

3 Quantifying social distance

Comparing Belief, Belonging and Behaviour by means of a weighted index

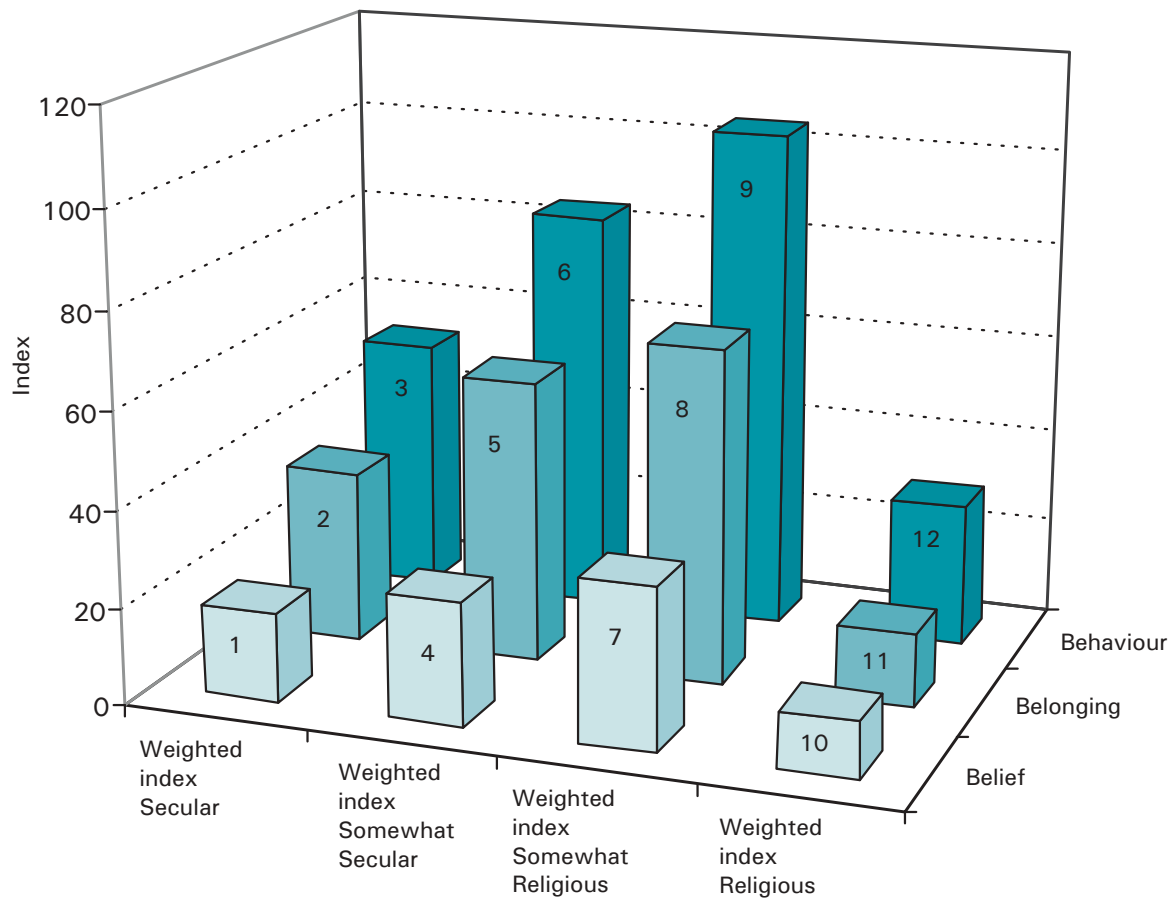
Although we know that Belief achieves the highest levels of consensus, we do not know exactly how much higher this is, compared with the consensus level in the Belonging and Behaviour categories. Creating a weighted index allows us to show relative comparisons *between* the outlook types for the Belief, Belonging and Behaviour categories, as well as whether or not there are any idiosyncrasies *within* the outlook types in terms of these three categories.²⁶

Figure 8 is a three-dimensional representation of the indexed relationship between outlook and the

Belief, Belonging and Behaviour categories. The relationships can be seen in the *relative* differences shown in the figure, and not in its absolute dimensions, which can be disregarded.

The first analysis is *between* the three categories, comparing the shape of the curves created for Belief, Belonging and Behaviour with each other (reading Figure 8 from left to right along the category rows). With regard to Behaviour, the tall Somewhat Religious column (9) differs dramatically from the short Religious column (12), whereas along the Belief row, the difference between columns 7 and 10 is (proportionately) less marked. The height differences between Secular, Somewhat Secular and the Somewhat

Figure 8: Weighted index of Belief, Belonging and Behaviour



26 Please refer to Appendix B for the methodology involved in creating a weighted index.

Religious are proportionately similar with regard to both Behaviour (3, 6, 9) and Belief (1, 4, 7) but not with regard to Belonging, in which case Somewhat Religious tapers off, creating a less steep gradient (2, 5, 8).

The second analysis of Figure 8 involves looking at differences *within* individual outlook groups' responses in each of the three categories (i.e. reading the graph from front to back along the weighted outlook rows). Three salient trends are revealed. The first concerns the Secular, the second concerns the Religious, and the third concerns the Somewhat Secular and Somewhat Religious. The Secular show a proportionately equal score for all three categories (1, 2, 3). The Religious, by comparison, show a marked difference between the score for Behaviour (12) and that for Belief (10) and Belonging (11), between which the difference is marginal. The third trend shows that the 'somewhat' categories demonstrate a bias against Belief; they are both more coherent on Belonging and Behaviour than on Belief, which has a proportionately low score for both of the 'somewhat' outlook types (4, 5, 6 and 7, 8, 9).

When all four outlook types are compared, the Religious Belonging score (11) stands out as unusually (relatively) low. Based on this analysis, therefore, the Religious demonstrate markedly different patterns of belonging to all other outlook groups.

Factoring in quantifiable and meaningful social distance

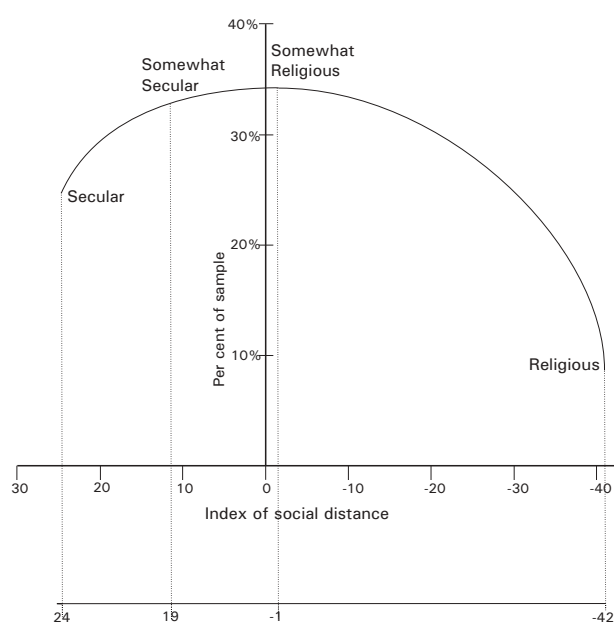
The 'gap' observed in Figure 8 between, say, the Religious score for Behaviour (12) and the Religious score for Belonging (11) or between the Religious score for Behaviour (12) and the Somewhat Religious score for Behaviour (9) can be conceptualized as 'social distance'.²⁷ At this stage it is helpful to start treating the Secular, Somewhat Secular, Somewhat Religious and Religious outlook types as four discrete (and therefore mutually independent) categories rather than (as up until now) as a continuum of outlooks moving steadily from the secular to the religious and vice versa. For example, the Secular and the Religious may be 'socially closer' to each other than they are to the Somewhat Secular or the Somewhat Religious.

²⁷ Please refer to Appendix C for the methodology involved.

Belief

Figure 9 shows the relationship between the four outlook types for Belief items, quantified using an 'index of social distance' plotted against the proportion of the sample each represents. The distance between the two most separated outlook types (Secular and Religious) is 66 index points, the widest spread for any of the three categories (cf. Figures 10 and 11). In addition, the Religious stand a full 41 index points from the next nearest type, the Somewhat Religious. The distance between the Secular, Somewhat Secular and Somewhat Religious is small, at only 25 index points, and these three are approximately equidistant from each other. This suggests that, on opinions and attitudes, the Secular, Somewhat Secular and Somewhat Religious are socially close to each other, while the Religious are far away and isolated.

Figure 9: Index of social distance for Belief items



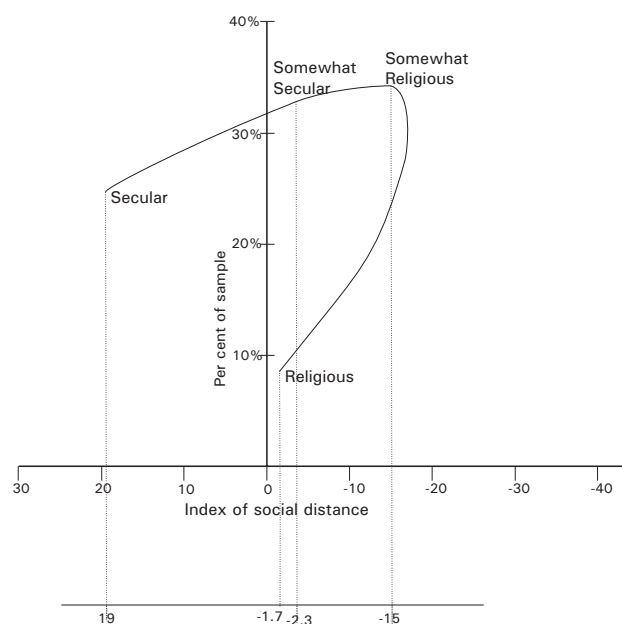
Belonging

Figure 10 demonstrates what at first seems to be counter-intuitive. However, having abandoned the notion of a continuum, we can see that the distance between the two most separated outlook types (Secular and Somewhat Religious) is only 34 index points, the smallest of the three categories and almost half the distance observed for Belief (Figure 9). What is also clear is that, although the overall social distance is small, it is the Secular who stand

out from the other outlook types. The distance separating the Somewhat Secular, Somewhat Religious and Religious is just 13 index points, indicating that their belonging habits are socially very close. That the Secular stand 21 index points away suggests that they differ significantly from all other outlook types in their belonging habits.

Also of interest in Figure 10 is how the Religious, from a social distance point of view, stand almost on top of the Somewhat Secular and virtually midway between the Secular and the Somewhat Religious in terms of their Belonging. With regard to Belonging traits, the Religious are more 'secular' than either of the 'somewhat' outlook types.

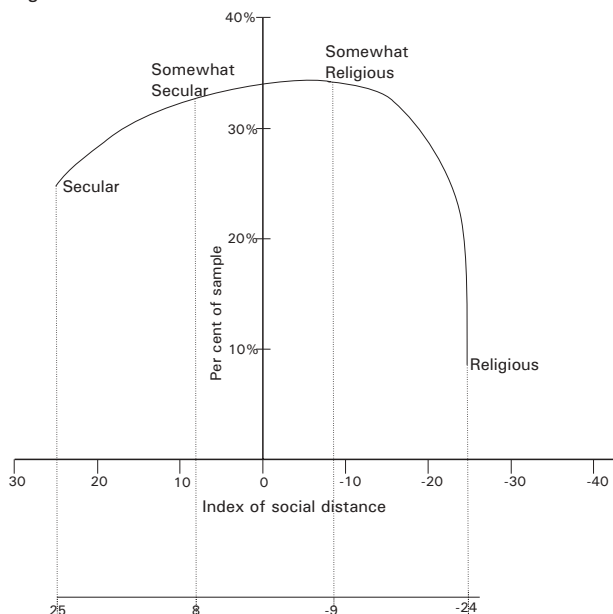
Figure 10: Index of social distance for Belonging items



Behaviour

For Behaviour items distances between each of the four outlook types in Figure 11 are fairly even (about 16 index points each). The Secular are furthest from the Religious, next furthest from the Somewhat Religious and nearest to the Somewhat Secular with fairly equal spacing. Overall the distance between the two furthest separated outlook types (Secular and Religious) is 49 index points. So, with regard to Behaviour (amount and extent of religious and secular activity), the outlook model is a useful predictor.

Figure 11: Index of social distance for Behaviour items



Belief, Belonging and Behaviour compared

The narrowest social distance between outlook types is for Belonging, followed by Behaviour and then Belief, which shows the widest social distance. Figure 12 shows the relationships between all of the three categories. At the bottom of this graph is a bar showing how all the index scores relate to each other based on outlook type. On the left are the locations of the secular scores (S/SS) and on the right the religious scores (R/SR). The outlook type showing the greatest social distance across the three categories is Religious, which overlaps with both Somewhat Secular and Somewhat Religious (with at least 40 index points between the Belonging score and the Belief score). It is clear that the Religious scores are the main cause of the differing shapes of the three graphs.

Using these results it is possible to predict outcomes. For example, the Religious exhibit high index scores on matters of opinion and belief and low index scores on attachments. The same logic follows for the Secular, despite the expectation that they would score consistently low in all three categories. Finally, the Somewhat Secular and Somewhat Religious groups show a very similar spread and even overlap each other, with the Somewhat Secular shifted to the left of the scale and the Somewhat Religious to the right. The

overlap is again due to the Belonging category, suggesting that outlook does not correlate with this

category as neatly as it does with Belief and Behaviour.

Figure12: Index of social distance for Belief, Belonging and Behaviour compared

