STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL ATTITUDES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Hierarchical model of social/political attitudes

From: H. J. Eysenck, Sense and Nonsense in Psychology (1957).
Why interesting?

• descriptive tasks
  - is there any structure
  - outline the structure
• explanatory accounts - what explains the structure
• understanding consequent phenomena
Early Studies: Thurstone (1934) and Ferguson (1939)

Figure 4. Factor study of radicalism with attitude scales by Thelma Gwinn Thurstone.

L. L. Thurstone (1934), *The Vectors of Mind.*
Early Studies

• small samples, students
• few items in attitude scales
• FA based on scale scores rather than on individual items
Two-dimensional model of Hans Eysenck

From: H. J. Eysenck, Sense and Nonsense in Psychology (1957).
Eysenck's model

- more varied samples
- varied scales
- FA based on items
- Ideological bias
- Psychological basis of (one dimension of) ideology
Conservatism as a unidimensional bipolar dimension (G.D. Wilson)

Second-order factor

Conservatism
(vs. Radicalism/Liberalism/Progressivism)

First-order factors

1. Militarism or Punitiveness,
2. Antihedonism
3. Ethnocentrism
4. Religious Puritanism
Wilson's model

- popular new scale - WP C-scale
  - 'catch-phrase' scale:
    - Religion, Death Penalty, Abortion, ...
- cross cultural approach
- more consistent statistical analyses
- FA on two levels
- Psychological basis: Fear of uncertainty
Kerlinger’s Dualistic Theory

Traditional model:

Liberalism
Radicalism/Progressivism/
Left

Conservatism
Kerlinger’s Dualistic Theory

Liberalism

Conservatism

*Kerlinger's model:*
Kerlinger's Dualistic Theory

Liberalism
1. *Civil Rights*
   - civil rights, racial integration, desegregation
2. *Social Liberalism*
   social security, socialized medicine, poverty program, social welfare,
3. *Sexual Freedom*
   - equality of women, women’s liberation, birth control, abortion
4. *Human Warmth and Feeling*
   - love, human warmth, affection, feeling
5. *Progressivism*
   - child centred curriculum, child’s interests and needs, pupil personality (Kerlinger 1984).

Conservatism
1. *Religiosity*
   - church, Christian, faith in god
2. *Economic Conservatism*
   - profits, money, business, free enterprise, capitalism, private property
3. *Traditional Conservatism*
   - discipline, law and order, authority, family, tradition
Kerlinger's Dualistic Theory

- theoretically informed selection of items/referents (political philosophy, public discourse...)
- large, occasionally probability samples
- consistent application of second-order FA
- Psychological basis:
  - Progressive attitude: ‘applies’ the value of equality to the economic realm (equality of income, property, life chances, etc.) and the value of freedom to the non-economic realm (e.g., tolerance, permissiveness).
  - Conservative attitude: freedom applied to the economic realm (free enterprise, opposition to government interference) and equality - applied to the non-economic realm (e.g., conformism to conventional social norms).” (Middendorp and deVries 1981, 252).
'Outliers', recent studies, cross-cultural evidence

- separation of economic (LR) and social (or value, lifestyle..) dimensions seems more firmly established

- European research: auth & LR

- post-socialist Eastern Europe
  - two conservatisms
  - both related to authoritarianism and similar SES variables - but not religiosity

Example:
Enyedi & Todosijević (2003)
(1) Conventionalism, (2) Socialist conservatism, (3) Right-wing conservatism, (4) Libertarianism
Summary

• No support for 'non-ideological public' thesis
• Evidence supports at least one dimension: Conservatism (Right) vs. Liberalism (Left, radicalism)
• Often additional dimensions reported
  ₁ Authoritarian-Libertarian
  ᶦ Separation of economic and socio-cultural LR dimensions
• Ideological dimensions - complex entities, consisting of more specific components
• Influence of political and historical context
• Structure of ideology - important component of political culture
• Methodological issues
  - samples, questions, analytic methods

• Future research
  - replicable research
  - cross-cultural approach
  - Behavioral consequences of political attitudes