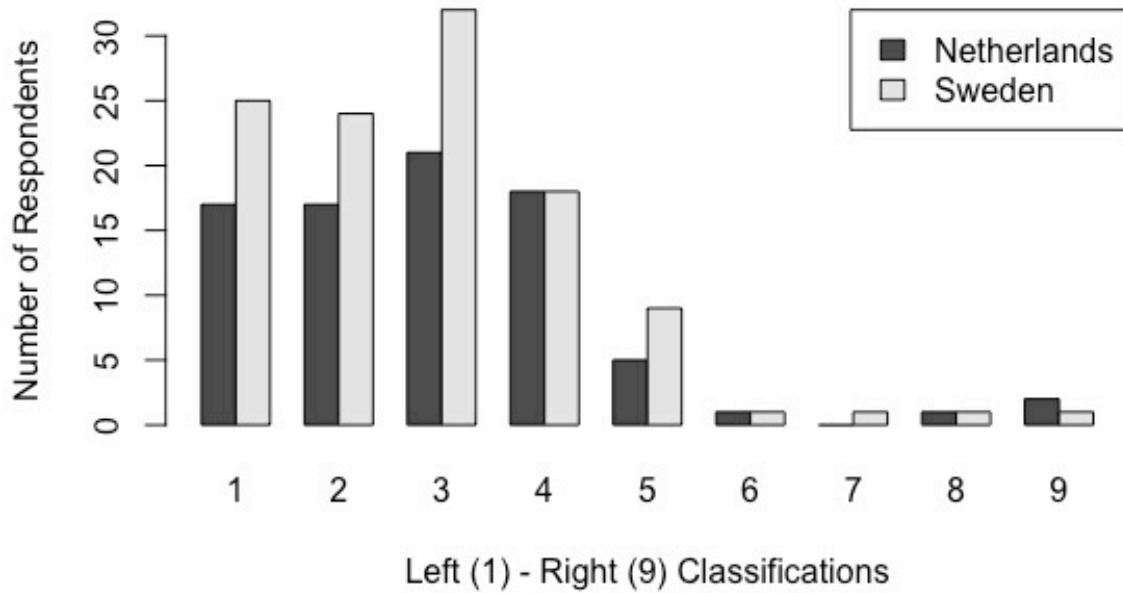
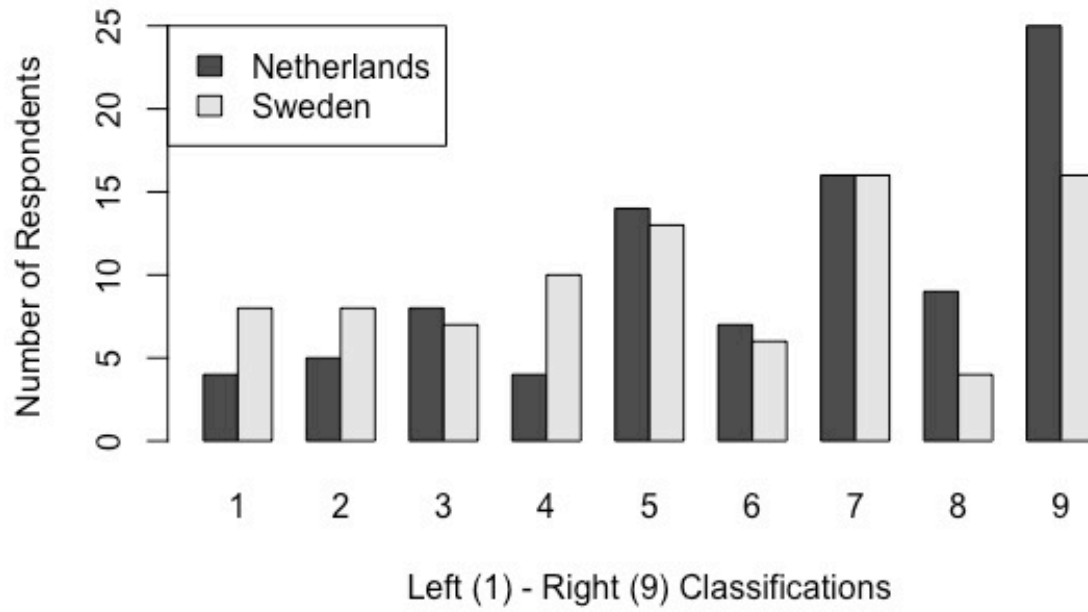


Fig 18. More Heterosexual Teachers in American Higher Education



Appendix B – Surveys

Table 14. Survey Questions – The Netherlands

<i>Set</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Question/Policy Proposal/Statement</i>
	First Question	Välj land / Kies land Sverige Nederland
	Initial Statement	Deze vragenlijst gaat over beleid en hoe dat beleid kan worden gezien in termen van links en rechts. Alle antwoorden worden vertrouwelijk behandeld. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 3 tot 5 minuten duren.
1		Mensen spreken vaak over politiek in termen van links en rechts. Waar op de links-rechtsschaal van 1 (Links) tot en met 9 (Rechts) zou u de volgende stellingen en beleidsvoorstellen plaatsen?” 1 - Links 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 - Rechts Weet ik niet/wil ik niet zeggen
	Inhabitants / Refugees	“De overheid moet minder geld uitgeven aan vluchtelingen en meer aan haar eigen burgers”

Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

	Men / Women	“Er zitten minder vrouwen dan mannen in de bestuurstop van beursgenoteerde bedrijven in Nederland. Daarom moet er een wet komen die bedrijven verplicht om evenveel vrouwen als mannen in hun bestuurstop op te nemen”
	Heterosexual / Homosexual	“Homoseksuele stellen moeten in dit land niet kunnen trouwen voor de wet”
	Rich / Poor	“De armste 20% van de bevolking moet minder belasting betalen, terwijl de belastingtarieven voor de rijkste 20% omhoog moeten om het verlies in belastinginkomsten te compenseren”
2A	Autochthon / Allochton	"Autochtone hockeyers zijn, vergeleken met allochtone spelers, oververtegenwoordigd in het Nederlands mannenhockeyelftal. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van allochtone spelers in het nationale team door de overheid worden bevorderd"
2B		"Allochtone kickboksers zijn, vergeleken met autochtone kickboksers, oververtegenwoordigd in het Nederlandse professionele kickboksen. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van autochtone kickboksers door de overheid worden bevorderd"
2		Zou u kunnen toelichten waarom u deze specifieke links-rechts positie kiest bij de voorafgaande vraag? Zo niet, dan kunt u deze toelichting overslaan.
2A	Men / Women	"Mannelijke studenten zijn, vergeleken met vrouwelijke studenten, oververtegenwoordigd in de bètawetenschappen (zoals wis- en natuurkunde) op Nederlandse universiteiten. Daarom moet een grotere instroom van vrouwelijke studenten aan deze studies door de overheid bevorderd worden"

2B		"Over het algemeen zijn vrouwelijke studenten, vergeleken met mannelijke studenten, oververtegenwoordigd aan Nederlandse universiteiten. Daarom moet een grotere instroom van mannelijke studenten aan de universiteiten door de overheid bevorderd worden"
2		Zou u kunnen toelichten waarom u deze specifieke links-rechts positie kiest bij de voorafgaande vraag? Zo niet, dan kunt u deze toelichting overslaan.
2A	Heterosexual / Non-Heterosexual	Deze stelling gaat over de Verenigde Staten. "Heteroseksuele filmkarakters zijn, vergeleken met niet-heteroseksuele (LGBTQ) filmkarakters, oververtegenwoordigd in Hollywood-films. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van LGBTQ-filmkarakters in Hollywood-films door de overheid bevorderd worden"
2B		Deze stelling gaat over de Verenigde Staten. "Homoseksuele docenten zijn, vergeleken met heteroseksuele docenten, oververtegenwoordigd in het hoger onderwijs in de VS. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van heteroseksuele docenten in het Amerikaanse hoger onderwijs door de Amerikaanse overheid bevorderd worden"
2A	Whites / Non-Whites	Deze stelling gaat over de Verenigde Staten. "Gekleurde spelers zijn, vergeleken met blanke spelers, oververtegenwoordigd in de Noord-Amerikaanse basketbalcompetitie NBA. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van blanke spelers in de NBA door de Amerikaanse overheid bevorderd worden"

2B

Deze stelling gaat over de Verenigde Staten.

"Blanke spelers zijn, vergeleken met gekleurde spelers, oververtegenwoordigd in de Noord-Amerikaanse ijshockeycompetitie NHL. Daarom moet een betere vertegenwoordiging van gekleurde spelers in de NHL door de Amerikaanse overheid bevorderd worden"

3

Control Variables

Nu volgen enkele vragen over uzelf.

Waar zou u uzelf op de links-rechtsschaal plaatsen?

1 - Links

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 - Rechts

Weet ik niet/wil ik niet zeggen

Wat is uw geslacht?

Man

Vrouw

Anders [Text box to fill in]

Wat is uw leeftijd?

15-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

66+

In welke sociale klasse zou u zichzelf plaatsen?

De arbeidersklasse

De hogere arbeidersklasse

De middenklasse

De hogere middenklasse

De hogere klasse

Weet ik niet/wil ik niet zeggen

Wat is uw hoogst behaalde opleidingsniveau?

Geen opleiding/ onvolledige basisonderwijs

Basisschool

Middelbaar/ middelbare school niet afgerond

Middelbaar/ met diploma

Hoger beroepsonderwijs of technische hbo-opleiding

Universiteit bachelors diploma

Universiteit Masters diploma

Universitair gespecialiseerd diploma (Doctoraal,
Juridisch)

Anders (s.v.p. aangeven) [Text box]

Hoe geïnteresseerd bent u in de politiek?

Vrijwel niet geïnteresseerd

Tamelijk geïnteresseerd

Zeer geïnteresseerd

Table 15. Survey Questions – Sweden

<i>Set</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Question/Policy Proposal/Statement</i>
	First Question	Välj land / Kies land Sverige Nederland
	Initial Statement	Den här undersökningen handlar om politik. Mer specifikt angående hur politiska förslag och påståenden klassificeras på den politiska vänster-högerskalan. Alla svar är anonyma. Enkäten tar ungefär 3 till 5 minuter att fylla i.
1		Man talar ibland om vänster och höger när man pratar om politik. Var på vänster-högerskalan, från 1 (Vänster) till 9 (Höger), skulle du placera följande politiska förslag/påståenden? 1 - Vänster 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 - Höger Vet inte/Vill inte svara
	Inhabitants / Refugees	"Staten borde spendera mindre pengar på flyktingar, och mer pengar på svenska invånare"
	Men / Women	"Det är färre kvinnor än män i svenska bolagsstyrelser. Aktiebolag borde därför enligt lag ha

		minst lika många av vardera kön i deras bolagsstyrelser"
	Heterosexual / Homosexual	"Homosexuella par borde inte få gifta sig"
	Rich / Poor	"De fattigaste 20% av Sveriges befolkning borde betala mindre i skatt, medan de rikaste 20% borde betala mer i skatt så att den totala skatteintäkten lämnas oförändrad"
2A	Swedish Background / Immigrant Background	"Det finns en överrepresentation av ishockeyspelare med svensk bakgrund i SHL (Swedish Hockey League) i jämförelse med ishockeyspelare som har invandrarbakgrund från icke-europeiska och icke-västerländska länder. Därför borde staten satsa på att öka andelen ishockeyspelare med invandrarbakgrund från icke-europeiska och icke-västerländska länder i SHL."
2B		"Det finns en överrepresentation av basketspelare med invandrarbakgrund från icke-västerländska länder i Svenska Basketligan i jämförelse med basketspelare med svensk bakgrund. Därför borde staten satsa på att öka andelen basketspelare med svensk bakgrund i Svenska Basketligan."
2		Förklara varför du klassificerade det föregående förslaget som du gjorde. Du kan lämna denna ruta tom om du vill.
2A	Men / Women	"Högskoleprovet är ett prov för de som vill ta sig in på svenska högskolor. Tjejer får i snitt sämre resultat på detta prov i jämförelse med killar. Därför borde staten satsa på att förbättra tjejers resultat, och mindre på att förbättra killars resultat"
2B		"Killar får i snitt sämre betyg i skolan i jämförelse med tjejer. Staten borde därför satsa på att förbättra killars betyg, och mindre på att förbättra tjejers betyg"

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2		Förklara varför du klassificerade det föregående förslaget som du gjorde. Du kan lämna denna ruta tom om du vill.
2A	Heterosexual / Non-Heterosexual	Det följande förslaget handlar om USA. "Heterosexuella är överrepresenterade som karaktärer i Hollywoodfilmer i jämförelse med HBTQ-karaktärer. Därför borde den amerikanska staten satsa på att öka andelen HBTQ-roller i Hollywoodfilmer"
2B		Det följande förslaget handlar om USA. "Homosexuella lärare som jobbar inom eftergymnasial utbildning (såsom universitet och högskolor) är överrepresenterade i jämförelse med heterosexuella lärare i USA. Därför borde den amerikanska staten satsa på att öka andelen heterosexuella lärare inom eftergymnasial utbildning"
2A	Whites / Non-Whites	Det följande förslaget handlar om USA. "I den nordamerikanska basketligan NBA (National Basketball Association) är svarta spelare överrepresenterade i jämförelse med vita spelare. Därför borde den amerikanska staten satsa på att öka andelen vita basketspelare i NBA"
2B		Det följande förslaget handlar om USA. "I den nordamerikanska hockeyligan NHL (National Hockey League) är vita spelare överrepresenterade i jämförelse med svarta spelare. Därför borde den amerikanska staten satsa på att öka andelen svarta hockeyspelare i NHL"

3 Control Variables

Nedan följer ett antal frågor om dig:

Hur skulle du placera dig själv på vänster-
högerskalan?

1 - Vänster

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 - Höger

Vet inte/Vill inte svara

Är du:

Man

Kvinna

Annat [Text box to fill in]

Ålder:

15-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

66+

Hur skulle du beskriva din egen klasstillhörighet?

Arbetarklass

Exploring Bobbio's Idea of an Egalitarian Left-Right Dimension

Övre arbetarklass

Medelklass

Övre medelklass

Överklass

Vet inte/Vill inte svara

Vilken är din högsta slutförda utbildning?

Ej fullgjort grundskola (eller motsvarande obligatorisk skola)

Grundskola (eller motsvarande obligatorisk skola)

Gymnasium, folkhögskola (eller motsvarande)

Eftergymnasial utbildning, ej högskola/universitet

Studier vid högskola/universitet

Studier vid/examen från forskarutbildning

Annan [Text box]

Hur intresserad är du av politik?

Inte särskilt intresserad

Ganska intresserad

Mycket intresserad
