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### Growing up on Different Sides of the Wall - A Quasi-Experimental Test: Applying the Left-Right Dimension to the German Mass Public

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# Growing up on Different Sides of the Wall – A Quasi-Experimental Test: Applying the Left–Right Dimension to the German Mass Public

ANJA NEUNDORF

*This paper utilises survey data from the 1999 European Value Study to conduct a quasi-experimental analysis of the relationship between the left–right self-identification and policy preferences of Germany’s electorate. Given the German division until 1990 it is plausible that citizens from East and West Germany had different ideological socialisation experiences swayed by the political discourse of their times. This paper models the influence of this diverse experience on ideological thinking, and examines the effects on the understanding of political issues. The findings suggest that differences do exist in the ideological consistency and attitude structuring of respondents. Compared to respondents in the West, East Germans are more likely to understand the term ‘left’ in socio-economic terms. On the other hand, they seem to connect the term ‘right’ rather to xenophobic issues. These results have crucial implications for political communication in representative democracies, as they question the one-level dimensionality of the left–right concept.*

## INTRODUCTION

Ideology is a heuristic that effectively can support communication between political elites and the mass public, and enable individuals to make judgements about the political world. In public discourse ideological labels, such as ‘left’ and ‘right’ are employed to exemplify ideologies. These labels serve as an analytical shorthand for summarising policy positions on several issues. The left–right dimension as a ‘mechanism for the reduction of complexity for individuals and a communication function for the political system’<sup>1</sup> can orientate citizens as it is ‘the single most important indicator of party policy, and a pointer to underlying ideology’.<sup>2</sup> Political elites label policies, parties, and politicians in left–right terms in order to summarise their attitudes to the economy, the role of the state, and value orientations in general. In this way whole ‘packages of policies’ are described as ‘left’ or ‘right’. As Inglehart and Klingemann emphasise, ‘the classical view of the left–right dimension sees it a super-issue which summarises the programs of opposing political groups’.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this paper is to explore whether voters ‘buy’ these packages as a set of comprehensive issues. It is not yet definitely demonstrated that citizens actually understand ideological labels in the same way as political and intellectual elites do.<sup>4</sup> Jennings, however, points out that if ‘ordinary citizens do not put their political thoughts together in a consistent and stable fashion, or if they put them together in a

quite different fashion than the elites, it is not difficult to see why they might be befuddled or discouraged by the behaviour of what they see as doctrinaire of ideological elites'.<sup>5</sup> As the ideological labels 'left' and 'right' are widely used by political elites,<sup>6</sup> it is necessary to investigate firstly if people actually understand these labels and secondly whether they use them to derive opinions about more concrete issues. This paper contributes to the existing literature on citizens' competence and the expected linkage between political elites and the mass public by connecting policy preferences to an individual's ideological self-identification.<sup>7</sup>

The paper further contributes to the scientific debate about the actual content of the left–right dimension. It is commonly used as a socio-economic dimension measuring the role of the state in the domestic economy; for example via socialist or laissez-faire attitudes.<sup>8</sup> However, this traditional meaning is challenged with some scholars claiming that the labels 'left' and 'right' tap other concerns, such as 'new politics' issues or xenophobia.<sup>9</sup> This paper accordingly examines whether people still connect their general socio-economic policy preferences to their self-positioning on the left–right dimension or whether other issues dominate the content of these ideological labels. The main assumption is as follows: if the left–right dimension is, indeed, such a powerful and overarching heuristic – as claimed by several scholars – we would expect that citizens' own policy preferences and their ideological standpoint captured by the left–right self-identification are related.<sup>10</sup>

The paper also investigates how political socialisation into different political systems can affect citizens' competence. More specifically, the object here is to examine the impact of systemic processes of socialisation on an important political heuristic. Based on the changing meaning of the ideological labels over the last three decades, the German context provides a quasi-experimental setting to study elite influences on the ideological thinking of individuals. The division of Germany into two different political systems and its reunification provide a unique opportunity to investigate the ideological thinking and the understanding of political issues of citizens who were socialised in different contexts. This political socialisation approach is central to my argument.

A set of questions from the 1999 European Value Study is used that includes respondents' placement on the left–right dimension followed by a set of five socio-economic policy questions. The questionnaire design produces a framing effect. According to Zaller, one can expect that the consistency between these scales should be quite high for those with an ideological orientation.<sup>11</sup> The differences between the two are operationalised as an inconsistency measure and are modelled in multiple regressions comparing East and West Germans. It is assumed that if respondents are consistent in their responses, they actually use the left–right scale as an economic dimension.

#### POLICY REPRESENTATION AND THE CONCEPT OF CONSISTENCY

Political representation in a democratic system is based on the interplay between the political elite and the mass public. Citizens need to formulate clear preferences, usually expressed by supporting one particular party in an election. On the other hand, to be elected, the political parties need to satisfy the preferences of their

voters. The 'congruence between the preferences of citizens and the actions of policy-makers constitute a major claim and goal of liberal democracy'.<sup>12</sup> Clearly weaknesses in these linkages such as a lack of a mutually accepted and understood set of opinions shared by elites and masses might well lead to 'the decay of democracy'.<sup>13</sup>

In a multi-party system such as Germany, citizens have a variety of political alternatives to choose from. The five competing political parties in contemporary Germany offer a diverse set of policies. Voters need cues to decrease the costs of their decisions as they choose between these different policy packages. Party identification is likely to be one such device,<sup>14</sup> as is the ideological stance of parties which can function as a cost-saving heuristic. However, it remains unclear if voters do connect their 'own philosophy' to the policies offered by the political parties.<sup>15</sup>

This connection is closely linked to the concept of consistence. This paper uses the concept of *congruence* introduced by Sniderman and Bullock, which describes the predictability of the positions citizens take on specific issues given their general political orientation, such as self-identification on the left-right dimension.<sup>16</sup> This understanding of consistency is very similar to Converse's concept of constraint. Sniderman and Bullock argue that citizens in representative democracies are able to coordinate their responses on political opinions and preferences insofar as political parties coordinate choices and policies. They claim that 'political parties provide the basis for the consistency of individuals'.<sup>17</sup> Coordination is achieved by 'menu dependency', as political parties provide issue positions on a wide range of topics, which are perceived as consistent packages.

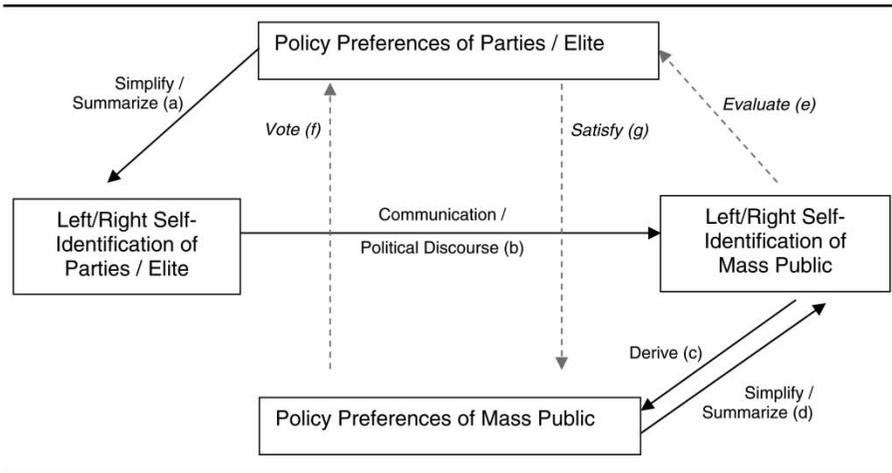
#### IDEOLOGICAL LABELS AS MEANS OF POLITICAL ORIENTATION

Research in the past 50 years has shown that most citizens in Western democracies are not able to use the information provided by the political elite in a meaningful way.<sup>18</sup> The vast majority seems to lack consistent or stable opinions. Converse argues in his black-and-white model that 'a large proportion of an electorate simply does not have meaningful beliefs, even on issues that have formed the basis for intense controversy among elites for substantial periods of time'.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these negative findings there seems scholarly consensus that heuristics, such as the left-right schema, through providing an orientation to the political system, can reduce the complexity of the political world.<sup>20</sup> The ideological labels can be employed as shortcuts that help citizens connect it to specific policy preferences. Zechmeister distinguishes two functions of ideological labels used as heuristics.<sup>21</sup> Firstly, ideological labels may facilitate reasonable political evaluations and choices for individuals. The terms 'left' and 'right' help uninformed voters to overcome information processing limitations by providing cues about political standpoints and ideas. Secondly, she notes that ideological labels may enhance political communication.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 1 summarises my previous arguments, showing how ideological labels at the elite level link to those at the mass level. The main challenge for representative democracies is to implement competing policies. As the policy level is too complex and difficult for the mass public to understand, the political elites simplify their preferences by summarising their policy stance using ideological labels such as 'left' and

FIGURE 1  
A TOP-DOWN MODEL OF THE LEFT–RIGHT DIMENSION AS A MEANS OF ORIENTATION



‘right’ (arrow a). These labels are then transmitted by political discourse to the mass public (b). The arrow in Figure 1 is a direct path, indicating the top-down approach of the model. Further, political elites influence citizens’ understanding of the ideological labels, as they have ‘communication dominance’ in the political sphere. Citizens are then assumed to formulate their own ideological position on the left–right dimension by following the elite’s political communication. Based on the concept of congruence described above, voters derive their policy preferences from their left–right self-identification (c). The line in (d) illustrates the influence of citizens’ policy preferences on their ideological self-identification. I consider this two-way link as ‘ideological consistency’. The central point of this article lies in the processes (a) to (d), i.e. the political communication between the elite and the mass public with its implication for the political understanding of citizens. The arrows (e) to (g) have been included to make the model comprehensive.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Meaning of the Ideological Labels ‘Left’ and ‘Right’*

In order to fulfil a communication function, it is necessary that the elites and the mass public apply the same ideological ‘left’ and ‘right’ labels. Pappi and Shikano note that ‘on the basis of a common understanding, parties can build bridges between ideological and policy spaces so that ideologies are capable to function as an information shortcut for voters’.<sup>24</sup> However what do political elites and the mass public associate with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’?

The most common tool for analysing the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ labels is content analysis of open-ended survey questions. Respondents in a survey are usually asked to state what they associate with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’.<sup>25</sup> Other studies use expert surveys to analyse the meaning of the ideological terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ for the political elite.<sup>26</sup> Party manifestos and official documents offer an additional possibility to identify the content of ideological labels used by political

elites (illustrated by the process (a) in Figure 1). The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) assigns the policy positions of national political parties on a left–right dimension by deriving party ideologies from party manifestos.<sup>27</sup> The CMP allocates different policy themes such as strong defence to free enterprise and traditional morality as ‘right’ and peaceful internationalism, welfare and government intervention as ‘left’. Theoretically driven, Downs divides the ideological space into those who believe in state control of the economy, who are positioned on the dimension’s left; and people believing in a free market principle, who are situated on the right-hand side.<sup>28</sup> He argued that the essence of the left–right dimension is a disagreement over the scope of government intervention in the economy.

Since the introduction of Inglehart’s theory of value change in the early 1970s, this purely socio-economic meaning of the left–right dimension has been challenged. Some researchers have argued that the subtle shift from materialist to post-materialist values have changed the main cleavages of modern societies. Hence, the centrality of the left–right dimension was affected by this change as well.<sup>29</sup> However, it yet remains unsettled whether the salience of the left–right dimension as the old socio-economic, class-based cleavage shifted towards an alternative dimension of policy competition, tapping non-economic, non-class-based concerns often associated with ‘new politics’ issues. Many scholars still claim that the class cleavage remains very strong.<sup>30</sup>

As argued above, the mutual understanding of the content of ideological labels is essential for successful political communication between the political elite and the mass public. To test, how the changing meaning of the left–right terminology might have affected ideological thinking among the mass public, I focus on Germany, where the last 30 years have seen the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ change quite dramatically. The next section provides a more detailed discussion about ideological labels in Germany and describes the importance of political socialisation to account for the processes influencing the meaning of ideological labels.

#### THE POLITICAL SOCIALISATION APPROACH IN THE CASE OF GERMANY

Klingemann carried out the first systematic research on the individual understanding of the left–right dimension in Germany. He and others found that the ideological labels of ‘left’ and ‘right’ are widely recognised and understood by the German electorate.<sup>31</sup> German citizens seem moreover to ‘interpret the policy standpoints of parties in a way compatible with the meaning of left–right, as discussed by political elites and the media’.<sup>32</sup> Bauer-Kaase conducted the most recent content analysis of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ in the German electorate, by comparing the labels’ meaning over time (1971–98).<sup>33</sup> Her findings demonstrate that the content of the classical socio-economic meaning of the term ‘left’ remains quite strong. For example, issues about social inequality and a socialist economic system became more important to Germans from both East and West over time.

Following some important political events with the leftist terrorist groups (in particular, the Red Army Faction) and the emergence of the Green party in the 1970s, there is some evidence for a pluralisation of the term ‘left’ by the addition of new issues – especially among young, highly educated and politically interested electors. However, in the 1990s the main political conflicts were economic in nature, probably

due to growing unemployment and cuts in social security following the German reunification. This resulted in a strong socio-economic use of the term 'left'.<sup>34</sup>

Based on these developments and, consequently, the changed terms of political discourse, Pappi and Shikano argue that East and West Germans vary in their exposure to the shifting meaning of the term 'left', largely due to the different role of the leftist parties.

In West Germany, the Greens are placed at the leftmost position with the consequence that the meaning of being left changed from traditional social democratic issue positions in favour of social welfare for the lower classes to 'new politics' issues. . . . In East Germany, the leftmost position of the PDS strengthened the welfare and income redistribution issues of the old left.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, it is no surprise that 15 per cent of West Germans, but only 7 per cent of East Germans mention issues of 'new politics' when asked about the term 'left' in open-ended questions in 1998.<sup>36</sup>

On the contrary, the use of the term 'right' changed significantly during the 1990s. Bauer-Kaase illustrates that 'right' is increasingly used to describe extreme national socialist parties. 34 per cent of West Germans and 53 per cent of East Germans associate xenophobia with the ideological label 'right' when answering an open-ended survey question.<sup>37</sup> Bauer-Kaase attributes the widespread xenophobic association with the term 'right' in the Neue Bundesländer with the increase of assaults against foreigners in the East. With only about one-quarter associating this term with a capitalist market economy in 1998, German reunification could well be a turning point in the use of the term 'right' in the political discourse of the mass public. Several studies analysing the content of the left–right dimension using data prior to 1990 do not even mention the association with xenophobia or the radical meaning of 'right'. Despite being clearly a market-orientated economic term, only labels such as 'conservatism' or 'religiosity' were also associated with 'right'.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, the ideological labels 'left' and 'right' customarily used by the political elite and the electorate alike to capture socio-economic, class-based conflicts shifted towards a less clear ideological dimension. The term 'left' still seems to be mainly influenced by the old meaning, although sub-groups of West Germans interpret this label as associated with 'new politics' issues. The term 'right', on the other hand, seems to have shifted away completely from its original laissez-faire, market-orientated meaning towards tapping xenophobic issues. In this paper, I explore the extent to which citizens in East and West Germany still use the left–right ideological dimension as the original socio-economic cleavage.

Overall, the changed and broadened meaning of the terms 'left' and 'right' in the last two decades influenced East Germans in their understanding of these labels in a way different from their Western compatriots. Albeit that they enjoyed a common background of culture and language, the division of Germany until 1990 implies that respondents from the East and the West have very different socialisation experiences as a result of growing up in two opposed political systems. It is, however, not clear if this has produced dissimilar ideological understandings among East and West Germans.<sup>39</sup> I address this issue by modelling the influence of these diverse experiences on ideological thinking among German citizens.

Political socialisation is central to this argument. Merelman defines it as ‘the process by which people acquire relatively enduring orientations towards politics in general and towards their own political system’.<sup>40</sup> It has been empirically demonstrated that adolescents change more rapidly than adults with respect to these orientations. Such political attitudes appear to stabilise, mainly in the ages between the late 20s and early 30s.<sup>41</sup> Younger citizens should hence be better placed to pick up changes in the political discourse in respect of applying ideological labels.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

We can assume that the vast majority of the Germans were politically socialised before the Berlin Wall was toppled. Based on the socialisation approach, one can derive several hypotheses about the ability of German citizens on both sides of the former Wall to use ideological labels in a consistent way and hence are able to follow the political discourse.

The main argument I test is that one can predict a person’s stance on a bundle of policies from their left–right self-placement. The main focus of this article is on investigating the impact of systemic processes of socialisation on understanding the relationship between ideological labels and policy preference. The quasi-experimental setting provided by the reunification of Germany and the changing meaning of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ discussed above, offer an unique opportunity to investigate this question empirically.

Based on the theoretical discussion summarised in Figure 1 and the existing empirical evidence presented above, I argue that the content of the ideological labels changed among the political elites over time (a). This process was driven by the emergence of new parties such as the Greens and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the development of new political conflicts, such as anti-foreigner sentiments. Assuming that the citizens of West and East Germany were exposed to different political discourses (b), I explore the effects this change had on the connection of citizens’ ideological self-identification and their policy preferences (c). Based on the changing meaning of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’, I expect that the ideological position on the ‘left’ or the ‘right’ during the period when citizens were politically socialised are important for determining if a respondent uses their socio-economic policy preferences in line with their ideological self-identification. In this way, it is possible to test whether the left–right dimension is still dominated by class-based interpretations or is replaced by other cleavages.

For answering the research question the context in which East and West Germans became familiar with the ideological labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ is decisive. Even if we take into account that citizens of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) had some limited access to western TV, we can assume that they were exposed to these ideological labels only after Germany’s reunification for the most part.<sup>42</sup> The terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ were not used in the political discourse of the former GDR. Our first hypothesis is then formulated as follows:

*Hypothesis 1a: East Germans are less familiar with the labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ than West Germans.*

Based on this argument the next hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 1b: East Germans are more ideologically inconsistent in their beliefs than West Germans.*

As discussed above, the term 'right' is nowadays much more associated with xenophobic ideas than with the original free market principles, especially among East Germans. This should make it difficult for all East Germans, irrespective of their age, to derive socio-economic policy positions from a 'right' self-identification. The youngest generation in West Germany is also expected to be highly inconsistent with a rightist ideological position. The pre-reunification generation in West Germany, on the other hand, should still interpret this label as a socio-economic term or should at least be better able to bring their policy preferences in line with a 'right' ideological leaning. Based on this reasoning we derive the following hypothesis on ideological inconsistency for East and West Germans who consider themselves as 'rightists':

*Hypothesis 2: Germans who were politically socialised into the political system in West Germany after reunification and consider themselves as 'rightist' are likely to give inconsistent answers to economic policy stimuli.*

The term 'left', on the other hand, is still used to describe socialist economic preferences. Especially, with the emergence of the PDS (since 2006 *Die Linke*) in 1990, Germany has a clearly defined political party that has a strong economic position, favouring socialist economic policies and, moreover, labelling its policies unmistakably as 'left'. As a mainly East German party, the PDS should hence be a helpful political anchor for East Germans. Older Western Germans, however, were more exposed to the emergence of 'new politics' issues on the 'left' with the establishment of the Green Party in the late 1970s. A leftist ideological position should, hence, activate several considerations, such as the environment, citizen's participation, and social inequality. This ambivalence is expected to result in higher inconsistency. Moreover, political socialisation theory suggests that it is more difficult for adults to change their once established attitudes. We can accept that the older, pre-reunification generation in West Germany got stuck with the 'left' as a term describing 'new politics' issues.

In recent years, the influence of 'new politics' issues has diminished. Hence, the youngest post-reunification generation in the West is expected to interpret the term 'left' much more in terms of economic conflicts again. From this empirical argument, the final hypothesis states:

*Hypothesis 3: East Germans and young West Germans are expected to be more ideologically consistent in their socio-economic policy preferences with a leftist position than the pre-reunification Western generation.*

#### DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The German data for the third wave of the European Values Study (EVS) is used in the empirical analysis. The face-to-face interviews took place during October to December 1999. The lower cut-off age was 18, which means that the youngest respondents in the survey were nine years old when the country was reintegrated. The sample size of 2,036 respondents over-represents East Germans, which is ideal for this study.

*Measurement of the Dependent Variable 'Ideological Inconsistency'*

To test the hypotheses, I analysed whether voters connect their self-identification on the abstract 'left–right' labels with their policy preferences. Due to data availability, the focus is on the socio-economic content of the ideological labels. This idea goes back to Converse's idea of constraint, which claims that ideas are inter-related with each other.<sup>43</sup> The joint analysis of the left–right dimension and its connection to socio-economic policy opinions contributes to the understanding of the concept of constraint. Huber, for example, uses issue positions to predict the left–right self-identification.<sup>44</sup> I go further by connecting policy preferences and the ideological self-identification of individuals to one concept – ideological consistency.

As the focus of the article is whether electors can follow the political discourse of the political elite, and are, consequently, able to fill the abstract ideological labels 'left' and 'right' with meaningful policy content, I employ an approach by Zaller to measure connectivity. He emphasises in particular the role of framing in inducing consistency in a survey design. Ideologies can be considered to be framing devices. Zaller implies that one can stimulate ideological considerations and issue consistency by making ideological concepts salient to survey respondents. Accordingly, we can interpret the failure to connect policy issues to one's ideological standpoint as evidence that these are not related for the respondent. Zaller points out one deduction of his receive-and-accept model:

Having had their ideological orientations made salient to them just prior to answering policy items, those respondents who have such an orientation are more likely to rely on it as a consideration in formulating responses to subsequent policy questions, thereby making those responses more strongly correlated with their ideological positions and hence also are ideologically consistent with one another.<sup>45</sup>

The EVS questionnaire design allows one to replicate this finding. Respondents were first asked to place themselves on a ten-point left–right scale, which was followed by a set of questions on attitudes towards socio-economic policies. This order is clearly a framing technique, but the scaling of these policy questions was reversed from the items of the left–right dimension. That is, a score of *one* was considered as 'left', whereas *one* on the policy scales supports *inter alia* more private business ownership. This modification of response categories posed a cognitive challenge to respondents as they could not give the same answer on all scales in order to be consistent.

A scale is constructed which measured the difference between the left–right dimension as an indicator of ideological self-identification and five socio-economic policy issues. The ten-point left–right scale does not offer a neutral position, which reduces the well-known temptation to select the mid-point.<sup>46</sup> To test the ability of respondents to connect their position on socio-economic policies to their left–right self-identification, we used five ten-point socio-economic scales. These scales relate to the following issues:<sup>47</sup>

- Private vs. state ownership of business;
- Extent of government responsibility to provide for its citizens;

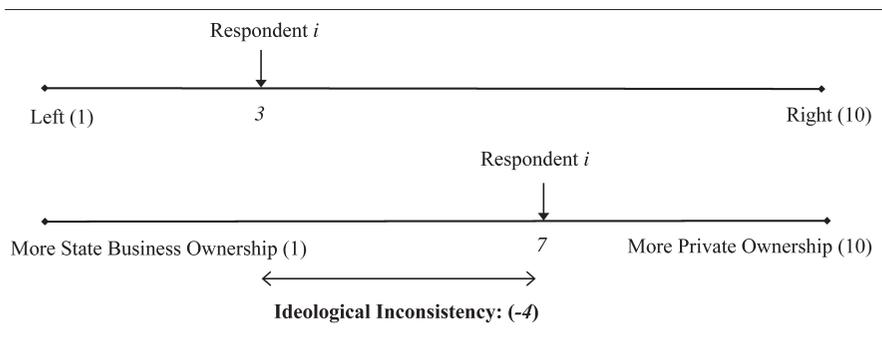
- Willingness of the unemployed to accept a job;
- Competition is good or harmful;
- Firms and freedom.

The five scales measure socio-economic issues one would associate with 'left' (i.e. socialist perspective) vs. 'right' (i.e. laissez-faire understanding). As the five items stimulate different considerations, we expected respondents to vary naturally in their answers. On average, if a person understands the left–right labels in terms of specific socio-economic issues, that person's position on the five reversed scales should be very close to his/her position on the left–right dimension.<sup>48</sup> If the respondent is ideologically consistent, the difference between ideological self-identification and policy stance should be approximately zero. As illustrated in equation (1) and Figure 2, the dependent variable 'ideological inconsistency' is calculated by subtracting the average score on the socio-economic policy scales from self-placement on the left–right scale.<sup>49</sup> Thus the value for respondent *i* would be:

$$\begin{aligned} \Pi_i = & \text{(Score of } i \text{ on left-right scale)} \\ & - \text{(Average score of } i \text{ on socio-economic scales)} \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

Figure 2 provides an illustrative example. Respondent *i* considers herself as 'left-wing' and gives herself the value of 3 on the left–right dimension. Her average position on socio-economic policies is 7, as she supports competition, free firms, private business ownership, more responsibility for the people, and believes that unemployed people should accept any job offer. Her calculated 'ideological inconsistency'<sub>*i*</sub> value would consequently be (–4). This negative deviation shows that her views on socio-economic issues do not consistently fit into a left-wing ideological position. As we are not focusing on the direction of the bias we use the absolute value of this deviation in the following statistical analyses.

FIGURE 2  
ILLUSTRATION OF OPERATIONALISATION OF 'IDEOLOGICAL INCONSISTENCY'



### *Independent Variables and Control Variables*

The main independent variable of the empirical model is a dichotomous item for East and West Germans (*Hypothesis 1*). Placement on the 'left' (scores 1 to 4) as well as on the 'right' side (scores 7 to 10 on the left–right dimension) are also included to test for the influence of ideological leaning on policy preferences and ideological inconsistency (*Hypotheses 2 and 3*). Age is expected to influence the ideological consistency of respondents. Thus age is included as binary variables to test the expected negative effect for the youngest generation that was politically socialised after reunification. I selected out those that were not older than 20 years in 1990 (born after 1969) as representing the post-reunification generation. An interaction term for age and 'left'/'right' ideological self-placements was included to account for the expected effects outlined in hypotheses 2 and 3.

The consistency of survey responses using left–right labels as a guide for policy opinions requires controlling for factors that influence the ability to be ideologically consistent. Political sophistication and party support are the two main concepts that are relevant to this, although there is no consensus on their measurement.

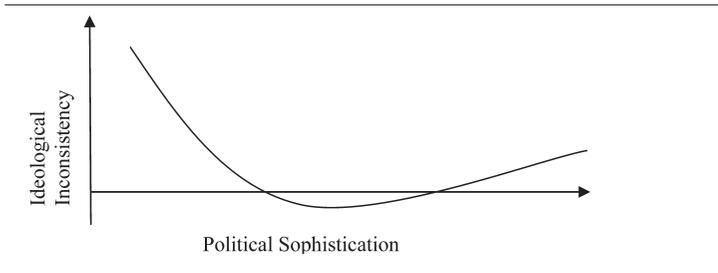
### *Political Sophistication*

The level of political sophistication affects the respondent's ability to give consistent answers in surveys. Zaller finds that 'only the politically aware pay enough attention to elite discourse to find out the ideological implications of different policies'.<sup>50</sup> Others have also emphasised the role of education and political interest as sources of constraint. In short, the greater the political sophistication of an individual, the better their ability to recognise and apply ideological labels.<sup>51</sup>

However, as Zechmeister pointed out, ideological labels are especially useful for poorly informed voters to overcome the lack of political information. On the other hand, Zaller found that highly political aware citizens are more resistant to elite cues,<sup>52</sup> highly sophisticated citizens do not need ideological shortcuts or heuristics as an orientation tool. Thus, political sophistication is expected to have a concave shape. It still remains uncertain how this relationship affects the ideological consistency of respondents. I anticipate that the answer of highly sophisticated respondents to left–right self-identification is rather random, as they do not use ideological labels. Their scores on the dependent variable are rather high. As illustrated in Figure 3, I expect a non-linear relationship between political sophistication and ideological inconsistency.

To separate the effect of East/West political socialisation it is necessary to control for political sophistication of an individual. Luskin considers three conditions people need to satisfy in order to develop political sophistication: *opportunity*, *ability*, and *motivation*.<sup>53</sup> One can think of education as expressing *ability*, interest in politics characterising *motivation*, and exposure to media news constituting *opportunity*.<sup>54</sup> As political sophistication requires the interplay between all three conditions, individual levels of political sophistication can be estimated by calculating an additive index consisting of the sum of the three variables noted above divided by the total number of valid answers (ranging from 0 to 3) to control for missing values. Each single variable ranges between 1 (e.g. 'not at all interested in politics') and 4 ('very interested in

FIGURE 3  
EXPECTED EFFECT OF POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION ON IDEOLOGICAL INCONSISTENCY



politics’); and the additive index ranges from 1 to 4 as well. A high value on the index indicates that a respondent is highly educated *and* very interested in politics *as well as* very regularly informed about politics.

### *Party Support*

A second individual source of ideological thinking is support for a particular political party. Parties are most frequently mentioned when asked about the content of the ideological labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ in open-ended questions.<sup>55</sup> Parties seem to be anchor points for evaluation as well as individual orientation. Moreover, political parties are a source of issue consistency as they offer policy packages (see above). The party’s package, which may be supported through voting for a party, can influence the use and understanding of ideological labels. Partisanship is therefore a crucial factor for consistency. For the following analyses, we use several dummy variables for supporters of each German political party. Those who do not support any particular party are used as the reference category.

## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

To understand ideological inconsistency in the German electorate, we examine, in the first section, familiarity with the concepts of ‘left’ and ‘right’. Missing values on the left–right dimension account for significant group differences in the explanatory variables. In the second part, we explore the dependent variable in more detail, examining factors that affect this inconsistency using multiple regression analyses.

### *Familiarity of Ideological Labels in the German Electorate*

The ability to give ideologically consistent answers in surveys reflects whether or not German electors can make sense of the left–right continuum. The vast majority of the German citizens seem to be familiar with the ideological labels ‘left’ and ‘right’: 83.0 per cent of West and 81.8 per cent of East Germans place themselves on the left–right dimension. The difference between citizens from the West and the East is therefore not significant;<sup>56</sup> and there seems no regional difference in the familiarity of ‘left’ and ‘right’.

However, there were altogether 17.6 per cent missing values on the crucial variable of ideological self-identification. All 358 respondents who failed to place themselves on the left–right dimension could not answer any single socio-economic policy question either. It is worth examining these people in more detail, as they obviously have problems using ideological labels in any way. In addition, significant group differences in the independent variables on this item can affect the explanation of ideological inconsistency. Accordingly, I model the missing values on ideological self-identification.

Table 1 presents the results of a logistic model to account for missing values on left–right self-placement. The model uses the same independent variables used later to explain ideological inconsistency (see Table 4).<sup>57</sup> The overall fit of the model is satisfactory, with a pseudo  $R^2$  of 0.186 and 82.6 per cent cases correctly classified.

TABLE 1  
LOGISTIC MODEL OF MISSING VALUES ON LEFT–RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT

Explanatory Variables	$\beta$ (std.err.)	Probabilities
East German	0.083 (0.135)	0.010
Political Sophistication <sup>A</sup>	-2.531*** (0.538)	-0.341
Squared Political Sophistication	0.324*** (0.109)	0.046
SPD Supporter <sup>B</sup>	-1.973*** (0.225)	-0.165
CDU Supporter <sup>B</sup>	-1.504*** (0.163)	-0.156
FDP Supporter <sup>B</sup>	dropped	
Green Supporter <sup>B</sup>	-1.121** (0.346)	-0.106
PDS Supporter <sup>B</sup>	-2.143*** (0.380)	-0.143
Republican Supporter <sup>B</sup>	-0.929 (0.542)	-0.087
Female	0.280* (0.139)	0.030
Age	0.003 (0.005)	0.000
Young <sup>C</sup>	-0.223 (0.232)	-0.028
Intercept	3.227***	
Chi <sup>2</sup> -value of overall model	341.5***	
Pseudo $R^2$	0.186	
$R^2$ <sub>count</sub>	0.826	
Number of Observations	1,969	

Notes: (Significance, two-tailed test: \*= $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*= $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*= $p \leq 0.001$ ; Data: EVS 1999, Germany).

<sup>A</sup> Additive index of education, political interest and news consumption, ranges between 1 (not sophisticated at all) and 4 (highly sophisticated).

<sup>B</sup> Reference category are those not identifying with any political party. The variable for FDP-supporter was dropped from the model, as all FDP supporters placed themselves on the left–right dimension.

<sup>C</sup> Those respondents that were born after 1969 and are expected to be mainly politically socialised after the German reunification.

The main purpose here is to test the hypothesis that East Germans are less familiar with 'left' and 'right' due to their late political socialisation (*Hypothesis 1a*). The results of the logistic regression suggest, however, that there are no significant differences between East and West Germans in their capacity to place themselves on the left–right dimension, even after controlling for political sophistication and party support. This implies that missing values are not concealing differences between East and West Germans in the survey.

Overall, the findings reported in Table 1 show that the capacity to place oneself on the left–right continuum depends on political sophistication and party support. The findings support a top-down model proposed in Figure 1; political parties provide their supporters with cues to orientate themselves in a complex political world. Note, moreover, that the assumed curvilinear relationship of political sophistication on the use of ideological labels is confirmed: the more sophisticated a respondent, the less likely is s/he to fail to place her/himself on the left–right continuum. The very sophisticated persons, however, have a greater chance of failing to answer this question, which is captured by the positively significant squared political sophistication index. On the whole, most citizens were able to categorise themselves ideologically.

#### *The Connection between the Left–Right Scale and Socio-Economic Policy Preferences*

In this section, I examine the relationship between left–right self-placement and socio-economic policy preferences in more detail. First, I report the relationship between each single policy issue, as I assume they jointly measure the stance towards socio-economic policies. The results of a principle component analysis of the five issues (reported in the Appendix) show that only one factor is extracted. This indicates that only one dimension is captured by the five items measuring respondents' socio-economic policy stances.<sup>58</sup> When I included the left–right self-placement in the factor analysis the one-dimensionality was less clear. Although, only one factor is extracted, the factor loading of the left–right self-placement of 0.3 is quite low, which may reflect the multiple facets of left–right terminology discussed earlier. One can find an association between left–right self-placement and the socio-economic dimension, but it seems that respondents relate additional issues to their ideological stance alongside the economic issues. The low correlation coefficient in the interval of [0.11; 0.15] demonstrates that a considerable number of respondents deviate in their responses on socio-economic policy issues from their self-placement on the left–right continuum. I can only assume that they connect other issues to their ideological self-identification.<sup>59</sup>

I now turn to the main dependent variable: ideological inconsistency. Table 2 presents the mean absolute value of inconsistency between the different ideological leanings and age groups in East and West. There is a small significant difference between East and West Germans in their overall mean ideological inconsistency.<sup>60</sup> East Germans are on average slightly more inconsistent, which confirms the expected greater inability of East Germans to give consistent answers (*Hypothesis 1b*). This is not, however, because they are less familiar with the terms 'left' and 'right' than West Germans. Other factors that might influence this discrepancy are tested in the multiple regressions reported in a later section.

Looking at the different age and ideological groups conceals further interesting differences between citizens in the East and West. Contrary to expectations, respondents self-identified on the 'right' are more consistent than those on the 'left'. The leftist column in Table 2 shows that all groups have a higher inconsistency score than those in the rightist column. The table also indicates that older leftist West Germans vary the most among all groups with a mean deviation of 4.09 between left-right self-identification and their socio-economic policy preferences. The fact that the young generation (post-reunification) in West Germany is more consistent than their parents and grand-parents supports the finding about the recent strengthening of the old economic meaning of the term 'left' of previous studies. Overall, East Germans, whatever their age, are more consistent in their policy stance to their leftist ideological position than West Germans.

From Table 2 we also have confirmation of the hypothesis that West Germans are better able to connect their 'right' ideological self-identification to neo-liberal socio-economic policy preferences. As we can see, older West Germans have the lowest deviation (1.77) of all groups in the sample.

Overall, the descriptive analysis of the dependent variable confirms our hypotheses. East Germans are somewhat more inconsistent than West Germans (*Hypothesis 1b*). This is most apparent if they have rightist ideological leanings (*Hypothesis 2*). However, electors of the former GDR are better at connecting a leftist ideological position to their socio-economic policy preferences than their Western compatriots (*Hypothesis 3*).

Taking the findings presented in Table 2 into account, it is not surprising that a vast majority of 58.3 per cent of all respondents has a 'left' bias (see Table 3). This means that they consider themselves to be 'leftists' while supporting a more market-based economy.<sup>61</sup> It is likely that German citizens face difficulties when considering themselves as 'rightists' as this term is associated with xenophobia. They label themselves as 'left' or use the neutral middle positions 5 and 6, while supporting a liberal market economy.

#### *Multiple Regression Analyses on Ideological Inconsistency*

The results of multiple regression analyses reported in Table 4 provide additional insight into the preceding findings. In Model 1, which contains all respondents from

TABLE 2  
MEAN IDEOLOGICAL INCONSISTENCY BY IDEOLOGICAL LEANING AND AGE

	Absolute Deviation	Left Self-Identification		Right Self-Identification	
		Young <sup>A</sup>	Old <sup>B</sup>	Young	Old
Eastern German	2.74 (1.34)	3.25 (1.47)	3.12 (1.49)	2.92 (1.76)	2.60 (1.34)
Western German	2.55 (1.52)	3.44 (1.33)	4.09 (1.80)	1.29 (0.83) <sup>C</sup>	1.77 (1.11)

Source: EVS 1999, Germany; standard deviation in parentheses.

Notes: <sup>A</sup> Young means those citizens that were mainly politically socialised *after* the German reunification. Those respondents that were born after 1969 and are expected to belong to this group.

<sup>B</sup> The category 'old' comprises those respondents who were mainly politically socialised *before* the German reunification. Respondents who were born before 1970 are expected to belong to this group.

<sup>C</sup> There are only 11 young Western Germans in our sample who placed themselves on the right. Hence, the result has to be treated with caution.

TABLE 3  
BIAS OF IDEOLOGICAL DEVIATION

	Frequency	Per cent	Mean Ideological Inconsistency
Left Bias <sup>A</sup>	1,187	58.3	2.80
No Deviation	45	2.2	0
Right Bias <sup>B</sup>	442	21.7	2.36

Source: EVS 1999 for Germany only, Missing cases: 362 (17.8 per cent).

Notes: <sup>A</sup> Left bias is a result of those respondents who consider themselves as being more 'left' than they are on the policy dimension.

<sup>B</sup> Right bias emerges from those respondents who consider themselves as being more 'right' than they are on the policy dimensions.

East and West Germany, we measure the difference in ideological inconsistency between East and West (*Hypothesis 1b*). Models incorporating the remaining independent variables (excluding the regional variable) are then estimated for Eastern (Model 2) and Western Germany (Model 4) separately. Model 3 and Model 5 additionally include the interaction terms of age and 'left'/'right' self-identification (*Hypotheses 2 and 3*) measuring the expected effect of socialisation on understandings of the terms 'left' and 'right'. A combined model was also estimated, including interaction terms for all variables, which, however, turns out to be very difficult to interpret due to the number of interaction terms. I decided to estimate separate models for East and West Germany to illustrate the different coefficients comparatively.

Comparing the five models, the independent variables explain the variance on ideological inconsistency best for West Germans (adjusted  $R^2=0.318/0.321$ ), whereas the model predicts ideological inconsistency among East Germans only poorly (the adjusted  $R^2=0.088/0.087$ ). Note that there are no significant difference between East and West Germans, when controlling for all other variables (Model 1). We thereby reject *Hypothesis 1b*: citizens on both sides of the former wall seem not to differ largely in their general ability to have consistent policy preferences.

Turning to the coefficients of the different models, we find a strong positive effect for a 'left' self-placement on the dependent variable in all five models. What already became apparent in Table 2 is confirmed in the regression analyses. West Germans have more problems than East Germans in connecting their leftist ideological position to ideas about socialist economic policy (comparing Models 2 and 4). This is shown by the magnitude of the coefficients on the leftist predictor in the two models. Although leftist East Germans deviate more than those placing themselves in the middle ( $\beta = 0.622$ ), they are better able than West Germans applying the term 'left' to socio-economic policies. Model 4 on the other hand shows a positive deviation of 1.596 of leftist West Germans, compared to those placing themselves in the middle.

In *Hypothesis 3*, I suggested that people in the East and young Westerners are more consistent in their socio-economic policy preferences with 'left' ideological self-identification. That is, the pre-reunification generation in West Germany was assumed to have been influenced more by the broadened meaning of the term 'left' with 'new politics' issues. This is tested by including the interaction terms in Models 3 and 5. The analysis confirms that the older leftist Westerners are, the more inconsistent they are (Model 5). This effect is significant on the 10 per cent

TABLE 4  
RESULTS OF OLS-REGRESSION ON IDEOLOGICAL INCONSISTENCY

Sample	Model 1 Whole Germany	Model 2 Eastern Germans I	Model 3 Eastern Germans II	Model 4 Western Germans I	Model 5 Western Germans II
<b>Explanatory Variables</b>					
East German	0.093 (0.070)				
Left Self-Placement <sup>A</sup>	1.029*** (0.093)	0.622*** (0.107)	0.889** (0.294)	1.596*** (0.151)	0.978** (0.339)
Right Self-Placement <sup>A</sup>	-0.134 (0.085)	0.349** (0.133)	0.641 <sup>†</sup> (0.375)	-0.588*** (0.094)	-0.153 (0.293)
Political Sophistication <sup>B</sup>	0.494 (0.341)	-0.129* (0.471)	-0.141** (0.471)	0.689 (0.076)	0.715 (0.451)
Squared Pol. Sophistication	-0.070 (0.062)	0.062 (0.084)	0.062 (0.084)	-0.117 (0.084)	-0.121 (0.083)
SPD Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.330** (0.105)	0.156 (0.158)	0.160 (0.159)	0.293* (0.136)	0.283* (0.135)
CDU Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.004 (0.089)	-0.075 (0.125)	-0.076 (0.122)	-0.039 (0.118)	-0.027 (0.118)
FPD Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.315 (0.187)	0.325 (0.277)	0.339 (0.277)	0.479 <sup>†</sup> (0.252)	0.421 <sup>†</sup> (0.249)
Green Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.267 <sup>†</sup> (0.167)	0.199 (0.255)	0.196 (0.254)	0.158 (0.207)	0.208 (0.208)
PDS Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.013 (0.136)	0.146 (0.146)	0.154 (0.146)	0.741 (0.594)	0.794 (0.602)
Republican Supporter <sup>C</sup>	0.568 (0.355)	0.230 (0.489)	0.202 (0.491)	0.474 (0.464)	0.498 (0.454)
Female	-0.111 <sup>†</sup> (0.067)	-0.056 (0.091)	-0.060 (0.092)	-0.073 (0.089)	-0.096 (0.089)
Age	-0.005* (0.002)	-0.011** (0.003)	-0.007 <sup>†</sup> (0.004)	0.004 (0.003)	0.004 (0.004)
Young <sup>D</sup>	-0.175 (0.112)	-0.241 (0.158)	-0.248 (0.157)	-0.307* (0.149)	-0.222 (0.156)
Age * Left Self-Placement			-0.006 (0.006)		0.013 <sup>†</sup> (0.007)
Age * Right Self-Placement			-0.006 (0.007)		-0.008 (0.005)
Intercept	2.196***	2.818***	2.675***	1.082 <sup>†</sup>	1.082 <sup>†</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.172	0.102	0.104	0.336	0.341
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.165	0.088	0.087	0.318	0.321
Number of Observations	1,655	838	838	817	817

Notes: (Significance, two-tailed test: <sup>†</sup> $p \leq 0.10$ ; \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ ; Data: EVS 1999, Germany;  $\beta$ -Coefficients and robust Standard Errors in parentheses)

<sup>A</sup> Reference category are those that placed themselves in the middle of the scale (score 5 or 6).

<sup>B</sup> Additive index of education, political interest and news consumption, ranges between 1 (not sophisticated at all) and 4 (highly sophisticated).

<sup>C</sup> Reference category are those not identifying with any political party.

<sup>D</sup> Those respondents that were born after 1969 and are hence expected to be mainly politically socialised after the German reunification.

level. The interaction term of age and a 'left' self-identification is, as expected, not significant in the East.

Turning to a rightist ideological leaning, the differences between East and West Germans become more apparent, as the coefficients have the expected opposite

effect. East Germans of rightist self-identification are significantly more inconsistent than those placing themselves in the middle of the left–right dimension (Model 2:  $\beta = 0.349$ ). Ideologically ‘right’ West Germans, on the other hand, are less inconsistent with a highly significant negative effect ( $-0.588$ ). However, this finding is neither conditional on the age of West nor of East German respondents (Models 3 and 5).

It is, further, interesting to note that none of the party-supporter dummy variables is significant among East Germans. We can therefore conclude that political parties and the political discourse seem not to influence the East Germans in their ability to connect their ideological position to socio-economic policy preferences. The influence of the political parties is also rather small in West Germany. Only SPD and FDP supporters have a significantly higher inconsistency than those identifying with no particular party. We can conclude that those not supporting any particular political party, yet able to place themselves on the left–right dimension, have a clear understanding of these ideological labels. Independents are divided among those generally failing to apply ideological labels (as demonstrated in the logistic regression in Table 1) and those using ideological labels just as consistently as partisans. This means that party support mainly provides a cue for the self-identification on the left–right dimension, but not for the connection to specific policies.

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, I examined the question whether voters can follow the political discourse of the political elite by filling out the abstract ideological labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ with some meaningful policy content. I expected that due to differing political socialisation experiences, East and West Germans vary in their use of the ideological labels ‘left’ and ‘right’. I employed a top-down approach assuming that the political elite and in particular political parties inform the ideological understandings of citizens. This is done by filling ideological labels, with policy packages focusing on socio-economic preferences.

The political socialisation approach was used to derive some expected effects on the differences in ideological inconsistency among East and West Germans. These two groups became familiar with ideological labels and the connected policy packages under different circumstances. The original mainly socio-economic semantic meaning of the labels ‘left’ and ‘right’ were pluralised during the 1970s, largely due to the emergence of the Green Party in the political spectrum. The term ‘left’ was widened by ‘new politics’ issues, which could make it difficult for voters to bring their leftist ideological self-identification in line with policy preferences. On the other hand, the 1990s saw a revitalisation of the old class-based meaning of the term ‘left’, due to growing economic turbulence caused by reunification. Reunification also influenced a change in the use of the term ‘right’. With problems of radical assaults against foreigners in the Neue Bundesländer, the term ‘right’ is nowadays used to describe xenophobic attitudes rather than moving towards a liberal market economy.

To explore the three research hypotheses derived from the socialisation literature, I used German data from the 1999 European Values Study. The dependent variable ‘ideological inconsistency’ measured the extent to which the left–right dimension

still absorbs socio-economic policy preferences among the German mass public. The empirical analyses demonstrated that Germans are generally familiar with the terms 'left' and 'right', as over 80 per cent of the respondents placed themselves on this dimension. According to these findings we can reject the notion that East Germans are less familiar with ideological labels. Nine years of a unified Germany were enough time for East Germans to develop an ideological self-identification on this Western political shortcut.

In general, the overall difference between East and West Germans to give ideologically inconsistent answers is insignificant. However, the analyses could demonstrate fairly large differences between the two main ideological leanings. Especially, those with a 'left' ideological self-identification seem to have problems connecting this view to socialist economic policy preferences, thereby providing support for the pluralisation hypothesis of this term. East Germans proved better at doing so, which may be due to their socialist experience. The East German party (PDS, now *Die Linke*), offers a helpful anchor point on the political spectrum by providing a very clear heuristic linking socialist economic policies to the label 'left'.

On the other hand, West Germans appear to handle a 'right' ideological leaning better in connecting it to a liberal market economy. Especially older rightist citizens in the West have the lowest ideological inconsistency of all groups. This finding strongly supports the political socialisation approach, as the older West Germans developed a firm understanding of the term 'right' to illustrate free market principles. The older age group in West Germany was expected not to be influenced by the changing meaning of the term 'right'. Once established, these ideas seem to have a central role in an individual's belief system. In contrast, East Germans became familiar with the term 'right' when this label was mainly associated with xenophobic ideas. Consequently, electors labelling themselves as 'right' do have problems connecting this ideological position to socio-economic issues – in particular to a market economy. The right-wing parties in Germany are quite 'left' on economic issues. Hence we might claim that these respondents are not necessarily 'inconsistent'. They rather associate different issues with their ideological structuring principle.

Concluding from the empirical analysis, we can support previous findings about ideological labels in German political discourse. The term 'left' seems to be used more in a traditional socio-economic fashion, while the term 'right' seems to be associated with xenophobia. The pre-reunification generation which was mainly politically socialised before the toppling of the Wall seems to have a more diffuse understanding of the term 'left'. Even so, this sub-group is able to bring free market principles into line with a rightist ideological leaning.

These findings suggest that ideological labels 'left' and 'right' are not necessarily opposing concepts within the mass public with socialist and neo-liberal ideas. Rather, it looks as if the terms 'left' and 'right' are separate concepts that are not necessarily connected. Researchers usually use the left–right continuum as one dimension but with multiple facets. This investigation, however, demonstrates that especially for East Germans there is evidence that the labels 'left' and 'right' are different concepts that trigger distinctive considerations. Especially, the term 'right' needs to be used with care in contemporary Germany, young West Germans avoid using this term to describe themselves altogether.

This finding questions the powerful and overarching heuristic function of the left–right dimension as the main communication tool, linking the political elite and the mass public. Rather, the meanings of ‘left’ and ‘right’ have changed – and changed asymmetrically. In West Germany, ‘left’ has become contaminated with ‘new politics’; in East Germany, ‘right’ has become contaminated with xenophobic attitudes. Until Germany has recovered from the shock of reunification, it would be wise to recommend caution in deploying ‘left–right’ as an analytic tool, as different considerations are activated among different sub-groups of the electorate.

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  21. Zechmeister, 'What's Left and Who's Right?'
  22. *Ibid.*, p.151.
  23. The left–right dimension fulfils also an evaluation function (e). That is, citizens get their political understanding through the analytical shortcuts of the left–right terminology. This consequently enables them to evaluate the policies as proposed by the political elite and to arrive at a final voting decision (f). The responsible party model assumes moreover that the political parties satisfy the policy preferences of their voters (g).
  24. F.U. Pappi and S. Shikano, 'The Positions of Parties in Ideological and Policy Space: The Perception of German Voters of their Party System', *Working Paper: Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung* 73 (2004), p.2.
  25. H.D. Klingemann, 'Testing the Left–Right Continuum on a Sample of German Voters', *Comparative Political Studies* 5/1 (1972), pp.93–106; Inglehart and Klingemann, 'Party Identification, Ideological Preference, and the Left-Right Dimension among Western Mass Publics'; Ogmundson, 'A Note on the Ambiguous Meanings of Survey Research Measures Which Use the Words "Left" and "Right"'; H.D. Klingemann, 'Measuring Ideological Conceptualizations', in S.H. Barnes (ed.), *Political Action* (London: Sage Publications, 1979); P. Conover and S. Feldman, 'The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications', *American Journal of Political Science* 25/4 (1981), pp.617–45; Fuchs and Klingemann, 'The Left–Right Schema'; Van Deth and Geurts, 'Value Orientation, Left–Right Placement and Voting'; K. Knight, 'Ideology and Public Opinion', *Research in Micropolitics* 3 (1990), pp.59–82; Knutsen, 'Value Orientation, Political Conflicts and Left–Right Identification'; P. Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel? – Eine Längsschnittanalyse der

- Inhalte der politischen Richtungsbegriffe "links" und "rechts", in H.D. Klingemann and M. Kaase (eds.), *Wahlen und Wähler: Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 1998* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001), pp.73–111 Zechmeister, 'What's Left and Who's Right?'
26. J.D. Huber and R. Inglehart, 'Expert Interpretations of Party Spaces and Party Locations in 42 Societies', *Party Politics* 1/1 (1995), pp.73–111; Herrera, 'Understanding of Ideological Labels by Political Elites'; R. Herrera, 'The Language of Politics', in W.E. Miller (ed.), *Policy Representation in Western Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
  27. Budge et al., *Mapping Policy Preferences*; H.D. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, J.I. Budge and M. McDonald, *Mapping Policy Preferences II: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, European Union and OECD 1990–2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
  28. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, p.116.
  29. Inglehart, 'The Silent Revolution in Europe'; Inglehart, 'The Changing Structure of Political Cleavages in Western Society'; Van Deth and Geurts, 'Value Orientation, Left–Right Placement and Voting'; Evans et al., 'Measuring Left–Right and Libertarian–Authoritarian Values in the British Electorate'.
  30. Knutsen, 'Value Orientation, Political Conflicts and Left–Right Identification'; Middendorp, 'Left–Right Self-Identification and (Post)materialism in the Ideological Space'; W. Jadodzinski and S. Kühnel, 'Bedeutungsvarianz und Bedeutungswandel der politischen Richtungsbegriffe "links" und "rechts"', in H. Rattinger, O. Gabriel and W. Jadodzinski (eds.), *Wahlen und politische Einstellungen im vereinten Deutschland* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1994); Huber and Inglehart, 'Expert Interpretations of Party Spaces and Party Locations'; Herrera, 'The Language of Politics'; Budge et al., *Mapping Policy Preferences*; Klingemann et al., *Mapping Policy Preferences II*; P. Warwick, 'Toward a Common Dimensionality in West European Policy Spaces', *Party Politics* 8 (2002).
  31. Klingemann, 'Testing the Left–Right Continuum on a Sample of German Voters', cf. Fuchs and Klingemann, 'The Left–Right Schema'.
  32. Pappi and Shikano, 'The Positions of Parties in Ideological and Policy Space', p.19.
  33. Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel'.
  34. Jadodzinski and Kühnel, 'Bedeutungsvarianz und Bedeutungswandel der politischen Richtungsbegriffe "links" und "rechts"'
  35. Pappi and Shikano, 'The Positions of Parties in Ideological and Policy Space', p.73;
  36. Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel', p.223.
  37. Ibid., p.225; Huber and Inglehart, 'Expert Interpretations of Party Spaces and Party Locations' confirm this strong linkage between ideological labels and xenophobia in Germany.
  38. Jagodzinski and Kühnel, 'Bedeutungsvarianz und Bedeutungswandel der politischen Richtungsbegriffe "links" und "rechts"'; W. Jagodzinski and S. Kühnel, 'The Stability of the Meaning of Left and Right in Germany, 1976–1990', in C.J. Anderson and C. Zelle (eds.), *Stability and Change in German Elections* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); M. Kaase and H.-D. Klingemann, 'Social Structure, Value-Orientations, and the Party System: The Problem of Interest Accommodation in Western Democracies', *European Journal of Political Research* 10 (1982), pp.367–86.
  39. Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel'; Pappi and Shikano, 'The Positions of Parties in Ideological and Policy Space', p.19.
  40. R. Merelman, 'Revitalizing Political Socialization', in M. Herman (ed.) *Political Psychology* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1986), p.279.
  41. K. Jennings and R.G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); K. Jennings, 'The Crystallization of Orientations', in M. Jennings and J.W. van Deth (eds.), *Continues in Political Action* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).
  42. The argument could be made that the consumption of Western German TV, which was widely accessible in the GDR territory already educated the Eastern German citizens in the usage of the terms 'left' and 'right'. A recent study by M. Meyen, 'Kollektive Ausreise? Zur Reichweite ost- und westdeutscher Fernsehprogramme in der DDR', *Publizistik* 47/2 (2002), pp.200–20, shows that usage of the Western news media was relatively low before the year 1988, when the political tumults that led to the toppling of the Wall started. Furthermore, I argue that even if the GDR citizens already got into contact with these terms before the political reunification in 1990 through the Western media, the relevance of these was very low for the Eastern German citizens. One can therefore assume that Eastern Germans only used the terms 'left' and 'right' after the reunification as they had direct implications on their actual political decision making.
  43. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'; Converse, 'Attitudes and Non-Attitudes'
  44. Huber, 'Values and Partisanship in Left–Right Orientations'.
  45. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, p.85; cf. J. Zaller and S. Feldman, 'A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences', *American Journal of Political Science* 36/3 (1992), pp.579–616; cf. V. Price, 'Priming Ideological Leanings: The Impact of

- Saliency and Commitment', *Report to the National Election Studies Board of Overseas, Ann Arbor, Michigan, US* (1991); This finding goes back to the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance first introduced by L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (London: Tavistock, 1957). According to this theory, individuals avoid cognitive dissonance by trying to seem consistent in their attitudes.
46. Klingemann, 'Testing the Left-Right Continuum on a Sample of German Voters'; M. Kroh, 'Measuring Left-Right Political Orientation: The Choice of Response Format', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71/2 (2007), pp.204-20. As a sign of their inability to use the left-right terminology in a meaningful way the majority of the voters tend to flock to the middle point on ideological scales. In the data used in the empirical analyses about 43 per cent placed themselves on 5 or 6, the middle points of the 10 point scale. As the variable is continuous, I performed a Shapiro-Wilk test to check for normality. The test statistic *W* is 0.99864 for the left-right self-placement, which clearly shows normality. Therefore, I can reject this objection that there might be a problem of middle flocking (which would be indicated by a kurtosis function).
  47. See Appendix for the exact question wording of variables.
  48. As discussed above, the socio-economic scales are reversed to the left-right dimension. In order to calculate the deviation between the left-right and the five policy scales, it is necessary to code the items in the same direction.
  49. We can only calculate the deviation for those (1) having a valid answer on the left-right scale and (2) at least one socio-economic scale. We obtained the average score on the socio-economic policy dimension by summing up the scores on the five scales and dividing this sum by the valid answers. We are thereby able to account for missing values. 155 (7.6 per cent) of the respondents have at least one missing value on one of the socio-economic scales. For example, some people associate only parts of the issues measuring the socio-economic policy dimension with the left-right terminology. I therefore tested whether these respondents differ in their ideological consistency, as they might have ignored those questions that are not linked to their ideological self-identification. As two-sample t-test estimates show no difference, we consequently treat these 155 respondents equal to those who answered all five socio-economic policy questions.
  50. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, p.113.
  51. Converse, 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics'; cf. R.D. Lambert, J. Curtis, S. Brown and B. Kay, 'In Search of Left/Right Beliefs in the Canadian Electorate', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 19/3 (1986), pp.541-63; Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel'.
  52. Zechmeister, 'What's Left and Who's Right?'; Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.
  53. R.C. Luskin, 'Explaining Political Sophistication', *Political Behavior* 12/4 (1990), pp.331-61.
  54. Education is measured by the highest educational level attained, subdivided in four categories - did not finish school/*Hauptschulabschluss*, *Mittlere Reife*, *Abitur*, and university degree. Political interest is measured on a four point scale, ranging from 1 'not interested at all' and 4 'very interested'. To measure the political news exposure, respondents were asked 'How often do you follow politics in the news on television or on the radio or in the daily papers?' They could choose between: every day, which 65.5 per cent of all respondents answered, several times a week, once or twice a week, less often, and never. The last two categories were collapsed to bring this variable into the four-point format of the political sophistication index. However I have to consider some weaknesses of the factor of media exposure. It is thus very difficult to distinguish between 'low-brow' political media (in the German case, for example, *Bild-Zeitung*) and 'high-brow' media (such as the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* or *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). Only the latter ones would be suitable for receiving valuable political information to create political sophistication. Other problems with media exposure arise from subjective differences in self-rating standards. Moreover, exposure does not necessarily mean that political news consumers comprehend and use the information presented (Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, pp.334-335). Nevertheless, news exposure is very important for the argument used in this paper. The media consumption is necessary to perceive the 'policy packages' provided by the political elite.
  55. Fuchs and Klingemann, 'The Left-Right Schema', p.225; Bauer-Kaase, 'Politische Ideologies im Wandel'.
  56. The two-sample t-test assuming equal variance estimates a t-value of -0.71, which is not significant on the 5 per cent level.
  57. The interaction terms between age and a left/right self-placement are not included in the model, as they can not be calculated.
  58. The factor explains 51.2 per cent of the five variables' combined variance. The loadings are all above 0.62, which shows uni-dimensionality and a high correlation of all variables with the socio-economic policy factor. The estimated Cronbach's alpha of 0.75, moreover, confirms the high reliability of this scale. The average pair-wise correlation between the five socio-economic policy issues is 0.38

ranging from 0.28 to 0.60. All correlations are significant on 1% level. The results of the factor analysis are included in the appendix.

59. This finding is confirmed in the pair-wise correlation between the six variables. The alpha coefficient testing the reliability of items by looking at the consistency of a person's responses decreases only slightly to 0.73 when the variable of ideological self-placement is included in the test to the five items of socio-economic preferences.
60. Those respondents only placing themselves in the middle of all scales could influence this value. There are, however, only 29 (1.4 per cent) respondents who have the value 5 and/or 6 on all five policy scales. Of those 21 also placed themselves at 5 or 6 on the left–right dimension. The low number of cases suggests that this does not constitute a considerable problem. I therefore keep these respondents in the analysis, as there is no evidence that this answer pattern is an expression of non-attitude.
61. They do not necessarily place themselves on the left side of the dimension; even so most in this category do so.

## APPENDIX

### Measurement of Variables in EVS 1999 for Germany

#### *Question Wording of Variables Measuring 'Ideological Inconsistency'*

##### i) The Left–Right Dimension

'In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right". How would you place your view on this scale, generally speaking?'

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	-1	-2
<input type="checkbox"/>											
Left									Right	DK	NA

##### ii) Socio-Economic Policy Scales

'Now I would like you to tell me your view on various issues. How would you place your view on this scale? If you fully confirm with the first statement, place yourselves in the 1. If you fully confirm with the second statement, choose number 10.'

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	-1	-2
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individuals should take more responsibility to provide for themselves										DK	NA
People who are unemployed should have to take any job available or lose their unemployment benefits										DK	NA
Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas.										DK	NA
The state should give more freedom to firms.										DK	NA
Private ownership of business and industry should be increased.										DK	NA
						The state should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for					
						People who are unemployed should have the right to refuse a job they do not want					
						Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people.					
						The state should control firms more effectively.					
						Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.					

## A1 a) RESULTS OF FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY SCALES

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Explained Variance</i>		<i>Factor Loadings</i>	
<b>Factor 1</b>			<b>Variable</b>		<b>Uniqueness</b>
1	2.561	0.512	Ownership	0.771	0.405
2	0.761	0.152	Government Responsibility	0.693	0.519
3	0.693	0.139	Unemployed People	0.677	0.542
4	0.587	0.118	Competition	0.621	0.614
5	0.398	0.080	Firms and Freedom	0.801	0.358

## A1 b) RESULTS OF FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY SCALES AND LEFT-RIGHT SELF-PLACEMENT

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Eigenvalue</i>	<i>Explained Variance</i>		<i>Factor Loadings</i>	
<b>Factor 1</b>			<b>Variable</b>		<b>Uniqueness</b>
1	2.662	0.443	Left-Right Self-Placement	-0.300	0.912
2	0.950	0.158	Ownership	0.772	0.404
3	0.763	0.127	Government Responsibility	0.700	0.516
4	0.672	0.112	Unemployed People	0.694	0.518
5	0.569	0.095	Competition	0.603	0.636
6	0.384	0.064	Firms and Freedom	0.805	0.351

Source: EVS 1999, Germany only.