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## **Public opinion without opinions? Item nonresponse and (the absence of) substantive opinions in public opinion surveys**

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## Propositions

1. The term ‘non-substantive answers’ ignores the fact that answers of this type provide valuable information about which part of the public is unable or unwilling to answer individual survey questions. [this dissertation]
2. It should be standard practice to include a non-substantive answer category in questions in public opinion polls and questionnaires. [this dissertation]
3. The first step towards a thorough understanding of public opinion is to examine whether individual respondents are willing and able to give a substantive answer to a poll or survey question. [this dissertation]
4. In a ‘Nexit’ referendum a follow-up question should be included: how upset would you be if your opinion would not prevail when the issue is ultimately decided? [this dissertation]
5. Public opinion results from responses to individual opinion *questions*, and is not necessarily based on individual *opinions*.
6. The outcome of survey questions which are not cognitively tested, should be ignored.
7. Getting people to answer survey questions is easy. Getting the *right* people to answer these questions is hard.
8. To provide valid input into policymaking processes, surveys should be preceded by a qualitative assessment of relevant concepts and explanations, a cognitive test and a quantitative pilot to develop a high quality questionnaire.
9. Doing a PhD is like having a baby: it is hard work, tiring and for a long time you are unsure about the outcome.
10. Proverbs 16: 32 contains a deep wisdom: “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city”.