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Dissertation summary
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Title: Islamophobia, Hostility against Islam or Criticism of Islam
On the Validity of Items in Standardized Surveys

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Summary

The dissertation titled “Islamophobia”, “hostility against Islam”, “Islamcriticism”? - On the validity of items in standardized surveys' focuses on the validity of 16 selected items for researching Islamophobia and hostility towards Muslims. Due to inconsistent concepts, different definitions and a large number of items with sometimes very different results in the field of attitude research on Islam and Muslims, an examination of the quality and validity of items seems necessary.

In addition to validity, the study focuses on three further sub-questions: 1) Can the four groups (Islamophobes, pessimistic-critical, optimistic-critical and cultural relativists) from the quantitative research (Leibold and Kühnel 2008) be found in the quantitative and qualitative data collected? 2) Can the differences from the quantitative research be found with regard to the response behavior of the respondents based on the five sample criteria (gender, age, education, voting intention and proportion of migrants in the residential environment)? 3) Are there inconsistencies in response behavior between the standardized questionnaire and the cognitive interview? If so, what are the consequences of these inconsistencies?

In order to check the validity - more specifically the content validity - and to be able to answer the three sub-questions, 30 cognitive interviews were conducted in the Berlin district of Spandau from July 2017 to April 2018. Cognitive interviews make it possible to investigate what associations respondents have with the items at hand and whether the intentions of the item developers match the respondents' answers. In this work, cognitive interviews with a descriptive approach were combined with a mixed-methods approach, as a standardized questionnaire on political and social attitudes and the socio-demographics of the respondents was also collected and the work is based on quantitative studies.

The main research question and the sub-questions were evaluated using the constant comparative method (CCM), mean value comparisons, regressions and pattern coding.

In summary, it can be stated that of the 16 items tested, twelve are of limited validity and four are not valid. Furthermore, sub-question 1 can be answered with a yes. The four types identified by Leibold and Kühnel (2008) were also found in this study, taking into account the responses to the items and the cognitive interviews. The answer to sub-question 2 also tends to be yes: Bivariate, gender has no influence on hostility towards Islam or Muslims, while age, voting intention and the proportion of migrants have a positive influence on hostility towards Islam

and Muslims, i.e. the older the respondent, the more right-wing their voting intention and the higher the proportion of migrants in their living environment, the more hostile they are towards Islam or Muslims. Education, on the other hand, has a negative influence on hostility towards Islam and Muslims, i.e. the higher the level of formal education, the lower the level of hostility towards Islam and Muslims. In the multivariate regression model, only education has a negative and voting intention a positive influence on hostility towards Islam and Muslims. Sub-question 3 was answered using pattern coding. A table was created that compared the respondents' answers in the standardized questionnaire with their answers in the cognitive interview and checked for consistencies or inconsistencies, with the result that some items were understood completely differently than intended. These are therefore not suitable as items for measuring hostility towards Islam and Muslims, which is why they are not recommended.

In conclusion, it can be said that no item can be considered valid individually, but together they “work” in terms of group classification. The extremes in particular, islamophobes and cultural relativists, could therefore be adequately captured using surveys. Further validation of items appears to be urgently needed in view of the results.