

Generalized Trust in Surveys

From Scales to Dragons

Sebastian Lundmark

Göteborg Studies in Politics 145

2016

Avhandlingen baseras på följande delstudier:

Lundmark, Sebastian, Mikael Gilljam, and Stefan Dahlberg. 2015. "Measuring Generalized Trust: An Examination of Question Wording and the Number of Scale Points." *Public Opinion Quarterly* doi:10.1093/poq/nfv042

Lundmark Sebastian and Mikael Gilljam. "Panel Conditioning on Political and Social Attitudes: Evidence from a Seven-Wave Randomized Experiment."

Lundmark, Sebastian and Andrej Kokkonen. "Subjective Assessment and Objective Number of Immigrants: Impact on Generalized Trust and Attitudes toward Immigrants."

Lundmark, Sebastian. 2015. "Gaming Together: When an imaginary world affects generalized trust." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 12 (1): pp. 54–73.

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i statsvetenskap som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges till offentlig granskning fredagen den 29 Januari 2016, kl. 13.15 i Torgny Segerstedtssalen, Universitetets huvudbyggnad, Vasaparken 1, Göteborg.



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Lundmark, Sebastian. 2016. *Generalized Trust in Surveys: From Scales to Dragons*. Göteborg Studies in Politics 145, edited by Bo Rothstein, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. ISBN 978-91-628-9682-9 (Print), ISBN 978-91-628-9683-6 (PDF), ISSN 0346-5942

Abstract

Generalized trust has been one of the frequently researched attitudes in political and social sciences. Although this type of trust saw its real breakthrough in the theories about social capital, offered by Robert D. Putnam in 1993, the survey measurement was created in the 1940s. Despite this, only a handful of studies evaluate generalized trust from a survey measurement perspective.

This thesis presents four articles aiming to rectify this shortcoming by employing a measurement error perspective to the generalized trust survey question. The first article offers analyses of whether the survey question can be improved through the application of theories dominant in survey methodology. The second article investigates measurement error in generalized trust and other attitudes stemming from panel survey participation. The third article analyzes whether measurement error in responses to factual questions bias results between generalized trust and ethnic diversity. The fourth article utilizes the knowledge obtained in the thesis by studying social experiences in an online game and its impact on generalized trust.

The thesis proposes that measurement error in the generalized trust survey measurement can be substantially decreased by employing survey methodology theories. In addition, generalized trust seems to be measured in panels without increasing measurement error. Furthermore, the effect of ethnic diversity does not seem to be driven by measurement error in factual survey questions about immigrants. Using the proposed adaption of how to measure the generalized trust survey question in the first articles, the last article finds that social experiences in voluntary associational-like environments in an online game seem to affect generalized trust. All in all, when measured as suggested in this thesis, generalized trust fares pretty well as a survey measurement. Hence, the thesis promotes a continued usage of the generalized trust survey question.

Keywords: Generalized Trust, Survey Methodology, Survey Experiments, Panel Studies