Knowledge and partisanship. An uneasy relationship

The article is based on the data from the Polish General 2010 Election Study. It researches the sources of a valid, as opposed to erroneous, perception of politically controversial facts regarding selected aspects of economic and social conditions. In accordance with the classical approach to researching political knowledge, the authors posit a hypothesis that a ‘factually’ correct perception of the facts which are politically controversial will be positively related to educational level, knowledge of non-controversial, objective facts and interest in politics. Second, on the basis of the results of studies on avoiding a cognitive dissonance and a motivated reasoning, we suppose that, in situation where a correct answer is unfavourable to the party preferred by a respondent, an erroneous perception of politically controversial facts will be more visible among the individuals who identify more strongly with a given political party. Third, we expect an erroneous perception of politically controversial facts to be more visible among those who receive information from sources less ideologically differentiated, where such people are less likely to come across correcting factors, that is, ‘adjustments’ to an erroneous image that they hold. And fourth, we assume that interaction between knowledge and belonging to a party does have its influence. We therefore expect that the individuals who identify more strongly with parties will be more likely to provide an erroneous reply to politically controversial questions, even if they are highly familiar with the non-controversial, objective knowledge.