



Great Expectations

A Sociocognitive Perspective on Attitudes Toward Immigrants

Sanne Maria Noyon

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, 05 June 2017

European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Abstract

Why is there so much variation in attitudes toward immigrants? Research consistently shows that people with lower socioeconomic status and education levels display more negative attitudes toward immigrants and that there is significant variation in public opinion between countries and over time. While common explanations such as contact theory and ethnic competition theory account for some of this variation, many questions remain unanswered. The present dissertation takes a “sociocognitive approach”, focusing on two fundamental human needs: the need to belong and the need to understand. I argue that this approach adds to existing accounts by providing an explanation for attitude change as well as helping us to explain a set of unanswered puzzles regarding variation in anti-immigrant sentiment.

I argue that normative influence processes, framing, and uncertainty are key to understanding attitudes toward immigrants, and I present a series of semi-independent empirical studies using a variety of methodological approaches to tease out these mechanisms. First, a series of natural experiments reveals that there is no straightforward relationship between uncertainty and attitudes toward immigrants. Most notably, I find that public attitudes toward immigrants in the Netherlands were not affected by the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh. Second, I propose that this may be due to the way in which the murder was interpreted in the media – an explanation that is in line with the framing hypothesis. Third, using support for an anti-immigration party as a proxy for attitudes toward immigrants I show how social identity- and normative influence processes can provide a plausible explanation for extreme levels of populist radical right support. Fourth, I present a survey experiment which reveals that there is no strong relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution in the UK. This finding goes against interest-based explanations of attitudes toward immigrants, thereby paving the way for a sociocognitive approach.

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Preface

We are witnessing an eventful period for immigration to the European Union. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa as well as poor shelter facilities in neighboring countries have led to an increase in refugees to European countries, with unprecedented numbers of sea arrivals (Fargues, 2015, p. 3). In 2015 1,008,616 refugees arrived to Europe by sea, outnumbering arrivals in the previous year by 4.5 to 1 (UNHCR, 2015a). The majority of these boat refugees disembarked in Greece, while some 153,600 migrants arrived in Italy (UNHCR, 2015b). Crossing the Mediterranean by boat is a risky enterprise; despite rescue operations by the Italian navy, the UNHCR (2015b) reports 3,771 fatalities in 2015. The most famous case is arguably that of the Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, whose picture shocked people around the world. These developments have greatly increased the salience of migration, sometimes giving the impression that we are speaking of a new phenomenon. Instead, immigration, whether forced or voluntary, has always been part of the European reality. Patterns of migration tend to vary over time, depending on (geographical) factors such as conflicts, policies, and economic circumstances (e.g. Fargues, 2015, p. 1). Over the past decades, Italy has become an important destination country for migrants (Ambrosini, 2014, p. 199). In 2012, I arrived here as a migrant myself.

As a Dutch person, living in Italy is a great experience. Besides the evident upgrade in terms of climate and cuisine, living here offers a unique chance to get an insider's glimpse into Italian society. While some of my experiences have confirmed cultural stereotypes, others have debunked these, and yet others have led to new understandings. An interesting recurring topic I have noticed concerns the discussions about immigration that I have with my Italian acquaintances.

My 75-year old neighbor Pino tells me that seeing the shocking images of drowning migrants and of the refugee camps on the small island of Lampedusa have made him change his opinion about immigration. He no longer believes that it is good for Italy. He tells me about a Moroccan boy he used to know who now posts things in Arabic on his Facebook profile. It bothers Pino that he does not understand; he is worried that the boy might be a radical Muslim and he wishes he would post on Facebook in Italian, as, in fact, he used to do. Pino's wife tells me an anecdote of how she was waiting in line for her monthly bus ticket (which she is able to purchase with a senior discount) at the city hall. There was a foreign woman in front of her who received a similar discount, simply because

of her status as a poor migrant. This is just not right, she says. A 20-something-year old girl on my football team holds similar views on immigrants. She does not discuss them with me directly but she shares them with the world on her Facebook profile. She writes how Muslim immigrants will take over Western culture, how terrorists fake being refugees, and how it is a disgrace that the Italian healthcare system is short on money while there is always enough to help migrants.

Despite the fact that I am an immigrant in this country myself, Italians do not typically treat me as such. Pino, his wife, and my team mate: each of them seems happy to have me. It seems we cannot simply say that an immigrant is an immigrant is an immigrant. This observation will not come as much of a surprise to anyone. Still, as much as common sense might agree, explaining *why* we hold different opinions about different types of immigrants and why different groups of people hold different attitudes about immigrants seems less straightforward. This thesis aims to explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants.

Writing a dissertation about attitudes toward immigrants

To quote a dissertation commonplace, this project has been a long journey. When I came to Florence in 2012, I arrived with a theory, and I spent a considerable amount of time specifying and trying to test it. My central question was what drove attitudes toward immigrants, and my theory was that it was not so much about immigrants, but about uncertainty. More precisely, I hypothesized that uncertainty should make people more susceptible to right-wing rhetoric, and therefore the variation we observe in attitudes toward immigrants should covary with variation in uncertainty. In other words, while we may observe certain patterns in attitudes toward immigrants based on people's education level, occupational status, and so on, these are not the factors that drive attitude formation. There should be, I thought, another element that relates to these demographic patterns, which at the same time explains *why* we observe these patterns. I started my PhD with the notion that this element was uncertainty.

Over the past years, I have shared this theory with many different people, most of whom thought that it made a great deal of sense. Many people were fascinated by this idea, while many others (mainly non-academics) reacted with a "yeah, that seems about right". Among the former group was my professor. As much as he sympathized with my hypothesis however, he also cautioned me to focus on my empirical question: the thesis was about attitudes toward immigrants, not uncertainty.

As much as I rationally agreed with my professor's advice, my personal fascination with uncertainty and the prospect of four years of academic freedom tempted me to try and embark on a risky journey to prove my uncertainty hypothesis after all. Much like a

pit bull (in my professor's words), I planted my teeth firmly into the topic of uncertainty, and kept shaking until something came out. What came out? A theoretical account of uncertainty, which nicely outlined my perspective on attitudes toward immigrants. Unfortunately, what also came out was a set of results that did not prove (but neither disprove) the theory. After having spent four weeks at the annual Max Planck uncertainty summer school in Jena without even once hearing a workable definition of the central concept, I started to believe that no one really knew what uncertainty meant. For my project, this implied having to accept that uncertainty was maybe not the explanation of attitudes toward immigrants – at least not the only one, and certainly not the one that would lead to a coherent dissertation.

Since a coherent thesis (and not proving a theory) was the designated endpoint of this endeavor, I went back to my priors, and finally started listening to the repeated mantra of my professor: focus on the empirical question. The empirical question was still the same, but I now considered also other possible explanations. To test these, I decided to approach the problem from different angles, using a range of different approaches. A risky enterprise, still, but a more focused one. Looking through different “windows”, I hoped to learn more about what drives attitudes toward immigrants.

Through the first alternative window, I observed the Dutch town of Rucphen, which had shown overwhelming support for an anti-immigrant party in recent elections. Comparing it to a very similar, but more center-left town allowed to test several common explanations of attitudes toward immigrants. My hypotheses were mostly rejected, but what really surprised me was how friendly and happy the people in the right-wing town were. There was a strong sense of community, something that I had not expected, and that made me believe that precisely this could be a driver of right-wing support. With more time I would further study this possibility.

People who hold negative attitudes toward immigrants are often quoted as saying “I am not racist, but I just think it is not right that “those people” come here and take advantage of our social benefits while: there is no work for them/they did not contribute to the system/our own people are in need and we should provide for them first”. This commonly established connection between immigration and the welfare state, at the intersection of identity, solidarity, and fairness issues, is what I looked at through the second alternative window. What did I see? From where I was standing, it did not seem like the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution was so strong as to justify negative opinions about immigrants by pointing at concerns about the welfare state. I observed that different types of immigrants were evaluated differently, but the window was too small to understand what drove those differences. Still, I learned that the answer was probably not (or not only) solidarity, however logically plausible.

The approach of peeking through different windows and using different instruments to study the view has come at a cost. The overall coherence of my argument is not what I had

hoped it to be when I started. While this may be problematic for purposes of publishing this dissertation as a monograph, my approach has also yielded many interesting findings and insights, making it a successful exercise from a scientific point of view. I learned a lot about methods. Using a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods, not all of which made it into the final dissertation, I can conclude that not all methods serve all purposes. For example, a lab experiment designed to create a sense of community and observe subsequent behavioral reactions to newcomers, turned out to be too complicated to form a relevant contribution to the dissertation. In other cases however, behavioral measures yielded fascinating results, for instance in the lost-letter experiment in Rucphen, in which I found higher return rates for non-Dutch addressees. Moreover, the combination of several measures helped to reveal interesting findings. For instance, without a qualitative analysis, I would not have been able to grasp the Dutch public reactions to the murder of Theo van Gogh, which seemed so puzzling based on a quantitative analysis alone.

From trying to prove a theory using a case, I have ended up writing a thesis trying to understand a question testing many different hypotheses. My research challenges many common explanations of anti-immigrant sentiment, questioning interest-based explanations of attitudes and support for the populist radical right in particular. In the end, adopting a sociocognitive perspective, my dissertation demonstrates how identity-based factors and framing can shape attitudes. In the case of Rucphen, the comparison with a town that was very similar in terms of economic and demographic factors ruled out common interest-based explanations of support for the populist radical right. Moreover, I did not observe a significant difference in anti-immigrant sentiment between the two towns, thereby raising doubts on the value of policy preferences as a plausible explanation for the observed difference in voting behavior. Instead, what really seemed to set Rucphen apart was the high level of social cohesion, suggesting an underlying mechanism related to social identity, -norms, or -networks.

Similarly, my welfare state study does not reveal a connection between attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution. While this is interesting in the light of the debate on immigration and the future of European welfare states, these results raise the question what then shapes attitudes toward immigrants. Given the recent framing of European migrants as “welfare tourists”, (elite) framing could be a relevant factor to taking into account here. This approach is in line with my study on the consequences of the murder of Theo van Gogh. The lack of a negative effect of the murder of a public figure by a radical Muslim has puzzled several scholars, including myself. Studying the media discourse on the case, however, reveals that the murder was largely interpreted as an event that was not related to immigration. In other words, it seems that media framing moderated the anticipated negative effects of the murder on public opinion on immigration.

Besides challenging existing explanations of anti-immigrant sentiment, my findings

generated new hypotheses and questions. The Rucphen case suggests that social networks matter, but without a measure of social cohesion it is hard to quantify this claim; the Theo van Gogh case suggests that framing moderates reactions to public events, but without comparable cases it is hard to rule out alternative explanations; the welfare state study suggests that framing and public perceptions of particular groups may affect attitudes toward those groups, but further research is needed to understand how these relate to other attitudes. While my findings are clearly not definitive, they provide an alternative perspective on attitudes toward immigrants, thereby contributing to our understanding of this hugely important issue.

So why do Italians not see me as an immigrant? While this dissertation was not intended to answer such a specific micro-level question, I am rather confident it is not because of economic factors. Based on my research, I expect that Italian attitudes to *me* may be driven by social identity and framing. But, as my professor would say, that is an empirical question.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why is there so much variation in attitudes toward immigrants? While immigration is by no means a new phenomenon in Europe (e.g. Fargues, 2015), the ongoing refugee crisis increases the salience of both the issue and the broad variety of reactions to it. While groups of people travel to the Greek island of Lesbos to help refugees arriving by boat, others protest their arrival, or even choose to pay fines instead of accepting a small number of refugees in their midst, as was the case in the Swiss village of Oberwil-Lieli (Streit um Flüchtlinge, 2016). Given the consequences of (reactions to) the refugee crisis for outcomes including, but not limited to, European cooperation, political processes, support for redistribution, and integration of newcomers, understanding what drives this variation is indispensable. Developing this kind of insight is the aim of the present dissertation.

Research has identified a number of ways in which attitudes toward immigrants tend to vary. For example, there is considerable variation in attitudes across time (e.g. Fetzer, 2011; McLaren, 2013; Meuleman, Davidov, & Billiet, 2009) and countries (Transatlantic Trends, 2014; Meuleman et al., 2009). The latter type of variation is illustrated in Figure 1.1, which shows the percentage of people in a number of European countries who agreed that immigration made their country a better place to live. Responses were recorded on an 11-point scale ranging from “worse” to “better”. A score of six or higher on this scale was coded as a positive attitude toward immigrants. As the figure shows, beliefs about immigration vary greatly across the sampled countries, with Swedish respondents overwhelmingly positive about immigration, and Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia, as well as Austria and Portugal expressing more critical beliefs about immigration.

In line with the personal experiences that I described in the Preface, there is variation in attitudes toward different types of immigrants. As Ford (2011) shows, people hold an “ethnic hierarchy” of preferences for immigrants, in which both ethnicity and cultural proximity play a role. In the UK, for instance, this means that white immigrants are generally preferred over non-white immigrants, and that there is a hierarchy within those two groups. Ford (2011, p. 1026) reports that Australians and immigrants from

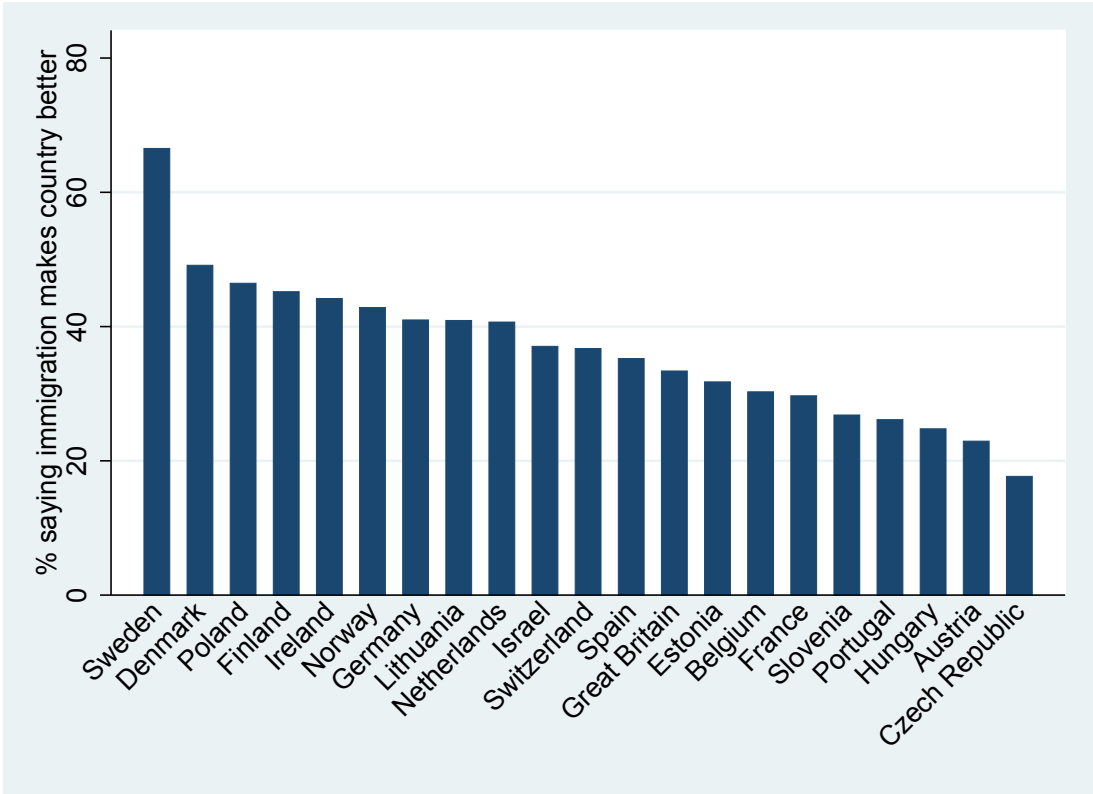


Figure 1.1: *Percentage of respondents who believe that immigration makes their country a better place to live. Non-native respondents were excluded from the analysis. Source: own calculations European Social Survey (ESS) (2014) data collected between 2000 and 2012.*

Views of Muslims more negative in eastern and southern Europe

Unfavorable view of Muslims in our country

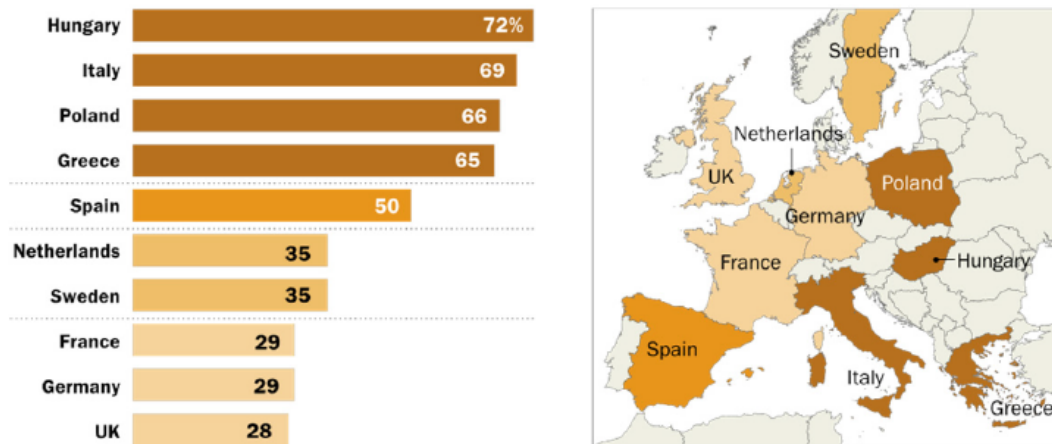


Figure 1.2: *Variation in attitudes toward Muslims across Europe. Source: Stokes et al., 2016*

Hong Kong meet the highest levels of support among white and non-white immigrants, respectively, while Eastern Europeans and South Asians are the least popular immigrant groups within the two categories. In the wider European context, a recent cross-national study reveals that Muslims and Gypsies are the most commonly stigmatized groups, while attitudes towards Jews are more positive (Stokes, Simmons, & Wike, 2016). Again, there is geographical variation in how negative these attitudes are – Figure 1.2 provides an example of how attitudes toward Muslims vary across a number of European countries.

Within the geographical and time dimensions there is wide variation between groups with different socioeconomic status and education levels. In general, research has shown that people with lower socioeconomic status hold more negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g. Pardos-Prado, 2011; Heitmeyer, 2012, pp. 30-1; Gijsberts, Hagendoorn, & Scheepers, 2004, p. 228). Similarly, lower levels of education are typically associated with more negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g. Allport, 1954/1958; Fetzer, 2011, p. 1; Freeman, Hansen, & Leal, 2013, p. 4; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). For the specific case of attitudes toward Muslim immigrants, a recent study by Goodwin, Raines, and Cutts (2017) shows that support for a ban on immigration from Muslim countries is especially pronounced among respondents with a secondary education or lower. This type of variation is also confirmed by European Social Survey (European Social Survey (ESS), 2014) data, as shown in Figure 1.3. Comparing responses for citizens with different education levels across European countries on the same variable as above (Figure 1.1) reveals that respondents with higher levels of education are far more likely to express positive views on immigration, with a difference of twenty percentage points compared to those with the lowest levels of education.

Importantly, these are merely correlational observations. Knowing that, for instance, higher education is related to a higher tolerance toward immigrants does not explain *why*

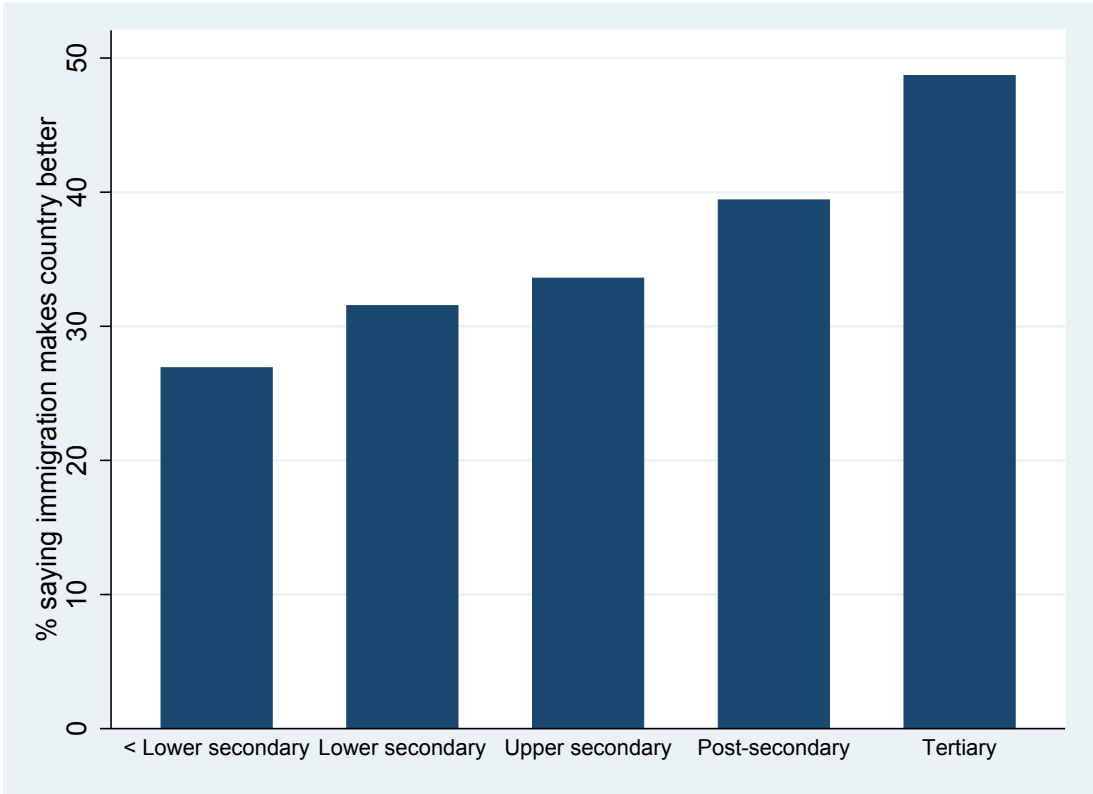


Figure 1.3: *Percentage of respondents who believe that immigration makes their country a better place to live. Non-native respondents were excluded from the analysis. Source: own calculations European Social Survey (ESS) (2014) data collected between 2000 and 2012.*

this is the case. However, knowing the dimensions on which attitudes vary can serve as an indicator of the drivers of this process.

The two main theoretical accounts on attitudes toward immigrants are the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954/1958) and ethnic competition or realistic conflict theory (e.g. Esses, Brochu, & Dickson, 2012; Olzak, 1992). Both accounts start from the premise that the presence of an out-group – in this case, immigrants – affects attitudes towards that group, but the hypothesized outcomes are fundamentally different. Whereas the contact hypothesis posits that certain types of contact with out-group members can lead to more positive attitudes toward that group, according to ethnic competition theory the presence of an out-group should lead to higher (perceptions of) competition over resources, with more negative attitudes as a result (Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2011). As I will show in what follows, the two perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but a bigger issue is that they do not provide adequate explanations for all the variation we observe and the drivers of that variation. I illustrate this point with examples in my discussion below.

Taking a what I will call *sociocognitive perspective* (defined below), the present dissertation aims to explain the variation in attitudes toward immigrants that is left unaccounted for by existing theories. Specifically, I argue that a focus on two essential human needs – for belonging (Maslow, 1954, as cited by Forsyth, 2010, p. 58) and for sense-making (Kahneman, 2011/2012; see also Colombo & Steinmo, 2016, on the need to belong and the need to understand) – can help to explain the conditions under which people are likely to develop negative attitudes toward immigrants. Building on the social psychological tradition, I highlight the concepts of social identity theory, framing, and uncertainty. Throughout this thesis, I apply these concepts to explain variation in attitudes.

In what follows, I discuss variation in attitudes toward immigrants in the light of the contact theory and the ethnic competition theory. I show that, while both accounts are intuitively valid explanations of attitudes toward immigrants, they do not adequately explain the variation we observe. In an attempt to do so, I propose a sociocognitive approach to attitudes toward immigrants.

1.1 Contact and competition

The contact hypothesis was introduced by Allport in his influential work *The nature of prejudice* (1954/1958). Inspired by research on racial desegregation in the army and in public housing projects (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005, pp. 263-4), Allport proposed that:

[p]rejudice (...) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law,

custom or local atmosphere), and if it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups (1954/1958, p. 267).

The contact hypothesis has inspired a large body of work, which extends well beyond the study of ethno-racial relationships. A recent meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2005) confirmed that contact with out-group members generally leads to more positive attitudes toward the group, especially in the case of contact between people of different sexual orientations, ethnic backgrounds, or age (pp. 267-8). In line with Allport's original formulation cited above, the quality of contact seems to matter. In a telephone survey in Germany, Koopmans and Veit (2014b) find that superficial inter-ethnic contacts with neighbors had a negative effect on trust toward neighbors for native-born Germans, while O'Neil and Tienda (2010) report similar results in a comparison of two counties in North Carolina. More sustained contacts with immigrant neighbors instead was associated with more positive attitudes toward immigrants.

Since more diverse environments imply more inter-ethnic contact (Hewstone, 2015; Koopmans & Veit, 2014b; McLaren, 2003), in the logic of the contact hypothesis we should find more positive attitudes toward immigrants in more ethnically diverse areas. The map in Figure 1.4 provides an example of this. The figure on the right maps support for the German anti-immigrant movement PEGIDA in February 2015, while the figure on the left shows the concentration of immigrants in Germany in the same period. It is noteworthy how the maps are almost the mirror image of each other: in areas with high concentrations of immigrants we find low support for PEGIDA, and vice versa. Similarly, the Estimating Constituency Opinion project (2014) notes how anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK is especially prevalent in areas with low immigration rates, while Goodwin et al. (2017) report higher support for a ban on Muslim immigrants in rural areas across Europe. In the light of the contact hypothesis, we may assume that the more positive immigration attitudes that we observe among Germans and British in areas with high concentrations of immigrants have been shaped by higher levels of inter-ethnic contact.

While the contact hypothesis provides a plausible explanation for the observed pattern of variation in support for PEGIDA, it should be noted that Allport does not offer explanations for the processes related to the reduction of prejudice following contact, or possible generalizations of its effects. In other words, we still do not know *why* we observe this variation. As such, this is a hypothesis and not a theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005, p. 271).¹ Other criticisms include the issue that the process by which contact reduces prejudice suffers from a selection bias (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 69): people who are not open to immigrants in the first place are not likely to engage with them, and therefore we are not likely to observe any attitudinal changes for this group.

¹The contact hypothesis was later extended to include processes that explain the mechanisms through which contact should reduce prejudice. For an overview see Pettigrew, 1998.

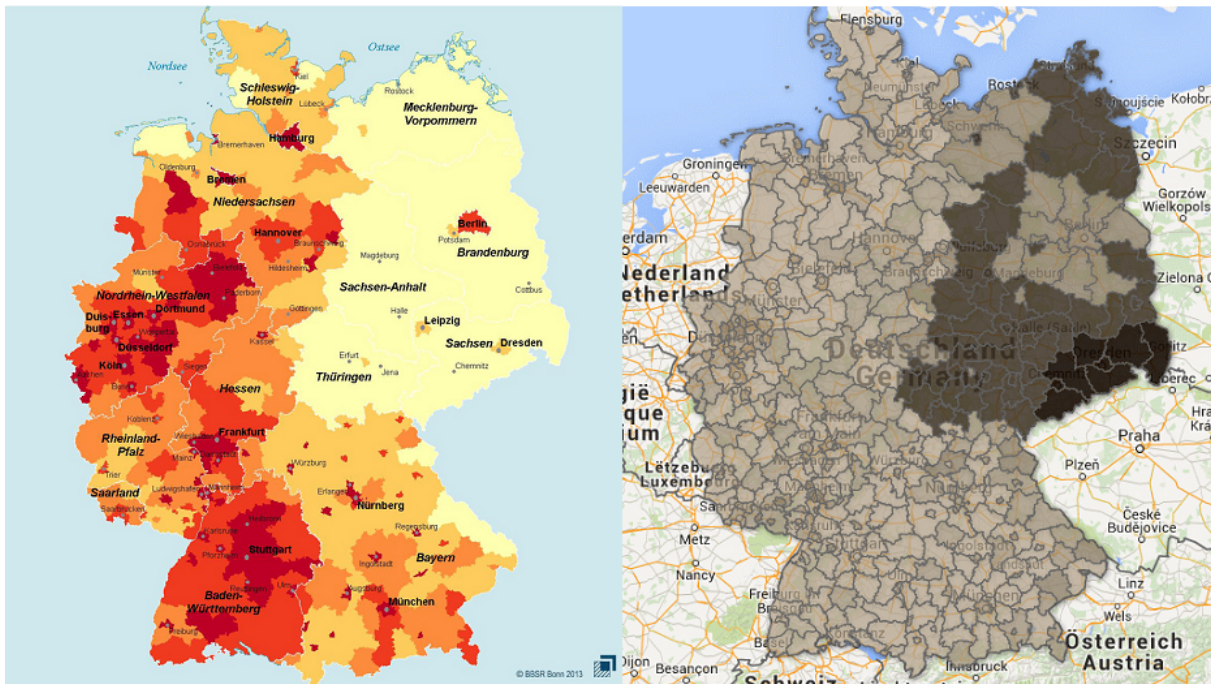


Figure 1.4: *Share of immigrants (left) versus share of PEGIDA supporters (right) across Germany. Darker colors refer to higher concentrations. Source: Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, n.d.; Carsten Wolfram, 25 February 2015, personal communication.*

Moreover, while the contact hypothesis serves to explain geographical variation, it is less clear how to interpret, for example, the observed variation across groups with different socioeconomic status. Specifically, since ethnic diversity at the neighborhood level is related to economic conditions (e.g. Abascal & Baldassarri, 2015; Ford, 2011), we might expect higher levels of inter-ethnic contact, and consequently more positive attitudes toward immigrants among people with lower socioeconomic status, as they are more likely to live in ethnically diverse environments. This is the exact opposite of what the studies on variation in attitudes cited above typically find. Finally, despite the optimistic results reported in Figure 1.4, other studies find that higher levels of immigration are related to increased support for the extreme right (Halla, Wagner, & Zweimüller, 2012; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). Similarly, in a study on public housing projects in Chicago, Ryan Enos finds that the demolition of social housing projects that were inhabited especially by African-American families affected voting behavior of white people living close to the projects. Specifically, after the African-American families moved away, both voting turnout and support for conservative parties dropped among white residents (Enos, 2016).

These seemingly contradictory findings can be explained by taking into account the difference between contact and context: higher levels of immigration not only increase the opportunities for contact, but also lead to higher perceptions of competition and threat (Savelkoul et al., 2011). The negative effects that such perceptions have on outcomes ranging from attitudes toward immigrants to trust in neighbors, are attenuated by quality

contact between neighbors of different ethnic backgrounds (Savelkoul et al., 2011; Stein, Post, & Rinden, 2000; Stolle, Soroka, & Johnston, 2008).

Ethnic competition theory posits that (perceived) competition reinforces group identification processes, ultimately leading to more negative attitudes toward out-group members, in this case immigrants (e.g. Savelkoul et al., 2011; Olzak, 1992). We can observe the most obvious example of this in the labor market: migration can increase (perceptions of) competition for jobs, especially among those with a low education level (e.g. Pardos-Prado, 2011; Mansel, Christ, & Heitmeyer, 2012; Coenders, Gijsberts, Hagendoorn, & Scheepers, 2004). As such, ethnic competition theory could explain cross-class variation in attitudes toward immigrants. Moreover, factors such as immigration rates and macroeconomic circumstances are bound to affect labor market conditions, and thereby also perceptions of competition (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Meuleman et al., 2009; Olzak & Shanahan, 1996). Therefore, the ethnic competition perspective could account for variation across time and countries, as well.

A priori, ethnic competition theory seems a very plausible explanation of attitudes toward immigrants (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014, p. 242). Anecdotally, a plumber who is outcompeted by newcomers offering the same work for lower pay has good reasons to oppose immigration. Empirically, however, evidence for the competition account is limited. While a number of studies establish a connection between (labor market) competition and attitudes toward immigrants or support for the far right (e.g. Esses et al., 2012; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Mayda, 2006; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000), an extensive review of the literature by Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) reveals only weak support for the impact of economic factors on attitudes toward immigrants, leading the authors to speak of ethnic competition as a “zombie theory” (p. 241).

Contrary to ethnic competition theory, it seems that people who experience competition by immigrants sometimes display more liberal immigration attitudes. An example of this is provided by Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010), who show that high-skilled natives display more positive attitudes toward both low-skilled and high-skilled immigrants. At the same time, people who do not experience direct competition sometimes display negative attitudes toward immigrants. Indeed, in a series of clever survey experiments in the Netherlands, Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior (2004) demonstrate that concerns about cultural identity are more important determinants of attitudes toward immigrants than economic concerns.

Anecdotally, immigrants are not only blamed for “taking our jobs”, but also for “taking our benefits” (Rydgren, 2008). This implies that economic drivers of attitudes toward immigrants encompass more than merely labor competition. A focus on such alternative economic factors could help to explain the observed cross-class variation in attitudes toward immigrants. Specifically, while people with either high or low socioeconomic status may potentially experience job competition by immigrants, it is unlikely that the better off

compete for welfare benefits. This implies that the preference for high-skilled immigrants among high-skilled natives could be driven by preferences for redistribution rather than by competition-related factors. In other words, it could be that for high-skilled natives, the problem is not to compete with immigrants but to *pay* for them. Since high-skilled immigrants should be less likely to rely on welfare benefits (Helbling & Kriesi, 2014, p. 597), well-off natives should prefer them over low-skilled immigrants. In line with this, Helbling and Kriesi (2014) find that well-off natives in areas with low taxes (where there is the risk of tax increases with growing demand for benefits, p. 597) prefer high-skilled immigrants.

The relationship between redistribution- and immigration preferences can be explained from the perspective of risk pools (Rehm, 2011). When citizens feel that the risk of needing unemployment benefits is not distributed equally across society, they will withdraw their support for the welfare state. In this case, the arrival of low-skilled immigrants may affect risk perceptions, thereby affecting support for redistribution. Indeed, Burgoon (2014) reports that support for redistribution is higher in areas with better economic integration of migrants. In the light of this theory, opposition to low-skilled immigration can be an expression of preferences for redistribution rather than of culturally driven attitudes toward immigrants. I further explore this possibility in Chapter 5.

In short, while at face value both the contact hypothesis and ethnic competition theory provide valid explanations of the mechanisms driving attitudes toward immigrants, it seems they have only limited explanatory power to account for the variation we observe across countries and time, and between people with different socioeconomic status and education levels. Moreover, neither the contact hypothesis nor ethnic competition theory provides satisfactory explanations for why people prefer certain types of immigrants over others (Ford, 2011). This observation, paired with the results of the studies discussed above, points to a more social psychological process of attitude formation. While this change of focus has been suggested by other scholars before me (e.g. Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Sniderman et al., 2004; Ford, 2011; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010), so far it remains unclear what the factors of interest are, how these work together in shaping attitudes toward immigrants, and under which circumstances. It is these precise questions that the present dissertation aims to address.

1.2 Toward a sociocognitive theory of attitudes toward immigrants

I now propose a sociocognitive approach to explain attitudes toward immigrants. My theory is rooted in the social psychological tradition and highlights three main elements that shape attitude formation: social identity theory, framing, and uncertainty.

1.2.1 Social identity theory

A theory of attitudes toward immigrants is fundamentally a theory of group dynamics: the main interest here is in the reactions of one group of people (native-born citizens) to another (immigrants). As such, a more social psychological account of attitude formation should build on insights on intergroup dynamics, which are captured in *social identity theory* (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity theory starts from the premise that people organize the social world by mentally categorizing themselves and others around them into groups. The purpose of this process is self-serving: people try to construct an image of themselves that is as positive as possible, based on their group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). The theory can be summarized as a two-fold process: the first step is categorization, the second is comparison (Brewer, 2001, p. 7728). In categorization, continuous (social) variables are transformed into discrete classes, thereby decreasing distinctiveness within, and increasing distinctiveness between, groups. “Since individual persons are themselves members of some social categories and not others, social categorization carries with it implicit *in-group-out-group* (we-they) distinctions” (Brewer, 1996, p. 292). In other words, social categorization processes help people to understand which groups they are part of, consequently also labeling others as in-group or out-group members.

Defining oneself a member of a certain group inevitably means that there will be people who are not part of the group. As a matter of fact, the very definition of a group depends on the presence of other groups (Tajfel, 1974, pp. 71-2). Defining oneself as “Dutch” or “woman”, for example, does not contribute to meaningful social distinctions in a group of only Dutch women. In this situation, more relevant categories would be for instance hair color or height. This may change as soon as a man or someone of another nationality joins the group. These fluid categorizations help to explain why people hold different attitudes toward different types of immigrants. The greater the number of potential bases for common categorizations, the easier it is to identify a person as an in-group member. Indeed, Ford (2011) shows how attitudes become more negative as natives and immigrants share fewer common traits.

Although group categorization is not a sufficient condition for prejudice (Grieve & Hogg, 1999, p. 926), the presence of an out-group may lead to “intergroup situations characterized by preferential treatment of ingroup members, mutual distrust and intergroup competition” (Brewer, 1996, p. 292), and these situations can emerge “[e]ven in the absence of prior interaction or conflict” (ibid.; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 38). This is even more true in case of (perceived) competition over resources (Esses et al., 2001). Hence, especially in times of economic downturn, the mere presence of an out-group can lead to perceived competition, with discrimination as a result. Based on this discussion, we can formulate a social identity hypothesis stating that *we should find higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in situations with higher levels of social identification.*

As emphasized repeatedly, there is considerable variation in attitudes toward immigrants within groups of natives. This can be explained from the social identity perspective by taking into account the specific groups that people identify with, and the situations in which they are most likely to do so. Specifically, social groups carry with them sets of shared norms that their members comply with, and if these norms are negative toward certain out-groups, group members are likely to adjust their behavior accordingly (Reynolds, Haslam, & Turner, 2012). Moreover, situational factors affecting group identification processes help to explain why some people are more likely to engage in social categorization than others. This point further specifies the previous hypothesis by adding that *the effects of social identification processes on attitudes toward out-group members are contingent upon the social norms that are shared within a group.*

To better understand the drivers of variation, I propose taking into account also two more cognitive factors that shape attitudes toward immigrants: *framing* and *uncertainty*.

1.2.2 Framing and uncertainty

Of course, even when people are not confronted with immigrants in their daily reality, such as the east Germans in Figure 1.4, they are familiar with the phenomenon of immigration. How they feel about this phenomenon, then, depends on how it is represented – or *framed* – in their minds. Lecheler, De Vreese, and Slothuus (2009) define frames as:

patterns of interpretation that are used to classify information sensibly and process it efficiently. Framing stresses certain aspects of reality and pushes others into the background – it has a selective function. In this way, certain attributes, judgments, and decisions are suggested (p. 401).

Frames can be individual representations of an issue, in which case we speak of a “frame in thought”, or a representation suggested by public actors such as the media or politicians, in which case we speak of a “frame in communication” (Chong & Druckman, 2007, pp. 100-1).

Frames can have important consequences for attitudes and decision making. The famous Asian disease example by Kahneman and Tversky (2000, pp. 4-5) is a case in point. Describing the potential outcomes of a medical program to fight a mysterious Asian disease either in terms of the number of people saved or the number of fatalities reversed preferences. In other words, attitudes depended on whether the same problem was perceived as a loss or a gain.²

Similarly, the way immigration-related issues are represented by public actors or in someone’s mind can shape attitudes toward immigrants. Evidently, right-wing politicians

²As Kahneman (2011/2012, p. 368) explains, this frame-dependent pattern of preferences relates directly to the famous Prospect Theory, in which people display more risk-seeking or risk-averse behavior depending on whether a gamble is described in terms of losses or gains. The Asian disease example extends the effects of framing beyond the economic context.

tend to present a more negative framing of immigration than actors on the political left. Especially for people who are not directly exposed to immigrants, such framing – by politicians or media outlets but also by social groups – can be an important driver of attitudes toward immigrants. Variation in attitudes could then be explained by taking into account the types of frames that people adhere to. In other words, we may hypothesize that *negative (media) framing of immigration-related issues leads to more negative public attitudes toward immigrants.*

As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, the importance of individual interpretations of reality reaches beyond shaping attitudes on specific issues. Rather, the way in which we perceive the world affects every aspect of human behavior. Individual world views define which expectations we hold about the world. If I let go of my pencil, I expect it to drop; if the traffic light turns green, I expect to be able to cross safely; and if I work hard all my life, I expect to be able to enjoy a pension when I retire. Importantly, such expectations can vary from person to person and from situation to situation. Astronauts, for example, learned that the law of gravity does not apply in space, while pedestrians in Italy know that a green light does not always imply a safe moment to cross the street. Furthermore, while Dutch people may expect pensions when they retire, citizens of countries with less generous welfare systems may not hold similar expectations. Expectations about the world, in turn, define behavior, whether that applies to not dropping things, looking twice before crossing the street, saving money for retirement, or any other type of behavior. Human behavior is generally rather automatic and is guided by simple decision rules – heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1982; Kahneman, 2011/2012; Bodenhausen, Macrae, & Sherman, 1999, p. 272) – which are based on the things we learned to expect from the world surrounding us (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982, p. 145).

For the purpose of the present dissertation, I am especially interested in violations of expectations: what happens if I am ready to retire but it turns out there is no pension available for me? Since the human brain is wired to make sense of the world – Kahneman (2011/2012) even refers to a “sense-making machinery” (p. 204) – events that violate expectations, and thereby coherent world views, make people feel uncomfortable. Moreover, in a world that we do not know how to interpret, heuristics do not apply, leaving people without clear guidelines on how to behave. I define this feeling of not knowing how to make sense of the world as *uncertainty*.

One way to reduce uncertainty is by adopting another framework that serves to make sense of the situation. For instance, in the pension example above one could resolve uncertainty by accepting the idea that immigration is a burden on the welfare state and therefore immigrants are to blame for pension cuts. The fact that this is not true (Fargues, 2014) is not relevant here; as long as ideas are able to explain the world, they serve to reduce uncertainty (Freeman, 2009, p. 13; Culpepper, 2008, p. 3). Since frameworks of ideas are themselves representations of the world or specific issues, this implies that framing

effects should be stronger for people experiencing uncertainty. As I show in Chapter 2, the type of ideas that are voiced by the populist radical right should be especially attractive to people experiencing uncertainty. Since these are typically anti-immigrant ideas, we can ultimately explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants through variation in uncertainty. In other words, we can further specify the framing hypothesis formulated above by adding that *the effects of negative framing of immigration-related issues should be stronger for individuals experiencing uncertainty.*

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, this argument mirrors the well-established theory of uncertainty and institutional change in political science. To be more precise, this theory states that violations of policy paradigms should lead to uncertainty, which is ultimately solved by adopting an alternative paradigm (Hall, 1993). As Mark Blyth (2002) argues in his *Great Transformations*, ideas play a central role in the selection of such alternative paradigms. The *Great Expectations* in my title echoes both the title and the general argument of Blyth's work, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of individual-level expectations for the study of public opinion on immigrants.

1.3 The present dissertation

In what follows, I aim to explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants from a sociocognitive point of view, highlighting the elements of social identity theory, framing, and uncertainty. In the theoretical chapter (**Chapter 2**), I further elaborate on and integrate these concepts. I end the chapter with a list of hypotheses derived from the outlined theory, after which I present three empirical studies on variation in attitudes toward immigrants.

Chapter 3 provides a test of the framing and uncertainty hypotheses, taking advantage of the co-occurrence of shocking events and the data collection of the European Social Survey (2012; 2012, 2014) in different contexts. Focusing on Muslim terrorist attacks, I observe no straightforward relationship between uncertainty-provoking events and attitudes toward immigrants. I further study this relationship by analyzing the media discourse of one of the events. I find that the media actively framed the event in a way that did not link it to immigration in the public mind. This observation can explain why the natural experiment does not reflect the anticipated negative shift in attitudes toward immigrants.

Using support for populist radical right parties as a proxy for attitudes toward immigrants, **Chapter 4** tests the social cohesion and social norms hypotheses, as well as a number of common explanations for support for the populist radical right. For this purpose, I travel to Rucphen, the municipality with the highest percentage of Freedom Party (PVV) voters in the Netherlands. Using a combination of street- and expert interviews, historical election data, and a lost-letter experiment, I find that the local voting behavior is best explained from a social identity perspective. Compared to inhabitants of Schijndel, a town

that is similar on all relevant demographics but different in terms of electoral outcomes, inhabitants of Rucphen do not express higher levels of racism either in the interviews or in the lost-letter experiment, thereby providing only limited support for a general dislike of immigrants as an explanation for the high level of populist radical right-wing support. Instead, in line with the social identity perspective, we observe high levels of social cohesion and strong social norms in Rucphen.

As a test of alternative accounts, **Chapter 5** applies the interest-based hypothesis formulated on page 15 to questions of inter-group solidarity. Specifically, I study the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and welfare state attitudes, a frequent topic of debate in the literature on the effects of immigration on host societies. To this end, I carry out a survey experiment using a representative sample of the UK population. Presenting participants with descriptions of welfare recipients who are either British-born, Irish-born, or Pakistani-born, I assess the importance of redistribution preferences for attitudes toward welfare recipients. My results reveal only limited support for an interest-based explanation of attitudes toward immigrants, thereby leaving room for a sociocognitive explanation of variation in attitudes toward immigrants.

Finally, in **Chapter 6** I summarize the findings of my empirical studies and discuss the relevance of the sociocognitive approach for explaining variation in attitudes toward immigrants. I conclude that this approach yields valuable insights for research purposes and policy making alike.

Chapter 2

Great expectations: A sociocognitive approach to variation in attitudes toward immigrants

By definition, a sociocognitive approach to attitudes toward immigrants entails two main elements: groups and cognitive processes. Groups matter because attitudes toward immigrants ultimately refer to beliefs or prejudices about a certain *group* of people; cognitive processes matter in understanding how such beliefs about others are formed. Following Colombo and Steinmo (2016), in the present chapter I connect these two elements with two basic human needs: the need to belong and the need to understand. As I will demonstrate below, categorization is a central feature of both these essential needs.

Traditionally, the focus of prejudice research has been on personality factors (Dixon & Levine, 2012b, p. 6). An example of this is Adorno's seminal work on "the authoritarian personality" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950/1969), which forms part of a larger post-WWII research agenda attempting to explain the horrors of Nazism (Reynolds et al., 2012, p. 52). Over the years, the interpretation of prejudice has changed from a product of personal psychological factors to an error or bias produced by cognitive psychological processes (Reynolds et al., 2012, p. 53; Dixon & Levine, 2012b, pp. 8-9). This has led researchers to study prejudice first and foremost as an individual phenomenon (Dixon & Levine, 2012b, pp. 6-7). However, interpreting prejudice as a result of cognitive or personality factors is problematic because it leaves little room for attitude *change*. It thus remains unclear how attitudes toward others can improve, or how attitudes are formed in the first place (Reynolds et al., 2012, p. 54). Since mechanisms of change can explain variation, this is an important observation for the present dissertation. The solution proposed by Reynolds et al. (2012) is a focus on groups. The authors argue that

personality factors are of lesser importance in a group context, because behavior in such situations is driven by social identities (p. 58). In the present dissertation, I follow this recommendation by analyzing the importance of the *need to belong* for attitudes toward immigrants.

As I discuss in more detail below, human beings are evolutionarily predisposed to live in groups. As a consequence, we have an innate need to belong. This is because living in groups and cooperating with others yielded adaptive advantages, which ultimately led to gene selection based on social, instead of situational, factors (Brewer, 2004). This gene selection process helps to explain why humans continue to live in groups, even though aspects of the modern world such as supermarkets and door locks make the direct relevance of doing so less obvious (Forsyth, 2010, p. 66). At the cognitive level, the processes involved in social identification are captured by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The central assumption of social identity theory is that people aim to construct a positive self-image, and this takes place through categorization of social information, and comparisons between the groups that are defined through this categorization process. Social identification leads to a preference for in-group members (Brewer, 1996) and a willingness to conform to the group's norms (Forsyth, 2010). If the group holds negative views of out-group members, this can lead to inter-group hostility or discriminatory behavior (Reynolds et al., 2012). These results explain how social identity processes can affect attitudes toward out-group members, such as immigrants.

By acknowledging the importance of the need to belong for attitudes toward immigrants, I do not mean to deny the importance of cognitive factors in shaping attitudes. Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) adopt a similar position in their extensive meta-analysis of drivers of political conservatism:

we are influenced by personality theories of conservatism, but we find them most useful for identifying needs and motivations that may be temporarily as well as chronically accessible. This opens the door to situationalist, social psychological theorizing and research on the manifestations of political conservatism (p. 374).

Similarly, rather than analyzing prejudice exclusively in terms of cognitive factors, I show how cognitive processes can shape attitude change and create specific needs that explain who is susceptible to what type of ideas.

A concept of particular interest here is another fundamental human need: *the need to understand*. Understanding the surrounding world allows humans to interact and react to situations and others in their social environment (e.g. Moskowitz, Skurnik, & Galinsky, 1999; Allport, 1954/1958). The main way of making sense of the world and defining our actions is by maintaining a cognitive framework, or worldview, that explains situations, guides information selection, and suggests possible courses of action (Kahneman, 2011/2012). When worldviews are challenged by unexpected events, the need to make

sense of the world is violated, leading to an unpleasant state of uncertainty. As I will argue below, uncertainty can be solved by adopting an alternative framework, which does not necessarily have to be true, so long as it satisfies the need to understand. While this is a general mechanism that could be applied to different types of attitudes, a series of cognitive and social identity processes explains why this mechanism is especially relevant to the study of attitudes toward immigrants.

The outline of the chapter is as follows. I first discuss the need to belong and the cognitive processes involved, as well as the consequences of social identification for behavior and inter-group relations. I then discuss the need to understand, and the effects of violations of expectations. Drawing a parallel with institutional theories of policy paradigm change, I argue that uncertainty should increase susceptibility to ideas, and to anti-immigrant ideas in particular. I conclude the chapter by reviewing the hypotheses derived from this theory, and I briefly discuss how the empirical studies in this dissertation aim to test these.

2.1 The need to belong

As observed in Chapter 1, the question of attitudes toward immigrants is essentially about *groups* of people. To understand how attitudes between groups form, I will start from the beginning, quite literally: the evolutionary advantage of living in groups.

Living in groups is crucial to human survival. While, from an evolutionary perspective, group membership also yielded disadvantages, such as having to share food and an increased susceptibility to communicable diseases (Forsyth, 2010, p. 65), these are outweighed by the advantages brought about by group life. More specifically, living in groups entailed considerable advantages in situations of hunting, defense against predators, and for locating scarce resources such as places to sleep or breed safely (R. D. Alexander, 1980, pp. 60-1). Central to these advantages is the concept of *cooperation*: while cooperative behavior created an adaptive advantage for humans living in groups (Bowles & Gintis, 2011), at the same time it led to the evolution of traits that made humans dependent on cooperation, a phenomenon that Brewer (2004) characterizes as “obligatory interdependence” (p. 107). Brewer (2004) cites tool making and an omnivorous diet as examples of traits that entailed both an adaptive advantage and an obligatory interdependence for group members. Specifically, she argues, to successfully undertake activities such as omnivorous behavior, thereby expanding the range of potential living environments, humans depended on sharing knowledge: “[i]f each individual member of an omnivorous species had to learn by trial and error what foods are toxic, efficiency would be very low” (p 107)¹.

Sharing knowledge and resources is contingent upon the principle of reciprocity: when sharing, group members should be able to trust that they will be on the receiving end of

¹Similarly, consider having to write a dissertation without building on shared knowledge; this is a virtually impossible exercise.

the transaction at a later point in time (Brewer, 1999, p. 433). As such, cooperation can be described as a “dilemma of trust” (ibid.). To limit the risk of non-reciprocated favors, trust, and therefore cooperation, is limited to in-group members only. By increasing in-group similarity and distinctiveness to other groups, the recognition of in-group members is facilitated while the possibility of accidentally sharing resources with out-group members is limited (Brewer, 1999, pp. 433-4). In short, being able to distinguish, or rather *discriminate*, between groups and emphasizing group-specific traits is an adaptive feature.

Although the original advantages of group-based living, such as collective hunting or protection against predators, may be less salient in modern life (Forsyth, 2010, p. 66), the evolutionary approach assumes that modern humans should have a preference for living in groups as well. This is because, if group-based living yielded adaptive advantages, it should have been social factors, rather than physical aspects of the environment, that shaped human evolution (Brewer, 2004, p. 108) – a process termed gene-culture coevolution (Gintis, 2017). More specifically, it should be the case that cooperative humans were more successful not only in terms of survival but also in terms of reproduction (Forsyth, 2010, p. 66; see also Darwin, 1879/2007, pp. 203-6). In other words, if more cooperative humans were more successful, their genes should have been passed on to following generations, thereby ultimately genetically predisposing modern humans to cooperation and group-based living.

While this is not the place for an elaborate review of support for the evolutionary origins of human social behavior, it suffices to say that most modern social psychologists agree on the importance of the *need to belong* for human behavior and well-being. For instance, Maslow (as cited by Forsyth, 2010, p. 58) includes the need to belong in his pyramid of fundamental human needs; Fiske (2005, p. 42) lists five main drivers of human group behavior, including the need to belong; and Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) observe that “humans are fundamentally motivated to create and maintain meaningful social relationships with others” (p. 598). As Forsyth (2010) notes, some theorists argue that belonging to groups feeds self-esteem (p. 65). This latter point echoes the logic of an influential modern theory of social behavior: social identity theory.

2.1.1 Social identity

Social identity theory was first introduced by the social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1974), and later elaborated together with his colleague John Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Originally aiming to explain hostility between groups (Forsyth, 2010, p. 77), the authors noted how:

in order for the members of an ingroup to be able to hate or dislike an outgroup, or to discriminate against it, they must first have acquired a sense of belonging to a group which is clearly distinct from the one they hate, dislike or discriminate against (Tajfel, 1974, p. 66).

In other words, inter-group hostility follows processes of group identification, and Tajfel (ibid., p. 67) shows that this is the case even when the basis for identification is trivial, for example on the basis of preference for one piece of art over another.

According to social identity theory, a group is a:

collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40).

Importantly, group membership does not necessarily relate to physical groups. Rather, in the logic of social identity theory, groups are cognitive entities consisting of three or more people (Hogg, 2006, p. 111).

The process of group identification works through two main mechanisms: group categorization and group comparison (Brewer, 2001, p. 7728). Group categorization refers to the ordering of social information into meaningful distinct categories (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69; Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004, p. 462; Forsyth, 2010, p. 77). Through social categorization, the differences within groups are decreased, while the differences between groups are emphasized (Brewer, 1996, p. 292). As Hogg (2006) observes, social categories are essentially prototypes, or:

fuzzy set[s] of attributes (perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors) that are related to one another in a meaningful way and simultaneously capture similarities within the group and differences between the group and other groups of people who are not in the group (p. 118).

This process of categorization applies to other people as much as it applies to ourselves (Forsyth, 2010, p. 77). When identifying as a group member, people “depersonalize” their identity and perceive of themselves in terms of their group membership; when depersonalizing out-group members, we speak of stereotyping (Hogg, 2006, pp. 118-9).

Such social categories gain meaning through comparison, the second process of interest. Here:

social comparisons with other groups (e.g., sales persons versus customers in a store/sales persons versus production workers in the organization) determine which features or behavioral norms help to define the group in a particular situation. Generally, these features are those that distinguish the group from relevant comparison groups (Ellemers et al., 2004, p. 462).

In other words, while categorization defines social groups, comparing social groups helps to understand the meaning of these categorizations. The category “women” does not mean anything without the existence of the category “men”, and the same is true for the categories “immigrants” and “natives”.

This discussion highlights two important implications of social identity theory. First, as Tajfel (1974, pp. 71-2) also observes, groups are technically meaningless without the presence of a relevant comparison group. If unique group features are identified through social comparison processes, the presence of out-group members is crucial to the definition of the in-group. Second, the fact that out-groups define which features of social groups become salient implies that individuals can hold multiple social identities depending on the situation in which they find themselves (Hogg, 2006, p. 115). In other words, a person can identify as Dutch, woman, academic, and in many additional ways, but the identity that is salient depends on the situation and the other people who are present in that context. To cite another example by Ellemers et al. (2004), in a work situation categorizations could be made based on professional roles when it comes to improving procedures, while ethnic or gender identities should be more salient when discussing affirmative action programs (p. 462).

Social identification leads to a preference for in-group members, called *in-group favoritism* (Brewer, 1996, p. 292). In Tajfel's (1974) original experiments, participants who were asked to divide money between two others consistently preferred in-group members, even when social categorization was based on trivial features such as preference for one painting over another or performance in an estimation task (p. 67; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 38-9). In a more realistic group situation, Baldassarri and Grossman (2013) show how prosocial behavior of Ugandan farmers is shaped by group identification, with more generous allocations of money to in-group members. Besides preferences in allocations of resources, in-group favoritism is also found to affect evaluations of character and actions of others, and inter-group cooperation (Brewer, 2001, p. 7728).

Based on this discussion, we may hypothesize that stronger social identification leads to more negative feelings toward out-group members. For the case of attitudes toward immigrants, this implies that:

we should find stronger anti-immigrant attitudes among people who identify more strongly with their social group.

The ultimate goal of social identity processes is to construct a positive image of the self (Tajfel, 1974, p.68; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40; Brewer, 1991, p. 477; Hogg, 2006, p. 120), and therefore individuals will aim to identify with groups that contribute positively to their self-esteem. Indeed, groups strive to distinguish themselves positively from others, and people are found to identify more strongly with higher-status groups. For example, in a study on support for college football teams, Cialdini et al. (1976) found that students wore more team apparel and more often discussed matches in terms of "we" when their college's team had won than when they had lost, especially when their self-esteem had been challenged. These results imply that the students identified more strongly when the team had the possibility to contribute positively to the students' identity.

Instead, if it is the case that social groups do not contribute to a positive self-image, group members have a number of options. Of course, dissatisfied members could simply choose to leave the group for a higher-status group, thereby engaging in social mobility (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 43). If this is impossible for some reason, individuals might engage in social creativity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, pp. 43-4): comparing their group on another dimension (e.g. “we may have lost but at least we played fair”), changing the value attached to their group attributes (e.g. “Black is beautiful” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 43)), or changing reference group (i.e. comparing the group to a lower-status group), thereby reducing the negative effects of low-status group membership. This way, beliefs about relative group status and permeability of group boundaries affect social behavior (Hogg, 2006, p. 122).

2.1.2 Consequences of social identification processes

The fact that social identities are cognitive entities does not mean that they are fictitious or imaginary. Indeed, the behavioral consequences of social identification processes can be very real. This is because social groups carry with them sets of shared social norms: “prescribed behaviors shared and enforced by a community” (Villatoro et al., 2014, p. 335), which makes “other people’s responses predictable and meaningful” (Forsyth, 2010, p. 145), thereby facilitating interactions (Gintis, 2017, p. 122).

While the precise definition of social norms varies across the literature, we can distinguish four commonly shared dimensions (Opp, 2001). First, norms express “oughtness”: the “expectation that some behavior ought to be (or ought not to be) performed” (ibid., p. 10714). Second, norms apply to specific situations, and are thereby conditional.² Third, norms are rules that are shared among members of the same group – an essential observation for the present argument – and fourth; norm-deviant behavior is sanctioned. For instance, a social norm in Italy (i.e. shared by the Italians as a group) is that you do not (i.e. “ought not”) drink cappuccino after 11AM (i.e. conditional on the time). As any non-Italian who has tried to break this rule can tell you, non-compliance will be sanctioned – typically not in a violent way or by taking your money (at least not in my experience), but by social disapproval or simply refusal to serve you. While sanctioning serves to reinforce norms, group members also internalize norms, leading them to behave as expected by their fellow group members (Gintis, 2017, p. 123).

By providing descriptions of how people typically (ought to) behave, norms guide behavior of individuals who identify with the group in question. An extreme example is the Stanford prison experiment, in which college students displayed extreme behavior depending on the role they had been assigned (i.e. prisoner or guard; Zimbardo, 2007, as cited by Forsyth, 2010, p. 233). More everyday examples are the hotel room study by

²Opp (2001, p. 10714) describes how there is an exception to the rule that you ought not kill for soldiers in the war.

Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius (2008), in which individuals show higher compliance when presented with a social norm that is more specific to their situation, as well as studies on binge drinking among sorority members (Neighbors et al., 2010), and training regimes in sports teams (Gammage, Carron, & Estabrooks, 2001). Research generally shows that compliance increases as a function of level of social identification (Hogg, 2006, p. 124; Ellemers et al., 2004, p. 462; Reynolds et al., 2012, p. 58).

As (Forsyth, 2010, p. 9) observes, when we speak of groups we mean more than just a collection of individual members; we speak of a “unified whole”. This is because groups display a certain level of cohesion, “the integrity, solidarity, and unity of a group” (ibid.). In a more precise definition, Van der Meer and Tolsma (2014, pp. 461-2) describe cohesion as:

the degree of interconnectedness between individuals that is both a result and cause of public and civic life. It encompasses feelings of commitment, trust, and norms of reciprocity and is demonstrated by participation in networks and civic organizations.

Social cohesion increases as a function of social identification (Hogg, 2006, p. 122), and cohesive groups typically have more satisfied members and (in the case of teamwork) higher productivity (Forsyth, 2010, pp. 135-9). At the same time, cohesive groups place a stronger pressure to conform on their members (ibid., p. 137). In academic research, social cohesion is used to explain both positive and negative outcomes in society. In policy making, social cohesion is largely a response to newly emerging social cleavages following globalization processes (Van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014, pp. 278-9). More specifically, due to its connection with trust and solidarity, social cohesion is an important concept for the analysis of welfare state attitudes. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5. Moreover, in line with social identity processes outlined here, Chapter 4 will provide an example of how strong social cohesion can go hand in hand with negative reactions to out-group members.

Indeed, given the relationship between social identification and in-group favoritism, high identification and correspondingly high social cohesion could foster discrimination of out-group members. While in-group favoritism, implying a preferential treatment of in-group members, can certainly be dubbed discrimination, Brewer (1999) argues that positive attitudes toward in-group members are not necessarily correlated with out-group hostility. Social identification processes, however, provide a “fertile ground for conflict and hate” (p. 435). Among the situations that could spark inter-group conflict, Brewer cites examples such as a sense of moral superiority, perceived threat or competition, and the pursuit of common goals without mutual trust (pp. 435-7). Reynolds et al. (2012, p. 59) further observe that shared beliefs about out-group members can explain inter-group hostility. In line with this, a series of experiments by Crandall, Eshleman, and O’Brien

(2002) shows how expressions of prejudice are strongly contingent upon social norms, and that suppression of such attitudes is driven by normative pressure rather than by tolerant individual mindsets (pp. 374-5). At the same time, if group norms about out-groups are positive, they can explain positive attitudes (Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008, p. 243).

As an illustration, consider the example of Canada. While Canada is known for its high levels of support for immigration (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 57), Canadians, also, are only human and therefore it would be surprising if they were immune to the (negative) consequences of inter-group dynamics. Indeed, Canadian citizens display prejudice as well, as cases of racism against indigenous people show (ibid., p. 64). We can explain this pattern of pro-immigration attitudes and negative reactions to indigenous people by considering what it means to identify as a Canadian. As Banting and Kymlicka (2010, p. 60) argue, multiculturalism is part of the Canadian identity, thereby introducing a social norm that is positive toward immigrants as well as forming a potential basis for common identification between natives and immigrants. In contrast, this norm does not seem to apply to indigenous people (at least not to the same extent), and especially those who declare themselves “non-Canadian” are faced with strong negative reactions in society (Kymlicka & Banting, 2006, p. 302). In short, the Canadian case shows how social identities can shape attitudes toward out-group members through normative influence processes. Since these attitudes are driven by social norms and not by actual experiences with out-group members, this is true even in the absence of actual inter-group contact.

In short, humans have an innate *need to belong*, and the social groups they adhere to have important consequences for behavior and attitudes toward out-group members. This can explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants in two main ways. First, it could be that some people have a stronger national identity than others, thereby increasing the salience of inter-group boundaries, and thus the sense that immigrants constitute a distinct out-group. In this case both the salient identity and the strength of that identity drive attitudes toward immigrants. Second, variation may be driven by different social norms held by different social groups. This implies that it is not identification, as such, but the specific group that people identify with that helps to explain outcomes for attitudes toward immigrants. Based on this discussion, we may specify the social cohesion hypothesis formulated above (p. 26) by adding that

the effect of social identification processes on attitudes toward immigrants depends on the shared set of social norms within the group.

To better understand how such normative influence processes work at the cognitive level, and in which situations people are more likely to engage in social identification processes and accept group norms, I now turn to another fundamental human need: the need to understand. As we will see below, much like the need to belong, the need to understand can explain attitudes toward immigrants, either in isolation or in combination

with the need to belong.

2.2 The need to understand

The human need to make sense of the social world through social categorization and identification processes relates to a more general *need to understand*. As we will see, again, categorization is key.

As several scholars have pointed out, humans have a fundamental need to make sense of the world. For instance, Kahneman (2011/2012, p. 204) refers to the mind as a piece of “sense-making machinery”; Moskowitz et al. (1999, p. 21) describe the human “drive to attain meaning”; and Allport (1954/1958, p. 170) speaks of an “insatiable hunger for explanations”. This need to understand applies of course to big questions such as the meaning of life, but humans also crave to understand more trivial features of the world surrounding them. The reason for this is straightforward. In order to interact with the world surrounding us (Moskowitz et al., 1999, p. 25) and the other people in that world (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004, p. 592), we need to be able to attach meaning to facts and events, and to formulate expectations about what is to follow (Goffman, 1974, p. 38; Allport, 1954/1958, p. 167). As Chater and Loewenstein (2016) argue, the importance of making sense can be applied to explain a wide range of outcomes, from belief in conspiracy theories and religion to jurors’ opinion formation.

Humans construct their understanding of the world by organizing their knowledge into a coherent cognitive framework or worldview (Kahneman, 2011/2012, p. 71), which is the filter through which perceptual information is processed. The idea of worldviews as mental representations of knowledge is central to various strands of research. For instance, the *Gestalt* school of psychology assumes that the “perceptual field is structured into *meaningful and understandable units* that are built through relationships among the parts” (Moskowitz et al., 1999, p. 16; emphasis in original); in his seminal work on public opinion, Lippmann (1922/1997) speaks of “mental images” (p. 9) and the “pictures in people’s minds” (p. 18); and in his studies on “the nature of prejudice”, Allport (1954/1958) writes that:

all of us are continually trying to build up a world-picture that is orderly, manageable, and reasonably simple. Outer reality is in itself chaotic – full of too many potential meanings. We have to *simplify* in order to live; we need stability in our perceptions (p. 169; emphasis in original).

Importantly, the idea of mental representations of reality also recalls Goffman’s (1974) discussion of frames as “organization of experience” (p. 11), and “frames in thought” – or “individual frames” – in framing theory, which are defined as: “an individual’s cognitive understanding of a given situation. (...) frames in thought refer to what an audience

member believes to be the most salient aspect of an issue” (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 101).

What the various definitions have in common is that frameworks are *simplifications* of reality. By reducing the world to recognizable categories (Moskowitz et al., 1999, p. 27), our minds construct a coherent interpretation of our environments that allows us to articulate expectations and interact with objects and other people in those environments. From a cognitive point of view, organizing the world into frameworks allows people to process perceptual information more quickly and to define their behavior accordingly. Instead of engaging in systematic processing, a comprehensive and thorough but slow processing mode (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Kahneman, 2011/2012), people typically rely on heuristic processing, a:

more limited processing mode that demands much less cognitive effort and capacity than systematic processing. When processing heuristically, people focus on that subset of available information that enables them to use simple inferential rules, schemata, or cognitive heuristics to formulate their judgments and decisions (Chaiken et al., 1989, p. 213).

Such heuristics – or simple decision rules – come in different kinds. Famous examples are the representativeness heuristic and the availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992), but it has been suggested that even political orientation (Pardos-Prado, 2011) and stereotypes (Bodenhausen et al., 1999, p. 272-3; Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994; Kahneman, 2011/2012, p. 168-9) can be used as decision rules guiding opinions and voting behavior (see Baldassarri, 2013, for a more detailed account on heuristics and voting behavior).

While there is some debate on how these two cognitive mechanisms work together,³ most scholars agree that heuristic processing is the default mechanism for information processing and decision making (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1982; Kahneman, 2011/2012; Bodenhausen et al., 1999, p. 272). This is because, much like real-life tools like vacuum cleaners and dishwashers help us to save time on daily tasks, heuristics are cognitive tools that save processing capacity and energy. Kahneman (2011/2012, p. 20) shares heuristic processing under the functions of “System 1”, which “operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control”. Relying on the automatic functions of System 1 can only be successful because people hold expectations about what to expect from the world, and thereby know how to interpret perceptual information (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982, p. 145). In line with this, Kahneman (2011/2012) argues that the “main function of System 1 is to maintain and update a model of your personal world,

³For example, Baldassarri (2013, pp. 43-5) notes how the assumption in classic dual-process models that motivation increases the likelihood of systematic processing violates the inherent automaticity of heuristics. Experimental results seem to provide support for “two systems” models, which assume that both processing modes work in parallel.

which represents what is normal in it” (p. 71). In other words, the cognitive frameworks or worldviews that people hold are the drivers of information processing, expectations, and decision making. Essentially, this means that human behavior is conditioned by the theories we hold about the world surrounding us.

A coherent representation does not necessarily mean that humans always interpret events in the correct way, or even in the same way. The need to understand implies that humans search for an interpretation of the world that makes sense, whether this is the “true” interpretation or not. This “satisficing” approach can lead to very different interpretations of the same event. For instance, after the mass shooting by an American Muslim in an LGBT club in Orlando in June 2016, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton argued that this was an example of why gun control should be stricter in the US, while her competitor Donald Trump interpreted the same event as an example of why Muslims should be banned from the country (Siddiqui & Gambino, 2016). From a cognitive perspective, it is not relevant who is right – either “guns caused this” or “Muslims caused this” can serve as ways to make sense of the situation.

This last point explains why people can hold different attitudes. This is based on different cognitive interpretations of facts and events. At the same time, this observation introduces framing as an essential concept to understand attitude formation. In the words of Entman (1993), framing can be defined as selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). By highlighting certain aspects of an issue, and thereby presenting it from a certain angle, frames serve as schemes to present news, while at the same time informing audiences on how to understand events (Scheufele, 1999, p. 106). Since individual interpretations of events are partially constructed based on information by the media (ibid., p. 105), issue framing is an important driver of public opinion.

Framing effects have been studied widely, both experimentally and observationally (see Chong & Druckman, 2007, for a review). In general, these studies reveal that the way in which issues are framed can affect attitudes significantly (e.g. Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). For instance, in an experimental study De Vreese (2004) manipulated a news report to include different frames of EU enlargement and found that frames “have the ability to direct viewers’ thoughts when conceiving of a contemporary political issue” (p. 45), although policy preferences were not found to be affected (p. 46). That political behavior is not immune to framing effects however was shown by Burscher, Van Spanje, and De Vreese (2015). In a comparative panel study across 11 countries, the authors found that exposure to news on immigration and crime affects voting behavior by increasing the propensity to vote for the radical right.

Given that human behavior is conditioned by the theories we hold about the world surrounding us, as explained above, it follows that *variation* in behavior can be explained by

differences between the theories that people hold. In other words, the need to understand helps to explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants on account of different worldviews. The results of the framing studies discussed here suggest that variation in worldviews may be the result of exposure to different interpretations – or frames – of events. Based on this discussion, we may hypothesize that

variation in attitudes toward immigrants is explained by exposure to different (media) frames.

Social identities and frameworks

As suggested above, cognitive frameworks of interpretation are essentially simplifications of reality. Importantly, this is exactly what happens in social identification processes (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69): social categorization reduces the social world to clearly defined categories, thereby reducing complexity (Grieve & Hogg, 1999, p. 926). More importantly, as discussed in Section 2.1, social identities encompass a set of shared social norms that, by defining standard behavior and making others' actions predictable, can be seen as interpretative frameworks in themselves. By providing their members with a set of norms, groups can act as “shared reality provider[s]” (Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006, p. 91):

Our construction of realities is conducted interactively with fellow members of groups to which we belong and that we deem important. It is through such a group process that a system of agreed upon categories and beliefs is constructed whereby reality is apprehended (Kruglanski et al., 2006, p. 84; see also Esses et al., 2012, p. 522).

By providing such frameworks, social groups spur us to perceive (social) reality from a certain point of view (Dixon & Levine, 2012a, p. 307), thereby playing an important role in the construction of worldviews (Brewer, 2004, p. 108).

The pressure for conformity that comes with group identification makes that it is hard to hold conflicting attitudes within a group. A dramatic example of this is provided by the famous experiments by Solomon Asch (1963/2003; as cited by Forsyth, 2010), in which participants have to state out loud which out of two lines is longer. Although the solution is obvious, hearing others in the room state the wrong answer led people to give the wrong answer as well, a result that is widely interpreted as a confirmation that people adjust their behavior to that of others. In terms of interpretative frameworks, it seems that people adjust their worldview to that of other people who are similar. If shared worldviews include negative perceptions of out-group members, this is likely to affect inter-group dynamics and political attitudes (Taber, 2011, p. 377). An example of this is provided by Minkenberg (2000, p. 185), who argues that supporters of the new radical right across

Europe share a common worldview. I discuss the relationship between uncertainty and the radical right in more detail below (Section 2.2.4). Additionally, this dissertation provides an example of shared attitudes in Chapter 4.

In short, social identification processes generate a shared perception of reality, which allows people to interpret the world and define expectations. As discussed above, different interpretative frameworks can help to explain variation in attitudes. The social identity perspective on interpretative frameworks adds to this by defining how group identification processes can affect these. For the purpose of the present dissertation, this implies that variation in attitudes toward immigrants can stem from variation in cognitive frameworks, which in turn is affected by social identities: how you see the world shapes your attitudes toward immigrants, and who you identify with shapes how you see the world. While this perspective may explain variation between people with different social identities, it does not specify the situations in which people are likely to: (1) change their attitudes, or; (2) identify more strongly with their social groups. To better understand these two points, I now discuss violations of cognitive frameworks.

2.2.1 Violations of expectations: Uncertainty

As cognitively efficient as heuristic processing based on interpretative frameworks may be, the world is not really as simple as it is represented in peoples' minds (Kahneman, 2011/2012, p. 204; Lakoff, 2006, p. 13). Therefore, it is likely that people will be confronted with events or situations that do not fit their expectations. Frameworks not only serve to explain the world but also guide information selection. An attentional bias filters out information that does not match frameworks (Lakoff, 2006; Ehrlich & Maestas, 2010, p. 663; Evans, Ball, & Brooks, 1987) and anomalies will very often go unnoticed. As an example of this, Kahneman and Tversky (1982) mention the famous distorted room illusion, in which the (visual) expectation that rooms are rectangular leads observers to perceive people who are walking through the room as changing in size (p. 147). As frameworks are repeatedly challenged, however, they lose their validity. In other words, challenged self-views or worldviews suffer from instability (Van den Bos, 2009, p. 198). As I argue in the following paragraphs, such violations of expectations lead to subjective uncertainty, a negative psychological state that motivates people to reduce this through the acceptance of alternative cognitive frameworks.

Events that do not match cognitive frameworks violate the human need for coherence (Festinger, 1957/1975; Kahneman, 2011/2012). Not every such violation is necessarily negative – a surprise can also be seen as a violation of expectations (Kahneman, 2011/2012, p. 72). The main difference between surprise and uncertainty as potential outcomes of violations of expectations lies in the appreciation of the resulting situation. We may have expected a quiet night at home instead of coming home to a *surprise* party with

guests, music, and presents, but we are familiar with the idea of a party. Once we have accepted that the latest *Peaky Blinders* episode will have to wait for another night, we may enjoy this violation of expectations. For uncertainty, this is not the case. Following the violation of expectations, we find ourselves confronted with a reality that we do not know how to make sense of, and this is an uncomfortable situation. It violates our need for understanding, it leaves us uncertain about what to expect from the future, and it limits our courses of action. Uncertainty is not caused so much by the violation of expectations per se, as it is by the absence of a relevant interpretative framework.

This is different from how uncertainty is commonly defined in the literature. Knight (1921/1971) contrasts uncertainty with risk and defines it as a unique situation in which the “distribution of the outcome in a group of instances” (p. 233) is unknown. Keynes (1921/1973) acknowledges that uncertainty is characterized by unknown probabilities, but blames this on the limits to human reasoning power (p. 34), thereby essentially reducing uncertainty to risk (Blyth, 2002, pp. 31-2). Without aiming to reduce uncertainty to a merely computational problem, the notion that actors’ characteristics affect the tools with which they can react to situations does not seem completely unreasonable. In other words, both cognitive and situational aspects could affect feelings of uncertainty. As Beckert (1996) puts it:

A sociological treatment of uncertainty as a constraint on rational decision-making has to take into account both the actor and the situation. Cognitive processes are not only quantitatively limited but produce systematic biases in reasoning processes and are, moreover, socially influenced. At the same time it is also the complexity of causal relationships that leads to unintended consequences and prevents actors from optimizing behavior (p. 822).

In short, the combination of a complex situation and cognitive limits explains why actors fail to optimize their behavior.

In my definition of uncertainty, I take Beckert’s (1996) advice to focus on both actors and situations one step further. In a sense, the root of uncertainty is still to be found in both situations and actors. However, I argue that it is the *interplay* between actors and situations, rather than their additive effect, that gives rise to uncertainty. Just as a crisis only becomes such because of how it is perceived from a given (ideational) point of view (Blyth, 2002, p. 9; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012, p. 491), a situation can only be seen as complex from a given interpretative framework of reality. Uncertainty is caused by the mismatch between the expectations based on such a framework and a real situation. Therefore, we can speak of an interplay between personal and situational factors. I define the resulting feeling of not knowing how to make sense of the world as uncertainty.

The constructivist school in international relations defines uncertainty as “a lack of meaning” (Rathbun, 2007, p. 551), while Van den Bos (2009) speaks of “a subjective

sense of doubt or instability in self-views, worldviews, or the interrelation between the two” (p. 198). Both definitions are in line with the definition proposed here. My definition however has two additional advantages. First, by defining uncertainty as a result of a violation of expectations, I specify the causal mechanism behind the concept. This is very similar to the mechanism of relative deprivation, proposed by Gurr (1970/1971) to explain “why men rebel”. While Gurr’s work has been widely criticized for suffering from the ecological fallacy (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015, p. 4), his definition of relative deprivation as a result of a discrepancy between expectations (of wealth) and reality (p. 24) is a relevant analogy for the process leading to uncertainty. A second advantage of my definition is its starting point. Considering uncertainty as the violation of a more fundamental need to understand the world explains why this is such a negative state, which people wish to solve.

Institutional uncertainty

Implicit in the definition of uncertainty as the result of a violation of frameworks is the solution: adopting an alternative interpretative framework of reality. In other words, the violation of the need to understand creates a demand for new ideas to make sense of the state of the world. This mirrors the well-established theory of institutional change following uncertainty. Much like cognitive frameworks at the individual level, central to the stability of institutions and policies is the framework on which they are built:

Policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a *Gestalt*, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. I am going to call this interpretive framework a policy paradigm (Hall, 1993, p. 279).

As we will see in what follows, such policy paradigms can of course be subject to change. However, institutions are usually not. Weyland (2008) explains this institutional stasis from a cognitive perspective, using prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). A key finding in experiments based on prospect theory is that “losses loom larger than gains” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992, p. 298). As a consequence, agents who interpret a situation in terms of losses are typically more risk-seeking, whereas the opposite is true for agents who interpret a situation in terms of gains (Weyland, 2008, p. 286-7). Hence, whether a situation is perceived in terms of gains or losses can profoundly alter people’s behavior and this is true for the institutional as much as for the individual level. Since institutional change can be highly risky (ibid.), institutions are generally not willing to change their

policy paradigms and, hence, they are characterized by stasis. This tendency is further strengthened by “[t]he distributional consequences of many institutional changes” (ibid., p. 288), which lead certain sectors to prefer the status quo and oppose change.

The fact that institutions are generally resistant to change, however, does not mean that nothing ever changes. Rather, within policy paradigms, small adjustments to solve problems are continuously made. This kind of incremental change is called first and second order change:

First and second order change can be seen as cases of “normal policymaking,” namely of a process that adjusts policy without challenging the overall terms of a given policy paradigm (...) The process of first order change is likely to display the features of incrementalism, satisficing, and routinized decision making that we normally associate with the policy process. Second order change and the development of new policy instruments may move one step beyond in the direction of strategic action (Hall, 1993, p. 279-80).

While first and second order change can serve to adjust paradigms to situations, risk aversion can prevent policy makers from making more drastic changes for a long time, even when the situation may call for it (Weyland, 2008, p. 287-9).

This can only last so long. As Hall (1993) puts it:

Like scientific paradigms, a policy paradigm can be threatened by the appearance of anomalies, namely by developments that are not fully comprehensible, even as puzzles, within the terms of the paradigm. As these accumulate, ad hoc attempts are generally made to stretch the terms of the paradigm to cover them, but this gradually undermines the intellectual coherence and precision of the original paradigm (p. 280).

In other words, if situations emerge that cannot be explained in terms of the current framework, actors will have difficulty making sense of the world through that framework and as a result it will lose its validity. A state of affairs in which paradigms are undermined can be defined as a crisis – a situation that challenges the “cognitive basis of existing institutions” (Culpepper, 2008, p. 5).

As with a discrepancy between frameworks and reality on an individual level, situations in which policy paradigms are challenged are bound to cause uncertainty. Indeed, it is deep feelings of uncertainty that typically characterize crises (Culpepper, 2008, p. 3; Blyth, 2002, p. 9). In such situations, the time is ripe for third order change; “radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse associated with a “paradigm shift”” (Hall, 1993, p. 279). Institutional change usually proceeds through three stages. The first stage is acknowledgment of a crisis, after which the second stage – a period of institutional experimentation (which is still characterized by uncertainty) – follows. Finally, in the

third stage, new frameworks are accepted and “actors go back to ‘taking for granted’ the game they are playing” (Culpepper, 2008, p. 5). While ideas serve to disqualify existing institutions and to define a crisis, they are also instrumental in solving crises and restoring certainty (ibid., p. 8). In situations of institutional uncertainty, ideas can guide the reinterpretation of the situation at hand and thereby they serve as “institutional blueprints” (Blyth, 2002, p. 40). As such, besides serving as frameworks, they also provide directions for future action by helping to define expectations. It follows that third order change can only take place when ideas (i.e. solutions) are available (Weyland, 2008, p. 296; Blyth, 2012, p. 208).

While Weyland (2008) sticks with the cognitive approach and describes selection of ideas as a process that is guided by heuristics (pp. 291-3), other authors focus on the appeal of ideas in terms of correspondence to “the most salient features of an old dilemma” and “crossover appeal to both negotiating partners” (Culpepper, 2008, p. 7), as well as to questions of authority (Hall, 1993, p. 280; Blyth, 2012, p. 210). Importantly, the winning idea is not necessarily the “true idea” (Culpepper, 2008, p. 3). Rather, “whether an economic idea is deemed to be “true” or not depends on how widely it is held” (Blyth, 2002, p. 33). As Hall (1993) puts it, “the process whereby one policy paradigm comes to replace another is likely to be more sociological than scientific” (p. 280), and, as a consequence, the facts are of lesser importance than authority (Blyth, 2012, pp. 210-1). In short, truth itself is socially constructed (Blyth, 2012, pp. 202-3) and as long as a framework of ideas can serve to explain the factual world and define possible courses of action, it can reduce uncertainty and reinstate institutional stability.

2.2.2 Cognitive effects of uncertainty

Comparing these theories of institutional uncertainty to the above outlined mechanism behind subjective uncertainty reveals clear similarities between the processes leading to uncertainty at different levels. Extending this comparison to include also the solution of uncertainty suggests that the processes of restoring certainty that are proposed by the institutional literature – that is, adopting new frameworks – may apply to subjective uncertainty as well. In other words, subjective uncertainty could be resolved by adopting alternative worldviews. Drawing a parallel between uncertainty and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957/1975) leads to a similar solution. According to Festinger, when there is no consistency between two or more cognitions, that is “any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one’s behavior” (p. 3), people will experience *cognitive dissonance*. For example, a person who continues to smoke while knowing it is harmful for her health holds conflicting cognitions. Her knowledge about her behavior and her knowledge about smoking are inconsistent and she is likely to experience cognitive dissonance. Like uncertainty, cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant psychological

state and therefore people will actively seek to reduce it. A person experiencing cognitive dissonance can reduce this by either changing “his “knowledge” about his behavior by changing his actions” (p. 6) or by changing his beliefs. Indeed, it has been shown that accepting certain beliefs can serve to reduce dissonance, for example when prejudiced individuals are asked to voice counter-attitudinal statements and as a result change their attitudes (Heitland & Bohner, 2010), or, quite differently, when disadvantaged people accept social inequality (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).

Similarly, a person who sees her knowledge about the state of the world conflicting with her beliefs about that world (that is, someone who experiences a violation of expectations) is expected to experience uncertainty. As a result, either her cognitions about the factual state of the world or her beliefs about the world will have to change. Since beliefs are often more easily changed than facts, a framework shift is likely to result.⁴ In other words, violations of expectations should motivate attitude change.

At the cognitive level, uncertainty should prompt an increase in systematic processing. This is because as useful as heuristics may be to reduce cognitive complexity they are not likely to be very relevant when the state of the world does not match subjective expectations. Therefore, people experiencing subjective uncertainty should engage in systematic processing to understand the state of the world and define consequent courses of action. This line of reasoning is supported by a wide range of studies on emotions and cognitive processing. This research generally shows that uncertainty activates systematic processing (Tiedens & Linton, 2001; Tormala, Rucker, & Seger, 2008; Tobin, Capuozzo, & Raymundo, 2012; Wan & Rucker, 2013), while certainty-related emotions such as anger are associated with more heuristic processing (Angie, Connelly, Waples, & Kligyte, 2011, p. 1395). In the words of Kahneman (2011/2012, p. 24), violations of the worldview that System 1 adheres to activate System 2, which is characterized by systematic information processing.

Cantril (1941) argues that “[a] person is susceptible to suggestion when (...) he has no adequate mental context for the interpretation of a given stimulus or event” (p. 64). Summing up the cognitive effects of uncertainty, we can indeed arrive at that conclusion. If uncertainty motivates people to actively engage in uncertainty reduction by accepting

⁴While the concepts of cognitive dissonance and uncertainty are clearly very closely related, and we can certainly speak of overlap to some degree, it is important to note that they are not the same. Gurr (1970/1971) reaches a similar conclusion when discussing relative deprivation and cognitive dissonance. While cognitive dissonance comprises all violations of consistency, relative deprivation only focuses on distributions of goods. Furthermore, “only some perceptions of deprivation entail dissonance, in its original sense of contradiction among cognitive elements” (p. 41). Similarly, uncertainty only captures a partial aspect of cognitive dissonance. People can experience inconsistencies between cognitions on a daily basis (Festinger, 1957/1975, p. 5), but this does not mean every such instance will lead to uncertainty and subsequent framework shifts. Cognitive dissonance may lead the smoker mentioned above to quit, but it is unlikely that there has been a violation of the need to understand in this case. Whereas a change of behavior can solve more general instances of cognitive dissonance, violations of expectations inevitably call for an update of cognitive frameworks.

alternative frameworks, this implies that people who are experiencing uncertainty should be more susceptible to ideas.

It is this latter point that connects uncertainty to attitudes toward immigrants. As discussed above, different cognitive interpretations of the world can explain different attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, both generally and in the context of attitudes toward immigrants. If people experiencing subjective uncertainty are likely to accept anti-immigrant ideas – and as we will see below, this seems to be the case – this implies that we can ultimately explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants from variation in subjective uncertainty. Based on this discussion, we can further specify the framing hypothesis formulated above, adding that:

framing effects should be stronger in situations with high subjective uncertainty.

2.2.3 Uncertainty as a driver of individual-level attitude change

The fact that people need alternative frameworks in order to reduce uncertainty does not mean that any new idea will do. Rather than providing a “true” representation of the world, ideas are selected to satisfy a specific need. In the case of uncertainty this means that an idea that can satisfy the human *need to understand* should be an attractive solution.

An illustration of this “matching hypothesis” is provided by Tobin et al. (2012). In a study on the impact of causal arguments on persuasion, the authors primed participants with high or low causal uncertainty (with sentences such as “I found it unclear”) and high or low causal importance (with sentences such as “I must understand why”) (p. 273). In a series of causal and non-causal judgment tasks, the authors found that participants who had been primed with both high causal uncertainty and high causal importance were more sensitive to strong causal arguments than to strong non-causal arguments, arguably because the causal arguments matched their cognitive need for causal understanding (p. 280). Interestingly, and unexpectedly, participants who had been primed with high causal uncertainty but low causal importance were more persuaded by strong *non-causal* arguments. The authors interpret this as an indication that “when uncertain perceivers devalue causal understanding, they turn to other types of information to resolve their uncertainty” (p. 281). In other words, a person’s cognitive needs define which messages are most likely to be accepted. This matching effect has been replicated for messages that were framed to match feelings of confidence (ibid.), regulatory focus (Aaker & Lee, 2001), and concrete and abstract thinking (Wan & Rucker, 2013).

The latter study is especially relevant to understand what type of idea is attractive to people experiencing uncertainty. More specifically, research suggests that uncertainty leads people to think at a concrete level, while feeling confident is related to thinking at an abstract level (Wan & Rucker, 2013, p. 978). According to the matching hypothesis,

concrete messages should thus be more appealing to people experiencing uncertainty. This hypothesis was confirmed by Wan and Rucker (2013). In a series of experiments, the authors manipulated uncertainty by priming participants either with slogans related to confidence or by having them recall experiences in which they felt uncertain. Next, participants were asked to carry out a task related to construal levels (i.e. messages that were presented in either abstract or concrete terms). For example, subjects were asked to make a choice between an interesting (related to abstract thinking) or feasible (related to concrete thinking) lecture (p. 982). The authors found that participants who had been primed with uncertainty showed increased systematic processing, but only for the messages that matched their construal level. In sum, since uncertainty is related to concrete thinking, concrete ideas should be especially attractive instruments to reduce subjective uncertainty.

An especially relevant process for uncertainty reduction is that of social identification (Hogg, 2000). This is because social groups act as “shared reality providers” (Kruglanski et al., 2006, p. 91). By providing interpretative frameworks, social identification helps to make sense of situations and reduce uncertainty. Indeed, the sociological literature provides a wide range of examples of how behavior and decision making under uncertainty are driven by social networks (for a theoretical account integrating social psychological and sociological insights see Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011). Following a mechanism dubbed “rational imitation” (Hedström, 1998), people who do not know what to do tend to follow behavioral cues from others in their social networks – this applies to virtually all types of behavior, including expert decisions such as electoral behavior (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995) and issue voting in the European Parliament (Ringe, 2010), as well as organizational behavior (Hedström, 1998) and more trivial individual behaviors such as driving or deciding where to eat (ibid.).

Besides suggesting possible courses of action, social identification also serves to simplify the social world (as discussed on page 33), thereby further reducing uncertainty. For these reasons, social identification processes are especially relevant for uncertainty reduction (Hogg, 2000). It follows that we should observe stronger social identification among people experiencing subjective uncertainty (Hogg, 2006, p. 121). This relates to attitudes toward immigrants in two ways. First, we can expect that higher levels of social identification exacerbate the potential negative consequences of social identity processes described on page 29: strong identification should prompt in-group favoritism and inter-group conflict. Moreover, strong social identification is related to high levels of compliance, and in groups with anti-immigrant social norms this should lead to more negative attitudes toward immigrants among the group members. Second, in terms of the matching hypothesis, the increased importance of social identities implies that identity-based ideas should be especially attractive to people experiencing uncertainty. Since ideas related to immigration are almost inherently identity-based, this implies that these should be attractive to people

experiencing subjective uncertainty.

The effects of uncertainty summarized

In short, uncertainty is defined as the result of a violation of expectations. Together, the need to understand and the need to belong help to explain the effects of uncertainty on attitudes toward immigrants. More precisely, violations of the need to understand call for alternative interpretative frameworks. These do not necessarily need to be true, as long as they satisfy the cognitive needs that uncertainty generates. These are, of course, a need to understand, but also a need for concrete ideas. Group identification processes can reduce uncertainty by simplifying the social world and providing frameworks of reality that allow the formulation of expectations. In other words, processes related to the need to belong can be instrumental in satisfying the need to understand. At the same time, the intensification of social identification processes should increase the demand for group-related ideas at the cognitive level. In a manner similar to the causal importance study cited above (Tobin et al., 2012, as discussed on page 40), ideas that relate to social identity should be more attractive to people who are more engaged in social identification processes. This implies that we can summarize the type of ideas that are attractive to people experiencing uncertainty as concrete, group-based explanations of reality. As we will see now, it seems that populist radical right parties are especially relevant providers of such ideas.

2.2.4 Uncertainty and the populist radical right

As argued above, people experiencing uncertainty should be more susceptible to concrete ideas that emphasize group identification. Since uncertainty is solved by accepting a framework that matches these needs, no attitude change takes place until this demand is met by a supply of precisely these ideas. It seems relevant to note that right-wing populist parties typically provide ideas that meet both requirements for attractive ideas to resolve uncertainty. It should be clear how the populist radical right's anti-immigrant ideas meet the cognitive demand for personal relevance of group categorization; at the same time, the populist right is characterized by its appeal to "simple and ready-made solutions" (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 19), thereby meeting the demand for concrete ideas. These two factors combined can explain why the populist right should be especially successful in mobilizing political potential of people experiencing subjective uncertainty.

Along with the commonalities in the nature of their ideas, this relationship between conservatism and a concrete style is observed in the political rhetoric of the populist radical right as well. Based on the work of Jost, Glaser, et al. (2003), which shows that conservatives have a higher need for structure, Cichoka, Bileqicz, Jost, Marrouch, and Witkowska (2016) hypothesize that this implies that conservatives should have a stronger

preference for nouns, as these “convey greater permanence, stability of subjects and objects, as well as categorical perceptions of social actors and the world at large” (p. 4). Empirical evidence from Poland and Lebanon confirmed this stronger preference for nouns among political conservatives, and the Polish study showed that this relationship depended on subjects’ need for structure. In a complementary analysis of US presidential speeches, the authors found that speeches of Republican presidents contained more nouns and a higher level of simplicity. Similarly, the language of the Dutch populist radical right politician Geert Wilders is found to be particularly concrete (Van Leeuwen, 2009, 2015).

In short, it seems that the discourse of the populist radical right matches the psychological needs of people experiencing uncertainty, both on the linguistic and on the content level. This explains why conservative ideas should be especially attractive to people experiencing uncertainty. This observation implies that we could reinterpret the effects of uncertainty outlined above as a political mobilization argument. Uncertainty leads to a preference for simple ideas that appeal to in-group-out-group distinctions, and political entrepreneurs can use this to their advantage. If they do so successfully, this implies that we should ultimately be able to explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants (or at least variation in support for the populist radical right) from variation in uncertainty. This leads to the formulation of a final hypothesis:

we can observe covariation between uncertainty and attitudes toward immigrants.

2.3 Conclusion

How can a sociocognitive approach help us to understand variation in attitudes toward immigrants? This chapter has sought to give a first answer to that question by demonstrating how social identification processes and cognitive frameworks shape behavior and attitudes toward out-group members. While this account by no means invalidates established theories such as contact theory (Allport, 1954/1958) and ethnic competition theories (e.g. Savelkoul et al., 2011), I believe that the sociocognitive approach yields a number of advantages.

First, in contrast to contact theory, which focuses on contact between individuals of different backgrounds, a sociocognitive approach defines attitudes toward immigrants in terms of group-based processes. As such, it acknowledges the importance of social categorization as a source of both in-group favoritism and normative influence. The discussion on the need to understand in this chapter explains why these processes should be particularly important in times of uncertainty. More importantly, as Reynolds et al. (2012) argue, a social identity approach to inter-group dynamics allows explanation of attitude change. This is an important advantage compared to personality-based accounts of attitudes toward immigrants.

The second main advantage of the sociocognitive approach is that it moves beyond interest-based explanations of attitudes toward immigrants. Certainly, people who experience labor competition by immigrants have reason to be critical of immigration, but, as discussed in Chapter 1, this explanation is not sufficient to account for the observed variation in attitudes toward immigrants. Instead, a focus on social identification and normative influence processes allows us to explain anti-immigrant sentiment also among people who are not directly exposed to immigrants. Moreover, interpreting attitude change in times of uncertainty as a political mobilization process introduces politics and political entrepreneurs, as well as media framing, as important sources of information. Especially in the context of the current rise of the populist radical right across Europe, this cognitive perspective on political mobilization can form a valuable addition to existing theories on right-wing support.

In my discussion of the importance of the need to belong and the need to understand for attitudes toward immigrants, I formulated the following hypotheses:

- We should find stronger anti-immigrant attitudes among people who identify more strongly with their social group (Hypothesis 1a).
- The effect of social identification processes on attitudes toward immigrants depends on the shared set of social norms within the group (Hypothesis 1b).
- Variation in attitudes toward immigrants is explained by exposure to different (media) frames (Hypothesis 2a).
- Framing effects should be stronger in situations with high subjective uncertainty (Hypothesis 2b).
- We can observe covariation between uncertainty and attitudes toward immigrants (Hypothesis 3).

Throughout the dissertation I test these hypotheses as follows. Chapter 3 employs a series of natural experiments to test the hypothesis that uncertainty and attitudes covary (Hypothesis 3). Taking advantage of the co-occurrence of shocking events and data collection for the European Social Survey, the chapter sets out to track changes in attitudes toward immigrants following violations of expectations. My results indicate that we cannot speak of an unequivocally negative effect of shocking events on attitudes toward immigrants. To better understand the relationship between shocking events and attitudes toward immigrants, I consider how media framing plays into this, thereby providing tests for the hypothesis that variation in attitudes toward immigrants can be explained by exposure to different frames (Hypothesis 2a); as well as for the hypothesis that framing effects should be stronger in situations that are characterized by uncertainty (Hypothesis 2b).

While Chapter 3 is mainly informed by the need to understand, Chapter 4 focuses on the social mechanisms involved in the sociocognitive approach – thereby speaking to the need to belong. Using support for the Dutch anti-immigration Party for Freedom as a proxy for attitudes toward immigrants, I analyze voting behavior in a small town in terms of social cohesion and normative influence processes, thereby providing tests for the hypotheses that stronger social identification is related to more negative attitudes toward immigrants (Hypothesis 1a), and that this relationship is moderated by social norms (Hypothesis 1b).

A sociocognitive explanation of attitudes toward immigrants assumes that the processes involved in inter-group dynamics are inherently human. Importantly, this is not meant to imply that inter-group hostility is inevitable. For instance, the processes involved in social identification suggest that redefining the social world into different categories could reduce prejudices. Indeed, Marilyn Brewer (e.g. Brewer, 2001, 1999) proposes a number of ways in which this could work. As we will see in what follows (Chapter 3), analyses of media framing can lead to the same optimistic conclusion: anti-immigrant sentiment is not the default outcome. While we should of course applaud these results, it should be noted that this dissertation does not aim to explain how to improve attitudes toward immigrants. Rather, it is motivated by a *need to understand* what drives variation. In what follows, I attempt to do so from a sociocognitive perspective.

Chapter 3

“Do we know how to respond to this?”

Framing the murder of Theo van Gogh

As I explained in the Preface, the uncertainty hypothesis was the hypothesis I started out this doctoral research project with. I believed that uncertainty could be the underlying factor driving variation in attitudes toward immigrants, and the present chapter sets out to test that hypothesis. As I will explain, uncertainty is a complicated concept to measure, and therefore I use naturally occurring shocking events as instances where we should expect higher levels of uncertainty. In the logic of the uncertainty hypothesis, such events should lead to shifts in attitudes toward immigrants. As the analysis reveals, it seems that we cannot speak of an unambiguous negative effect of shocking events on attitudes toward immigrants. The second part of the chapter aims to further specify this relationship, and tests the framing hypothesis. My results indicate that media framing can be an important moderating factor in the relationship between shocking events and public opinion.

Why would people in areas with virtually no immigrants care about immigration, and hold attitudes that lead them to vote for anti-immigrant parties? It seems unlikely that these attitudes are driven by competition-based concerns (see Chapter 1). Could there be another underlying factor making these people more susceptible to anti-immigrant sentiment? As I argued in the previous chapter, this factor could be uncertainty.

Defining uncertainty as a situation that follows from the violation of frameworks implies that we may observe variation in uncertainty for two different reasons. First, it could be the case that some people are more exposed to *situations* that provoke uncertainty, such as economic depression (in a similar vein, Gurr (1970/1971, pp. 52-3) suggests that economic downturn in growing economies should give rise to relative deprivation). In this case,

variation in exposure to uncertainty-provoking situations could explain why some people experience more uncertainty than others. Second, it could be that there is no variation in exposure to uncertainty-provoking situations, but that there is variation in the effects that they have on people because of the *cognitive frameworks* that they hold. We may expect that more rigid frameworks are more often challenged by real-world events, thereby provoking uncertainty. In this case, people are expected to react in different ways to identical situations, depending on their worldview and related expectations about the world. If there is a relationship between uncertainty and attitudes toward immigrants, we should find similar patterns of variation for both. As discussed in Chapter 1, people with lower socioeconomic status and lower education levels typically display more negative attitudes toward immigrants. This implies that we should observe higher levels of (susceptibility to) uncertainty among those groups.

A closer look at susceptibility to situations that provoke uncertainty suggests that cross-class differences can be explained mainly by redefining the concept of class in terms of the distribution of “bads”, as suggested by Beck (2013, p. 67). Although the relationship between class and risk is still debated (see, for example, the exchange between Beck and Curran: Beck, 1999; Curran, 2013a; Beck, 2013; Curran, 2013b), it is reasonable to assume that:

in so far as the distribution of these risks tends to be highly conditioned by wealth differentials, the income and wealth differentials associated with class relations will in themselves be a primary means by which the relatively less wealthy are subject to the distribution of *bads* and risks (Curran, 2013a, p. 52; emphasis in original).

In other words, although the distribution of risks is “universal” (ibid., p. 46), the more advantaged are better able to shield themselves from exposure to risk and its consequences, resulting in inequality in both “goods” and “bads”. This inequality in “goods” and “bads” implies an inequality in proneness to subjective uncertainty, and thereby to its effects for susceptibility to anti-immigrant ideas.

While welfare state institutions can serve to reduce feelings of uncertainty (Martín Artiles & Molina, 2011, p. 455) among those in weaker social positions, the ongoing retrenchment of the welfare state and the resulting shift of risks from the state to individual citizens (Hacker, 2006) undermines the power of such uncertainty-reducing institutions. Judging by who depends most on welfare state institutions, the people who are most affected by this risk shift should be those with lower socioeconomic status. Interestingly, it seems that especially the middle class is increasingly affected by insecurity (ibid., p. 6). Hence, there seems to be an interaction between time (due to incremental adjustments of welfare state policies) and social class. In other words, if anti-immigrant sentiment in society increases in parallel with uncertainty, we should observe attitude

change especially among the middle class and not the working class. Longitudinal analyses of public opinion data could help to establish whether there is a parallel class-based pattern of changes in attitudes toward immigrants.

Alternatively, it could be the case that identical situations give rise to uncertainty in some people but not others. When defining uncertainty as the result of a violation of expectations, this implies that different cognitive frameworks should cause this variation. To this purpose, it is helpful to think again of cognitive frameworks as simplifications of reality. Cognitive frameworks will fit different external situations more easily, the more flexible they are. When frameworks are more rigid or simple, the odds of contrasting with the external world, and therefore the proneness to uncertainty, will be higher. The question, then, is whether we can assume that people with lower socioeconomic status and lower levels of education hold frameworks that are more likely to be violated. There is some evidence that supports this notion. Voss, Kehrberg, and Butz (2013, p. 101) suggest that people with lower “cognitive sophistication” hold more rigid frameworks and heuristics about the world, implying an increased proneness to uncertainty. This is in line with the robust negative correlation between education level and right-wing ideologies (Hodson & Busseri, 2012, p. 188). Similarly, it has been found that people who hold right-wing ideas display higher levels of cognitive rigidity (Rokeach, 1948; Sidanius, 1985).

The link between violations of expectations and anti-immigrant sentiment is observed in the relative deprivation literature as well. Modern definitions of relative deprivation are formulated as “a judgment that one or one’s in-group is disadvantaged compared to a relevant referent, and that this judgment invokes feelings of anger, resentment, and entitlement” (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015, p. 2), thereby relating more clearly to inter-group processes. Indeed, it has been shown that relative deprivation is related to xenophobia (Anhut & Heitmeyer, 2000, p. 33), prejudice (Guimond & Dambrun, 2002), discrimination in the form of linguistic abstraction and unfair allocation of resources (Moscatelli, Albarello, Prati, & Rubini, 2014), and worries about immigration (Poutvaara & Steinhardt, 2015). Using a large-scale survey panel in Germany, the Poutvaara and Steinhardt (2015) study even reveals a correlation between changes in perceived relative deprivation and changes in attitudes toward immigrants, thereby suggesting a causal relationship.

It seems that there is reason to assume that people with a lower socioeconomic status and a lower education are more prone to uncertainty due to both psychological (rigid frameworks) and structural (distribution of “bads”) factors. In addition, there is some evidence for an interaction between time- and class-based factors in the case of welfare retrenchment.

While this crude comparison of variation in attitudes toward immigrants and (susceptibility to) uncertainty is in line with an uncertainty-based explanation of attitudes, we should keep in mind that these are merely observational data, and therefore they are not very well-suited to explain causality. Establishing a causal relationship is further

complicated by measurement issues introduced by the definition of uncertainty as a violation of expectations. More specifically, reducing uncertainty to such a highly subjective experience implies that it is a complicated enterprise to predict who will experience uncertainty in which situations without prior knowledge of people's expectations. Secondly, the theory assumes that certainty is restored after new ideas have been accepted, introducing timing as a crucial factor for the measurement of uncertainty.

While these issues complicate the measurement of individually experienced uncertainty, there are certainly situations which are more bound to provoke uncertainty than others, and these can help to establish an understanding of the effects of uncertainty on immigration attitudes. In the present chapter, I focus on naturally occurring shocking events. To the extent that these events violate expectations—which we may assume is what makes them shocking in the first place—we should observe shifts in attitudes toward immigrants. More precisely, if the uncertainty hypothesis is true, we should observe more negative attitudes toward immigrants after shocking events.

The outline of the chapter is as follows. After discussing relevant literature on the relationship between shocking events and public opinion, I present three natural experiments to test the uncertainty hypothesis. The results imply that we cannot speak of an unambiguous negative relationship between shocking events and attitudes toward immigrants, a finding that seems to speak against the uncertainty hypothesis formulated in Chapter 2. To better understand this relationship, the second part of the chapter focuses on the media framing of one of the shocking events, the murder of Theo van Gogh. Based on a qualitative text analysis, I argue that media framing can be an important moderating factor in the relationship between events and resulting attitudes. Directions for future research are discussed.

3.1 Events and public opinion

There is a broad literature documenting the effects of events on public opinion, focusing on events ranging from murders (e.g. Gijsberts, 2005; Finseraas, Jacobsson, & Kotsadam, 2011; Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2007) to terrorist attacks (e.g. Legewie, 2013; Noelle-Neumann, 2002; Jakobsson & Blom, 2014; Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede, 2006), and nuclear disasters (e.g. Van der Brug, 2001).

In general, it is found that shocking events can affect attitudes profoundly, although the extent to which these effects last over time is not clear (Van der Brug, 2001, p. 279). Even if attitudes are not changed permanently, however, the timing of shocking events can make attitudes highly relevant and salient. This can be the case where, for example, shocks occur during election periods, as was true for the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster (Van der Brug, 2001) and the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid (Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede, 2006). While timing certainly matters, the location in which events

take place seems of less importance. Analyses of the Chernobyl case, as well as of the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York (Noelle-Neumann, 2002) and the 2002 attacks in Bali (Legewie, 2013) show that the effects of events can travel to impact attitudes even in remote countries. Furthermore, the effects of events that are linked to one group can carry over to other groups as well. Echebarria-Echabe and Fernández-Guede (2006, p. 263) found, for example, that the terrorist attacks in Madrid, which were carried out by Muslim extremists, not only affected attitudes toward Muslims but also toward Jews. In short, shocking events can affect attitudes in different ways. The type of attitudes that are affected and the direction of the effect depend on the nature of the event in question (Jakobsson & Blom, 2014, p. 2).

For the study of attitudes toward immigrants, we could think of two main reasons why events matter. The main hypothesis guiding this chapter is the uncertainty hypothesis, predicting increased openness to anti-immigrant ideas following events that violate expectations. Secondly, as Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2007) observe for the case of terrorist attacks, such events increase perceptions of threat, which in turn have been linked with higher levels of prejudice and anti-immigrant sentiment (p. 355; see also Savelkoul et al., 2011). Both mechanisms imply that:

attitudes toward immigrants should be more negative following shocking events.

As we will see in what follows, this hypothesis is not supported by my results.

3.2 Case selection

Given their direct relevance for immigration attitudes, I focus on three instances of Muslim extremist attacks. Specifically, I will analyze how the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh, the 2010 Stockholm bombings, and the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks affected attitudes toward immigrants. While the three events differ in their level of “success” – from the terrorists’ point of view – we may assume that each case violated expectations (e.g. of living in a safe place), and thereby caused uncertainty. I discuss these cases in more detail below.

Theo van Gogh

While widely praised as a director of movies and TV series, in the Netherlands Theo van Gogh was known especially for his provocative and offensive rhetoric. In his columns he consistently referred to Muslims as “goat fuckers” and to their prophet as a child rapist. Van Gogh’s insults were not aimed exclusively at Muslims, however. In the eighties, he infamously wrote that: “It smells like caramel; today they are burning the diabetic Jews”¹ (Koelewijn, 2004), and his harsh polemics with several individuals were widely known.

¹Unless stated otherwise, all translations in this dissertation are mine.

A Jewish organization sued Van Gogh in 1991 for an article which contained the quote about diabetics, along with other comments that were offensive to Jewish people. Van Gogh was found guilty and had to pay a fine, after which he republished the article in question. According to his mother, Van Gogh was not an anti-Semite but simply “extreme” (ibid.). In 2004, Van Gogh joined forces with the apostate Muslim and Liberal Party MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali to address the position of women in Islam. The cooperation resulted in a short movie, *Submission*, containing images of naked women covered by transparent veils, with Koran verses in calligraphy on their bodies. When the movie was first broadcast in national television in august 2004, it came as a shock for many members of the Dutch Muslim community, and resulted in death threats against Hirsi Ali.

On the morning of Tuesday 2 November 2004, Van Gogh was riding his bicycle in Amsterdam on his way to work as he was shot by Mohammed Bouyeri, an Amsterdam-born Muslim of Moroccan descent. A promising and well-liked student in his younger years, Bouyeri is said to have radicalized after his mother’s death. On his victim’s body, he left a letter written in a style typical of extremist groups, addressed to Hirsi Ali and containing further threats to other politicians. Bouyeri also carried a farewell letter in rhyme on his body, a sign that he possibly expected to be killed by the police forces after the murder. The event was followed by overwhelming public reactions, including demonstrations and sometimes violent behavior, such as arson attacks on mosques and Islamic schools (Eyerman, 2008, p. 1).

It was generally expected that the murder of Theo van Gogh and the following events would have a negative effect on attitudes toward immigrants in the Netherlands (Gijsberts, 2005, p. 202). However, a number of studies focusing on this question did not reach this conclusion. For instance, in a public opinion survey for the yearly national report on immigration, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) finds that people who were interviewed before and after the murder displayed similar preferences on migration policy and ethnic distance, attitudes toward Muslims, and opinions on the number of foreigners in the Netherlands (Gijsberts, 2005, Appendix Table B11.5). Similarly, in a cross-European analysis of the effects of the murder based on European Social Survey (ESS) data, Finseraas et al. (2011) are surprised to report no changes in immigration policy preferences in the Netherlands. In addition, a two-wave panel survey on “European integration and the role of the media and immigration attitudes” (Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2007, p. 358) run at the University of Amsterdam at the time of the murder did not reveal significant differences in general attitudes toward immigrants between those who participated before and after the murder either.

Stockholm bombings

On 11 December, 2010, Stockholm was the scene of a Muslim extremist terror attack. At a busy point in the city center, a car exploded and another bomb went off nearby (Borger &

Freden, 2010; Nyberg, 2010; Stockholm shopping blasts, 2010). Although the attack could potentially have been “catastrophic” (Nyberg, 2010), only two persons were lightly injured and only one person (the terrorist himself) was killed. It was said that “Sweden had just experienced its first suicide bombing - and had got lucky” (Borger & Freden, 2010).

Although the attack had failed, it was immediately and strongly condemned by domestic as well as international politicians. The Swedish Prime Minister declared that “Saturday’s events in central Stockholm lead many people to ask whether Sweden has become less safe. What occurred is unwanted and unacceptable. We must safeguard the open society where people can live together side by side” (Prime Minister’s Office, 2010), and similar statements followed from other countries (Savage, 2010).

Charlie Hebdo

On 7 January 2015, two men armed with kalashnikovs entered the Paris office of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, where they killed nine journalists, a maintenance worker, and two police officers (Topping, 2015). The killers were radical Muslims who felt offended by the magazine’s way of portraying Muslims and their prophet, and in this light, the event was widely interpreted as an attack on the freedom of speech (Dawes, 2015). French media reacted emotionally, and understandably so; this was, after all, an attack on fellow journalists. The reactions of the public, however, were overwhelming. Starting on the same night of the attacks, crowds gathered in the squares of France to show their solidarity; a phenomenon that culminated in a “Republican March” on 11 January attended by over one million people including world leaders (Willsher, Penketh, & Topping, 2015). Online reactions were equally impressive, with the Twitter hashtag #JeSuisCharlie [I am Charlie] reaching over 5 million tweets by 9 January (Giglietto & Lee, 2015, p. 33). Despite these massive reactions to the event, PEW Research Center (2015) notes, with a tone of surprise, that “there is no evidence that the atrocity sparked new public antipathy toward Muslims” (2015, p. 21).

3.3 Methods

Besides the fact that they are instances of Muslim terrorism, the three events described above have in common that they took place during the data collection for several waves of the European Social Survey (ESS). The methodological advantage of this co-occurrence is that it is possible to perceive of the resulting situation as a natural experiment, in which the people who were interviewed before the murder are the control group, and the people who were interviewed afterwards are the treatment group. Comparing mean outcomes of the two groups can tell us something about the impact of the event; this is especially true when comparing observations close to the cut-off point. In other words, if the uncertainty

hypothesis is correct, we should observe more negative attitudes toward immigrants after the three events.

While random assignment to treatments is one of the key characteristics of the experimental method, this is true for natural experiments only to some extent. Of course, shocking events are not planned and in that sense allocation to treatments is randomly determined by an external factor. However, population surveys typically suffer from a reachability bias, which leads to easier to reach respondents (e.g. retired and unemployed people) being interviewed earlier in the data collection process, whereas harder to reach respondents are typically interviewed towards the end of the data collection (Legewie, 2013, p. 1208). In other words, while randomization typically helps to minimize demographic differences between treatment groups in controlled laboratory experiments, this is usually not the case for natural experiments. Such demographic differences between treatment groups can introduce a bias in the estimation of the treatment effect.

One way to avoid reachability bias is to control for demographic differences between the treatment groups. Another way is to limit the time window for the analysis, thereby reducing the possibility that participants differ greatly on relevant demographics. Moreover, using a restricted time window provides a more accurate estimate of the effect since it limits the possibility that other events have taken place in that period, and that the effect of the event fades out over time. Finding the right time window can be tricky. While focusing on an overly extensive period might not give a good estimate of the effect of the event in question, an excessively limited bandwidth may imply the loss of too many data points to allow for valid statistical analyses. In my analysis, I use a bandwidth of 14 days before and after the events. While natural experiments are sometimes analyzed using a regression continuity approach (e.g. Finseraas et al., 2011; Legewie, 2013), I follow the example of Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2007) and analyze the data using t-tests, while controlling for media exposure.²

²The classical example of regression discontinuity is the effect of honors programs on future career opportunities (Angrist & Pischke, 2009, p. 252). Since honors programs are typically awarded only to successful students, it is hard to tell whether any positive outcomes are due to the program or to the students' pre-existing superior intellectual skills. Regression discontinuity can help to solve this question by comparing students close to the cut-off point (typically using SAT scores). The rationale is that students who score just above and just below the cut-off point are not very different, except for the fact that those with the higher score were admitted to the honors program. In this case, we expect a natural positive relationship between SAT scores and career outcomes, and the program can give rise to a *discontinuity* in this relationship. Instead, in the case of attitudes toward immigrants and shocking events, it seems unlikely that we can expect a natural relationship between time and attitudes, and therefore we cannot speak of the discontinuity of a regression function driven by the event. For this reason, comparing mean attitudes before and after the event seems more appropriate.

3.3.1 Data description

Theo van Gogh

The Dutch data for the second wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) (2012) were collected between 11 September 2004 and 19 February 2005. As a first step, I ordered the observations by date and used 2 November as a cut-off point. To avoid bias due to immigrant background, I removed responses by people that either did not have Dutch citizenship (51 cases) or were not born in the Netherlands (119 cases). In addition, I deleted responses of people who had been interviewed on the day of the murder, as it is unclear whether they had learned about it yet (17 cases). Finally, as mentioned, I limited the sample to 14 days before and after the murder. This way, a group of 282 observations before and 134 observations after the murder remained. Figure A.1 (Appendix) displays the distribution of the number of times participants were approached. The median number of the visit at which the interview took place was 3 for both groups.

Demographics and other relevant details of both groups are reported in Table 3.1. I include statistics for gender, age, education level, main activity (a dummy variable that expresses whether or not respondents are engaged in full-time work or education), political orientation, political interest, the degree of urbanization of the respondent's living environment, whether or not the respondent lives in Amsterdam, and the amount of time the respondent spends per day reading newspapers. The codebooks for these variables are reported in Table A.1. As shown in the table, the participants in the post-murder sample display somewhat higher levels of political interest (expressed in a lower score on the scale). The two samples do not differ otherwise.

Table 3.1: *Demographics for the pre-and post-event group in the 14 days before and after the murder of Theo van Gogh.*

Variable	Pre-murder	Post-murder	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
% Male	44.33	50.75	-1.23	414
Mean age	49.09	47.72	0.75	413
Education level	2.91	3.10	-1.28	414
% Work or education	55.87	62.69	-1.32	413
Political orientation	5.25	5.25	0.02	387
Political interest	2.40	2.21	2.28*	414
Urbanization	3.05	3.21	-1.31	414
% Amsterdam	2.84	2.99	-0.08	414
Newspaper reading	1.58	1.63	-0.35	414

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As for the heightened level of political interest after the murder, it seems that this is an effect of the event. Although differences on relevant demographics could of course be due to selection bias, it seems relevant to note that additional analyses show that the two groups do not differ on more objective measures of political interest, such as party membership and voter turnout (see Figure A.4). Moreover, the median for both groups is the same (2; quite interested). These results suggest that this increase in political interest is driven by the murder, making the more subjective measure inappropriate for the further analysis of this case. After all, we cannot know whether post-murder respondents who indicate high political interest would have given the same reply before the murder, rendering the comparison of groups with different levels of political interest before and after the murder invalid.

Stockholm bombings

To investigate the impact of the terrorist attack in Sweden, I use the fifth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS; 2012). For Sweden, these data were collected between 27 September 2010 and 1 March 2011 (included). I ordered the observations by date and used 11 December as a cut-off point. To avoid bias due to immigrant background, I removed responses by people that either did not have Swedish citizenship (49 cases) or were not born in Sweden (128 cases). There were no interviews collected on the day of the attack. As before, I limited the analysis to 14 days before and after the attacks. This way, a group of 152 respondents before and 60 respondents after the event remained. The small size of the post-attack group is due to the timing close to the holidays. Extending the bandwidth to three weeks does not lead to a larger post-attack group. Since further extending the bandwidth could imply the potential confounding effect of other events, I use the 14-day bandwidth for my analyses. Figure A.2 displays the distribution of the number of times participants were approached. The median number of the visit at which the interview took place was 3 for both groups.

Statistics for both groups on the same demographics as above are reported in Table 3.2. Again, codebooks are reported in Table A.1. As shown in the table, the participants in the post-attack sample are somewhat more likely to be engaged in full-time work or education, and display somewhat higher levels of political interest (expressed in a lower score on the scale). The two samples do not differ otherwise.

Again, while there is a significant difference in political interest before and after the attack, the median value for both groups is the same. Moreover, a χ^2 test does not reveal significant differences on more objective political variables such as voting behavior and party membership. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether there is a pre-existing difference in political interest between the two groups, or whether this was driven by the events.

Table 3.2: *Demographics for the pre-and post-attacks group in the 14 days before and after the Stockholm bombings.*

Variable	Pre-attack	Post-attack	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
% Male	39.47	46.67	-0.96	210
Mean age	43.58	42.9	0.24	210
% Higher educated	76.97	88.33	-1.48	207
% Work or education	73.68	86.67	-2.05 *	210
Political orientation	5.63	5.12	1.44	204
Political interest	2.36	2.07	2.15*	210
Urbanization	2.99	2.73	1.46	210
% Amsterdam	22.37	26.67	26.67	210
Newspaper reading	1.45	1.61	-1.17	210

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Charlie Hebdo

Responses for the 2014 wave of the ESS (2014) were collected in France between 4 November 2014 and 23 February 2015. Again, participants who did not have French citizenship (97) or were not born in France (129) were dropped. In addition, I dropped respondents who were interviewed on the day of the attack (15). Given that the attacks took place towards the end of the data collection period, and right after the Christmas holidays, a 14-day bandwidth yields only 31 responses in the two weeks before the attacks, and 123 in the two weeks after. Due to the small sample sizes of the 14-day bandwidth, especially in the weeks before the attacks, I consider a bandwidth of 21 days before and 14 days after the attacks. This yields 119 and 123 observations, respectively.

Figure A.3 (Appendix) displays the distribution of the number of times participants were approached. The median number of visits was 6 for both groups, but the figure shows that the distributions are rather different. A χ^2 test confirms that this difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 30.77$; $p = .00$). While Table 3.3 did not reveal significant differences between the pre- and post-attack group on relevant demographics, the fact that those interviewed after the attack were approached more often may indicate a lower initial willingness to participate – or simply a lower reachability. In either case, this could imply a qualitative difference between the two groups, possibly leading to differences in attitudes toward immigrants.

Demographics for the two groups are reported in Table 3.3. Since this wave of the ESS (2014) did not include a variable measuring newspaper use, I operationalized media use as time spent watching political news on TV. The used scale is the same as for the newspaper use variable used in the previous cases. Codebooks are again displayed in Table A.1. As the table shows, other than their difference in reachability, the two groups do not differ on any of the demographics.

Table 3.3: *Demographics for the pre-and post-attacks group in the 21 days before and 14 days after the Charlie Hebdo attacks.*

Variable	Pre-attacks	Post-attacks	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
% Male	47.90	47.15	-0.12	240
Mean age	48.80	46.97	0.76	239
Education level	396.71	408.93	-0.48	239
% Work or education	61.34	68.29	-1.13	240
Political orientation	5.13	5.17	-0.15	223
Political interest	2.47	2.33	1.16	240
Urbanization	2.60	2.45	0.88	239
% Paris	11.67	13.82	-0.48	240
TV watching	4.05	3.80	0.89	240

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Dependent variables

Similar to Finseraas et al. (2011), I consider the impact of the murder on preferences for immigration policy. I expand their measure (p. 399) by adding a third variable, thereby creating a scale consisting of the following items:

- To what extent do you think [your country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [your country] people to come and live here?³
- How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [your country] people?
- How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?

All items were measured on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (allow many to come and live here) to 4 (allow none). The items were standardized and added to create one scale. Cronbach's α was .85 for the Theo van Gogh case, .93 for the Stockholm case, and .88 for the *Charlie Hebdo* case. The scale was recoded such that a higher score indicates more liberal immigration policy preferences.

In addition, I consider a more cultural outcome. Again, I create a scale, which consists of the following items:

- Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?
- Would you say that [your country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?

³This item was not included in Finseraas et al.'s (2011) scale.

- Is [your country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?

These items were measured on an 11-point scale, where a higher value expressed more positive attitudes. The items were standardized and added to create one scale. Cronbach's α was .77 for the Theo van Gogh case, .87 for the Stockholm case, and .87 for the *Charlie Hebdo* case. A higher score on this scale means a more positive attitude toward immigrants.

In all cases, standardization of the variables took place before limiting the samples to the restricted bandwidths. A factor analysis confirms that the six items included in the analysis load on two different factors, thereby speaking in favor of using two separate scales rather than combining all items into a single measure.

3.4 Results

As mentioned above, it follows from the uncertainty hypothesis that shocking events should cause a negative shift in attitudes toward immigrants. Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 display average immigration policy preferences and cultural attitudes by week from the murder (similar figures for the other cases are reported in Figure A.5 through Figure A.8 in the Appendix). The graphs show that attitudes tend to vary over time, although there does not seem to be a clear effect of the murder.

This impression is confirmed by a series of t-tests. As shown in Table 3.4, there are no negative effects of the murder of Theo van Gogh, the Stockholm bombings, or the *Charlie Hebdo* attack on policy preferences, nor on more cultural attitudes toward immigrants. If anything, shocking events can have a *positive* effect on public opinion, as the positive effect for cultural attitudes in the Swedish case shows. Although coefficients reach only marginal statistical significance, we observe a similar positive effect of the bombings on policy preferences in Sweden, as well as on cultural attitudes after the attack in France. These results are further confirmed by a multivariate model controlling for a number of demographics (Table A.2). Importantly, while the t-test statistics could be biased by the difference in education level in the pre- and post-event group in Sweden, the positive effect of the bombings on cultural attitudes holds when controlling for education level in the multivariate model.

Interestingly, the 2014 wave of the ESS (2014) includes a variable measuring policy preferences for Muslim immigration in particular. Responses are measured on a 4-point scale, which I recoded so that a higher score expresses a higher openness to Muslim immigrants. As shown in Figure 3.3, respondents who were interviewed after the attack display a higher openness to Muslim immigrants. A t-test confirms that this difference is statistically significant ($t(230) = -2.15, p = .03$). Given the difference in reachability

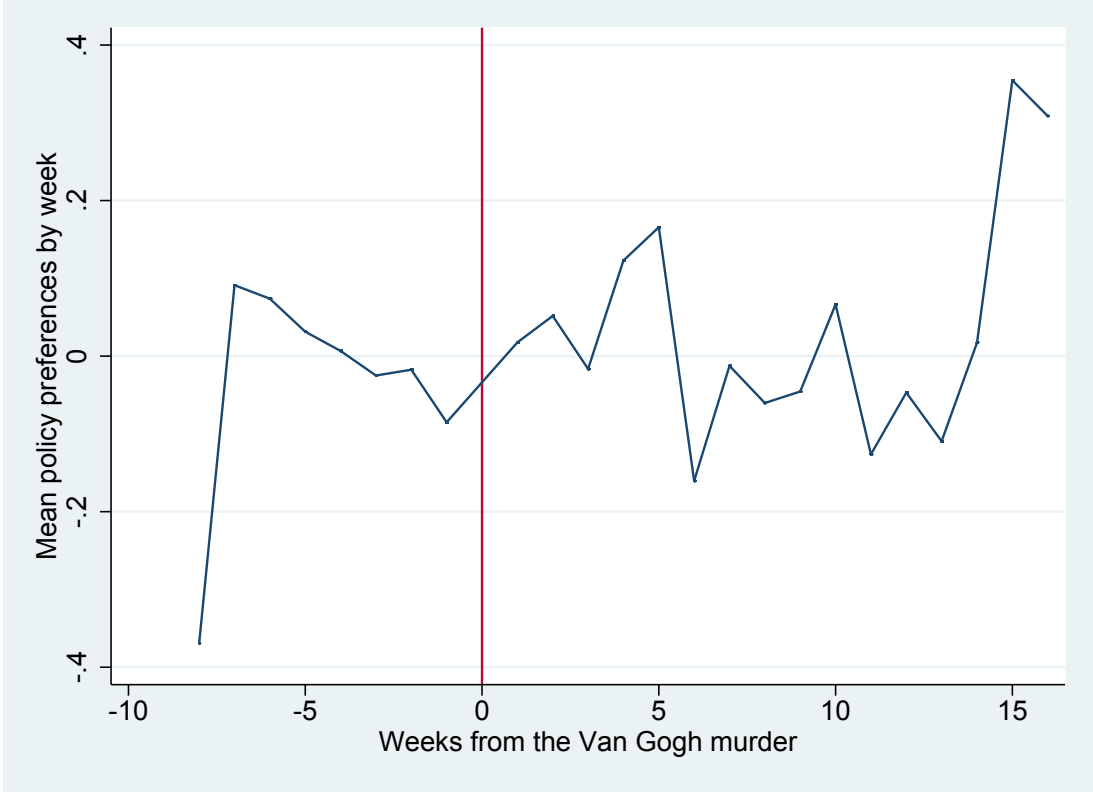


Figure 3.1: Average immigration policy preferences by week from the murder of Theo van Gogh.

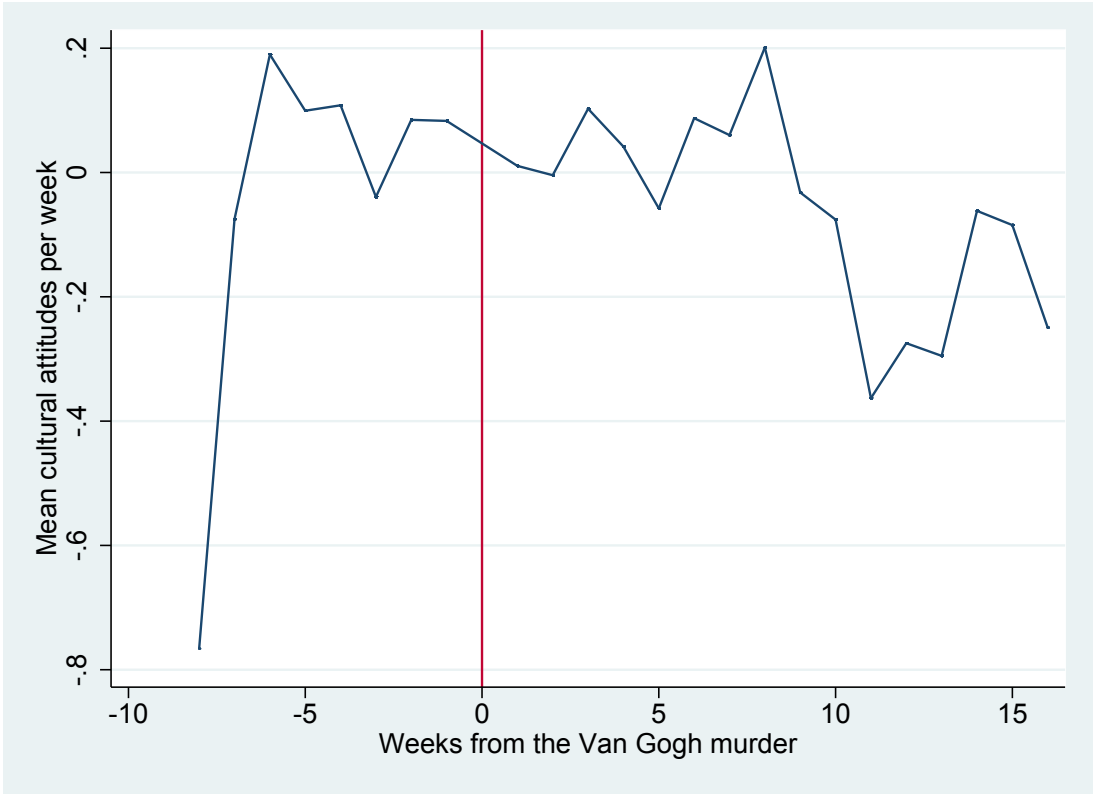


Figure 3.2: Average cultural attitudes by week from the murder of Theo van Gogh.

Table 3.4: *T-test statistics for the difference in means on policy preferences and cultural attitudes toward immigrants before and after shocking events (restricted bandwidths).*

Sample	Scale	Before	After	t	df
Theo van Gogh	Policy	-0.05	0.03	-0.93	414
	Cultural	0.08	0.00	0.96	414
Stockholm bombings	Policy	0.03	0.24	-1.47	205
	Cultural	0.03	0.48	-3.41 ***	209
<i>Charlie Hebdo</i>	Policy	0.01	0.16	-1.35	236
	Cultural	0.00	0.21	-1.83	240

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

between the pre- and post-attack sample, this result should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, based on these results, we cannot conclude that shocking events lead to more negative attitudes toward immigrants.

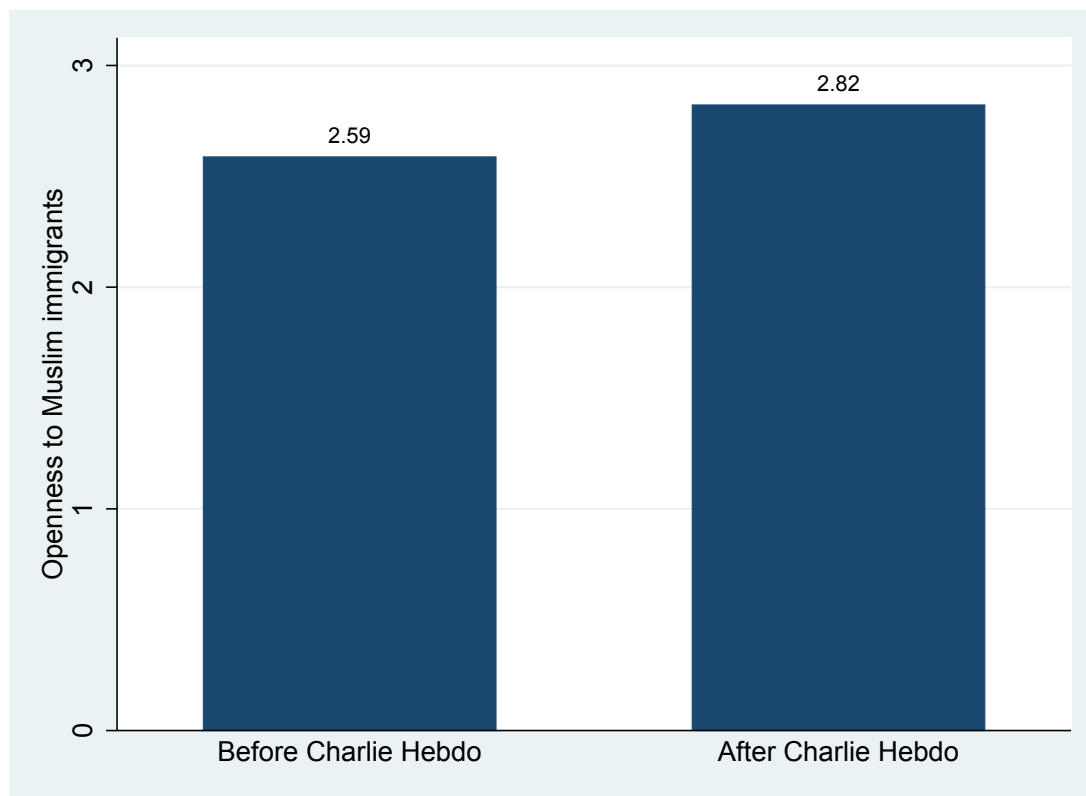


Figure 3.3: *Openness to Muslim immigrants before and after the Charlie Hebdo attack.*

Of course, if we do not observe changes in average attitudes toward immigrants, that does not necessarily imply that attitudes remained unaffected. It could be, for example, that certain groups of people are more sensitive to the effects of shocking events than others, leading to more polarized opinions. Given the nature of t-tests as a comparison of means, such effects are likely to go unnoticed. To further study this possibility, I now repeat the analysis for different subgroups.

I consider subsamples based on media use (high is a score of 2 or higher on the newspaper reading scale (political TV news in the *Charlie Hebdo* case)), political orientation (left is a score of 4 or lower on the left-right scale; right is a score of 6 or higher), education level (high is a score of 3 or higher on the education level scale), employment status (whether a participant has a job or is enrolled in education), and urbanization (urban is a score of 1 or 2 on the urbanization scale). Results for the Theo van Gogh case are reported in Table 3.5. Similar analyses for the other cases are reported in Table 3.6 and Table 3.7. As I discuss in more detail below, the analyses by subsamples reveal three different effects of shocking events: whereas we observe no significant effect of the murder of Theo van Gogh for any of the subgroups, we observe parallel positive shifts for several subgroups in the Swedish case, while the *Charlie Hebdo* analysis points at a mechanism of polarization.

Table 3.5: *T-test statistics for the difference in means on policy preferences and cultural attitudes toward immigrants in the 14 days before and after the murder of Theo van Gogh for different subsamples.*

Sample	Scale	Before	After	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Left-wing	Policy	0.33	0.29	0.23	124
	Cultural	0.47	0.29	1.42	124
Right-wing	Policy	-0.14	-0.11	-0.27	183
	Cultural	-0.01	-0.10	0.75	183
High education	Policy	0.15	0.16	-0.09	222
	Cultural	0.31	0.14	1.62	222
Low education	Policy	-0.26	-0.14	-0.83	190
	Cultural	-0.16	-0.19	0.24	190
No job or education	Policy	-0.20	-0.27	0.46	172
	Cultural	-0.10	-0.09	-0.08	172
Job or education	Policy	0.07	0.21	-1.28	239
	Cultural	0.23	0.06	1.59	239
High newspaper use	Policy	-0.01	-0.02	0.11	209
	Cultural	0.18	0.05	1.16	209
Low newspaper use	Policy	-0.09	0.09	-1.34	203
	Cultural	-0.02	-0.05	0.23	203
Urban	Policy	0.08	0.23	-0.80	106
	Cultural	0.06	-0.09	0.82	106
Non urban	Policy	-0.10	-0.02	-0.75	306
	Cultural	0.09	0.03	0.66	306

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As shown in Table 3.5, the murder of Van Gogh does not seem to affect public opinion on immigrants, whether people are left- or right-wing, live in urban or rural areas, and regardless of their education level, employment status, and newspaper use.

Table 3.6: *T-test statistics for the difference in means on policy preferences and cultural attitudes toward immigrants in the 14 days before and after the Stockholm bombings for different samples.*

Sample	Scale	Before	After	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Left-wing	Policy	0.17	0.47	-1.21	56
	Cultural	0.34	0.65	-1.42	57
Right-wing	Policy	0.10	0.02	0.37	96
	Cultural	0.07	0.30	-1.01	98
High education	Policy	0.16	0.32	-1.07	164
	Cultural	0.17	0.57	-3.01	167
Low education	Policy	-0.43	-0.39	-0.08	39
	Cultural	-0.44	-0.20	0.60	40
No job or education	Policy	-0.13	0.48	-1.81	43
	Cultural	-0.19	0.60	-2.50 *	45
Job or education	Policy	0.08	0.20	-0.76	160
	Cultural	0.10	0.46	-2.42 *	162
High newspaper use	Policy	0.16	0.40	-1.40	102
	Cultural	0.15	0.61	-2.64 **	105
Low newspaper use	Policy	-0.09	-0.03	-0.25	101
	Cultural	-0.08	0.27	-1.69	102
Urban	Policy	0.21	0.25	-0.19	71
	Cultural	0.28	0.70	-1.99 *	72
Non urban	Policy	-0.07	0.23	-1.62	132
	Cultural	-0.10	0.35	-2.67 **	135

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The analysis by subsamples for the Stockholm bombings confirms the positive effect of the event on cultural attitudes reported in Table 3.4. Although the small sample sizes as well as the demographic differences between the two groups make that we should interpret these effects with caution, the analyses by subgroup suggest that this positive effect occurs regardless of participants' demographic group. While we do not observe effects of the event for participants depending on their partisanship and education level, the t-tests

reveal significant effects for subgroup based on employment status and urbanization, with positive shifts regardless of participants' score on these variables. While these results are in line with those presented in Table 3.4, the direction of this effect is surprising as we would expect more negative attitudes toward immigrants after a terrorist attack.

The only subgroup for which we do not observe a parallel positive shift for participants with high and low scores alike is newspaper use: respondents who spend more time reading the newspaper display more positive attitudes after the bombings. This result could be related to the higher education level in the post-event sample. Alternatively, there could be an effect of media framing – a mechanism that could potentially also account for the surprising direction of the observed effects. I will discuss this point in more detail in the next section.

Table 3.7: *T-test statistics for the difference in means on policy preferences and cultural attitudes toward immigrants in the 21 days before and the 14 days after the Charlie Hebdo attack for different samples.*

Sample	Scale	Before	After	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Left-wing	Policy	0.39	0.63	-1.23	73
	Cultural	0.21	0.86	-3.58 ***	73
Right-wing	Policy	-0.19	-0.01	-1.25	99
	Cultural	-0.17	-0.14	-0.13	103
High education	Policy	0.08	0.29	-1.73	185
	Cultural	-0.02	0.32	-2.59 **	188
Low education	Policy	-0.26	-0.33	0.30	49
	Cultural	0.05	-0.18	0.90	50
No job or education	Policy	-0.28	0.05	-1.25	82
	Cultural	-0.19	-0.01	-0.85	83
Job or education	Policy	0.20	0.26	-0.43	152
	Cultural	0.12	0.32	-1.45	155
High TV exposure	Policy	0.16	0.40	-1.40	102
	Cultural	-0.32	0.10	-2.24 *	88
Low TV exposure	Policy	-0.09	-0.03	-0.25	101
	Cultural	0.17	0.29	-0.80	150
Urban	Policy	0.10	0.34	-1.45	108
	Cultural	0.17	0.37	-1.21	110
Non urban	Policy	-0.05	-0.01	-0.28	126
	Cultural	-0.13	0.06	-1.16	128

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In contrast to the Swedish case, it seems that the *Charlie Hebdo* attack had a positive effect on attitudes toward immigrants only for certain groups of people. This result points at a polarization effect. While attitudes toward immigrants remained unaffected *on average* (cfr. Table 3.4), the analysis by subsamples reveals that left-wing and highly educated respondents in particular displayed more positive (cultural) attitudes toward immigrants after the attack. While it is not surprising that education level and partisanship play into the relationship between shocking events and resulting attitudes, the direction of this effect is again surprising. Interestingly, there is again a media effect such that respondents with higher media exposure (in this case exposure to political news on television) display more positive attitudes toward immigrants after the attack.

3.5 Discussion

The results of the analyses so far do not give reason to conclude that uncertainty leads to more negative attitudes toward immigrants. First, there is no straightforward relationship between shocking events and resulting attitudes toward immigrants. While the studies discussed in Section 3.1 suggest that shocking events can have negative effects on attitudes toward immigrants, the cases presented here reveal positive or no effects of events for resulting attitudes toward immigrants. Moreover, the effects of shocking events seem to differ for different groups of people. These results do not support the uncertainty hypothesis. Second, we only observe changes in cultural attitudes toward immigrants – immigration policy preferences remain unaffected by the shocking events studied here. In other words, shocking events affect different types of attitudes in different ways. For the Theo van Gogh case, this result is in line with the findings of Finseraas et al. (2011), who report no changes in policy preferences in the Netherlands after the murder.

A possible explanation for the surprising direction of the effect in the Stockholm bombings case is education level. While the positive effect of the bombings on attitudes toward immigrants holds when controlling for education in a multivariate model, the limited sample size as well as the difference in education level between the pre- and post-event groups give reason to interpret this result with caution. For the *Charlie Hebdo* case there is another caveat, related to reachability. Although there are no differences between pre- and post-event groups on relevant demographics (see Table 3.3), people who were interviewed after the event were approached more often before they agreed to participate. The fact that French respondents in the post-event sample were less reachable (or less willing to participate) could have skewed the results.

Perhaps even more interesting than the question why we see a positive effect on attitudes toward immigrants in the cases of the Stockholm bombings and the *Charlie Hebdo* attack,

is the question why we do not observe a change in attitudes in the Theo van Gogh case. A possible explanation for this surprising result is offered by Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2007), who argue that the media should be considered an important factor shaping reactions to the murder. Specifically, in their study at the University of Amsterdam, they observe that although general attitudes toward immigrants do not differ significantly, respondents with high media exposure who participated after the murder were more likely to agree that immigrants can be a threat to security and to national culture (p. 359). This difference between groups with high and low media consumption was reduced significantly in the weeks after the murder, leading the authors to conclude that the media must have adopted an aggressive stance on immigration immediately after the murder, and a more moderate one in the following weeks (p. 362). However, the study does not include qualitative analyses that can support this claim.

A media-based explanation is in line with the uncertainty hypothesis forwarded in Chapter 2. More specifically, the hypothesis states that framing effects should be stronger when people are experiencing subjective uncertainty. It follows that the *nature* of the available ideas determines resulting attitudes. This reasoning introduces framing as a possible moderating factor in the relationship between shocking events and attitudes toward immigrants. If this is true, this could also help to explain why we observe different outcomes in different cases (and for different groups of people). In this light, it seems relevant to note that we observe positive effects for participants with high media exposure in both the Swedish and the French case (see Table 3.6 and Table 3.7). In the logic of the framing hypothesis, this implies that the media provided positive ideas about immigration. By the same logic, the absence of an effect of the Van Gogh murder (for those with high and low media exposure alike) could be driven by a neutral stance on immigration. The second part of this chapter aims to test this hypothesis.

3.6 Framing the murder of Theo van Gogh

As Hajer and Versteeg (2009) observe, “news is not *news* without a narrative” (p. 5; emphasis in original). In other words, in the case of an event such as those discussed above, news media have to choose how to present their story – or how to frame the problem at hand. As discussed in Section 2.2, the concept of framing refers to the process of emphasizing certain aspects of an issue, thereby approaching it from a certain angle. Besides functioning as schemes to present news, frames also serve to inform audiences on how to understand events (Scheufele, 1999, p. 106). The importance of frames for attitude formation is widely documented (see the discussion in Section 2.2 for a number of examples).

From a cognitive perspective, it makes sense to expect a demand for explanations after shocking events. This is because, as discussed in Chapter 2, humans have a fundamental

need to understand. Shocking events, which are unexpected by definition, call for interpretations that fit the worldviews that people hold. This relates to the work of Chernobrov (2016), who argues that shocking events are typically interpreted to fit familiar narratives. It follows from this line of reasoning that people reach an understanding of events through the way these are framed, either in the media or by others in their social environment. In other words, we may expect framing effects to be particularly important in times of uncertainty.

The second part of this chapter aims to test this hypothesis by analyzing the media framing of the murder of Theo van Gogh. Given the importance of framing for attitude formation, we might expect that media discourse had an effect on public opinion on the murder. The uncertainty theory suggests that the general sense of shock in Dutch society should have amplified this effect. If the media adopted a moderate stance on immigration, as Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2007) suggest, this could then explain why the natural experiment does not reveal a shift in attitudes toward immigrants. Some initial support for this hypothesis is provided by an exploratory text analysis of Dutch newspapers one month after the murder by Uitermark and Hajer (n.d.), and a more general analysis of the portrayal of Muslims in the media in the UK, the US, and the Netherlands by Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt (2007). These studies show that the Dutch media discourse on Muslims focused on structural societal factors (Uitermark & Hajer, n.d.), and that the link between Muslims and terrorism in the Dutch media became weaker after the murder of Van Gogh (Ruigrok & Van Atteveldt, 2007).

While these studies report general trends rather than specific interpretations of the murder, their results are in line with what we would expect if the absence of a negative shift in attitudes toward immigrants was due to the way the media framed the event. Of course, this claim can only hold if a qualitative analysis confirms that the media framed the event in a way that did not link it to immigration in the public mind. Therefore, I will now proceed with a more thorough reading of the media discourse aimed at providing a more reliable test of this hypothesis. To interpret the surprising (non-)findings of the natural experiment on the Theo van Gogh case in terms of framing effects, we should find that

The media framed the murder in a way that was not related to immigrants.

3.6.1 Methods

To test the framing hypothesis, I perform a text analysis on five major Dutch newspapers. The main aim of the analysis was to see how the murder was framed by the media. The text analysis consists of two main elements: a more quantitative analysis in which I analyze which words are most used before and after the murder, thereby giving an impression of the general discourse; and a more qualitative analysis in which I analyze the way in which

the events were discussed in the media.

The newspapers in my sample are *De Telegraaf*, a popular newspaper with a circulation of 727,000 in 2004 (Bakker & Scholten, 2011, p. 19); *De Volkskrant*, a center-left paper with a highly educated, rather wealthy audience and a circulation of 306,000 (ibid.); *Algemeen Dagblad*, a popular newspaper with regional editions and a circulation of 283,000 (ibid.); *NRC Handelsblad*, a center-right paper with a highly educated, rather wealthy audience and a circulation of 254,000 (ibid.); and *Het Parool*, an Amsterdam-based newspaper with a circulation of 79,360 in 2011 (HOI Instituut voor Media Auditing, 2015) and a relatively highly educated, wealthy audience (De Persgroep Nederland, n.d.). *NRC Handelsblad* and *Het Parool* are evening papers, the others come out in the morning. In a study using four of these newspapers, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p. 97) describe *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* as more serious news outlets, comparable to *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, respectively. On the sensationalist - serious spectrum, the authors place these newspapers on the serious extreme, with *Algemeen Dagblad* in the middle and *De Telegraaf* at the sensationalist pole. Hajer and Versteeg (2009, p. 7, fn. 20) adopt a similar distinction, comparing *Algemeen Dagblad* to *USA Today*.

Using LexisNexis, I searched for articles containing the keywords “Gogh”, “Moslim” (Muslim), “Islam”, “Immigrant”, “Immigratie” (Immigration), and “Marokkaan” (Moroccan) that were published between 26 October 2004 (one week before the murder) and 9 November 2004 (one week after). Since the keyword search did not yield any front page articles for *De Telegraaf* for the day after the murder, I performed an additional search for that date for *De Telegraaf* for the keyword “vermoord” (murdered). This way, I obtained a total of 661 unique articles.

I read all articles to analyze how the murder was framed in the media. To form an idea of relevant frames I first ran a pilot round using a deductive method based on the frames defined by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, pp. 95-6): conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. In the pilot, I considered all articles that appeared in the *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant (PZC)* using the same period and keywords as for the other papers. Using LexisNexis, this search yielded 65 unique articles which were published across 13 different dates. While the deductive method was a helpful way to guide the pilot, the previously defined frames did not seem specific enough to capture the different ways in which *PZC* covered the events. Therefore, I continued the final analysis adopting an inductive approach (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). The main frames that emerged from the analysis were freedom of speech, responsibility, identity and Muslims versus extremists. Typical examples of all frames are reported in Table A.3 (Appendix).

I pair the results of the qualitative text analysis with a more quantitative analysis of occurrence of words before and after the murder. I carried out this analysis using the text analysis program *Wordsmith* (Scott, 2016). To form a general idea of the discourse

after the murder, I compared my sample of the week after the murder to that of the week before. The software lists the frequencies of occurrence of every word before and after the murder, and tests the likelihood that a word appears in the text after the murder based on its frequency in the text before. When words with a low likelihood appear often in the post-murder text, this implies that they are characteristic for the discourse after the murder. This way, comparing the frequency of occurrence helps to form an idea of the most important themes that are discussed after the murder.

3.6.2 Results

It follows from the uncertainty hypothesis that exposure to anti-immigrant ideas in times of uncertainty should lead to higher anti-immigrant sentiment. By the same logic, exposure to ideas that are not related to immigration should not affect attitudes toward immigrants. If the Dutch media adopted a narrative of the murder of Theo van Gogh that did not relate it to immigration in the public mind, this could explain why the natural experiment – as well as the studies of Finseraas et al. (2011) and Gijsberts (2005) – does not reveal an effect of the murder on immigration attitudes in the Netherlands. The following qualitative analysis aims to further analyze this hypothesis through an in-depth reading of newspaper articles in the weeks before and after the murder, paired with a more quantitative comparison of commonly used words before and after the event.

My results suggest that every newspaper had its own dominant interpretation of the murder, in terms of freedom of speech, responsibility (of society or the elites), or identity. Importantly, none of these frames linked the event to immigration. Together, these results provide support for the framing hypothesis. I now discuss the results in more detail.

Main themes after the murder

To form a first impression of the main themes in the discourse on the murder of Theo van Gogh, I compare the frequency of words used in the newspapers before and after the murder. As outlined in Section 3.6.1, I do this using the text analysis software *Wordsmith* (Scott, 2016). I created a list of the 25 most commonly used words after the murder as compared to before. As discussed above, these are not so much the most frequently used words after the murder (for example, the list is not likely to include articles), but rather the most *typical* words for the post-murder discourse. If the media framed the murder in a way that was not related to immigration, we expect to find that immigration-related words are not among the most characteristic words for the post-murder discourse.

Results are displayed in Table A.4. As the table shows, the analysis yields no keywords related to immigration, suggesting that this was not an important topic in the week after the murder – at least not when compared to the week before. I infer three main themes from the list: (1) a **factual** category containing keywords related to the description of the

murder; (2) a **Muslim extremism** category including words related to religious practice and radicalization, and; (3) a **freedom of speech** category including keywords related to freedom of speech. By definition, the factual category has a more descriptive character, while the other two categories give a first indication on how the murder was interpreted.

The factual category includes keywords related directly to the murder:

- Gogh
- moord (murder)
- Theo
- Amsterdam
- B ⁴
- Mohammed
- brief (letter)
- verdachte (suspect)
- dader (perpetrator)
- daad (act)

Related to this category are the main political actors: Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Amsterdam mayor Cohen, Liberal minister of Internal affairs Remkes, Christian democratic minister of justice Donner, and Liberal vice premier Zalm. All these words and characters form part of the factual description of the murder – who was killed, where, by whom, and how. The high frequency of these words in the post-murder discourse implies that the murder was an important topic in the news.

While the first category is rather descriptive of the event of a murder, the second category reveals more about how the murder was interpreted; namely, in terms of Muslim extremism. The keywords in this category are:

- moskee (mosque)
- radicale (radical)
- jihad
- imams

⁴It is common use in Dutch media to reveal only the first letter of the last name of crime suspects for purposes of identity protection. For this reason, Mohammed Bouyeri is known in the Netherlands as Mohammed B., hence the high frequency of the keyword “B”.

Since the Dutch intelligence service AIVD is tasked with monitoring radicalization, this keyword probably falls into this category as well. It is important to note that, while these keywords clearly relate to Muslim extremism, and therefore it is likely that the murder was interpreted as a Muslim extremist act, the word “Muslim” does not appear in this list. In other words, while Muslim *extremism* was certainly a theme, in general Muslims were not mentioned more often after the murder than before. This is a first indication that the media distinguished between radical and more moderate Muslims.

The third category relates to a more moral dimension of the murder, interpreting it in terms of freedom of speech. It should not come as a surprise that freedom of speech was an important theme for the interpretation of a murder of a critic of Islam by someone who did not agree with his ideas. As I will discuss in more detail below, this remained a dominant frame throughout the week after the murder. The keywords that relate to the freedom of speech category are:

- vrijheid (freedom)
- vrije (free)
- meningsuiting (expression)
- mening (opinion)

These three categories give a first indication of the main frames that were used to discuss the murder. Importantly, immigrants or issues related to immigration do not appear among the most characteristic keywords, suggesting that the murder was not interpreted in terms of the immigration issue. These results provide initial support for the framing hypothesis. For a more thorough understanding of the discourse, I now move to a closer reading of the newspapers.

Interpretations of the murder

In their first editions after the murder, all papers expressed shock, with *De Volkskrant* opening with a 900+ word story with the title “‘We have let it rot for too long’, the unspoken question being: do we know how to respond to this?”. The murder was immediately linked to freedom of speech. *NRC Handelsblad* wrote that the note that the killer had left seemed to “suggest that Van Gogh’s loud voice in the public debate was to prove fatal for him” (2 November, p. 1) and other papers referred to the event as a “murder of opinions” (*De Volkskrant* 3 November, p. 13) and a “political murder” (*Het Parool* 3 November, p. 15). The importance of the issue was underlined by an editorial in *Algemeen Dagblad* which claimed that “freedom of speech is one of the core values of our society” (3 November, p. 3).

Freedom of speech continued to be an important frame during the whole week following the murder. On Saturday 6 November, *De Volkskrant* even dedicated a special supplement to freedom of speech. The theme of this supplement however was not necessarily the concept as such, as much as the *limits* to freedom of speech: did it mean that people should be allowed to offend and hurt all they want? The paper's conclusion seemed to be that it did not. As more than one article argued, we should not remember Van Gogh as a defender of the freedom of speech, primarily because while he may have demanded freedom of speech for himself, he certainly did not for others. Other articles pointed out how shocking Van Gogh's rhetoric was for Moroccan Dutchmen, while journalists living abroad noted that his comments would have been unacceptable in their respective countries of residence. The paper concluded that instead of letting this escalate, the Dutch should have asked themselves early on whether Van Gogh should have been allowed to say more or less anything he liked. In so doing, *De Volkskrant* showed a more critical attitude toward freedom of speech in general. Other papers adopted a similar view, as the following examples show:

Moroccan mosque visitor: "Insulting Muslims does not equal freedom of speech. My freedom ends where yours begins." (*NRC Handelsblad*, 3 November, p. 1)

"Every murder is horrible. But expressing your opinion should be possible, in whichever way. As long as we respect each other. It feels like values lost their meaning around here." (*Algemeen Dagblad* reader's letter, 5 November, p. 15).

Freek de Jonge (comedian): "If I had to name just one person who died and does not need to be praised to the skies, it would be Theo. Because – let's be honest – it is not innocence that has been murdered here. Freedom of speech is threatened by those who express their opinion freely, too." (*NRC Handelsblad*, 8 November, p. 7)

Adopting this more critical attitude of course did not mean that the media approved of the murder. Rather, the question of responsibility was raised. *NRC Handelsblad* analyzed the societal structure of the Netherlands, thereby shifting the blame away from Muslims or immigrants per se and turning the event into a collective problem:

Felix Rottenberg (former Labor politician): "The seed of fundamentalism is social isolation." (3 November, p. 2)

Cor Meijer (history teacher at Bouyeri's high school): "These kids say literally: an American with poor Dutch has more opportunities here than I do. And if you are a talented A-level student especially, and you cannot apply any of those talents in society, and you do not have a lot of support at home, polarization gets free play." (5 November, p. 3)

Sultan Guen and Fadi Hirzalla (lawyer and political scientist; both chairman of a public organization): “The (especially young) Muslims feel denied and rejected by Dutch society. To make up for the marginalization of their Islamic identity, they become susceptible to exaggerating that identity. It is a scientific fact that marginalization leads to radicalization. Hence, the radicalization of a handful of Muslims is a consequence of the assimilation debate, not the cause.” (8 November, p. 7)

De Telegraaf also questioned who was responsible for the murder but reached a different conclusion – rather than society, the elite was to blame. While the paper reinforced its populist identity with a large number of interviews with Van Gogh’s friends, his high school teachers, people on the street, and so on, *De Telegraaf* also expressed disappointment with the political elite:

Henk Westbroek (popular radio presenter): “One pit bull bites, the other is well-trained, but the one that bites gives all the sweet ones a bad reputation. So you will cross the street if you see a pit bull. Those few aggressive Muslims; it’s a shame for the rest of them. *All this is the result of that culture of glossing over the facts.*” (6 November, p. 19; my emphasis).

Cees Wijburg (actor and friend of Van Gogh): “Van Gogh was not against Islam. He was just against the intolerance that the leftist church⁵ has imported. *Now that he has been killed you should not blame people from different cultures, but the people who have imported and cultivated this climate since the seventies.*” (4 November, p. 5; my emphasis)

As discussed in Chapter 2, social groups can be powerful drivers of attitudes and behavior by providing their members with frameworks of interpretation. As emphasized repeatedly, it is the content of these frameworks that determines the basis for in-group-out-group distinctions, and consequent inter-group dynamics. An example of an identity-based interpretation is the *Algemeen Dagblad* quote on page 71, which states that freedom of speech is part of *our* society, thereby implicitly defining those who violate that norm as outsiders. A more constant and more positive identity-based interpretation of the murder was provided by *Het Parool*, which focused on Amsterdam rather than on religion or origin. Perhaps not surprisingly for an Amsterdam-based newspaper, *Het Parool* repeatedly emphasized a vision of the city as an inclusive category for all its citizens. This local focus was expressed through articles on local high schools, many street interviews, and many letters by readers. More importantly, it was emphasized in the paper’s actual discourse:

⁵The “leftist church” is a term coined by right-wing populist politician Pim Fortuyn to refer to the leftist (elitist) parties in the Netherlands (Hoffland, 2010). It has an ironic, negative tone.

Editorial report: “[the authorities] should trust the citizens of Amsterdam. They are not afraid to face the facts.” (3 November, p. 9)

Amsterdam alderman Aboutaleb: “[Theo van Gogh was] a loud and eccentric artist who discovered Amsterdam as a stage to realize his vision: an indivisible city, where everyone can be who they are.” (4 November, p. 5)

Eddy Terstall (movie director): “The only correct “us vs. them” distinction is that we are the citizens of Amsterdam, Muslims and non-Muslims, and they are an idiotic group of brainwashed relifascists⁶, who are trying to tear us apart, helped by their Dutch extreme right-wing friends of the new right. That kind of people has an interest in placing a fence between two groups of people. People like Ahmed Aboutaleb, closely followed by all decent Amsterdam citizens, Muslims and non-Muslims, want to put that fence where it belongs. Between the citizens of free Amsterdam and the extremists from both sides.” (9 November, p. 11)

This last quote also shows another frame that was adopted widely in the papers, that of stressing the difference between between normal Muslims and extremists. This is again an identity frame. By creating a distinction between the two groups, Bouyeri was presented as a member of the out-group we should fear, a group that other Muslims are not part of. This distinction was made by politicians as well as journalists and Van Gogh’s friends:

Cees Wijburg (actor and friend of Van Gogh): “The fact that the murderer turns out to be a Muslim terrorist is extremely sad for the Muslim community in the Netherlands. There is a very large group of Muslims that participates fully in our society and does not want any extremism.” (*De Telegraaf* 4 November, p. 3)

De Telegraaf editorial: “Nonetheless, the majority of Moroccan youth has an education and a job. (...) It is not a coincidence that Muslim organizations unanimously condemn the murder and the murderer’s delusions. Among the Muslims here the majority is moderate.” (5 November, p. 31)

Lodewijk Ascher (Amsterdam Labor politician): “We give terrorists what they want if we make all Muslims suspects now and thereby increase the factual segregation and feelings of frustration (...) We have to make crystal clear that this attack was aimed at normal Muslims, too” (*De Volkskrant* 6 November, p. 9)

Indeed, the Dutch citizens seemed to understand this distinction:

⁶“Relifascists” is a neologism stemming from the words “religious” and “fascists”.

“Maybe the most important explanation for the relative calm is that most Amsterdam citizens understand that you cannot blame the entire Moroccan community for the violence of one religious fanatic.” (*De Volkskrant* 6 November, p. 1 supplement “Reflex”)

These citations confirm the impression given by the quantitative text analysis; namely, that the murder was largely interpreted as an extremist act and not as a problem related to Islam or immigration more generally.

The only paper that did not seem to actively adopt a deescalating discourse was *Algemeen Dagblad*. While some of the readers’ letters expressed more critical opinions and referred to limits to freedom of speech (e.g. in the quote on page 72), the general tone of the paper was somewhat sensationalist. The morning after the murder, *Algemeen Dagblad* opened with a very vivid, detailed description of the murder, as told by an eye witness. There was a strong focus on readers’ views and comments and the paper expressed a general sense of worry, which was reinforced by a focus on terrorist networks (e.g. “Link with al-Qaeda investigated”, 4 November, p. 1), the intelligence service (e.g. “150 Muslims are permanently shadowed”, 4 November, p. 3), and threatened politicians (e.g. “Another arrest for threatening Wilders”, 9 November, p. 2). While the paper did not explicitly frame the murder in terms of immigration and Moroccans, it did not actively try to avoid allowing the audience to make this link either.

Discussion

A comparison of the most used words before and after the murder of Theo van Gogh, and a closer reading of the media reporting on the issue give no reason to assume that the media framed the event in a way that linked it to immigration. The keywords analysis shows that the post-murder discourse was characterized by words relating to the themes of Muslim extremism and freedom of speech. The importance of these themes was confirmed in an in-depth analysis of the media discourse, which further identified responsibility (of society or elites) and identity as important frames of interpretation.

Interestingly, it seems that every paper had their own preferred framing of the murder. *De Volkskrant* questioned what should be allowed in society; *NRC Handelsblad* perceived of the murder as a collective problem that had evolved out of the Dutch societal structure; *De Telegraaf* directed its anger at the political elite that it held responsible for the current societal climate; and *Het Parool* emphasized an inclusive Amsterdam identity. Importantly, while all newspapers had their own interpretation of the murder, none of these linked the event to immigration – they did not actively argue against this frame either, however. Despite this, all papers distinguished clearly between extremists and moderate Muslims, thereby avoiding blaming the Muslim community as a whole. The only paper that does not seem to have engaged in active efforts to deescalate the looming conflict in society is

Algemeen Dagblad. Although the paper's readers seemed more critical and pointed out the difference between insulting and freely expressing opinions, *Algemeen Dagblad* displayed a strong focus on freedom of speech and sensational elements such as the intelligence service, extremist networks, and threatened politicians.

As hypothesized, the events were not interpreted in a way that linked them to immigration in the public mind. These results are in line with the preliminary results of Uitermark and Hajer (n.d.), who observe “de-escalating tendencies” (p. 31) in the media. If exposure to the different interpretations of the murder offered by the various media outlets attenuated initial negative reactions, this could explain why the natural experiment and previous studies alike (Finseraas et al., 2011; Gijsberts, 2005) did not reveal an effect of the murder on attitudes toward immigrants.

3.7 Framing and attitudes toward immigrants after Theo van Gogh

So far, we have seen that the murder of Theo van Gogh did not have a significant effect on attitudes toward immigrants in the Netherlands, and that a potential reason for this surprising finding could be that the media did not link the murder to immigration in the public mind. If the negative effect of the murder is attenuated by media discourse, however, we would expect to find an effect for people who were not exposed to this discourse. In other words, we should still observe a negative effect of the murder for those with low media use. This is not what the analysis in Table 3.5 showed – the series of t-tests did not reveal effects for any of the subsamples.

While this finding seems at odds with the general argument forwarded here, it recalls the findings of the study of Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2007). As the authors observed, while the murder of Theo van Gogh did not change general attitudes toward immigrants in their study, participants with high media exposure who were surveyed after the event were more likely to agree that immigration formed a threat to security and national culture (p. 359). This implies that only some aspects of attitudes are affected by the murder. Similarly, it could be that only some aspects included in the present attitude scales are affected by the murder – and possibly subject to framing effects.

To test this hypothesis, I run a multivariate analysis on the six items included in the two attitude scales: the openness to immigrants from the same ethnic group as the Dutch majority, openness to immigrants from a different ethnic group, and openness to immigrants from poor countries; and the extent to which people believed that immigrants were bad for the economy, undermined the Dutch culture, and made the Netherlands a worse or better place to live (exact question wordings are reported in Section 3.3.1). The first three variables were measured on a 4-point scale, and the other three on an 11-point

scale. I recoded the first three items so that higher scores on all variables indicated more positive attitudes. Results are displayed in Table 3.8.

As the table shows, immigration attitudes are generally explained by the “usual suspects” – mostly political orientation and in some cases education level. Age and gender do not have significant effects. Interestingly, it seems that there was an effect of the murder on an aspect of immigration attitudes. Specifically, respondents who were interviewed after the murder were more likely to agree that immigration makes the Netherlands a worse place to live. Importantly, this effect is countered by newspaper use: people who spend more time reading the newspaper are more likely to agree that immigration makes the country a better place to live. The marginally significant effect of the squared newspaper variable suggests that this positive effect wears off as time spent reading the newspaper reaches the extremes – this finding is not surprising given the likely correlation between having the time to spend three hours a day reading the newspaper and relevant demographic variables such as employment status. In short, this analysis reveals a negative effect of the murder, and a positive effect of newspaper use for a specific aspect of attitudes toward immigrants. This result is in line with the framing hypothesis.

3.8 Discussion and Conclusion

Does uncertainty lead to more negative attitudes toward immigrants? The analyses presented here do not give an unambiguous answer to this question. A series of natural experiments based on shocking events does not reveal negative effects of uncertainty on general attitudes toward immigrants – on the contrary, in some cases (most notably the Stockholm bombings attack), we observe more *positive* attitudes after the events in question. Similarly, attitudes toward Muslim immigrants in France are found to be more positive after the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attack. Equally surprising, a natural experiment on the murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands does not reveal any effect of the murder on general public opinion on immigration – a result that, however surprising, is consistent with previous studies.

These surprising findings could be interpreted as an indication that the events did not lead to uncertainty. This is a possibility that the present research design does not allow testing, due to the absence of a measure of uncertainty. However, given the nature of the events in question it seems reasonable to assume that they provoked some degree of uncertainty – in its definition as provided in Chapter 2, that is as a violation of expectations. Terrorist attacks are unexpected by nature, and the (public) reactions to the three events are in line with this impression. The *De Volkskrant* headline asking “Do we know how to respond to this?” (see page 71) is a case in point.

A more plausible explanation of the surprising findings of the natural experiments – which can be, and is, tested here – is that the relationship between events and attitudes is

Table 3.8: Multivariate regression model for the effects of the murder on Theo van Gogh on the immigration attitudes variables. Question wording is reported in Section 3.3.1. Reported values are b-statistics. P-values in parentheses.

Variable	Same group	Different group	Poor countries	Economy	Cultural life	Place to live
Event	0.04 (0.61)	0.00 (0.96)	-0.02 (0.85)	-0.17 (0.40)	-0.17 (0.42)	-0.48 * (0.03)
Newspaper use	-0.06 (0.51)	0.03 (0.70)	-0.03 (0.76)	0.32 (0.13)	0.10 (0.63)	0.47* (0.04)
Newspaper ²	0.02 (0.17)	0.02 (0.40)	0.02 (0.37)	-0.01 (0.84)	-0.03 (0.50)	-0.08 (0.07)
Left-right scale	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.07 ** (0.00)	-0.08 *** (0.00)	-0.13 * (0.01)	-0.22 *** (0.00)	-0.12 * (0.05)
Work or education	0.13 (0.20)	0.09 (0.43)	0.29* (0.01)	-0.20 (0.43)	0.18 (0.48)	0.01 (0.98)
Education level	0.05 (0.16)	0.07* (0.05)	0.07 (0.06)	0.34*** (0.00)	0.34*** (0.00)	0.15 (0.10)
Household income	0.02 (0.47)	0.01 (0.60)	-0.01 (0.65)	0.08 (0.13)	0.11* (0.04)	0.08 (0.17)
Respondent age	0.00 (0.92)	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.01 (0.16)	0.00 (0.53)	-0.01 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.20)
Male	0.07 (0.39)	0.04 (0.63)	-0.06 (0.54)	0.18 (0.37)	0.04 (0.84)	0.15 (0.51)
Voted last election	0.25* (0.04)	0.13 (0.30)	0.09 (0.48)	0.41 (0.14)	0.39 (0.16)	0.40 (0.20)
N	316					
R ²	0.084	0.120	0.136	0.179	0.221	0.096

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

moderated by media framing. News media is a common way for people to learn about events (e.g. Scheufele, 1999, p. 106), and there is a wealth of research documenting the effects of framing on attitudes. It follows that media framing can be of significant importance for attitude formation following shocking events. To test this framing hypothesis, I analyzed the discourse of five major Dutch newspapers following the murder of Theo van Gogh. The analysis shows that the Dutch media framed the murder in ways that did not relate it to immigration. Moreover, immigration-related issues or Muslims were not mentioned significantly more often after the murder than before. These results offer a possible explanation for why the natural experiment, as well as previous public opinion surveys, fails to detect effects of the murder on general attitudes toward immigrants. It seems that people were exposed to a discourse that interpreted the murder as an event that was not related to immigration, leaving their attitudes toward immigrants unaffected.

This argument is further specified by a complementary multivariate regression model, which reveals that only a partial aspect of attitudes toward immigrants is affected by the murder of Van Gogh. More specifically, participants who were interviewed after the murder are more likely to agree that immigration makes the Netherlands a worse place to live, but this effect is countered by newspaper use. This result is in line with a framing interpretation of reactions to the murder of Theo van Gogh, and to shocking events more generally. While similar media analyses would be necessary to extend this interpretation to the Stockholm bombings and *Charlie Hebdo* cases, the fact that the natural experiments for those cases reveal positive effects of the shocking events only for those with high media exposure is in line with a framing argument. In short, the results of my study suggest that it is not the shocking event in itself but the *interpretation* of the event in the public mind that determines resulting attitudes toward immigrants.

Importantly, not all immigration attitudes are affected. Across the three cases, my analyses reveal significant effects of shocking events only for cultural attitudes – as opposed to immigration policy preferences – and in the case of Theo van Gogh only for a specific aspect of cultural attitudes. For the latter case, it should be noted that these findings do not necessarily contradict those of Finseraas et al. (2011). The authors used a scale that is based on two of the three items included in the migration policy scale (see Section 3.3.1), and my analysis confirms that there is no effect of the murder in this respect. Moreover, the finding that not all types of attitudes are affected by shocking events implies that attitudes toward immigrants are not a monolithic concept, thereby complicating the question of what drives public opinion on immigration. Further research is needed to understand how specific aspects of attitudes toward immigrants are shaped, and how the various elements relate to each other.

Moreover, which attitudes are affected by shocking events may also depend on media framing. More precisely, we should expect to observe changes especially for attitudes that are related to the adopted framing of the event. In the case of Theo van Gogh, given the

different narratives adopted by the newspapers included in the sample, we may expect effects on attitudes toward freedom of speech, elites, collective responsibility, and the Amsterdam identity – depending on the newspaper that the respondent read. Readership data would be necessary to further study this hypothesis.

In a similar vein, readership data could serve to better understand who is subject to framing effects, and whether the observed positive effects of media exposure are truly due to framing, or to confounding variables that are correlated with media exposure. More precisely, in the logic of the argument forwarded here, the positive effects of media exposure in all three cases included in this chapter suggest that the prevailing discourse on the shocking events was positive with regards to immigration. Instead, if cases with both positive and negative discourses on immigration lead to respectively more positive and more negative attitudes toward immigrants (depending on the discourse that the respondent was exposed to), we can exclude the possibility that people with higher media exposure simply hold more positive attitudes toward immigrants. The media reporting on the 2015/2016 New Year’s Eve events in Cologne, when large groups of migrants allegedly harassed women in the crowd, could be a relevant case in this respect. Without going into details here, the discrepancy between headlines such as “Police do not have any insights on offenders” (Die Zeit, 2016) and “Most of them were newly arrived asylum seekers” (Büscher, Lutz, & Stoldt, 2016) suggests that there were different narratives of the role of immigrants in the events.

Although not based on readership data, the results presented here can be best understood in the light of the framing hypothesis forwarded in Chapter 2: variation in (specific aspects of) attitudes toward immigrants seems to be related to exposure to media frames. To what extent this process is amplified by uncertainty, as proposed in the same chapter, remains unclear at this point.

Chapter 4

A tale of two cities: Populist radical right-wing support in the Netherlands

The previous chapter has demonstrated how the need to understand can serve to explain the effects of shocking events on attitudes toward immigrants. As such, it tested the more cognitive aspects of the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 2. The present chapter complements the previous by focusing on the other fundamental human need formulated in the theory chapter: the need to belong. Using support for an anti-immigration party in the Netherlands as a proxy for attitudes toward immigrants, I identify an extreme case and try to explain the observed variation. I consider different perspectives, including the social cohesion hypothesis forwarded in Chapter 2 as well as more common explanations of radical right-wing support. As we will see, whereas my analyses reveal only limited support for the classical hypotheses, the need to belong can help to understand support for anti-immigration parties by interpreting this as an outcome of normative influence processes.

On 26 May 2015, the day of the Senate elections in the Netherlands, the populist radical right-wing (PRR) *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom; PVV) received almost 12% of the votes (Kiesraad, n.d.), with support ranging between 4.5% and 33.3% across different parts of the country (RTL Nieuws, n.d.-a). This variation is interesting in the light of the rise of the PRR across Europe, but also for the study of variation in attitudes toward immigrants. This is because research has shown that a critical view on immigration is one of the traits of the typical PRR supporter (e.g. Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002, p. 365). Although voting behavior, of course, does not equal attitudes toward immigrants, the fact that the PRR vote is partly motivated by views on immigration implies that it can be used as a proxy for attitudes toward immigrants. The present chapter aims to shed light on the mechanisms that are involved in the PRR vote, thereby contributing to a

deeper understanding of variation in attitudes toward immigrants as well as in electoral behavior.

Importantly, the existence of and the support for a PRR party is not problematic in itself. On the contrary, as Rooduijn (2015) argues, democracy gains from parties that allow dissatisfied citizens to voice their concerns. Despite concerns that populist parties sometimes adopt undemocratic positions, precisely the fact that there is room for such sentiments confirms the appropriate functioning of democracy (ibid.). In the case of the Netherlands, even if the PVV emerges as the largest party from the elections, the coalition structure of the Dutch parliamentary system makes it highly unlikely that the party's leader will become prime minister. For the same reason, the PVV will have to compromise and therefore its radical views cannot be translated into equally radical policies (ibid.). An empirical, albeit limited, example of this forced moderation is found in the PVV's support of a minority coalition between 2010 and 2012 (Akkerman, 2016, p. 151). In terms of direct influence, therefore, the mere presence of the PVV in the Dutch political landscape is no cause for concern; the *indirect* influence of such parties, however, is. While populist parties often have only a marginal impact on policy making, more mainstream parties are not immune to their success. Especially when populist parties successfully mobilize anti-immigration sentiments, mainstream parties across the political spectrum are found to adopt more restrictive positions on immigration (Van Spanje, 2010). Now that Europe finds itself in the midst of a refugee crisis, PRR parties across the continent use these circumstances to their political gain (Rooduijn, 2015), thereby increasing the probability that mainstream parties will follow their ideological lead. Given these circumstances, it is ever more relevant to understand what motivates citizens to vote for the PRR. This question is the focus of the present chapter.

The present chapter provides a case study of PRR support in the Netherlands by analyzing attitudes and electoral behavior in the town of Rucphen. For the past six elections, Rucphen has been the municipality with the highest percentage of PVV voters in the country (RTL Nieuws, n.d.-b). Not only is Rucphen the leading municipality in the Netherlands in terms of PVV support, levels of support are significantly higher than the national average: note how the 33% reported at the beginning of this chapter corresponds to almost three times the national average. Given the relatively low number of immigrants and an average income that lies above the national mean (this will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3), common theories such as ethnic competition seem implausible explanations for the local voting behavior. If not economic factors and exposure to immigrants, what is it about Rucphen that makes the PVV so successful?

To better understand the factors that contribute to Rucphen's unique pattern of voting behavior, throughout the chapter I compare it to the town of Schijndel, another Dutch municipality that is similar to Rucphen in many ways, but that differs in terms of electoral outcomes. Adopting a mixed methods approach – including street- and expert interviews,

analyses of historical election data, large-scale survey data, and a field experiment – I find that inhabitants of Rucphen display relatively high levels of political disappointment and a preference for simple, straightforward language. Somewhat surprisingly, anti-immigrant sentiment is not more prevalent than in center-left Schijndel. These classical explanations of PRR support seem insufficient to account for the observed voting patterns in Rucphen.

My analyses suggest that these patterns of electoral behavior are best understood from a normative influence perspective. More specifically, my qualitative work in Rucphen and Schijndel shows that the former town is characterized by a strong social identity and a correspondingly high level of social cohesion. While social cohesion is generally perceived as a factor that contributes positively to the social climate (Chan, To, & Chan, 2006) – and indeed I find a negative relationship between PVV support and social cohesion across Dutch municipalities – as explained in Section 2.1.2, its effects are contingent upon the prevailing group norms. For the case of Rucphen, I propose that the presence of descriptive norms regarding voting behavior, as well as anti-elitist norms, could lead to a higher propensity to vote for the PVV. My observation that immigrants are often perceived as a normative threat in Rucphen – and not in Schijndel – is in line with this hypothesis. This mechanism could help to explain variation in support for the PRR across locations and socioeconomic status, especially in environments with only limited presence of immigrants.

The outline of the chapter is as follows. I first discuss the nature of the PVV and its position in the Dutch political landscape. Next, I discuss a number of explanations of support for the PRR that are proposed in the literature, as well as a social identity perspective. Following this, I discuss my case selection and methods, to proceed with a discussion of my findings. I propose that PVV support can be understood from an underlying mechanism based on social cohesion and normative influence processes. Finally, I conclude.

4.1 The Party for Freedom

The Dutch political landscape can be largely summarized along two axes: a socio-economic left-right dimension, and a cultural progressive-conservative dimension (Kriesi & Frey, 2008; Andeweg, 2012, p. 103; Pennings & Keman, 2003). Figure 4.1 shows the political landscape in the Netherlands along both dimensions according to the Dutch online voting application *Kieskompas* (2015). At the time of this study, the liberal party *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (People’s party for Freedom and Democracy; VVD) and the Labor party PvdA were in a coalition government.

The party of interest for the present study, the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom; PVV), was founded in 2006 by former VVD MP Geert Wilders. The PVV has participated in Dutch General Elections since 2006, in the European Elections since 2009, and in the Senate elections since 2011 (Parlement & Politiek, n.d.). At the local level, the

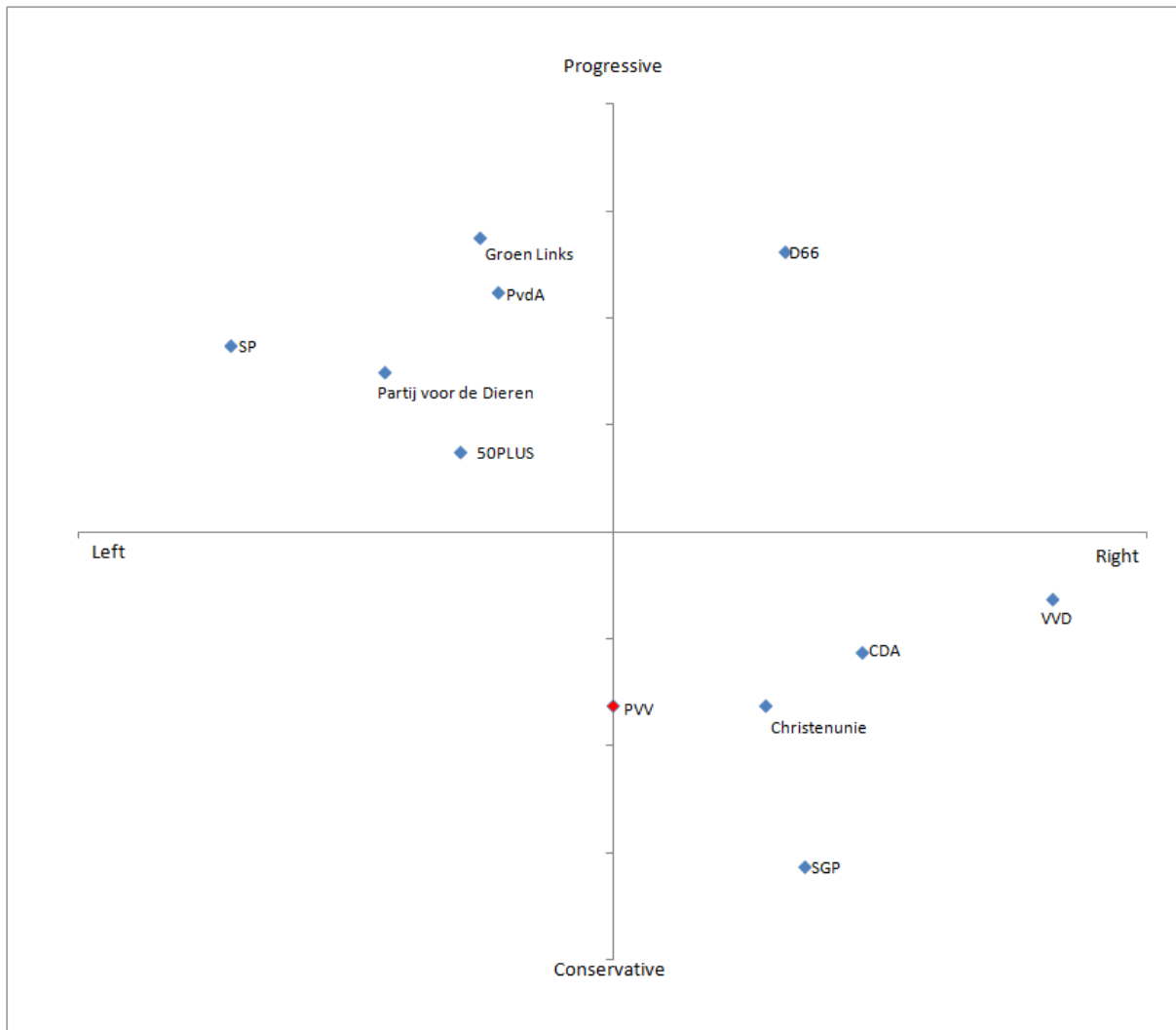


Figure 4.1: *The political landscape in the Netherlands at the time of the 2012 general elections. Source: Kieskompas, 2015.*

PVV is represented only in the municipalities of The Hague and Almere, although Wilders recently announced his ambition to participate in the 2018 local elections in municipalities across the country (NOS, 2016). While the PVV has so far never been in government, the party was involved as a supporting partner in the 2010-2012 minority government consisting of the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats (Lucardie, 2013).

In the Dutch political landscape, the PVV is positioned on the center of the left-right axis and on the conservative side of the progressive-conservative axis (see Figure 4.1). Despite this centrist positioning, the PVV is commonly perceived as a right-wing party. Indeed, the PVV shares the main features of the populist radical right party family, which are nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Rooduijn, 2014, p. 83).

Nativism is defined as “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state. The



Figure 4.2: Screenshot of the PVV website www.pvv.nl (26 April 2016): "Grenzen dicht!" links to a petition demanding to close the borders.

basis for (non) nativeness can be diverse, e.g. ethnic, racial or religious, but will always have a cultural component" (Mudde, 2007, p. 19). In the case of the PVV, we may distinguish country of birth as a broader basis for nativism, and religion as a more specific basis. To be more precise, examples such as the launch of a website where citizens could report problems with Eastern European migrants (Ebels, 2012) and general calls to close the borders (see Figure 4.2) mean that we may classify the PVV as an anti-immigrant party. This is also confirmed in the party's 2012 manifesto:

"The mass immigration is extremely harmful for the Netherlands. Aside from the problems with Islam that we have imported now, we observe an overrepresentation of non-Western immigrants in terms of dependence on welfare, antisemitism, homophobia, discrimination against women, criminality, nuisance, school dropout, and crimes of honor. Non-Western immigrants are costing the Netherlands 7.2 billion euros per year. That is why we should stop immigration of people from Islamic countries. Remigration is a beautiful thing. So we kick out criminals with a non-Dutch nationality immediately and we say goodbye to foreigners who do not have a job: 'work or get lost.'" (Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), 2012, p. 35)

In the example above, the PVV makes an explicit connection between immigration and Islam. Indeed, Muslims are the main target of the PVV's nativism, as is repeatedly

confirmed throughout the party manifesto:

“Another threat is the advance of Islam. This ideology is diametrically opposed to freedom. Not only for its supporters, but for the whole Western world. Progressive politicians are eager to please this totalitarian philosophy. The Party for Freedom says: not even a centimeter space for Islam in the Netherlands. That means that we are happy to combat the crown jewels of Islam in our streets: the minarets, the burkas, the headscarves etc. The people who think they need such matters can just go back. We’d be happy for them to.” (PVV, 2012, p. 26)

“The jihadist coups underline once again the permanent danger of Islam. This totalitarian ideology prescribes its followers everlasting war, up until the moment that the whole world is Islamic. So it is not that surprising that Islam is a lasting source of unrest.” (ibid., p. 46)

Authoritarianism, the second characteristic of the PRR party family, is defined as a preference for a strong law and order (Rooduijn, 2014, p. 82). In this regard, the PVV argues:

“Judges should really come to understand that the Netherlands wants harsher sentences. That is why the Party for Freedom wants minimum sentences. That a rapist faces at least ten years behind bars is the least we can expect. Aggravated assault: 20 years. After three serious violent crimes life sentence: *three strikes you’re out.*” (PVV, 2012, p. 31; emphasis in original)

“The police are here for the citizens and not the other way around. The police should guarantee our safety and that of our children. Therefore, we want police that are ‘all action’ not ‘all talk’. We want not too much emphasis on procedures, and more use of simple rules, so that we can see more blue in the streets.¹ The police will be in charge of the streets again. Of course our cops are selected by decisiveness. People with a taste for woolly socks² can apply for the community center.” (ibid.)

The main characteristics of populism, the third feature of the PRR party family, are anti-elitism and a strong and charismatic leader (Schumacher & Rooduijn, 2013, p. 125). As far as leadership is concerned, “Geert Wilders” equals “PVV”. This is principally due to

¹“Blue in the streets” is a commonly used expression for police presence, referring to the blue color of the Dutch police officers’ uniforms.

²In Dutch “woolly socks” is commonly used to refer to hippies or softies. The “community center” that is mentioned later in the same sentence does not necessarily have similar connotations. Dutch community centers are neighborhood meeting points run by volunteers, that often address issues in the community. In this case, community centers are probably mentioned to contrast their “soft” approach to the proposed tough approach of the police.

the fact that Wilders is still the party's only member in parliament. Moreover, this close and highly public association with the party has served as an important way in which he has mobilized voters to support it (Andeweg, 2012, p. 106; Vossen, 2010, p. 28; Akkerman, 2016, p. 145). This strong connection between Wilders and the PVV is further reflected in the high number of preference votes he receives as compared to his competitors from the VVD and the PvdA. For instance, a quick look at the results of the 2012 General Elections learns that 93% of PVV voters voted for the party leader, while the same was true for only 85% of VVD voters and 81% of PvdA voters (Kiesraad, n.d.; see Figure A.10 for histograms at the municipality level).

In their 2012 party manifesto, the PVV expresses anti-elitism by emphasizing the distinction between a (leftist) elite and the people (Vossen, 2010, pp. 25-7). By giving the title "*Their* Brussels, *our* Netherlands" (emphasis in original) to the manifesto, this distinction is made clear from the very start. Then, it is emphasized repeatedly throughout the manifesto, for instance:

"Over the past decades we have witnessed the slow erosion of our freedom and independence. A proud people drifts into an ever narrower trap. We were lured into it by progressive elites who promised us welfare and made us afraid of the alternative: economic depression and war." (PVV, 2012, p. 10)

"The citizen should have a bigger say. Our crown jewel is called binding referendum. We are happy to let the people judge hot issues. The progressive elites are terrified of the voice of the people. We are not. Open the polls and let the Dutch vote about for instance the multicultural society or the Large-European Empire. Care to lay a bet that the left will lose every time?" (ibid., p. 27)

Moreover, the party manifesto expresses anti-elitism indirectly by adopting a simple, everyday language (Lucardie, 2007, p. 176). In a linguistic analysis of political rhetoric in the Netherlands, Van Leeuwen (2015) distinguishes a number of factors that contribute to Wilders' clear language, among which are a limited use of complex sentences (pp. 71-82), a high number of intensifying adjectives (p. 56), and effective use of style figures such as parallelisms, anaphora, and metaphors. Through a frequent use of definite articles (e.g. "*the* politicians in The Hague, *the* voter, *the* Dutch culture" (p. 65)), Wilders creates clear distinctions between groups. Finally, in a comparison with the discourse of ex-Labor Minister of integration Ella Vogelaar, the analysis shows that the examples that the two politicians use to illustrate their arguments differ in level of concreteness as well. Whereas Vogelaar speaks of groups, for instance "people who used to be excluded can now move more actively in society", Wilders focuses on representative *members* of a group, for example when he states that "Henk and Ingrid are paying for Mohammed and Fatima" (Van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 7). This is an effective way to increase concreteness of an argument

(Van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 135).³

Given the party's critical stance toward elites and Muslims, we may expect to find only few PVV supporters among those groups. Indeed, the 2006 National Election Study found that not a single Muslim actually voted for the PVV. In addition, a large majority of 74% of PVV voters is not religious, a figure that rises to 88% if we consider religious people who do not attend church (Andeweg, 2012, Appendix 6D). While the PVV's anti-Islam rhetoric explains the absence of a Muslim electorate, the party's wider preference for freedom of speech over freedom of religion explains why it is not attractive to practicing voters of other denominations either (ibid., p. 98). Similarly, as can be expected from an anti-elite party, PVV supporters are not typically part of the elite. 41% of PVV voters self-classifies as middle class, while 48% self-classifies as upper working or working class (ibid., Appendix 6D). PVV voters are more often male than female (63% and 37%, respectively) and their mean age is 45 years old (ibid.). In line with the patterns of attitudes toward immigrants discussed in Chapter 1, a recent *Financial Times* analysis further reveals a strong negative relationship between support for the PVV and educational attainment (Ehrenberg-Shannon & Wisniewska, 2017).

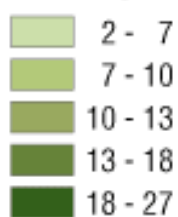
Knowing who votes for the PVV is of course helpful to explain the party's success over the past few years. However, this does not explain *why* this is the case. The Dutch political landscape includes other non-religious parties and even a left-wing populist party – the socialist SP (see Andeweg (2012, p. 108), Mudde (2007, p. 48), Rooduijn, De Lange, and Van der Brug (2012), and Schumacher and Rooduijn (2013) for more details on the SP's populist character). If anti-elitism and a non-religious character are the main factors driving electoral behavior, why exactly do people choose the PVV and not another party with those traits? Moreover, as shown in Figure 4.3, there is considerable variation in support for the PVV across the Netherlands. It seems unlikely that this variation corresponds to variation in socioeconomic status and religiousness across the country. Indeed, the province of Limburg, located in the South-East of the Netherlands, displays one of the highest rates of religiousness in the country (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), 2014, p. 8), while also showing relatively high PVV support (as shown in Figure 4.3). Finally, even if the majority of PVV voters are non-religious members of the working class, this does not necessarily mean that the entire non-religious working class votes for the PVV. Therefore, the question remains: why are some people more likely to vote for the PVV than others?

³Besides expressing anti-elitism, this discourse also relates to the simple ideas that should attract people who experience subjective uncertainty, as discussed in Section 2.2.4.

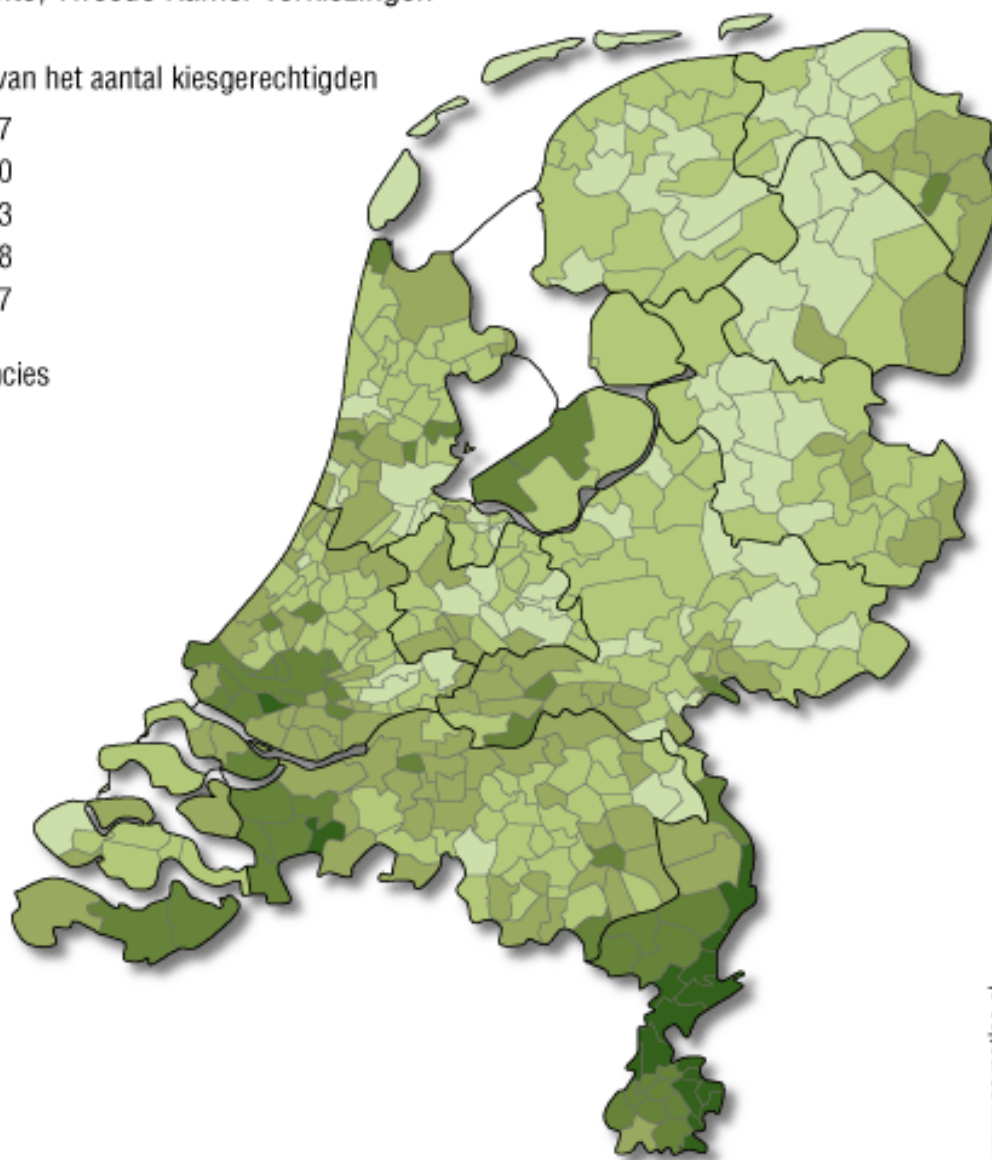
PVV-stemmers 2012

per gemeente, Tweede Kamer verkiezingen

Percentage van het aantal kiesgerechtigden



— provincies



Bron: ANP

www.zorgatlas.nl

Figure 4.3: Support for the PVV per municipality in the 2012 general elections in the Netherlands. Darker colors indicate higher PVV support. Source: Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu, 2014

4.2 Drivers of support for the populist radical right

Of course, the present dissertation is not the first to ask what motivates people to vote for the PRR. While the PVV may be a relatively new phenomenon, the electoral success of parties such as the French *Front National* and the British National Party (BNP) have motivated scholars to study this question for over two decades. In general, these studies distinguish between protest-based and ideology-based explanations of support for the far right (Cutts, Ford, & Goodwin, 2011, p. 420).⁴

Protest-based explanations of support for the far right define the PRR vote as the rejection of other parties in the political spectrum. In the words of Van der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie (2000): “[p]rotest voters want to show their discontent to the political elite by voting for a party that is an outcast in the political arena. The motive for their electoral choices is the party’s perceived opposition to the political regime” (p. 82). Political discontent has been identified as an important driver of right-wing support. For example, in their analysis of the 1988 *Front National* vote, Mayer and Perrineau (1992) conclude that:

It is (...) a vote ‘against’ things; against immigrants and delinquents who are but the scapegoats of their fears, against the political establishment and the parties of government. It is a protest vote, an ‘exutory’ vote as Jérôme Jaffré calls it, more expressive of resentment than instrumental (p. 134).

In a similar vein, feelings of political dissatisfaction have been found to drive support for the BNP (Cutts et al., 2011), the Belgian *Vlaams Blok* (VB), and more generally for extreme right-wing parties throughout Europe (Lubbers et al., 2002). In an analysis of the Dutch Election Survey, Schumacher and Rooduijn (2013) confirm the importance of protest attitudes as a driver of support for populist parties in the Netherlands, both for the left-wing populist SP and the PVV. As Rooduijn (2014) argues, this political disappointment matches the populist character of the PRR party family. This implies that we may expect to find a stronger preference for populism among PVV supporters, possibly expressed in higher levels of political dissatisfaction.

In an analysis of voting behavior in the 1994 European Elections, however, Van der Brug et al. (2000) find only limited support for protest-based voting. Based on the assumption that second order elections are the most appropriate situation to express political dissatisfaction through votes (p. 94), the authors expect to find especially strong

⁴In a post on the Dutch political science blog *Stuk Rood Vlees*, Professor Sarah De Lange (2015) provides a clear definition of the distinction between the extreme right and the radical right. The main difference between the two lies in democratic attitudes. The radical right is defined by the three elements outlined in Section 4.1 – while these elements may challenge the idea of *liberal* democracy, the radical right generally adopts a democratic approach. The extreme right instead propagates violence and is thereby contrary to democratic principles. Despite this clear distinction, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, hence the use of different terms in this discussion.

effects of this motivation on support for anti-immigrant parties. Instead, the analysis reveals that the main driver of support for anti-immigrant parties are attitudes, and attitudes toward immigrants in particular (*ibid.*). Other studies on support for the PRR confirm the importance of attitudes as an explanation of voting behavior. For example, in their analysis of support for the extreme right in Europe, Lubbers et al. (2002) find that higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in a country are related to higher support for the extreme right.⁵ Similarly, analyses of the electoral success of the BNP and the VB confirm the importance of racial attitudes, anti-immigrant sentiment (Cutts et al., 2011; Swyngedouw, 2001) and preferences for a strong law and order (Swyngedouw, 2001) as drivers of support for the far right. For the purpose of the present study, it is relevant to note that Schumacher and Rooduijn (2013) confirm the importance of policy positions also as a motivation for the PVV vote. This implies that we may expect to find higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment among PVV supporters.

A further policy preference that could drive PVV support is related to social policy rather than immigration policy. As shown in Figure 4.1, despite being part of the radical right wing party family, the PVV is not actually all that right wing on the socioeconomic dimension. Indeed, in their party manifesto, the PVV writes: “The Party for Freedom spares issues such as social security. That is our choice: standing up for the people who most need a helping hand. In these hard times a safety net is indispensable!” (PVV, 2012, p. 19). The party argues for protecting social services such as pension programs (p. 19, p. 23) and unemployment benefits (p. 23).

Importantly, the party’s anti-immigrant sentiment is reflected in their economic policy preferences, as well: these social benefits are not supposed to be for everyone. For example, in their discussion of the welfare state, the PVV writes:

“The Party for Freedom plainly chooses to defend our welfare state. This choice automatically leads to the rejection of mass immigration, which costs us 7.2 billion euros a year. In the end it is one or the other. You either pay welfare benefits for the whole world or you unambiguously choose your own population. The Party for Freedom leaves no doubt about which side it is on. This distinguishes us from the leftists who think that open doors and a solid welfare state go well together. We say: stop giving expensive benefits to newcomers. For example, social assistance⁶ is already becoming a hangout for foreigners. We say: migrants have to work in the Netherlands for 10 years before they are entitled to social benefits” (PVV, 2012, p. 22).

This interpretation of the welfare state as a good that is reserved only for “deserving

⁵Lubbers et al. (2002) also make the interesting observation that party characteristics are an important determinant of support for the far right. Since my analysis aims to explain variation in support for one party only, I do not discuss these findings here.

⁶In the original text, the PVV refers to “bijstand”, the lowest form of social benefits for long-term unemployed people without other means of income or wealth.

citizens”, a group in which immigrants are not typically included, is called welfare chauvinism (Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2014; Van der Waal, Achterberg, Houtman, De Koster, & Manevska, 2010). This phenomenon is observed especially among lower educated citizens (Van der Waal et al., 2010, p. 351). If welfare chauvinism is the main policy motivation driving support for the PVV, we may expect this to be higher in Rucphen than in Schijndel.

Based on this discussion, we may expect that PVV voters’ attitudes are motivated either by protest- or policy preferences, and that these preferences are stronger in Rucphen than in Schijndel. Specifically, I hypothesize that:

The PVV vote is motivated by high levels of populism, expressed in political disappointment and anti-elitism (H1).

The PVV vote is motivated by policy preferences, specifically anti-immigrant sentiment (H2a).

The PVV vote is motivated by policy preferences, specifically welfare chauvinism (H2b).

While these hypotheses could serve to explain variation in PVV support, one could argue that their relevance for the study of variation in attitudes toward immigrants is limited. More precisely, observing that there is a correlation between support for the PVV and anti-immigrant sentiment, as stated in Hypothesis 2a, does not tell us why such attitudes are apparently more prevalent in Rucphen than in other parts of the Netherlands. The sociocognitive theory outlined in Chapter 2 can serve to formulate an underlying mechanism to account for variation in both PVV support and attitudes toward immigrants. More specifically, the discussion in Section 2.1.2 proposed a relationship between social identification and attitudes toward out-group members. This implies that we should observe higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment – and consequently higher levels of PVV support – in communities with a stronger group identity.

As discussed in Section 2.1.2, increased social identification implies increased social cohesion. Social cohesion is generally perceived as a positive factor: could it be that it comes with a dark side? A number of empirical examples suggest as much. With a tone of annoyance, Sheri Berman (1997) notes that the widespread belief that social cohesion benefits democracy is “simply not always true” (p. 401), to proceed with an analysis of how it was high —rather than weak —social cohesion that set the ground for Nazism in Germany in the interwar period (see also Allen (1965/1973) for an in-depth analysis of the nazification of a highly cohesive German town). A more recent illustration of the relationship between social cohesion and right-wing ideology is provided by Fitzgerald and Lawrence (2011), who report higher levels of support for the radical right Swiss People’s Party among more cohesive communities. If these findings extend to the Netherlands, we should find that:

- *there is a positive relationship between social cohesion and support for the PVV (H3).*

While the relationship between social cohesion and electoral outcomes may seem ambiguous, this can be understood by taking into account social norms, shared sets of rules that describe how group members (ought to) behave (Forsyth, 2010, p. 145). As discussed in Section 2.1.2, rather than social cohesion alone, it is the combination of social cohesion and group-specific norms that drives behavior. People follow the norms of the groups they identify with and research on social groups such as fraternities and sports teams has shown that compliance increases as a function of identification (e.g. Neighbors et al., 2010; Gammage et al., 2001). Moreover, as outlined in Section 2.1.2, members of more cohesive groups face stronger pressure to conform to group norms (Forsyth, 2010, p. 137). How this affects attitudes toward out-group members depends on the specific norms that a group adheres to: while exclusionary norms should lead to more anti-immigrant sentiment in the group, the Canadian case demonstrates how positive multiculturalist norms can lead to the opposite result (see page 29).

A particularly interesting contribution in this respect is that of Van Assche, Roets, De Keersmaecker, and Van Hiel (2016), who study the relationship between right-wing attitudes⁷ and attitudes toward out-group members at the individual level in environments with varying degrees of right-wing attitudes. The authors find a strong correlation between individual-level right-wing attitudes and prejudice only in environments with low degrees of right-wing attitudes. Specifically, while we observe more negative attitudes toward out-group members among right-wing individuals in contexts with both low and high degrees of right-wing attitudes, in more right-wing environments attitudes toward out-group members are more negative among left-wing individuals, too. In other words, in contexts with a high degree of right-wing attitudes, *everyone* displays negative attitudes toward immigrants, regardless of their personal level of right-wing attitudes. These findings provide a further illustration of how attitudes toward out-group members can be subject to normative influence processes.

While voting is a private behavior, that does not necessarily mean that it is immune to the influence of social norms. As an example of the effect of normative messages in private contexts, consider the famous hotel room study by Goldstein et al. (2008). In the study, people staying in a hotel were presented with different messages that more and less explicitly encouraged them to reuse their towels. While standard appeals to the environmental benefits of reusing towels were not found to be very effective, merely informing hotel guests that 75% of others who had stayed in the same room had reused

⁷It should be noted that “right-wing attitudes” in this study ought to be interpreted in the social psychological rather than the political science definition. The authors distinguish between social-cultural right-wing attitudes (“adherence to traditional rules, submission to authorities imposing discipline, and aversion to deviance” (Van Assche et al., 2016, p. 2)) and economic-hierarchical right-wing attitudes (“the preference for intergroup dominance, social hierarchy, and societal inequality (...), which is based on motivational concerns related to control over economic resources, superiority, and power” (ibid.)).

their towels, led about half of the guests involved in the experiment to reuse their towels themselves (p. 477).

We could imagine a similar mechanism driving voting behavior. More precisely, knowing that 30% of people who are living in the same town voted for the PVV, could lead voters to conform to the norm, and thus vote for the PVV too. As mentioned in Section 2.2.3, it is a well documented finding in the sociological literature that people base their behavior on that of others in their social networks, and research in political science confirms that electoral behavior is no exception to this rule (e.g. Anderson, 2009; Zuckerman, 2005; see the contribution of Zuckerman in this volume for an overview of the evolution of the study of interpersonal influences on electoral behavior). Based on this discussion, we should expect to find that:

- *support for the PVV is contingent upon the prevailing social norms (H4).*

4.3 Cases

To test my hypotheses, I study the case of Rucphen, the municipality with the highest level of PVV voters in the Netherlands for the past six elections (RTL Nieuws, n.d.-b). As a means of illustration, consider the election results reported in Figure 4.4. The figure displays the electoral results of the PVV in Rucphen, Schijndel (more on Schijndel below), and the Netherlands in all the elections in which the party has participated so far. In all elections, support in Rucphen outnumbers the national average by far.⁸ Understanding what drives this massive support for the PVV in one town may help to understand more general mechanisms of PRR support.

Rucphen is a municipality situated in the province of Noord-Brabant, in the south of the Netherlands (see Figure 4.5). The municipality is composed of five so-called “church villages”, five small villages that were traditionally built around a church. On January 1st, 2015, the municipality had a total of 22,233 inhabitants (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), 2015a), spread across the five church villages as follows (Gemeente Rucphen, 2015):

- Sint Willebrord: 8987 inhabitants
- Sprundel: 4954 inhabitants
- Rucphen: 4764 inhabitants
- Zegge: 1967 inhabitants

⁸While this study was carried out before the 2017 General Elections, and therefore the present chapter does not include data for this most recent election, the results correspond with the patterns described here. 38.9% of the voters in Rucphen voted for the PVV, as compared to a national average of 13.0% (RTL Nieuws, n.d.-c). Schijndel has since merged into the new municipality of Meierijstad, where the PVV reached 13% (ibid.).

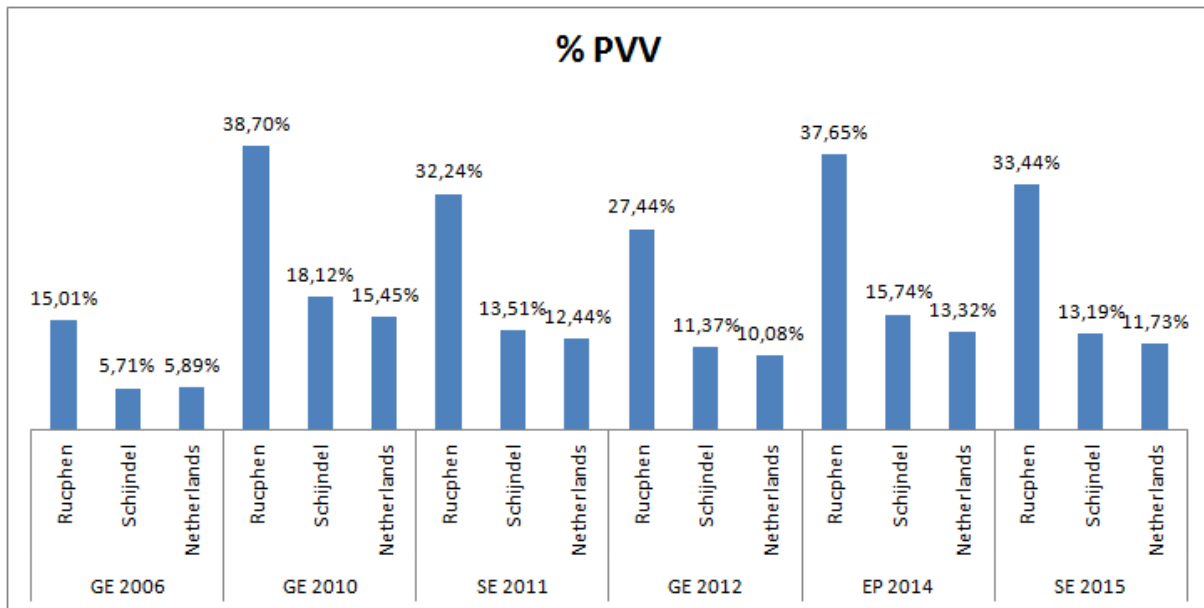


Figure 4.4: *Electoral success of the PVV in the General Elections of 2006, 2010, and 2012, the Senate Elections of 2011 and 2015, and the European Elections of 2014 in Rucphen, Schijndel, and the Netherlands. Source: own calculations Kiesraad, n.d..*

- Schijf: 1561 inhabitants

A map of the municipality and the five “church villages” is included in the Appendix (Figure A.9).

To better understand which factors drive high local PVV support, throughout this chapter I compare the town of Rucphen to that of Schijndel. Schijndel was chosen to match Rucphen on a number of important characteristics, while differing on the level of PVV support. As shown in Figure 4.4, levels of support for the PVV in Schijndel lie around the national average. Understanding how two towns that are similar in many ways can have such different election results can help to identify more general drivers of PRR support.

With 23,543 inhabitants, Schijndel is of similar size as Rucphen (CBS, 2015a). Both municipalities are characterized by a low degree of urbanization, with between 500 and 1000 addresses per km². Indeed, in a report by the Dutch National Statistics Agency, both score a 4 out of 5 on an urbanization scale where 1 is very high and 5 is very low urbanization (CBS, 2012, p. 51). Like Rucphen, Schijndel is located in the traditionally Catholic region of Noord-Brabant (Figure 4.5). Not surprisingly, a majority of inhabitants of both towns identifies as Catholic (see Figure 4.6), although only 8.7% of the inhabitants of Rucphen and 5.8% in Schijndel attends church regularly (CBS, 2014).

To rule out competition-based explanations of support for the PRR, I matched both towns on economic factors. As shown in Figure 4.7, immigration rates in Rucphen and Schijndel are low compared to the Dutch average, as is the share of non-Western immigrants. As shown in Table 4.1, both towns enjoy a higher average income, a lower



Figure 4.5: *The municipalities of Rucphen (black) and Schijndel (grey) in the province of Noord-Brabant (green) in the Netherlands. Source: RegioAtlas, 2015.*

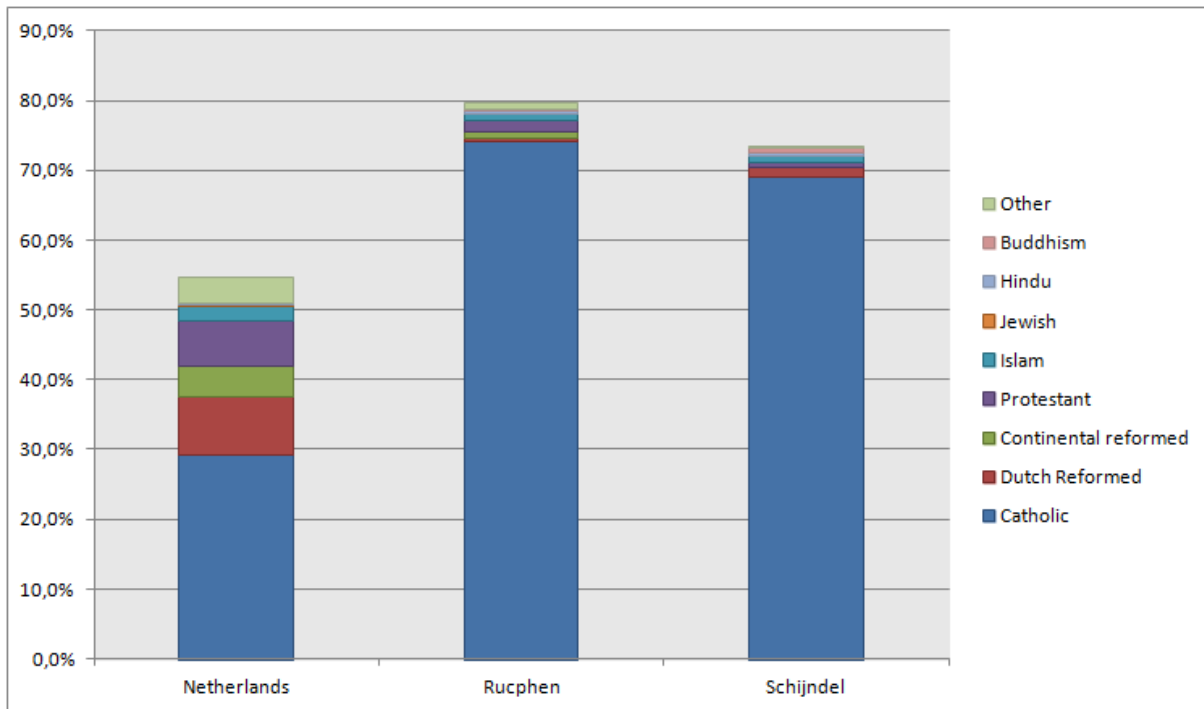


Figure 4.6: *Religious denomination for the Netherlands, Rucphen, and Schijndel. Source: own calculations CBS (2014) data.*

unemployment rate, and a lower share of households on welfare benefits than the national average. While Rucphen especially has a relatively large share of inhabitants with low education (Figure 4.8), a χ^2 test did not reveal significant differences with the Dutch national mean or between the two towns.

For the purposes of the present study it is relevant to remember that the PVV is locally represented in only two Dutch municipalities (as mentioned on page 84), including neither Rucphen, nor Schijndel.

Table 4.1: *Economic variables in 2012 for the Netherlands, Rucphen, and Schijndel. Source: (Kwaliteitsinstituut Nederlandse Gemeenten (KING), 2015).*

Area	% Unemployment	% Households on welfare benefits	Mean disposable income per household
The Netherlands	7.5	4.8	€34,500
Rucphen	6.8	2.4	€35,300
Schijndel	6.0	2.0	€35,800

4.4 Methods

How can it be that the PVV attracts so many more voters in Rucphen than in Schijndel, while the two towns are so similar in terms of religion, size, immigration rate, income, and education level? In order to test the above formulated hypotheses on political

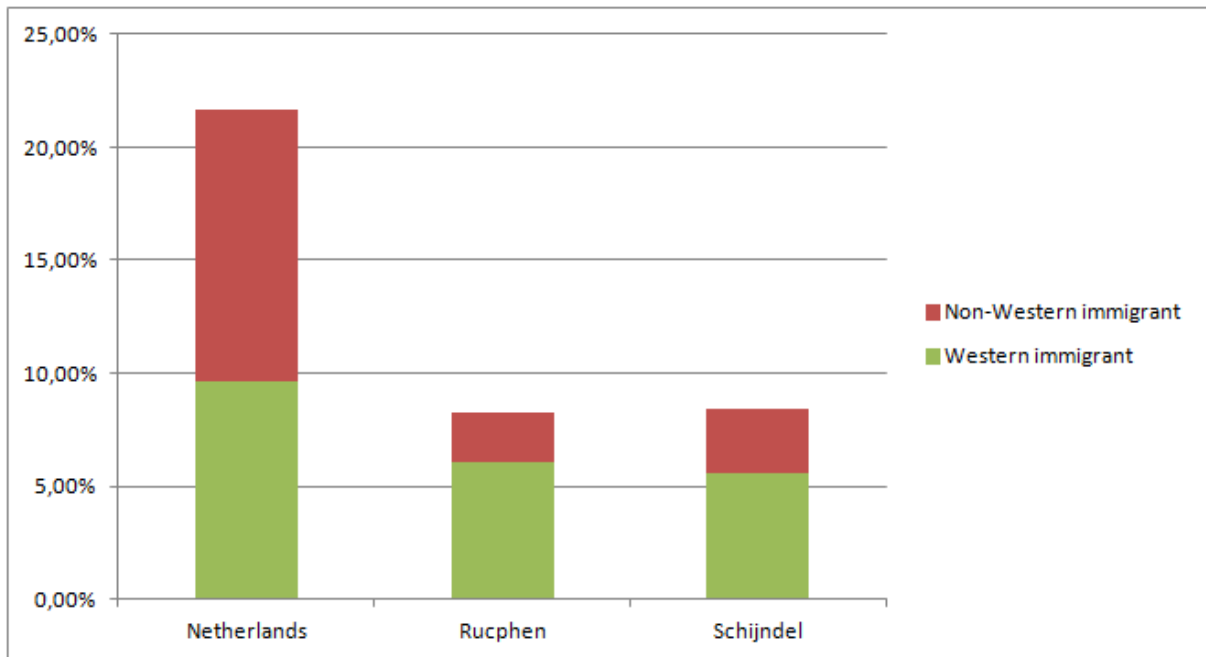


Figure 4.7: Immigration figures by origin for the Netherlands, Rucphen, and Schijndel as of 1 January 2015. Source: own calculations CBS, 2015a data.

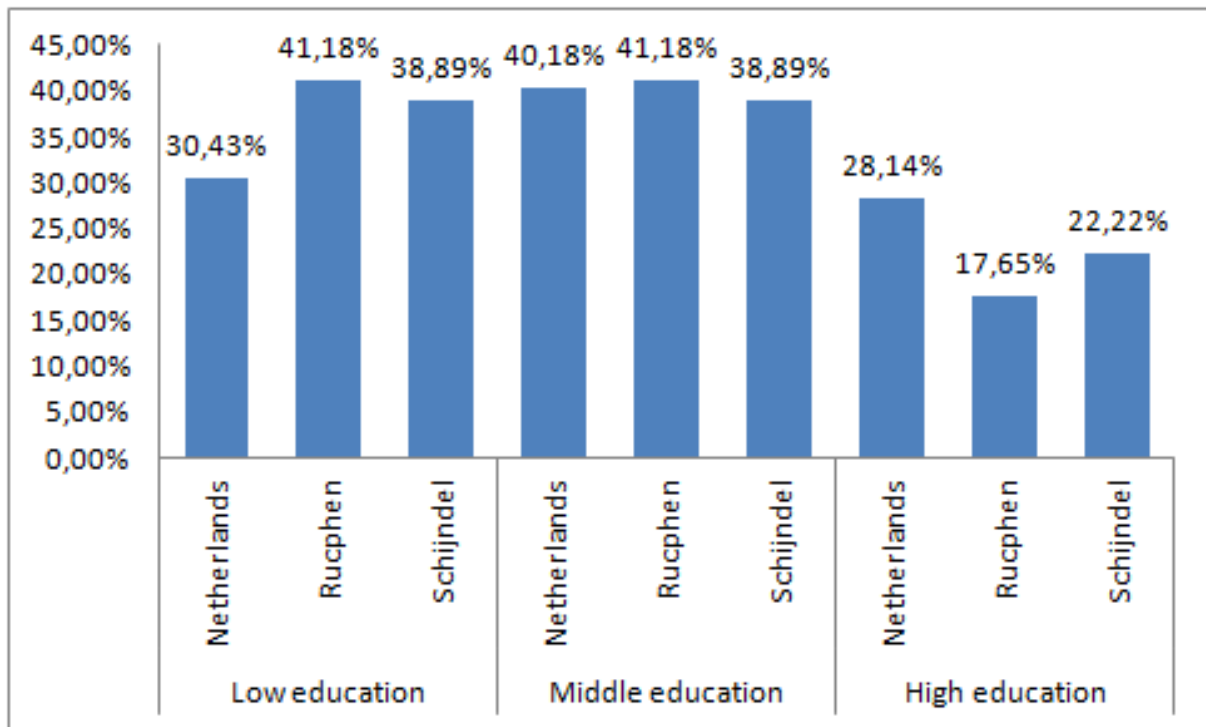


Figure 4.8: Education level in the Netherlands, Rucphen, and Schijndel in 2014. Source: own calculations CBS, 2015a.

disappointment, attitudes toward immigrants, welfare chauvinism, social cohesion, and social norms, I use a combination of election data, interviews, survey data, and a lost-letter experiment. I discuss my methods in more detail below.

4.4.1 Election data

As argued by Schumacher and Rooduijn (2013), political disappointment should increase attraction not only to PRR parties, but to populist parties more generally. This implies that, if residents of Rucphen display higher levels of political disappointment, we should find high levels of support not only for the PVV but also for the left-wing populist SP (as mentioned on page 88). To test this possibility, I compare municipality-level data on electoral outcomes for the PVV and the SP for all elections in which the PVV participated since its foundation in 2006. These include general, Senate, and European elections. The data was retrieved from the online archives of the Dutch election authority (Kiesraad, n.d.).

In addition, I use the results of the 2012 General Elections to study the relationship between PVV support and social cohesion. The election data are again retrieved from the online archives of the Dutch election authority (Kiesraad, n.d.). I discuss the social cohesion data in more detail below.

4.4.2 Interviews

I carried out a series of semi-structured interviews to test my hypotheses on political disappointment, attitudes toward immigrants, welfare chauvinism, social cohesion, and social norms. Besides testing these hypotheses, the interviews form an important addition to the quantitative data in this study by providing insight into factors that are not well captured by quantitative measures, or that I did not initially formulate research hypotheses on. For instance, the difference in support for the PVV between the two towns suggests that there are higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in Rucphen than in Schijndel. Even if this is confirmed by survey measures, however, we can still not be confident as to *why* this is the case. Semi-structured interviews allow forming a deeper understanding of what drives these attitudes, and thereby offer an important complementary perspective on the issue (see Blundo & Olivier de Sardan, 2006 for a more detailed discussion of the value of anthropological methods for the study of sensitive topics).

The interviews were carried out between 8 and 18 July 2015. For all interviews, I approached people during the day at supermarkets or at the weekly local market (on Saturday in both towns) with the request for a short interview about their experience of living in Rucphen or Schijndel. Given the nature of my research question, I aimed to interview native Dutch citizens only, and therefore I only approached white people. In addition, I only approached people who were alone, in order to avoid people influencing

Table 4.2: *Description of the interview sample.*

	Rucphen	Schijndel
Number of interviewees	20	21
Mean age	56.05	49.48
Number of women	12	12
Number of unemployed	3	3
Number of retired	4	4
Number of students	1	1
Number of housewives	3	0
Number born elsewhere	7	8

each other, and to avoid a possible social desirability bias provoked by peers. I further tried to make my interviewees feel more comfortable by recording all interviews with pen and paper only. Since it is fair to assume that they were not used to being interviewed, I hoped that this would allow them to speak more freely.

Some main characteristics of the thus acquired sample are reported in Table 4.2. As the table shows, the samples are largely comparable. The most noteworthy difference is that there are three housewives in the Rucphen sample, as compared to none in Schijndel. Moreover, the Rucphen sample is slightly older. Further descriptions of the interview samples, as well as an outline of the interview questions are reported in the Appendix (Table A.5 and A.6).

In addition, I carried out three expert interviews with local politicians from different political backgrounds in Rucphen, and with a journalist for a local newspaper in Schijndel. While the interviews allow forming a more in-depth understanding of what drives attitudes toward immigrants and PVV support, as discussed above, the small number of interviewees will limit the generalizability of my findings. I discuss this point in more detail in the conclusion.

I use the interviews as measures for all the hypotheses discussed above. A coding scheme including indicators and typical examples for each hypothesis is provided in the Appendix (Table A.8).

4.4.3 Survey data

To test the hypothesis that PVV support is correlated with local social cohesion, I use the WoON2012 dataset (Dutch Ministry of Internal affairs (BZK)/CBS, 2013), a national survey on living circumstances including housing but also neighborhood factors. The dataset includes 69,339 observations for all 414 Dutch municipalities (in 2012), including 52 respondents in Rucphen and 51 in Schijndel. Using Principal Component Analysis with orthogonal rotation I created a scale for neighborhood cohesion consisting of the following items:

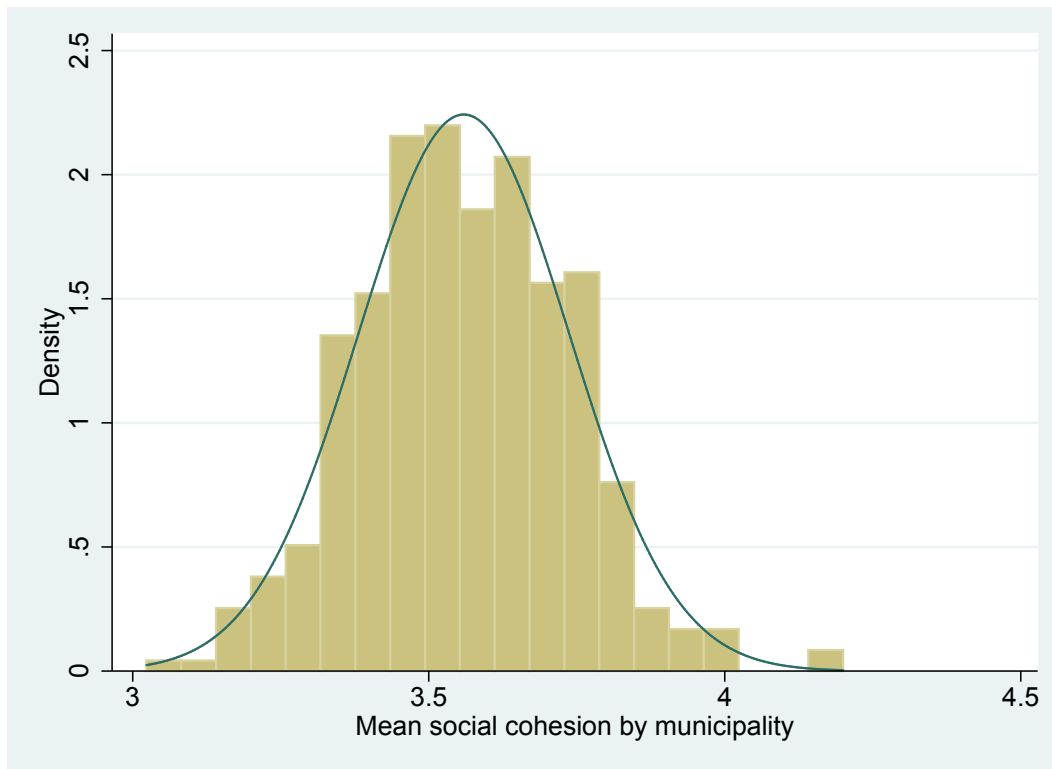


Figure 4.9: *Distribution of cohesion at the municipality level across the Netherlands.* Source: own calculations BZK/CBS, 2013 data.

- To what extent do you agree with the following statements:
 - I have a lot of contact with my direct neighbors.
 - I have a lot of contact with others from the neighborhood.
 - In this neighborhood people interact in a pleasant way.
 - I live in a cozy neighborhood with a strong community feeling.
 - People in this neighborhood hardly know each other.

All items were measured on a 5-point scale which was recoded where necessary such that a higher score expressed a higher level of cohesion. They were then combined into a scale by calculating the mean of the five items. Cronbach's α of the scale was .82.

For the purpose of the analysis, I calculated the mean cohesion score for each municipality. Due to merged municipalities over the years and missing data for some cases, combining the various datasets led to a final sample of 402 municipalities. Figure 4.9 displays the distribution of social cohesion across the municipalities in the sample. As the graph shows, social cohesion is generally rather high and normally distributed. With a score of 3.49, Rucphen scores just below the national average of 3.56. I discuss this in more detail in Section 4.5.3.

As I discuss in more detail in Section 4.5.3, I compare the cohesion scores with the results of the 2012 elections in each municipality (Kiesraad, n.d.). I control for

municipality-level immigration- and unemployment rates, rurality, education level, mean age, and municipality size using data from CBS (2015a; 2015b; 2012). As above (page 95), rurality is measured on a scale where 1 is very high and 5 is very low urbanization (CBS, 2012, p. 51). As a measure of education level, I use the percentage of inhabitants who score in the “high education” category of the scale used in Figure 4.8.

4.4.4 Lost-letter experiment

As a further test of anti-immigrant sentiment and social cohesion, I use a lost-letter experiment. The lost-letter technique was first introduced by Milgram, Mann, and Harter (1965) to measure attitudes toward different institutions. In the experiment, envelopes with an address and a stamp are dropped on the street, as if someone had lost them. Since the letters will only be returned if a passerby makes the effort to pick them up and put them in a mailbox, the return rate can be used as a measure of cooperative behavior (Koopmans & Veit, 2014a, p. 380). In addition, by varying the addressees of the letters, it is possible to measure preferences towards different groups. Besides the political institutions of the original experiment, this technique has been applied to measure attitudes toward various issues ranging from different medical practices (Kern & Yeaton, 2010) and sexual orientations (Bridges, Anzalone, Ryan, & Anzalone, 2002), to different ethnic and religious groups such as Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland (Silva & Mace, 2014), Arabs and Swedes in Sweden (Ahmed, 2010), Turks and Germans and Muslim and Christian organizations in Berlin (Koopmans & Veit, 2014a), and Turks and Dutch people in the Netherlands (Volker, Mollenhorst, Steenbeek, Schutjens, & Flap, 2015).

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, it is often argued that there is a negative relationship between ethnic diversity and trust. Trust, in turn, can affect a variety of behaviors, among which is cooperation. This theory led Koopmans and Veit (2014a) to hypothesize that return rates in a lost-letter experiment in Berlin would be lower in more ethnically-diverse neighborhoods. Their findings confirmed their hypothesis, implying that the lost-letter experiment could also serve as a measure of neighborhood cohesion. Even in relatively homogeneous communities, cooperative behavior should increase as a function of trust and cohesion. In other words, if PVV support is contingent on social cohesion, as stated in hypothesis 3, we should find higher return rates in Rucphen than in Schijndel.

However, it is unclear to what extent lower return rates of letters in ethnically diverse neighborhoods are actually driven by trust, at least in the Netherlands: a study of 110 Dutch neighborhoods combining the lost-letter technique with survey data confirmed the negative effects of ethnic diversity on return rates, but did not detect a relationship between return rates on the one hand, and social cohesion and trust on the other (Volker et al., 2015). While this point may invalidate the lost-letter experiment as a measure for

the social cohesion hypothesis, it still constitutes a measure of cooperation. In addition, by varying the names of the addressees on the envelopes, the experiment can form a measure of prejudice, which is relevant for the attitudes toward immigrants hypothesis (H2a).

In the present experiment, I distinguish between Dutch and Moroccan addressees. To minimize the risk that one individual would find two letters addressed to the same person, thereby raising suspicion, I chose two names for each category. Names were chosen based on how common they are in the Netherlands. For the Dutch names I relied on my own experience while for the Moroccan names I consulted a discussion about common Moroccan names in the Netherlands on a Dutch forum for people with a Moroccan background (Maroc.NL Community, 2005). The Dutch names were Jan de Vries and Sander de Jong. The Moroccan names were Mohammed Amrani and Achmed ben Salah. All letters were sent to the same Amsterdam address. The envelopes contained a short message, as well as a unique identifier code which allowed me to understand where the letter had been dropped.

The sampling strategy of the experiment was based on the number of mailboxes in the two towns. For each mailbox, a circle with a radius of 200 meters was drawn around the exact address. Then, a 75 x 75 meter grid was placed behind the map and four squares in which the letters would be distributed were chosen randomly. I planned to spread the distribution of the letters across three days, again to minimize the risk that one person would find more than one letter, thereby avoiding suspicion. Therefore, one of three days was assigned randomly to each selected square. In this way, two letters with a Dutch addressee and two letters with a Moroccan addressee were dropped across three different days at a range of 200 meters from each mailbox in the two municipalities. With 21 mailboxes in Rucphen and 18 in Schijndel, this approach led to a total of 84 and 72 letters, respectively.⁹

The letters were dropped on weekdays between 9 and 16 July 2015. Mondays were excluded because there is no mail service in the Netherlands on Mondays. On 14 July, the weather forecast was good, but it turned out to drizzle and sometimes rain during most of the day. Since I dropped letters in both towns simultaneously that day, this is not a problem for the experiment, as the weather conditions were similar in both cases. Indeed, statistical analyses do not reveal significant differences in returns between the towns for that day.¹⁰

⁹I thank Max Schaub for designing this sampling strategy.

¹⁰During one of the first rounds in Rucphen I saw a mailman picking up a letter and putting it in a nearby mailbox. Although this is, of course, problematic for the experiment as it is supposed to measure cooperative behavior of the local population and not the quality of the mail service, I assume it does not significantly skew my results. The first reason for this is that removing the letter in question from my analyses does not substantially alter my results. In addition, mailmen in the Netherlands work all through the day so it would have been impossible to avoid them altogether. In other words, I expect the “mailman bias” to be of equal size in both Rucphen and Schijndel. I assume that any differences I find between the two towns are due to the behavior of their residents and not of their mailmen.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Populism

The PVV expresses populism both directly, by framing the political arena in terms of the good people versus the corrupted elite (Vossen, 2010), and indirectly, by adopting a simple language (Lucardie, 2007; Van Leeuwen, 2015). If populism is the reason that people vote for the PVV, we may expect that these two populist elements at the party level are reflected in voters' attitudes (Rooduijn, 2014). Given that PVV support is higher in Rucphen, we should find higher levels of anti-elitism and preferences for the PVV's rhetoric in Rucphen than in Schijndel. As shown by the results presented below, these hypotheses are supported by my interviews.

While none of my interviewees in Schijndel refers to Wilders' rhetoric, two of the local politicians and several citizens of Rucphen mention the importance of clear language, as shown in the examples below:

“Because it's simply direct, it comes from the heart, no nonsense, that's what a Willebrorder¹¹ stands for. Wilders, he's not afraid to speak out. People rely on his language. Just as it was with farmer Koekoek, with Janmaat, with Pim Fortuyn¹²...”. (Rucphen, local politician)

“When I joined the city council back in the days they gave me a pocket dictionary for political jargon. I threw it out right away. Politics calls for clear language”. (Rucphen, 56-year old male retired construction worker)

One of my interviewees takes this further and tries to explain why exactly Wilders' rhetoric is attractive for the residents of Rucphen:

“Look, it's just that the education level around here is very low. And people like that are more easily convinced by Wilders' message. People around here think in simple ways. Wilders has a simple message and that's attractive for them”. (Rucphen, 61-year old male unemployed construction worker)

This construction worker is not alone in this interpretation of education level as a driver of PVV support. Two local politicians propose the same, and one of them even suggests that a low education level is related to a fear of loss, and that this fear is used by the PVV to sell their views on migration. While this latter point in particular echoes the uncertainty theory outlined in Chapter 2, we should remember that there was no significant difference in education level between Rucphen and Schijndel (see Figure 4.8), and therefore this is not a plausible explanation of the different electoral outcomes. Although Wilders'

¹¹Resident of the Sint Willebrord area of Rucphen.

¹²Populist politicians of the past. Koekoek, Janmaat, and Fortuyn were the leaders of the *Boerenpartij*, the *Centrum Democraten*, and *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, respectively.

rhetoric certainly seems more effective in Rucphen, we cannot conclude that this is due to differences in education level.

Besides revealing a stronger attraction to Wilders' rhetoric in Rucphen, the interviews provide support for the protest vote hypothesis as well. Interestingly, while there were no questions on political disappointment included in the interview, Rucphen interviewees spontaneously expressed political disappointment more often than their Schijndel counterparts, as shown for example in the following quotes:

“It doesn't matter who you vote for because they'll do whatever they want anyway. You can tell because everything is only getting worse”. (Rucphen, 28-year old female secretary)

“I don't vote because it doesn't matter. In the end they'll do what they want anyway”. (Rucphen, 53-year old male unemployed road mender)

“The foreigners are not to blame! But you know, I voted for Geert Wilders myself. Not because of the foreigners but because the others simply don't do anything so I thought I'd try Wilders this time”. (Rucphen, 60-year old male civil servant)

In line with this latter interpretation of the PVV vote as a vote against the political establishment, local politicians unanimously interpret the PVV vote as a protest vote, or “a vote against”.

In short, the interviews reveal a taste for populist rhetoric as well as certain levels of political disappointment in Rucphen. These results provide support for the populism hypothesis, thereby implying that left-wing populist parties should be able to benefit from this susceptibility to populism as well. Figure 4.10 compares the electoral results of the PVV and the SP since the first elections that the PVV participated in, in 2006. If the SP successfully capitalized on the taste for populism in Rucphen, we should find similar patterns for both parties. While this seems to be the case for the 2006 elections in Rucphen, and for most elections in Schijndel, the other results do not support this hypothesis. Year after year, electoral support for the PVV in Rucphen far outweighs that for the SP. More importantly, trends of electoral support over time for both parties vary greatly. This suggests that, despite the stronger taste for simple language and higher levels of political disappointment in Rucphen, this is not sufficient to explain: (1) the high level of PVV (and not SP) support in Rucphen, and; (2) the difference in electoral outcomes between the two towns. In short, while populism may be an element of PVV support, there should be additional factors that can account for the preference for the PVV in Rucphen. This is in line with attitude-based explanations of PRR support.

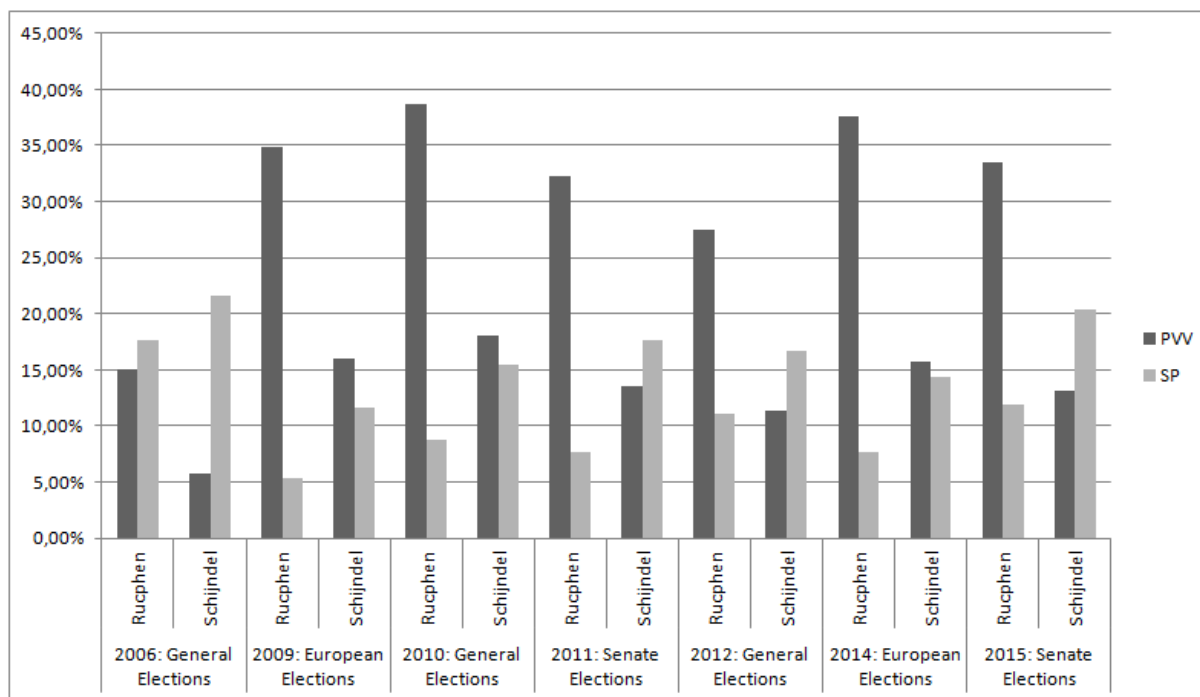


Figure 4.10: Election results of the past 10 years for the PVV and the SP by town. The 2007 Senate elections are not included in this figure since the PVV did not participate. Source: own calculations Kiesraad, n.d..

4.5.2 Policy preferences

Welfare chauvinism

An attitude- rather than protest-based explanation of the PRR vote implies that we should observe that voters share policy preferences with populist radical right parties. Besides higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment (which I will discuss starting from page 107), we expect to find higher levels of welfare chauvinism in Rucphen than in Schijndel. Indeed, it seems that residents of Rucphen clearly make the connection between the PVV and their redistribution preferences, as the quote below shows:

“We don’t have any rights anymore and [immigrants] just get everything for free. Eighty percent of the people around here see it like that and that is why everyone votes for the PVV. This used to be a family town and it has turned into a town with all kinds of people. And those foreigners get priority treatment! There are people here waiting for a house and those immigrants and asylum seekers just get it, just like that! It’s unfair. In the daily interaction there aren’t really any problems, it’s just that it isn’t organized fairly at the top”. (Rucphen, 48-year old housewife)

Six out of twenty interviewees in Rucphen refer to redistribution issues. Interestingly, only two of these do so when asked about their attitudes toward immigrants; the other four only bring up welfare chauvinism as an explanation for the high levels of PVV support

in the town. In contrast, only three out of 21 interviewees in Schijndel bring up welfare chauvinism, but always in relation to their attitudes toward immigrants, as shown, for example, by the quote below:

“It shouldn’t become too massive. Those people all arrive in Italy and of course we should help house them but it shouldn’t be too massive. All those people need insurance and help. We have always worked hard to achieve what we have and now we should give it to them? While there are poor Dutch people too. If you’ve worked your whole life and you lose your job you can’t afford to pay your mortgage anymore. Or if you are widowed... those people need our help too. Why don’t we help the Dutch first?” (Schijndel, 63-year old female retired medical taxi driver)

Although residents of Rucphen express concerns with fairness of redistribution more often than residents of Schijndel, instances of welfare chauvinism are limited in both towns. Interestingly, when fairness of redistribution is mentioned in Schijndel, it is linked to attitudes toward immigrants. Instead, in Rucphen this issue is mentioned in relation to the local voting behavior. This implies firstly that there is a connection between perceptions of fairness and attitudes toward immigrants. More importantly, this finding implies that the PVV successfully communicated its policy preferences. People understand that a vote for the PVV is a vote for a different redistribution of resources. Although the differences between the two towns are limited, and therefore there is little support for the welfare chauvinism hypothesis (H2b), these findings suggest that the residents of Rucphen make an informed decision when voting for the PVV. This observation provides tentative support for an attitudinal explanation of the PVV vote.

Anti-immigrant sentiment

“Probably there is so much PVV support around here because the people here are a bit racist. They don’t want black people; they don’t want foreigners”.
(Rucphen, 77-year old male retired restaurant/bar owner)

As the quote above shows, the connection between the PVV vote and anti-immigrant sentiment is easily made by residents of Rucphen. Indeed, if PRR support is informed by voters’ attitudes, we should expect to observe more anti-immigrant attitudes in communities with higher levels of PVV support. Interestingly, this is not what the interviews show. When asked their opinion about immigration, seven out of twenty interviewees in Rucphen and eight out of 21 interviewees in Schijndel express prejudiced attitudes. The *nature* of these comments, however, is different. Consider these typical examples of prejudiced comments from Rucphen:

“I’m actually happy with the fact that there are not so many foreigners. Why? Well, I just feel they’re not very clean, they have lots of kids, the food that they cook is smelly, they’re noisy... It’s just a very different culture and it clashes. If you live in South Africa where there’s dust everywhere it may not matter so much but here people are obsessed with cleaning”. (Rucphen, 39-year old female employee of accountancy firm)

“You should see what those gardens look like... and the trash... I can tell you, I had mice running on my counter tops because the Moroccan family living on that side threw their garbage against that wall. Yeah, that’s how they do things over there”. (Rucphen, 48-year old housewife)

Four out of seven prejudiced comments in Rucphen refer to discrepancies between immigrants’ habits and the local norms in Rucphen. As the following quote shows, the key to successful integration seems to lie in adjustment:

“There was this Pakistani family here, I remember bringing them a chair, they were given a house by the municipality. But it just doesn’t work, you come in there and the curtains are hanging on the floor, the whole house is a mess, that’s how they do things over there in Pakistan. When I worked in the port, there was this Moroccan, he adjusted, that was a good kid. He was religious but if we had a beer together he would have one with us, and his wife didn’t have to do all that crazy stuff”. (Rucphen, 73-year old male retired dock worker)

In contrast, people in Schijndel seem to be more concerned with cultural threat. While three out of eight prejudiced comments in Schijndel are related to general cultural differences between immigrants and the Dutch population, half of the comments express a sense of cultural threat, as the examples below show:

“Sure they can come, as long as they leave again. And let us be. You can see it happening with this Black Pete and Saint Nicholas¹³ discussion: they’re trying to take over the country”. (Schijndel, 40-year old female home care worker)

“Immigration is fine but it shouldn’t become too massive. They shouldn’t take over the place. As my father always used to say: when the blacks are in power you should be careful. Whether it’s in church or in government. And they’re there you know!” (Schijndel, 63-year old female retired medical taxi driver)

¹³Black Pete is the highly contested dark-skinned helper of Saint Nicholas, the Dutch equivalent of Santa Claus. In recent years, the looks of Black Pete have been strongly debated in Dutch society and abroad. Opponents (among which is the UN) say that Pete’s dark skin refers to slavery and see him as a symbol of discrimination toward black people, while supporters say Pete is dark skinned only because he brings presents through the chimney, and therefore he is merely an innocent figure that is part of a traditional children’s holiday. Since 2014, and more so in 2015, changes have been made to Black Pete’s looks, introducing also White Petes.

We do not observe similar perceptions of cultural threat among any of the interviewees in Rucphen. In other words, while there is no difference in the number of anti-immigrant expressions between the two towns, it seems that the drivers of these expressions are qualitatively different. Whereas norm transgressions are the main problem in Rucphen, in Schijndel a sense of cultural threat is more salient. I will come back to this point in Section 4.5.4.

Importantly, it seems that this anti-immigrant sentiment is not necessarily translated into discriminatory behavior – sometimes even quite the contrary. For example, when a Rucphen-based Armenian family did not receive a residence permit and had to leave the country in the 1990's, residents of the town started a petition in an attempt to overturn the expulsion (De Stem, 1996). Similarly, while the construction of a temporary home for asylum seekers in Schijndel in the 1990's was originally met with negative reactions in the town, these feelings faded over time and most people did not even notice when it closed a few years later (Jan van Alphen, personal communication, 18 July 2015). One of my interviewees even recalls visiting the asylum seeker home with the local Carnival association to introduce the newcomers to the local culture.

The impression that anti-immigrant sentiment is not reflected by behavior is confirmed by the results of the lost-letter experiment. In case there was no discrimination we would expect equal return rates for Dutch and Moroccan names while in case of discrimination against foreigners we would expect higher return rates for Dutch addressees. While the Schijndel sample shows the expected pattern of similar return rates for Dutch and Moroccan names (23 out of 36 and 22 out of 36 letters, or 63.9% and 61.1%, respectively), for the Rucphen sample *more* letters for Moroccan addressees are returned. Specifically, 23 out of 42 letters (54.8%) for Dutch addressees, and 33 out of 42 letters (78.6%) for Moroccan addressees are returned (see Figure 4.11). This is a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2=5.36$; $p=.02$). The results for Schijndel are in line with another lost-letter experiment in the Netherlands (Volker et al., 2015), as well as with Swedish (Ahmed, 2010) and German (Koopmans & Veit, 2014a) applications of the paradigm, none of which find significant differences in return rates by ethnic condition. While the surprising finding for Rucphen is hard to interpret, based on these results we can certainly not conclude that the behavior of the residents of Rucphen is driven by prejudice.

In short, while there certainly seems to be some anti-immigrant sentiment in Rucphen, the level does not seem to differ from the observed attitudes toward immigrants in Schijndel. Moreover, the lost-letter experiment does not reveal behavioral effects of anti-immigrant sentiment in either of the towns. On the basis of these results together, the hypothesis that we can explain the differences in support for the PVV from variation in anti-immigrant sentiment (Hypothesis 2a) is rejected.

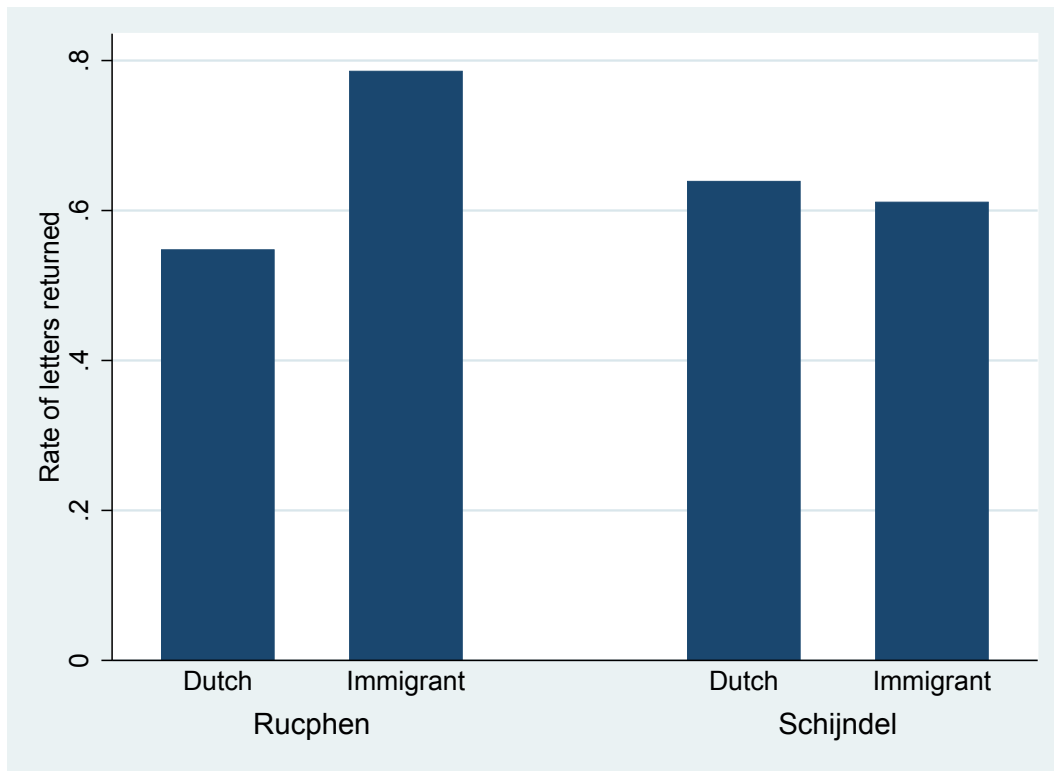


Figure 4.11: *Return rates by municipality and name condition. The difference is statistically significant in Rucphen but not in Schijndel.*

4.5.3 Social cohesion

If there is a correlation between PVV support and social cohesion, we should observe higher levels of social cohesion in Rucphen than in Schijndel. Indeed, it seems that Rucphen is characterized by high levels of social cohesion, as shown for example in the following quote:

“I am a widow but I am not the least bit lonely. I have many social contacts. My neighbors sometimes take out the trash for me even though my children live close by; everyone helps each other out down here. Everyone around here works in construction and if they want to build a house they just do it together. Maybe one is a carpenter, the next is a roofer... that way everyone helps each other”. (Rucphen, 78-year old female retired bus driver)

A 56-year old retired construction worker summarizes it as “that so-called participation society¹⁴ has been around for centuries already in this place”. This strong social cohesion extends not only to the typical residents of Rucphen, as reflected for example by the public reactions to the expulsion of an Armenian family in the 1990’s (see page 109), or more recently when the mayor’s car was set ablaze (NOS, 2015). In the words of a local

¹⁴The “participation society” is a recent idea in Dutch politics that comes down to encouraging people to take care of each other instead of relying on the welfare state.

politician: “they are one of us and you have to keep your hands off of them”. With this social cohesion comes typical small-town gossip:

“Everyone knows each other. If something happens around here everyone will know within half an hour. But it also means that if you hurt your toe on this side of town, on the other side they’ll hear that you broke your leg”. (Rucphen, 48-year old housewife)

Schijndel seems very different in this respect. Although some interviewees call the town close-knit, others tell me they do not actually know who is living across the street from them.

The high level of social cohesion in Rucphen is confirmed by a survey of newspaper articles about the town (retrieved using LexisNexis). These articles —not coincidentally often focusing on the local voting behavior —provide similar accounts to what emerged from the interviews: the general impression is that of a small, cohesive community where everyone knows each other (one article even describes how it consists of only 7 to 8 families (Van Schoonhoven, 2012)), and helps each other out (e.g. Thie, 2009; Van de Wier, 2015; Leeftang, 2016).

I use the lost-letter experiment as a further measure of social cohesion. If social cohesion is higher in Rucphen than in Schijndel, we should observe higher return rates in the former town. This is not what the experiment shows. Overall, 101 out of 156 letters were returned, which means an overall return rate of 64.7%.¹⁵ This is slightly lower than the figure of 70% that Volker et al. (2015) report as the Dutch average (p. 12). As shown in Figure 4.12, the return rate for Rucphen was slightly higher than that for Schijndel. This difference, 66.7% as compared to 62.5%, was however not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.29$; $p = .59$). Given that neighborhood cohesion and return rates in lost-letters experiments are not necessarily related in the Netherlands (see Volker et al., 2015), this finding does not necessarily undermine the hypothesis that social cohesion sets Rucphen apart.

As in another lost-letter experiment in the Netherlands (Volker et al., 2015), one envelope had been cut open. While this was probably a sign of curiosity, other letters were taped shut or put into new envelopes. Especially for letters that had been dropped on a rainy day, this could be a sign of an extra prosocial effort. There was no difference between municipalities or across ethnic conditions here (see Table A.7 for an overview).

The hypothesized difference in social cohesion between the two towns is not reflected in the results of the WoON2012 (BZK/CBS, 2013) data analysis either. With a score of 3.49, Rucphen is in the second quartile of cohesion scores across the Netherlands, while Schijndel appears in the third quartile with a score of 3.62. When considering scores by municipality in descending order, Rucphen ranks 257th, and Schijndel 153rd out of

¹⁵These figures include the letter that was picked up by a mailman as described on page 103.

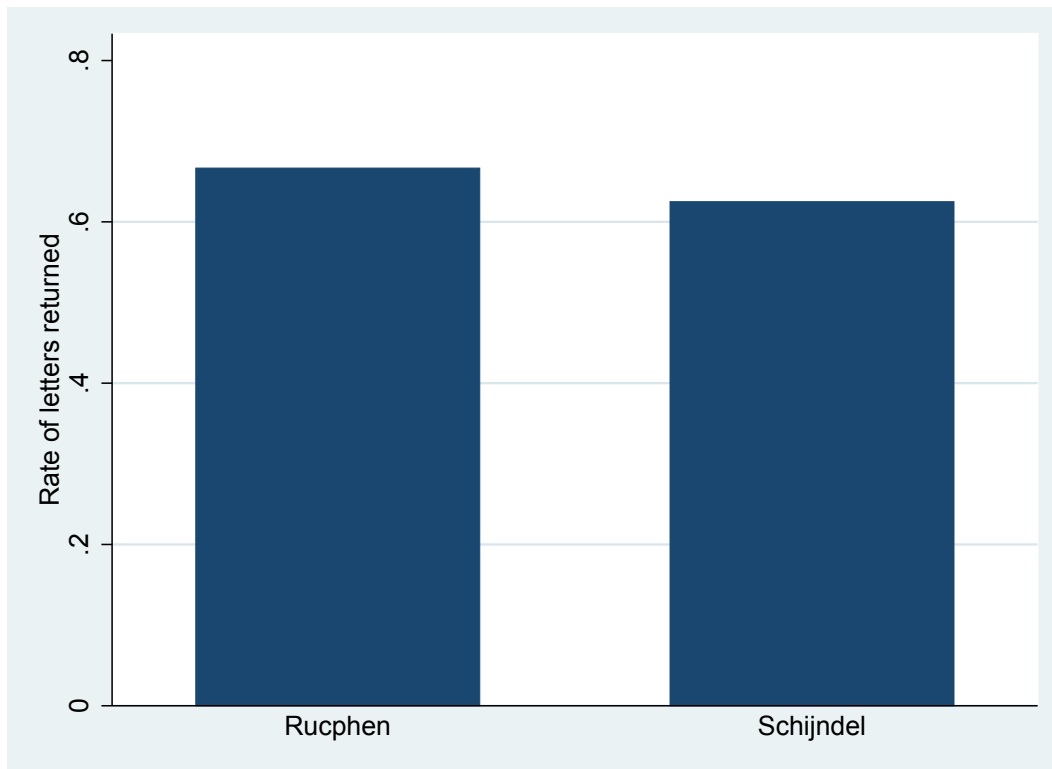


Figure 4.12: *Return rates by municipality. The difference is not statistically significant.*

402. While this may sound like social cohesion is a lot higher in Schijndel, a χ^2 test for the individual cohesion scores in Rucphen and Schijndel shows that this difference is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.65$; $p = .71$). Nonetheless, these results speak against the hypothesis that PVV support is driven by high social cohesion. Indeed, when regressing PVV support in the 2012 elections on social cohesion by municipality, we observe a highly significant *negative* effect of social cohesion on PVV support (see Model I in Table 4.3).

Following the findings of a *Financial Times* report (Ehrenberg-Shannon & Wisniewska, 2017) on important drivers of PVV support, in Model II in Table 4.3 I control for education level, immigration rates, municipality size, age, and rurality. This model explains some 28% of the observed variation. While most of this is due to the effects of the controls – with negative effects of education and rurality, and positive effects of immigration rates and higher age on PVV support – the significant negative effect of social cohesion holds.

Since Fitzgerald and Lawrence (2011) suggest that unemployment (like immigration) can harm social cohesion, in Model III I include a control for local unemployment rates, too. As Table 4.3 shows, there is no significant effect of unemployment on PVV support, and we still observe the significant negative effect of social cohesion.

The analysis in the present chapter focuses on two towns in the province of Brabant. To control for the impact that this regional factor may have, in a final model (Model IV in Table 4.3), I limit the analysis to municipalities in Brabant. The relationship between social cohesion and PVV support for this restricted sample is plotted in Figure 4.13. As the

Table 4.3: *Regression models for the relationship between social cohesion and PVV support across Dutch municipalities. Models I through III include all Dutch municipalities. Model IV is limited to municipalities in the region of Brabant.*

	I	II	III	IV
Social cohesion score	-0.17*** (0.00)	-0.14* (0.02)	-0.14* (0.03)	-0.15 (0.19)
Percentage highly educated		-0.55*** (0.00)	-0.54*** (0.00)	-0.86*** (0.00)
Percentage foreign		0.21* (0.02)	0.19* (0.05)	-0.08 (0.70)
Population size		-0.07 (0.25)	-0.08 (0.25)	0.16 (0.37)
Percentage 65+		0.17*** (0.00)	0.17** (0.00)	0.39** (0.00)
Rurality		-0.17* (0.03)	-0.18* (0.02)	-0.35* (0.03)
Unemployment rate			0.02 (0.80)	0.11 (0.55)
Observations	399	387	381	65
R^2	0.029	0.275	0.269	0.551

Standardized beta coefficients; p -values in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

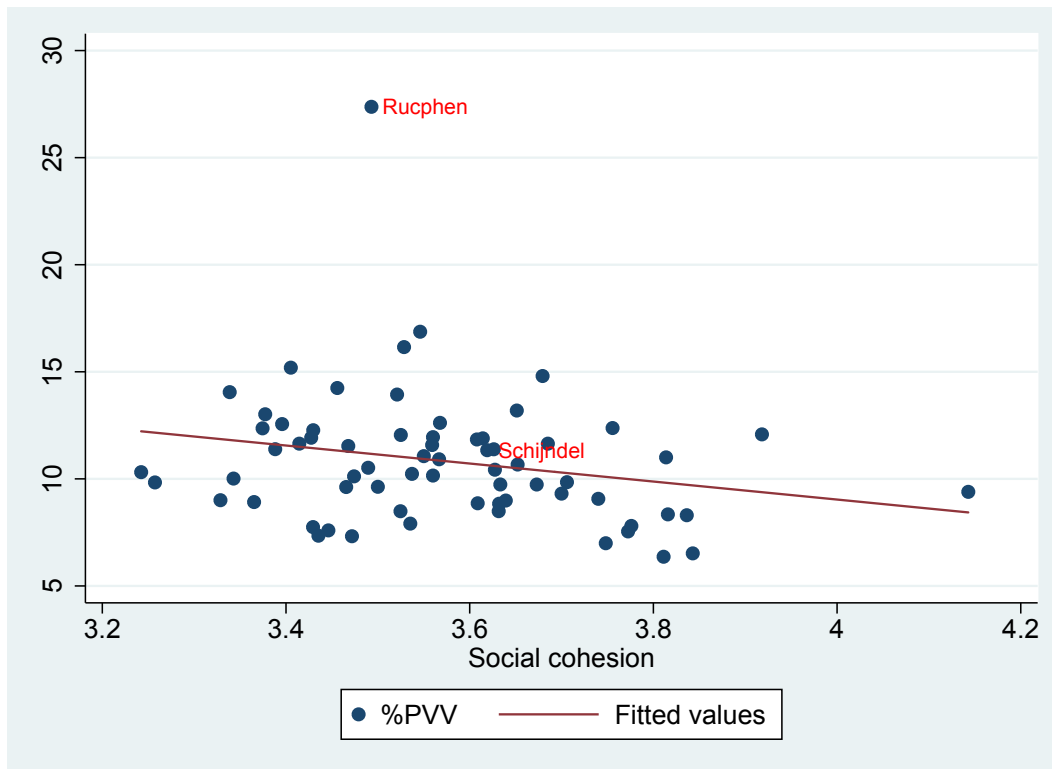


Figure 4.13: *The relationship between social cohesion and PVV support for municipalities in Brabant.*

figure shows, there seems to be a negative relationship between social cohesion and PVV support in Brabant, but Rucphen is an outlier in this respect. The regression model in Table 4.3 shows that, in the specific context of Brabant, this relationship is not statistically significant (removing Rucphen from the analysis does not change the regression coefficient of the social cohesion variable substantially). The main explanatory factors in this case are education level, age and rurality, which together explain 55% of the observed variation in PVV support.

In short, while my qualitative data indicate high levels of social cohesion in Rucphen, this result is not confirmed by the quantitative analyses. We can think of two main reasons why this is the case. First, comparing the cohesion measure in the WoON data (see Section 4.4.3) to the type of cohesion that emerges from the interviews raises the question whether both measures capture the same type of cohesion. Surely people in Schijndel would agree that they “live in a cozy neighborhood” – in fact, the survey results reveal high social cohesion in Schijndel. The question is, however, to what extent this type of cohesion translates in the helping behavior and small-town gossip that we observe in Rucphen, as well as the “feelings of commitment, trust, and norms of reciprocity” that Van der Meer and Tolsma (2014, pp. 461-2) include in their definition of social cohesion. A more sensitive (and theory-rooted) cohesion measure would serve to rule out this possibility.

Secondly, it could be the case that the WoON data provides a valid measure for social cohesion, but that cohesion simply is not the whole story. As observed in the discussion

on page 92, research reveals ambiguous effects of social cohesion on democratic outcomes, and this may be due to the moderating effect of social norms – a possibility that I will turn to now.

4.5.4 Normative influence

If the relationship between social cohesion and PVV support depends on the prevailing social norms, as stated in Hypothesis 4, we should observe not only high social cohesion in Rucphen, but also high compliance with social norms. Indeed, my qualitative data suggest that there is a clear set of social norms in Rucphen, especially when it concerns observable behavior. This impression was initially left by observing the very well-kept gardens around Rucphen —a fact that is noted also by some of the journalists who describe the town (e.g. Logtenberg, 2015; Van Schoonhoven, 2012). As shown below, my street interviews with residents are in line with this impression:

“Adjusting is very important here. No, that doesn’t mean you should attend the same church, you should just greet your neighbors and make sure your garden looks proper: just live properly”. (Rucphen, 58-year old female daycare employee)

“I started cleaning a lot more since I moved here, because that’s what’s expected of you”. (Rucphen, 39-year old female administrative worker at accountancy firm)

“You should see this place when it’s snowing! People clean the sidewalk in between snowfall! When my mother sees the neighbor cleaning the windows, she also does it. It doesn’t matter if they’re dirty or not, if the neighbor is cleaning the windows, so should we. Sometimes I sweep the sidewalk in the morning before I go to work and then the neighbor is called out of bed by his wife to clean their sidewalk too”. (Rucphen, local politician)

While observable behavior such as the examples cited above may be more prone to be restricted by norms, it seems that the residents of Rucphen are concerned with other types of behavior as well, as shown in the following example:

“The other day I was walking my dog and I was talking to this girl who had moved here only six months ago. She told me it annoyed her that there was so much dog poo everywhere so she had written a complaint to the town council. Well, she’s a lost cause. You cannot just come here and complain. This is how things go around here and you have to adjust”. (Rucphen, 78-year old female retired bus driver)

The importance of adjusting to the norms is echoed by many interviewees, especially when discussing the integration of newcomers. It seems that this is not always an easy process. People who were not born in Rucphen are commonly known as “import” or “outsiders” – one interviewee even refers to her husband as an “outsider”. Another interviewee who has lived in Rucphen for the past 43 years already recalls how 30-year olds will tell him: “you wouldn’t know that because you’re not from here”. Whether newcomers are from the neighboring village or from places further away, they all tell a similar story: the people in Rucphen could tell they were different, and that made it hard to integrate. Indeed, the key to a successful integration lies in adjustment:

“You should adjust if you come and live here, and you’ll be accepted”. (Rucphen, 60-year old housewife (originally from neighboring village))

Certainly, some of the newcomers to Schijndel had troubles integrating as well, even though it seems to be for different reasons:

“It was hard to integrate here. I thought Schijndel was just a one horse town”. (Schijndel, 53-year old female addiction care worker)

“My wife hated it at first! When we lived in Uden¹⁶ our friends would come and visit at the weekends, but that wasn’t possible here. Schijndel was a village”. (Schijndel, 62-year old male civil servant)

“At first I missed the shops and the neighborhood. There’s a bit of a small-town atmosphere around here”. (Schijndel, 61-year old female employee of wholesale company)

Instead, integration into the social community seems to be less problematic:

“Oh but I don’t think Schijndel is a closed community at all. It’s very open. And if there’s a problem, we’ll tell you. Integration isn’t hard around here”. (Schijndel, 66-year old retired male plasterer)

“It’s not that close-knit or closed around here, if you go to a bar it’s not like you won’t be accepted if you’re not from Schijndel. My girlfriend is not from Schijndel either and she doesn’t encounter any problems at all”. (Schijndel, 28-year old male system administrator)

“Integrating here was easy for me; the population was accessible. Everyone will chat with you, which is nice. The people here accept you very easily; they’re an open people. Something has to be really off with you for them not to accept you”. (Schijndel, 63-year old female retired home care manager)

¹⁶Uden is a town of 40,000 at some 20km from Schijndel.

In short, it seems that newcomers to both Rucphen and Schijndel have known problems in their respective integration processes. In Schijndel this had to do mainly with the place and less with the people. While the local population was generally welcoming, newcomers perceived of the town as a hamlet. In Rucphen, instead, newcomers had to adjust to the local norms in order to fit in. Indeed, social norms seem to be more important in Rucphen than in Schijndel.

It is relevant to note how this relates to the qualitative difference in anti-immigrant sentiment between Rucphen and Schijndel discussed above (Section 4.5.2). The interviews suggested that immigrants are perceived as a cultural threat in Schijndel versus a normative threat in Rucphen. While residents of Schijndel limit themselves to saying that immigrants “should adjust to the Dutch culture”, Rucphen seems to hold a very specific set of norms, and compliance is expected from Dutch newcomers and immigrants alike.

Social norms and PVV support

As explained in Section 2.1.2, strong social identification leads to higher social cohesion, which in turn is related to a stronger normative pressure on group members. In this light, the qualitative observation that social norms are more important in Rucphen than in Schijndel is in line with the general impression that social cohesion is higher in Rucphen. However, the link between social norms and PVV support seems less obvious. Do people vote for a PRR party because they feel that foreigners neglect their gardens? That seems far-fetched. At this point, it is important to remember that outcomes (e.g. for anti-immigrant sentiment) are determined by the specific norms that a group holds. In other words, if the Rucphen community holds norms that lead to a higher propensity to vote for the PVV, the high levels of social cohesion —and the consequent high pressure to conform —could make group members more likely to actually do so.

What are the norms that could explain support for the PVV? While this question would require a more thorough study aimed at identifying the set of shared norms in Rucphen, two factors that emerged from my qualitative work could provide a preliminary answer to this question. The first possible factor relates to the local identity as “hard-working people”, a recurring phrase in my interviews as well as in several newspaper articles, of which I report a few examples below:

“People here are hard workers and then it seems that foreigners just get everything for free. That feels unfair.” (25-year old female student)

“People here are hard workers and they don’t like being fooled. That is what other politicians do though [as opposed to Wilders].” (57-year old female unemployed health care worker)

“We are a municipality with hardworking people in the construction sector.”
(Local politician)

“Historically, Willebrord has the reputation of being a town of rebels¹⁷. They provide their own food, as they say around here. They just go and work hard and when they’re done, they work hard once more, but then to help others.”
(Local politician)

“The fact that Willebrorders think of themselves as hard working people, while politicians are not perceived as such, also drives their vote for anti-politicians.”
(Van Schoonhoven, 2012)

While the impression that foreigners are getting more than the “hardworking people” of Rucphen could contribute to general anti-immigrant sentiment, the contrast between hard working people and untrustworthy politicians (as observed in the last quote) speaks directly to the populist dimension of the PRR party family. Especially when combined with the “rebel identity” mentioned above (which forms another recurring element in the interviews and articles), it seems that the norm to work hard could be related to voting for an anti-establishment party such as the PVV.

Secondly, it could be that voting for the PVV is in itself a social norm that people in Rucphen comply with. As discussed on page 94, knowing what similar others do can drive behavior in private contexts. If this is the case for Rucphen, we should find that people know that the PVV is the largest party in Rucphen. Generally, the people I interviewed were aware of this fact. Many people probably also know that Rucphen is considered special because of this —something that the many journalists who come to the town around election time nowadays (e.g. Nijland, 2010) may have contributed to. In other words, it seems that the people in Rucphen know that “their people” vote for the PVV, potentially making it a descriptive social norm. The possibility that voting for the PVV is a social norm is further illustrated by a newspaper article in which a woman who voted against “certain parties that exclude groups of people” only wants to be quoted anonymously because “most people around here see it differently” (Thie, 2009).

In short, both the importance of social norms in Rucphen and the content of those norms are in line with a normative influence interpretation of the high level of PVV support. These results provide preliminary support for the hypothesis that the relationship between social cohesion and PRR support is contingent upon the prevailing social norms (Hypothesis 4).

4.6 Discussion and conclusion

What explains support for the populist radical right? Focusing on an extreme case, the present chapter has demonstrated that an explanation of PRR support that builds on the human need to belong can provide an additional perspective to this question. Based

¹⁷In Dutch: “vrijbuiters”.

on both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and building on the literature on social cohesion and normative influence processes, I proposed that the combination of social norms and cohesion at the local level could drive support for the PRR.

Explanations of the PRR vote typically boil down to two factors: political disappointment and policy preferences. My results provide partial support for both these elements. More specifically, my interviews reveal a stronger preference for populist language and higher levels of political disappointment in Rucphen, a community with high PVV support. Whereas none of my interviewees in Schijndel, a more center-left community, refer to the PVV's rhetoric, several citizens and politicians in Rucphen mentioned this as a reason for the local success of the PVV. Moreover, interviewees in Rucphen revealed higher levels of political disappointment than their counterparts in Schijndel. While these results suggest a preference for populism in Rucphen, historical election data show that this is not reflected in support for the left-wing populist SP. This implies that support for the PVV in Rucphen is driven by a preference for right-wing, rather than general, populism. Similarly, while voters are familiar with the PVV's policy preferences on immigration and redistribution, an observation that points at an attitude-based explanation, my results do not reveal noteworthy differences in the prevalence of such attitudes between the two towns.

In short, my results give only limited reason to assume that we can explain the observed voting patterns in Rucphen using these common accounts of PRR support. Instead, based on my qualitative work, I propose that the local success of the PVV can be best understood from a social psychological perspective. More precisely, considering the electoral behavior in Rucphen in relation to more general group-based factors points at the importance of normative influence processes. The interviews reveal a high level of social cohesion in Rucphen, paired with a framework of strong social norms which sometimes hinders the integration of newcomers. I propose that it is exactly this strong framework of norms that is important to explain the high levels of PVV support in Rucphen. Specifically, social cohesion implies a higher pressure on group members to conform to the norms, and the norms in question determine the behavioral outcomes. While more research is needed to further test this hypothesis, the local identity of being “hardworking people”—as opposed to politicians—as well as the commonly known preference for the PVV could be descriptive norms motivating voting behavior.

Importantly, the present study does not necessarily discount common explanations for PRR support in more average contexts. However, the present chapter has demonstrated that these common explanations do not suffice to explain voting patterns in more extreme cases. My qualitative work illustrates the added value of a social psychological approach in these cases. The interpretation of the observed electoral patterns in Rucphen in terms of normative influence processes is in line with the findings of Van Assche et al. (2016), who report a relationship between individual-level right-wing attitudes and prejudice toward

out-group members only in environments with low overall levels of right-wing attitudes. Given that Rucphen, with its consistently high levels of PVV support, qualifies as a strongly right-wing context, the explanatory value of individual-level attitudes should be limited.

While the interviews proved of great value for the analyses by providing insight into factors that are not easily captured by quantitative measures – such as the importance of compliance with social norms – it should be noted that the normative influence interpretation presented here is based on a mere number of 45 interviews. This low number gives the study an exploratory character, and limits the generalizability of my findings. Future research should aim to further test the proposed normative influence hypothesis of PVV support. Using a more sensitive measure of social cohesion than the one cited above (page 100) should allow the further analysis of the relationship between cohesion and PVV support, ideally leading to groups of cases with positive and negative relationships. Follow-up in-depth analyses such as focus groups and interviews should then serve to identify the prominent norms in the respective communities. This way, we can develop a more general understanding of the interaction between social cohesion and -norms and their combined effects on voting behavior. Field experiments using normative messages (following the example of the Goldstein et al. (2008) study) could further serve to test the effects of norms on private behaviors in contexts with varying levels of social cohesion. Moreover, social network analysis should serve to understand how electoral norms are developed and shared in local communities (see also Friedkin, 2001, on the emergence of social norms in social networks), as well as identifying the relevant actors influencing such norms and consequent behavior.

The social psychological focus of the present study implies a blind spot for more structural political factors, such as historical voting patterns.¹⁸ More specifically, analyses of electoral patterns reveal that the PVV electorate originates from right-wing parties such as the liberal VVD and the Christian-democratic CDA (see Figure 4.1 for the placement of the VVD and the CDA in the Dutch political landscape), as well as from the populist *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) (Vossen, 2017, pp. 112-3). A thorough explanation of the development of PVV support should consider historical voting patterns for the parties that the PVV electorate originally supported, as pre-existing differences in electoral patterns could explain different outcomes. In this respect, it seems especially relevant to note that in the early 2000's, Rucphen was known to be among the municipalities with the highest level of LPF supporters (Van Corven, 2002, see also Figure A.11 and A.12 in the Appendix). Future research should focus on tracing the evolution of PVV support from its origins in extreme cases (such as Rucphen).

In terms of the more general hypotheses guiding this dissertation – specifically the need to belong – my results do not give reason to conclude that group identification processes

¹⁸I thank Professor Van der Meer for pointing this out.

inevitably lead to more negative attitudes toward immigrants. Instead, I propose that this relationship can be understood by taking into account normative influence processes. While compliance with group norms increases as a function of social identification, and it is more difficult to hold conflicting opinions in a group with high conformity (as demonstrated by Asch's experiments cited on page 33), Chapter 2 has also pointed out that ultimately it is the *type* of norms that determines resulting behavior (page 29). Indeed, it seems to be the combination of cohesion and norms that accounts for the high levels of PVV support in Rucphen. In other words, the results presented here are in line with the normative influence hypothesis presented in Section 2.1.2.

This line of reasoning implies that groups with high social cohesion and norms that tolerate diversity, as we observe in Canada (see page 29), should be less likely to display similar electoral behaviors. As such, besides providing insight into drivers of attitudes toward immigrants, this chapter speaks directly to the literature on the relationship between social cohesion and democracy, that I briefly referred to above (page 92). As Berman (1997) argues, social cohesion can only be beneficial for democracy if it is paired with a reliable institutional framework —and with democratic norms, I would add based on the results presented here.

Chapter 5

United in diversity?

Immigration and welfare state attitudes in the UK

The results of the previous chapters suggest that attitudes toward immigrants are shaped by framing and normative influence processes: the effects of shocking events depend on how they are framed, while the effects of social cohesion depend on the prevalent group norms. While this sociocognitive perspective provides a plausible explanation for the patterns of variation in attitudes toward immigrants discussed here, it does not necessarily exclude competing accounts. More precisely, it could be the case that attitudes toward immigrants are also driven by interest-based factors. To test this possibility, the present chapter studies the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution, thereby engaging in the much debated issue of the consequences of immigration for European welfare systems. To preview my results, I find only limited evidence of a relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and preferences for redistribution. The absence of support for competing interpretations points again at the added value of the sociocognitive perspective for the study of variation in attitudes toward immigrants.

The town of Oberwil-Lieli, situated in the Swiss Alps, counts around 2,200 inhabitants (Yeung, 2016). This mountain village became world news in May 2016, when half of its residents voted to pay a yearly €270,000 fine instead of accepting 10 refugees (Streit um Flüchtlinge, 2016). While resistance against such a small number of refugees may be cause for surprise, this is even more so because of the fact that the town counts no fewer than 300 millionaires among its residents (Yeung, 2016). This relative wealth suggests that labor competition with immigrants was probably not the reason a small number of refugees were rejected. As the mayor was quick to add, racism was not the reason either (ibid.). Instead, among a variety of reasons, the mayor offered the concern that migrants could destabilize the social security system as an explanation (Streit um Flüchtlinge, 2016). Without aiming

to define the motivations of the citizens of Oberwil-Lieli as racist or something else, this example and the mayor's justification beg the question: can attitudes toward immigrants be driven by economic concerns beyond competition? This question is the starting point for the present study.

Research suggests that attitudes toward immigrants are indeed related to economic concerns that reach beyond ethnic competition issues. For example, in an attempt to explain why high-skilled immigrants are generally preferred over low-skilled immigrants in Switzerland, Helbling and Kriesi (2014) find only limited support for a labor market competition explanation. Instead, the authors show that the preference for high-skilled immigrants exists especially among well-off respondents who live in areas with low tax rates. Here, an increase in low-skilled immigration could imply a stronger reliance on the welfare state among immigrants and possibly increased taxes for well-off natives. In other words, resistance to immigration was driven by economic *preferences* rather than by economic *competition*. Similarly, based on a survey experiment on preferences for high- and low-skilled immigration in the US, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) suggest that concerns about the effects of immigration on society as a whole are more important than self-interest in shaping attitudes toward immigrants (p. 79). A related illustration of this is provided by Burgoon (2014), who reports higher support for redistribution in countries in which immigrants display higher employment levels and a lower reliance on social security.

The relationship between immigration and the welfare state is central to a strong debate (e.g. Alesina & Glaeser, 2004) which, however, typically assumes a reverse causal direction. Welfare state attitudes are thought to depend on attitudes toward immigrants, rather than driving them. Theoretically, we can think of a number of reasons why this should be the case. First, it could be that citizens think of the welfare state as a type of insurance that protects against the negative consequences of labor competition. If this is true, immigration and consequent increases in labor competition could actually lead to more positive welfare state attitudes (Burgoon, 2014, p. 365; Finseraas, 2008, p. 408; Naumann & Stoetzer, 2015).

Of course, nobody wants to pay for insurance they do not need. Therefore, this insurance argument may also explain the opposite outcome. If immigration leads native citizens to believe their risk of needing benefits is relatively low, they are likely to withdraw their support for the welfare state. In his discussion of risk pools, Rehm (2011, p. 292) explains the importance of a homogeneous distribution of risk for support for welfare benefits: “[c]eteris paribus, the more homogenous [the] risk pool, the more citizens will anticipate being net beneficiaries, since they will see themselves as being as likely as anybody else to lose their job and need the benefit” (p. 292). Since immigrants typically face a weaker position in the labor market than native-born citizens (Nannestad, 2007, p. 522; Bisin, Patacchini, Verdier, & Zenou, 2011), the risk of needing unemployment benefits is presumably not distributed equally across the population. Therefore, immigration could

decrease support for the welfare state among those who are better off, in this case the native-born citizens. Importantly, this is a purely economic and not a racist argument. Citizens reduce their support for the welfare state not because they dislike immigrants, but because they rationally assume they will not need welfare benefits themselves and thus do not see the need to pay for them.

Despite the rational nature of this argument, it is easy to give it a racist spin. This follows from concerns regarding identification and solidarity. A sense of a shared identity is thought to be an important driver of solidarity, and therefore it is seen as one of the prerequisites for the welfare state (Freeman, 1986, p. 52; Crepaz, 2006, p. 93; Freeman, 2009, p. 2; Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2014, p. 3; Soroka, Johnston, & Banting, 2006, p. 280). As an illustration, it is generally found that citizens who identify more strongly with their country of residence display a higher tax morale¹ (Li, 2010; Konrad & Qari, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, social identity processes work through social categorization, a cognitive process that categorizes people into groups based on characteristics they share and how they differ from people in other groups (Tajfel, 1974, p. 71). Because of the way categorization works, it is easier to identify with people who are similar. Immigration is a common source of diversity, whether on ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other grounds – it follows that immigration may undermine a sense of a shared identity (Bowles & Gintis, 2004, p. 3). In other words, immigration and subsequent increases in diversity could lead to the erosion of an inclusive national identity, and ultimately to decreased support for the welfare state. More importantly, when social identification processes coincide with those described in the risk pools argument, the result is an image of the welfare state as something that “we” pay for “others”. Clearly, this is detrimental to solidarity (Freeman, 1986, p. 62).

In this discussion, we can broadly distinguish between two types of arguments: a more interest-based argument that we can crudely summarize as “I do not want to pay for the welfare state because I do not want to support poor people”, and; a more identity-based argument which we could summarize as “I do not want to pay for the welfare state because I do not want to support people who are not like me”. Depending on whether immigrants are perceived as net contributors (i.e. labor market competitors) or beneficiaries of the welfare state, interest-based arguments serve to explain both positive and negative outcomes for welfare state attitudes. Instead, if immigrants are seen as different from the host country’s population, the identity-based argument serves to explain negative outcomes for welfare state attitudes.

The relationship between immigration and support for the welfare state has inspired a strong academic debate on the political viability of holding both pro-immigration and pro-welfare state policy preferences (dubbed the “progressive dilemma”; Goodhart, 2004)

¹Tax morale is defined as “a moral obligation or an intrinsic motivation to pay taxes” (Lago-Peñas & Lago-Peñas, 2010, p. 442).

in particular, and on the implications of immigration for the future of welfare states more generally. I discuss empirical results of the debate in more detail below. The present study aims to add to this debate by focusing on interest-based and identity-based explanations of support for the welfare state. For the purpose of the present dissertation we should further note that the relationship between welfare state attitudes and attitudes toward immigrants should be informative for the study of variation in attitudes toward immigrants by establishing whether these could be driven by economic concerns.

To test whether we can explain the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and welfare state attitudes in terms of economic- or identity-based concerns, I carry out a randomized survey experiment in the UK. The method is based on the work of Gilens (1995), who studied the relationship between attitudes toward African-Americans and welfare state attitudes. According to the logic of Gilens, if white Americans perceive the welfare state as something that they pay for African-Americans to benefit from, describing a welfare recipient as black rather than white should yield a greater correlation between ratings of the described person and general attitudes toward the welfare state.

Adopting a similar approach, my experiment reveals an interest-based mechanism of support for the welfare state, but not for attitudes toward immigrants. More specifically, I find no differences in support for redistribution between groups that have been primed with different ethnicities. This implies that the ethnicity of the described welfare recipient is of minor importance for resulting support for redistribution, thereby pointing at an interest-based mechanism. Instead, the evidence for a similar mechanism driving attitudes toward immigrants is only limited. This is because if attitudes toward immigrants were driven by welfare state attitudes, we would expect that evaluations of the immigrant vignettes had greater predictive value for support for redistribution than evaluations of the native vignette. Although the result for the European treatment provides tentative evidence in this direction, correlations between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution are generally similar across the treatments. This finding speaks against an interest-based explanation of attitudes toward immigrants. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of implications for the study of attitudes toward immigrants.

5.1 Immigration and the welfare state

There is a broad literature on diversity and public goods provision, inspired mainly by the questions of: (1) why African economies often lag behind, and; (2) why the American and European welfare systems are so different (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006, pp. 24-5). These studies typically focus on the effects of diversity rather than of immigration. However, given the close relationship between these two concepts, the results of these studies can be informative for students of both immigration and diversity.

In general, the American literature on the effects of diversity on public goods provision

is not very optimistic. Alesina and La Ferrara repeatedly confirm the negative relationship between ethnic fragmentation and both public goods provision and participation (2000, 2005a), and Alesina and Glaeser (2004) go so far as to conclude that “racial fractionalization can (...) explain about half of the difference in redistribution between the United States and Europe” (p. 11). Not only is there an effect on actual government spending, ethnic heterogeneity is also found to have a negative impact on support for redistribution in the US, and this effect seems to be driven primarily by negative perceptions of, or stereotypes about, minorities (Gilens, 1995, 1996; Alesina, Baqir, & Easterly, 1997; Alesina, Glaeser, & Sacerdote, 2001; Fox, 2004; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005b). In line with a social identity mechanism underlying the negative relationship between diversity and support for redistribution, the American political scientist Robert Putnam (2007) reports less trust and more “hunkering down” (p. 155) in more ethnically-diverse neighborhoods in the US. While this “constrict hypothesis” was recently contested by Abascal and Baldassarri (2015), Putnam’s work has had a strong impact on the debate, with several scholars attempting to replicate his results in other settings (e.g. Lancee & Dronkers, 2011).

Although the observation that Europe is becoming more American, both economically and socially (Taylor-Gooby, 2005, pp. 661-2; Finseraas, 2008, p. 411), gives cause for concern about the possible Americanization of European welfare regimes, it should be noted that the above-cited results may not necessarily be applicable to the question about the effects of immigration on the European welfare state. Most importantly, Europe is facing a different kind of heterogeneity as there is a fundamental difference between the newcomers in the European context and the previously enslaved minority in the US (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006, p. 27; Larsen, 2011, p. 333; Larsen, 2013, p. 205). Furthermore, these studies are primarily historical-causal accounts and it does not necessarily follow that they have predictive value in any other context (Myles & St-Arnaud, 2006).

In addition, while the American results seem to speak against ethnic heterogeneity, comprehensive literature reviews show that the evidence for the relationship between diversity and welfare provision is “mixed at best” (Stichnoth & Van der Straeten, 2013, p. 380). In a recent meta-analysis, Schaeffer (2014) concludes that “the debate has produced slightly more confirmatory than confuting evidence” (p. 22). The outcomes of empirical studies seem to hinge on a number of factors: for example, confirmatory evidence is found more often in the American context, and at the neighborhood level, suggesting that salience of ethnic diversity is an important factor (*ibid.*, pp. 23-5). Different outcomes are also found for the type of diversity in question (e.g. linguistic, religious) and the chosen outcome variable (*ibid.*, pp. 23-6). These results mirror those of a meta-analysis on the relationship between ethnic diversity and cohesion by Van der Meer and Tolsma (2014). Again, the level of analysis and the national context are important factors, with more evidence for a negative relationship in the US and at the neighborhood level. Besides these design-specific factors, it seems that the relationship between diversity and social cohesion

is not linear (p. 471). The relationship between ethnic diversity and welfare provision, too, is not as straightforward as it may seem. Taking into account moderating factors such as partisanship (Taylor-Gooby, 2005; Schmidt & Spies, 2013), multicultural policies (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006; Crepaz, 2006), and welfare regime (Finseraas, 2008; Crepaz & Damron, 2009) typically eliminates the negative relationship between ethnic diversity and redistribution.

Many of the studies cited above suffer from endogeneity problems: it is hard to determine whether ethnic diversity leads to lower trust and cohesion, or whether areas with lower trust and cohesion attract more ethnically diverse residents, for example because of co-varying economic factors. Indeed, Abascal and Baldassarri (2015), as well as Gijsberts, Van der Meer, and Dagevos (2012), conclude that the alleged negative effects of ethnic diversity at the neighborhood level are driven by compositional effects. Experimental methods can serve to avoid this methodological issue to some extent. Given the importance of trust as a potential factor underlying the relationship between diversity and solidarity, it is not surprising that many experiments studying this relationship rely on trust games.

The trust game is a two-player game in which the sender chooses which part of an initial endowment to send to a recipient. After sending the money, it is usually multiplied by the experimenter. The recipient then chooses how much of the received sum she wishes to send back to the sender. This game measures trust because the sender should trust the recipient to return a fair amount; in turn, the returned amount is a measure of the recipient's trustworthiness (Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman, & Soutter, 2000, p. 812).

With one noteworthy exception (Bouckaert & Dhaene, 2004), trust games in ethnically-mixed groups generally show that participants change their behavior when playing with partners of a different nationality (Glaeser et al., 2000) or ethnicity (Burns, 2006; Fershtman & Gneezy, 2001; Haile, Sadrieh, & Verbon, 2008). In addition, a trust experiment in the field in Switzerland shows that citizens from more ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods are thought to be, and indeed prove to be, more trustworthy (Falk & Zender, 2007).

Although it follows from this negative relationship between ethnic diversity and trust that diversity should ultimately have a negative effect on welfare provision as well, the real-world process of tax collection and public goods provision is probably captured better by public goods games. In a standard public goods game, participants are asked to contribute a part of their initial endowment to the public good, which is usually just a common pot. The money in the pot is multiplied, after which it is redistributed equally among the participants. To maximize their individual gains, players should refrain from contributing to the common good; to maximize the group's gains, players should contribute maximally, as the common pot is thus maximized.

The findings on public goods games with mixed groups mirror those of trust games with mixed groups to some extent. Overall, it seems that diversity harms cooperation (Finocchiaro Castro, 2008; Bortolotti, Casari, & Monti, 2013; Koopmans & Rebers, 2009;

Faillo, Grieco, & Zarri, 2012; M. Alexander & Christia, 2011). In a public goods experiment in India, however, Waring and Bell (2013) find that ethnic dominance (due to the local caste system) is more detrimental to cooperation than ethnic heterogeneity per se. In line with the findings of Schaeffer's (2014) meta-analysis, it seems that the type of diversity matters. Keuschnig and Schikora (2014) find no effect of religious heterogeneity while Koopmans and Rebers (2009) find a negative effect of diversity on contributions only for the "culturally inheritable traits" (p. 208) of religion and political orientation, and not for diversity created by grouping participants by season of birth.

Consistent with the literature on the American welfare state discussed above, laboratory experiments confirm the importance of ethnically-driven diversity for cooperation. In a public goods game with Italian and non-Italian students, Faillo et al. (2012) find that cooperation in ethnically-mixed groups is lower. This effect is due especially to lower contributions of foreign students, rather than because of decreased cooperation by native students in a mixed group. Other experiments instead find an effect of ethnic diversity on willingness to cooperate for native players. In a real-time simultaneous public goods game with homogeneous and mixed groups in Italy and the UK, Finocchiaro Castro (2008) finds that participants in mixed groups contribute less, regardless of their nationality. Bortolotti et al. (2013) manipulate diversity by bringing Italians and Arabs into a lab together and letting them play in either homogeneous or mixed groups. Group composition is communicated by providing the participants with colored cards that match the players' ethnicity. This experiment reaches similar results. While Arabs cooperate less than Italians when playing in homogeneous groups, cooperation decreases when groups are ethnically diverse; an effect that is driven mainly by decreased cooperation of Italian participants. In sum, both public goods games and trust games seem to find a negative effect of ethnic diversity on cooperation.

M. Alexander and Christia (2011) point out the importance of institutions to counter this negative effect. In a public goods game carried out with students of segregated and integrated schools in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, they replicate the negative effect of ethnoreligious diversity on cooperation only for students of segregated schools. For students of integrated schools, however, the authors find that the possibility to sanction free-riding group members significantly heightens cooperation in homogeneous and mixed groups alike. While sanctioning does not significantly alter cooperative behavior for students of segregated schools, for students of integrated schools the negative effect of diversity disappears when sanctioning is implemented.

While both cross-sectional data and experimental evidence seem to feed the worry of a possible Americanization of European welfare systems, it should be noted that these studies mainly focus on diversity rather than on immigration in general. As such, they exclusively relate to the identity-based concerns discussed above (page 125). If attitudes toward immigrants are driven by economic concerns, as the mayor of Oberwil-Lieli suggests,

we should find that these identity-based explanations of support for the welfare state are irrelevant. After all, the problem with immigrants is not that they are different but that they are poor. This implies that we should find that:

Support for the welfare state is driven by economic rather than identity-based concerns (H1)

Moreover, if attitudes toward immigrants are driven by welfare state attitudes, we should find that:

Variation in attitudes toward immigrants is explained by variation in welfare state attitudes (H2)

5.2 Methods

To test my hypotheses, I carry out a survey experiment using a nationally-representative sample of the UK population. We can think of survey experiments as population surveys, characterized by high external validity (Mutz, 2011), with the added advantages of experimental methods. Different versions of the questionnaire are seen as different experimental treatments, and observed differences in responses between the experimental groups are due to the different “treatments”. This assumption is strengthened by randomizing allocation of respondents to the different versions of the questionnaire, thereby minimizing differences between experimental groups. This way, internal validity is increased (ibid.). Moreover, survey-embedded experiments serve to avoid social desirability bias. In a standard survey we could only understand attitudes toward different types of welfare recipients by asking all respondents their views on all types. This approach is not very feasible since participants are likely to answer all questions in a similar fashion (see also Gilens, 1996, p. 598). Presenting each participant with only one version of the questionnaire and then comparing outcomes between the groups helps to avoid this bias, thereby increasing validity.

The survey experiment was structured as follows. Survey participants in the experimental treatments were asked to read and rate a description of a welfare recipient. Identity-based concerns were manipulated by varying the nationality of the vignette character, who was described as either a native, a Western immigrant, or a non-Western immigrant. Participants in a control treatment did not read a vignette. The Western immigrant in the vignette was Irish, and the non-Western immigrant was Pakistani. These nationalities were based on UK demographics. With an estimated number of 790,000 in 2014 (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2015), Poles are the largest Western immigrant group in the UK. However, given the political mobilization against Eastern European migrants in the UK in recent years, it is not entirely sure that Poles will be perceived

as Western immigrants. With 383,000 in 2014, the Irish are the second largest Western immigrant group in the UK (ibid.), and therefore I chose this nationality for the Western immigrant vignette. Pakistanis are the second largest non-Western immigrant group in the UK in 2014 after Indians (with 523,000 and 793,000 inhabitants, respectively (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2015)). The main reason for choosing the second largest immigrant group was due to the fact that Pakistan is a Muslim country. Therefore, we may expect Pakistanis to be perceived as more culturally different than Indians. In addition, by choosing the second largest immigrant group we can rule out the possibility that any observed effects are due to relative group size (note that the Indian immigrants outnumber the Irish by two to one) and be confident that these are indeed driven by identity-based factors. The fact that another study on deservingness of welfare recipients in the UK uses the same nationalities (Kootstra, 2016) gives further reason to be confident about the validity of these nationalities as representative of Western and non-Western immigrants.

Perceptions of welfare state recipients were measured by asking participants to rate the person described in the vignette along two dimensions. The first taps into a common prejudice about welfare recipients having many children (Witham, 2012), while the second item measures whether welfare recipients are perceived as lazy. Both the vignette wording and the accompanying questions were inspired by Gilens' (1996) survey experiment on racial prejudice and opposition to welfare among whites in the US.

The vignette and questions were worded as follows:

Thinking about a (British-born/Irish-born/Pakistani-born) mother in her early thirties who has been on welfare for the past six months, how likely or unlikely do you think she is to...

1. have more children so that she will receive a higher child allowance?
2. prioritise finding a job?

Answers were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Very likely) to 5 (Not likely at all). Answers were recoded such that a higher score indicated a more positive attitude toward the welfare recipient.

At this point, it is relevant to note that while the survey items measure *perceptions* of welfare recipients rather than facts, fertility and employment rates differ between the three nationalities included in the experiment. Specifically, in the first quarter of 2016, the employment rate was 74.6% for native-born British, 77.5% for EU14-born² residents, and 56.5% for Pakistani-born residents (ONS, 2017a). A study on fiscal impact confirms that the net contribution of EU immigrants to the UK is positive, while the net fiscal contribution of natives and non-EU immigrants is negative (Dustmann & Frattini, 2013).

²Besides Ireland, the EU14 includes the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden (ONS, 2017a).

Similarly, the fertility rate for EU immigrants and native-born mothers is 1.6, while that for Pakistani-born mothers is 4.7 (ONS, 2017b).

After reading the vignette, participants' support for redistribution was measured using a standard survey item (used, among others, by Naumann & Stoetzer, 2015) that is worded as follows: "Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement. The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels". Answer options range from 1 ("Strongly agree") to 5 ("Strongly disagree"). Answers were recoded such that a higher score expressed stronger support for redistribution.

Since the only difference between the treatments is the experimental manipulation, we may assume that any differences in support for redistribution between the several treatments is driven by the vignette. In other words, the vignette should increase the salience of (a certain type of) welfare recipients, and this can affect the way in which people answer the redistribution question. As such, this is a priming experiment (e.g. Mutz, 2011; Zaller & Feldman, 1992; Koopmans & Veit, 2014b). Comparing the treatments to the control condition allows estimation of the priming effect. Instead, comparing scores on the welfare state item across treatments allows estimation of the impact of interest-based concerns. More specifically, if support for redistribution depends on economic concerns only, we should not find differences between the three treatments. This is a first test of Hypothesis 1.

As stated in Hypothesis 2, if attitudes toward immigrants are driven by economic concerns, we should find that part of the variation in attitudes toward immigrants is explained by variation in support for redistribution. This hypothesis is tested by comparing vignette ratings to support for redistribution. A similar reasoning was used by Gilens (1995) in his survey experiment on racial prejudice and opposition to welfare among whites in the US, and by Peffly and Hurwitz (2002) in their study on prejudice and support for crime policies. In both these studies, the analyses revealed a stronger correlation between the vignette evaluations and policy preferences if the vignette character was described as African-American rather than white American, implying that policy preferences were driven by racial prejudice. By the same logic, if attitudes toward immigrants are driven by welfare state attitudes, we expect to find that the two are correlated. This implies that the correlation between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution should be higher in the immigrant treatments than in the native treatment.

The study was fielded through the YouGov omnibus survey on 5 January 2016 using a sample that was representative of the UK population. The sample consisted of 1779 respondents. Since the research question concerns host countries' reactions to immigrants, participants who were not born in the UK were dropped, resulting in 1422 observations. Population weights were applied to all analyses.

Although random allocation to treatments allows estimation of experimental effects without controlling for demographic variables, the study included controls for age, gender,

education level, household income, occupation status, political orientation, ethnicity, and attitudes toward immigrants. A series of χ^2 tests revealed no significant differences between the treatment groups. Therefore, these variables were not included in the analyses.

5.3 Results

As a first step, I compare welfare state attitudes across the three experimental treatments and the control treatment. Comparing the control treatment to the native treatment allows estimation of the impact of the vignette without the added effects of diversity, thereby serving as a manipulation check. Comparing attitudes across the three experimental treatments provides a test of interest- and identity-based drivers of support for redistribution. Any differences between the three experimental treatments should be due to identity-based concerns. Hypothesis 1, which states that interest-based concerns drive support for the welfare state, is supported if we find no differences between the treatments. As I discuss in more detail below, this hypothesis is supported by the data.

One issue with Likert scales is that the answer options may form an ordinal variable, but that it is unclear whether this variable is linear. More precisely, we do not know whether the distance between the answer options “strongly agree” and “agree”, for instance, is the same as the distance between the options “agree” and “neutral”. In this case, a one-step increase on the dependent variable does not necessarily correspond with a one-unit increase on the latent variable, in this case support for redistribution. To capture this possible variation in distance between answer options (Long, 1997, p. 115), the data were analyzed using ordered logit models. Results are displayed in Model 1 of Table 5.1.

The table shows that participants in the UK vignette treatment display significantly lower support for redistribution than participants in the control treatment. This implies that responses were subject to priming by the vignette: leading respondents to think of the welfare state in terms of its beneficiaries was enough to lower support for redistribution. Since identity-based factors are excluded in this comparison, this difference should be due to interest-based concerns. A post hoc test reveals that the difference between the three vignette treatments is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = .18$; $p = .91$), thereby providing further support for an interest-based interpretation of support for redistribution (H1). Interestingly, the difference between both immigrant treatments and the control treatment is not statistically significant.

To facilitate interpretation, predicted probabilities for each treatment are displayed in Figure 5.1. As the figure shows, predicted probabilities of answering “agree” to the statement that the government should reduce income differences are around 40% for all treatments. Instead, predicted probabilities of the “completely agree” option are higher for the control group than for the vignette conditions. The predicted probabilities of answering “neutral” and “disagree” are higher in the vignette treatments than in the control group.

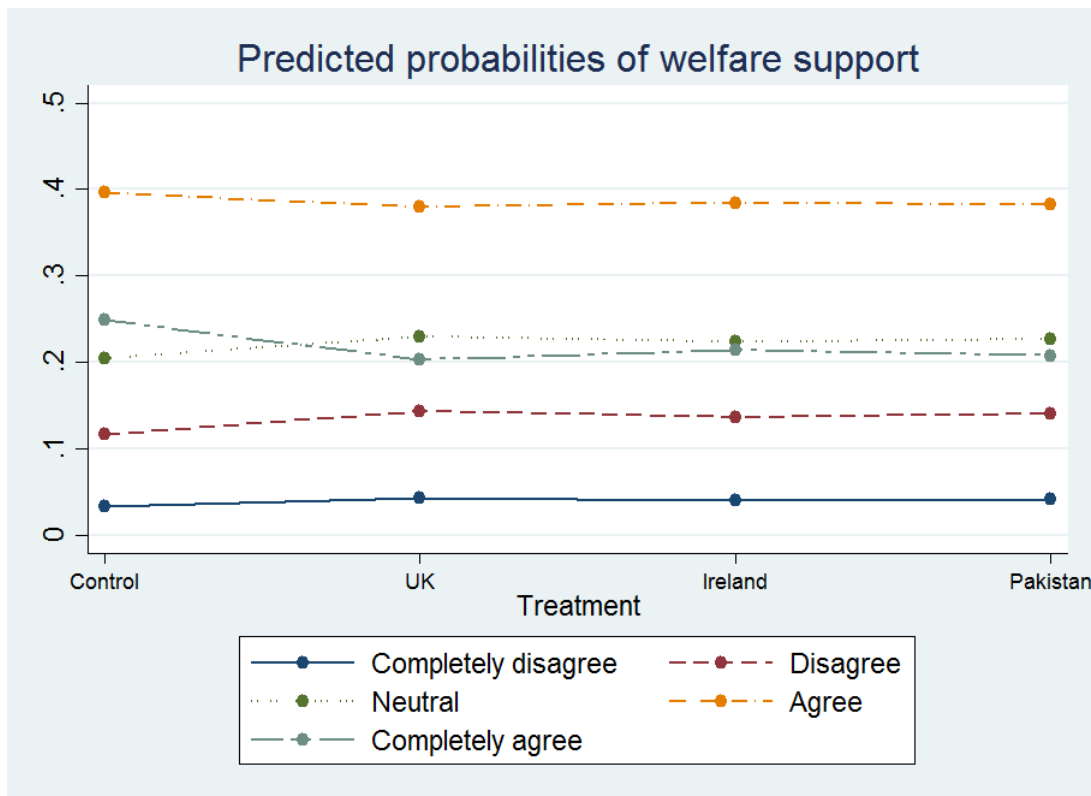


Figure 5.1: *Predicted probabilities of support for redistribution by treatment.*

Table 5.1: *Ordered logit models for support for redistribution by treatment. Model 1 compares the four treatments with the control treatment as the omitted category. Model 2 tests the effect of the two vignette rating items on support for redistribution for all vignette treatments. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
British	-0.26 (0.16)	0.05		
Irish	-0.20 (0.15)	0.10		
Pakistani	-0.23 (0.16)	0.07		
More kids			0.12 (0.09)	0.08
Prioritize job			0.30 (0.08)	0.00
N	1373		808	

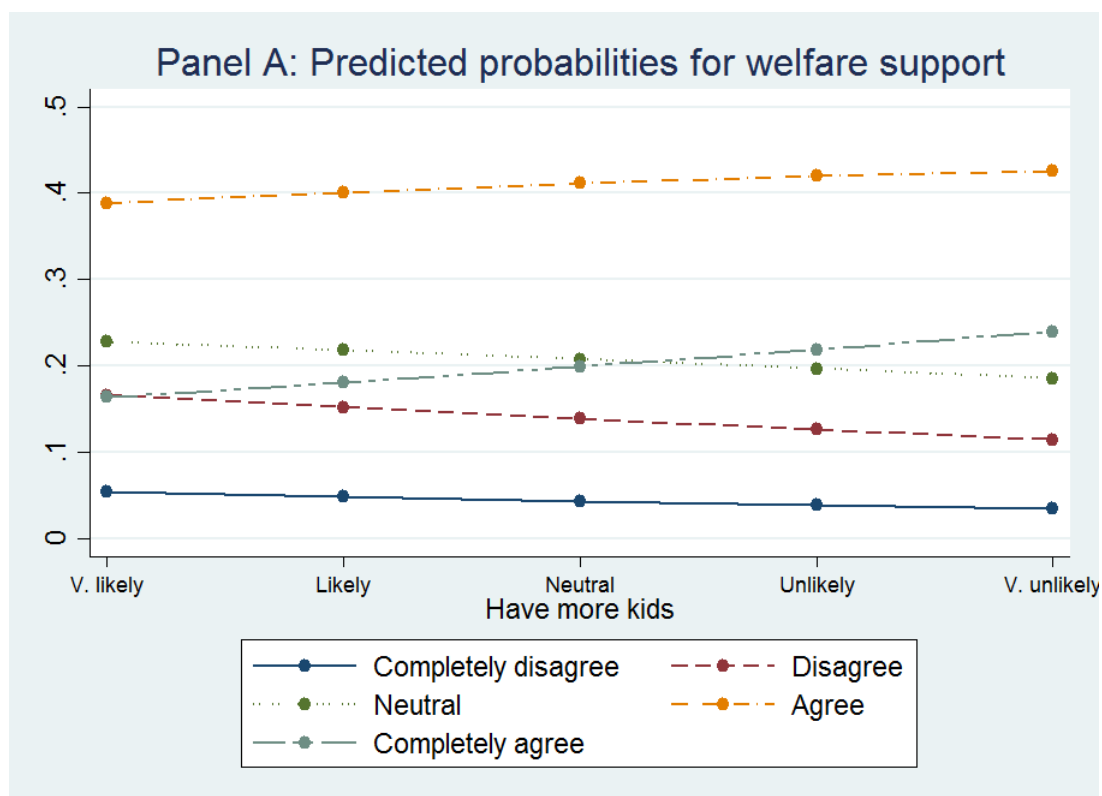


Figure 5.2: Predicted probabilities of support for redistribution for different scores of the “have more kids” item.

So far it seems that support for redistribution may depend on the way in which the welfare state is perceived. If respondents are encouraged to think of the welfare state as something that may be abused by recipients, they display lower levels of support. Relatedly, people’s perceptions of welfare recipients should affect support for redistribution. If citizens believe that welfare recipients are generally deserving, we may expect them to hold more positive welfare state attitudes. If this is the case, we should find that evaluations of welfare recipients correlate with support for redistribution. As shown in Model 2 in Table 5.1, the way in which respondents are perceived is indeed relevant for support for redistribution. If people think that welfare recipients are likely to prioritize finding a job, they display higher support for the welfare state. Predicted probabilities for both evaluation variables are plotted in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3. As the graphs show, predicted probabilities of replying “agree” or “completely agree” to the redistribution item increase as beliefs that the welfare mother will not have more kids increase. In line with the statistical analysis, these differences are more pronounced for beliefs on whether she will prioritize finding a job (Figure 5.3).

While there are no significant differences in mean support for redistribution between the native, Irish, and Pakistani vignette, it could be the case that perceptions of welfare recipients differ by country of origin. To shed light on this possibility, I compare the ratings of welfare recipients across the experimental treatments. If ethnicity does not

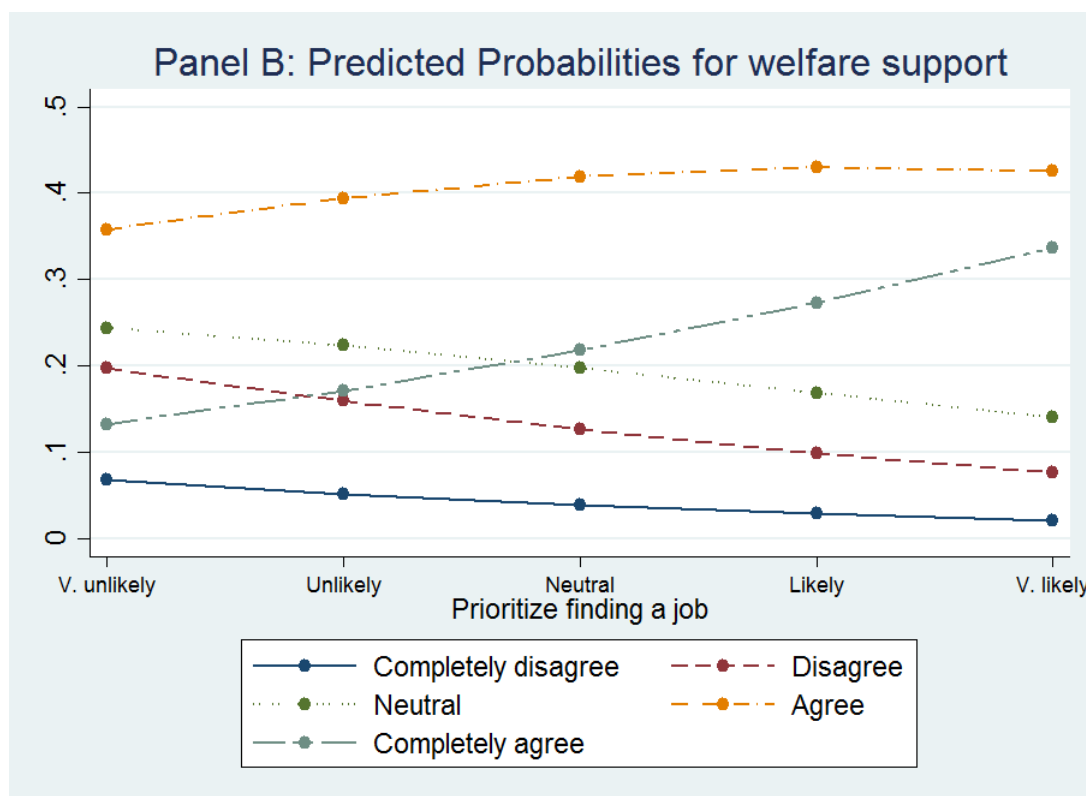


Figure 5.3: *Predicted probabilities of support for redistribution for different scores of the “find a job” item.*

matter for attitudes toward immigrants, and attitudes are entirely driven by perceived economic status, we may expect to find no differences between the treatments. After all, economic status is constant across the vignettes, while only ethnicity varies. An ordered logit model (Table 5.2) shows that this is not the case: the Pakistani vignette is evaluated significantly more negatively than the British and Irish vignettes.

As shown by the predicted probability plots in Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5, vignette ratings are rather negative in general. Around 42% of respondents think it is likely or very likely that the British welfare mother will have more children, a figure that increases with cultural distance to an estimated 53% for the Pakistani vignette. Similarly, only around 25% of respondents considers it likely or very likely that the British welfare recipient will prioritize finding a job. While figures are similar for the Irish welfare recipient, ratings become significantly more negative for the Pakistani welfare recipient. While Pakistani women are statistically less likely to be employed, and more likely to have more children than Irish and British women (see page 132), the main interest here is in *perceptions* of Pakistani women. Based on these results, it seems that perceptions of Pakistani welfare recipients are more negative than perceptions of British and Irish welfare recipients.

So far, the analyses have shown that the ethnicity of the described welfare recipient affects perceptions, which in turn affect support for redistribution. Nonetheless, there are no significant differences in mean support for the welfare state between the vignette

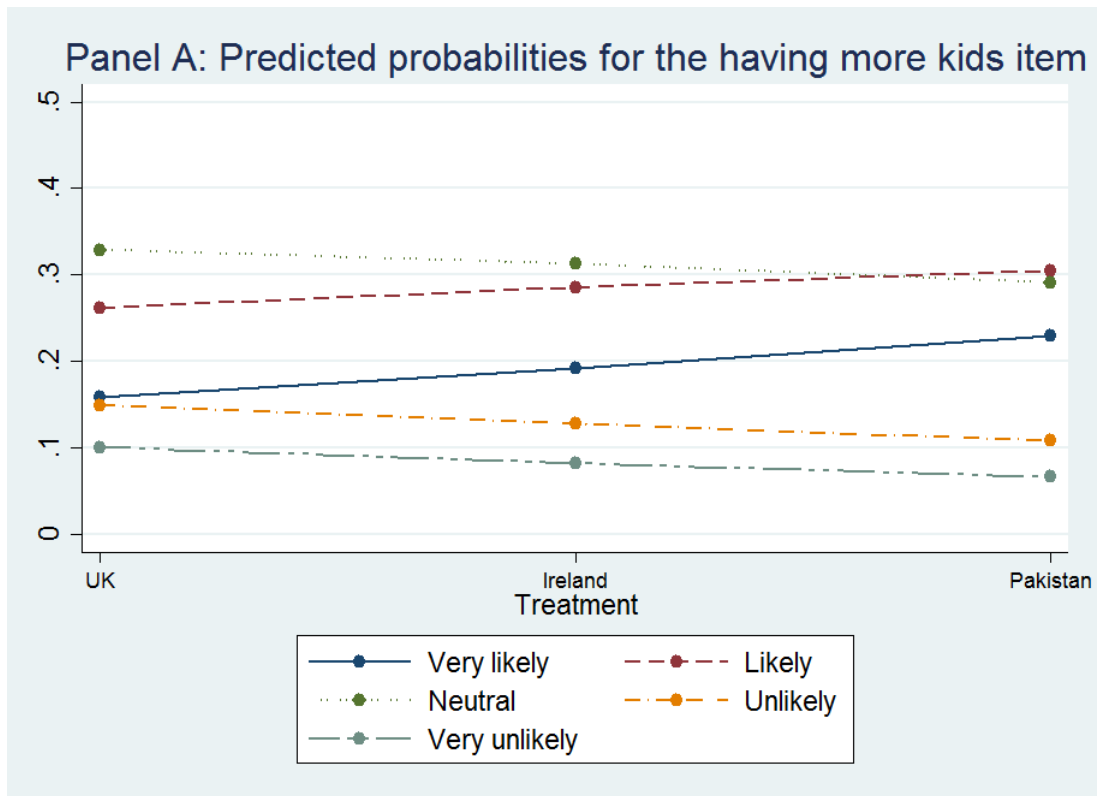


Figure 5.4: Predicted probabilities of the “having more kids” item by treatment.

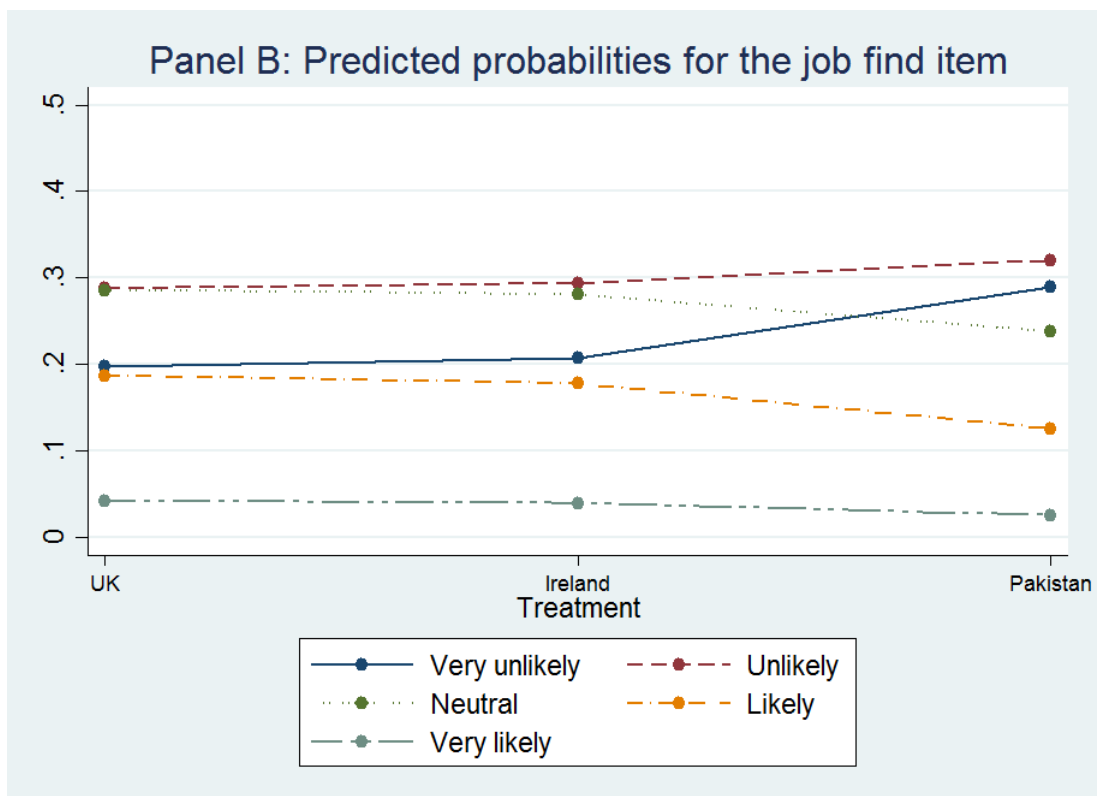


Figure 5.5: Predicted probabilities of the “find a job” item by treatment.

Table 5.2: *Ordered logit models for vignette ratings by treatment. The British vignette is the reference group. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	More kids		Prioritize job	
	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
Irish	-0.23 (0.17)	0.09	-0.07 (0.17)	0.35
Pakistani	-0.46 (0.16)	0.00	-0.51 (0.16)	0.00
N	855		856	

treatments. To better understand this mediating relationship, I now consider interactions between ethnicity and vignette rating by running Model 2 (Table 5.1) for each treatment separately. If attitudes toward immigrants are driven by welfare state attitudes, as stated in Hypothesis 2, we should find that the relationship between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution is higher in the immigrant treatments than in the native treatment.

Results are displayed in Table 5.3. Interestingly, the analysis reveals that the effect of the vignette ratings on welfare state attitudes is not constant across the different ethnic treatments. Whereas evaluations on both items have a significant effect on support for redistribution in the British group, in the Irish group there is a significant (and substantive) effect for the “prioritize finding a job” item only. This item is only marginally significant in the Pakistani treatment. In other words, participants with a negative perception of British welfare recipients display lower support for redistribution. This result should not come as a surprise.

More interestingly, while perceptions of the Pakistani welfare recipient are significantly more negative, the correlation between vignette ratings and support for redistribution is virtually the same in the Pakistani and the British group. In other words, the predictive value of evaluations of the Pakistani welfare recipient for support for redistribution is equal to that of evaluations of native welfare recipients. If attitudes toward Pakistani immigrants were driven by support for the welfare state, we would expect that the “Pakistani” part of the vignette added to the predictive value: we would expect to find a stronger correlation between the two variables. The fact that we do not implies that attitudes toward Pakistani immigrants are not strongly correlated with (and therefore not driven by) welfare state attitudes.

The model in Table 5.3 implies that a one-point increase on the finding a job item corresponds to a .26 increase (or roughly a quarter of the standard deviation of 1.12 on the redistribution scale) in support for redistribution in the British treatment. Figures for the Pakistani case (with an equal standard deviation but a slightly smaller coefficient) look similar. Instead, a one-point increase on the finding a job item in the Irish treatment corresponds to a 0.45 increase on the redistribution scale – or almost half of the 1.02

Table 5.3: *Ordered logit models for the impact of the two vignette rating items on welfare state attitudes per treatment. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	British		Irish		Pakistani	
	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
More kids	0.28 (0.14)	0.03	-0.08 (0.15)	0.30	0.15 (0.13)	0.12
Prioritize job	0.26 (0.15)	0.04	0.45 (0.13)	0.00	0.24 (0.15)	0.06
N	287		251		270	

standard deviation. Although a complementary model including interaction terms (see Table A.9 in the Appendix) does not reveal significant interactions, this stronger correlation between the expected likelihood of looking for a job and support for redistribution in the Irish treatment suggests that attitudes toward Irish immigrants are more strongly related to interest-based factors. This finding is in line with Hypothesis 2.

In summary, my survey experiment reveals a number of interesting findings. First, the lack of differences in support for redistribution between the three experimental treatments implies that welfare state attitudes depend on interest-based rather than identity-based concerns. This result is in line with Hypothesis 1. Second, when comparing the native vignette with an unframed control condition, thereby controlling for priming effects, I find that support for redistribution is lower when participants are led to think of the welfare state in terms of its beneficiaries. This implies that support for the welfare state depends on perceptions of welfare recipients, a notion that is further supported by analyzing the relationship between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution. Respondents who evaluate the described welfare mother more negatively display more negative welfare state attitudes.

My analyses show that these vignette evaluations in turn vary across the three treatments. The welfare mother is evaluated significantly more negatively when she is described as Pakistani rather than British or Irish. Finally, my analyses reveal that the predictive value of the vignette evaluations for support for redistribution is largely similar across the three experimental treatments. We observe a somewhat stronger correlation for the Irish vignette. This result, which suggests that beliefs about Irish welfare recipients have a stronger predictive value for support for redistribution than beliefs about British or Pakistani welfare recipients, provides tentative support for Hypothesis 2. I further discuss the implications of these findings below.

5.4 Discussion and conclusion

Are attitudes toward immigrants driven by concerns about the welfare state? The results of the present study give little reason to believe this is the case. A randomized survey experiment served to distinguish between identity- and interest-based concerns for support for redistribution. In a first step, the analysis aimed to understand which of these were more important drivers. A second step assessed the correlation between welfare state attitudes and attitudes toward immigrants. Identity-based concerns were manipulated by varying ethnic distance to the described welfare recipient, while the importance of interest-based concerns was assessed by comparing outcomes of the native treatment to an unframed control treatment.

My results reveal that there is no difference in support for redistribution between the three experimental treatments. In other words, the ethnicity of the welfare recipient does not matter for resulting welfare state attitudes. This result suggests that interest-based motivations trump identity-based motivations as drivers of support for redistribution. Moreover, a comparison between the native treatment and the control treatment shows that priming participants to think of the welfare state in terms of its beneficiaries lowers support for redistribution. This comparison excludes identity-based motivations and thereby points again at the importance of interest-based motivations to explain welfare state attitudes.

As for drivers of attitudes toward immigrants, it seems that interest-based motivations are less relevant. My analyses suggest that there is a strong correlation between support for redistribution and perceptions of welfare recipients. Participants who believe that welfare recipients are not likely to prioritize finding a job, and that they are likely to have more children, display more negative welfare state attitudes. These beliefs about welfare recipients, in turn, vary between the treatment groups. The Pakistani welfare mother in particular is evaluated more negatively than the Irish and native vignette characters.

We can further test the importance of interest-based concerns for attitudes toward immigrants by comparing the correlations between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution across the treatments. If attitudes toward immigrants and welfare state attitudes were unrelated we would expect to find similar correlations across the three treatment groups. This is because support for redistribution should only be driven by the “poverty” part and not by the “ethnicity” part of the vignette. In other words, an equal correlation across the treatment groups implies that the correlation between welfare state attitudes and evaluation of the welfare recipient is similar to what we observe in the native treatment, and therefore points at an only limited impact of interest-based drivers of attitudes toward the group in question.

For the Pakistani treatment, this is what we observe: the virtually equal correlations between vignette ratings and support for redistribution in the British and Pakistani cases

suggest that the “Pakistani” part of the vignette does not increase the predictive value of the vignette rating. It follows that attitudes toward Pakistani immigrants are unrelated to welfare state attitudes. The somewhat stronger correlation between the job finding item and support for redistribution in the Irish case implies that beliefs about Irish immigrants have a stronger predictive value for support for redistribution than beliefs about Pakistani immigrants, thereby providing tentative support for an interest-based explanation of attitudes toward Irish immigrants. In short, the limited evidence for an interest-based explanation of attitudes toward immigrants leaves room for an identity-based approach.

In terms of the sociocognitive perspective, the concepts of cognitive representations and framing especially deserve to be highlighted here. More precisely, my results suggest that beliefs about welfare recipients’ willingness to find a job and likelihood of having more children are correlated significantly with support for redistribution. Moreover, merely thinking of a British-born welfare recipient yields lower support for the welfare state. These results imply that perceptions matter. This relates directly to the discussion on cognitive frameworks in Section 2.2. Rather than an objective truth, it is perceptions of welfare recipients that drive support for redistribution. Inevitably, this notion brings also the concept of framing back into the picture. The way welfare recipients are perceived should depend on how they are portrayed in the media and by political entrepreneurs.

In recent years, and especially during the recent Brexit campaign, European immigrants were often framed as “welfare tourists”. For example, in 2013 UK Independence Party MP Douglas Carswell argued that:

the wave of benefit migrants has become a tsunami of economic refugees fleeing the eurozone crisis to try to find jobs here. We cannot both continue the free-at-the-point-of-use welfare state and benefits system and allow Europeans to flee the eurozone and come here (Portes, 2013).

Public opinion surveys suggest that this idea is communicated successfully to the public. For instance, in the 2014 British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), 24% of the respondents thought that welfare tourism was the main motivation for migrants to come to the UK, a figure that rose to 55% when considering only those with very negative attitudes toward migration in general.

While the welfare tourism frame could explain why attitudes toward some types of immigrants are related to interest-based concerns, we may wonder to what extent this applies to the Irish case. The positive perceptions of Irish migrants in this study, as well as in a YouGov report on perceived contributions of different immigrant groups to life in Britain (YouGov, 2015), suggests that Irish immigrants typically enjoy a positive reputation. At the same time, the importance of perceptions suggests that we may observe stronger relationships between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution for immigrant groups that are subject to the welfare tourism frame. Further research including

other immigrant groups as well as discourse analysis should serve to better understand how perceptions of immigrants are shaped, and how these relate to welfare state attitudes.

A study on the relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and support for the welfare state essentially concerns the *cognitive consistency* of holding different attitudes. While research in political science has traditionally assumed that pro-immigration and pro-redistribution preferences naturally co-occur (see the progressive's dilemma mentioned on page 125), recent studies on cognitive belief systems in the American (Baldassarri & Goldberg, 2014) and Dutch (Daenekindt, De Koster, & Van der Waal, 2017) contexts have shown that there is not one unique structure by which several cultural and economic attitudes are aligned. In other words, while the progressive's dilemma may be an actual dilemma for individuals whose attitudes correspond with the classical left-right structure, anti-immigration and pro-redistribution attitudes may go hand in hand for those with alternative patterns of cognitive beliefs. Daenekindt et al. (2017) argue that the process by which these belief systems are shaped is subject to framing and agenda-setting effects – an especially interesting observation given the framing of European immigrants as welfare immigrants discussed above.

Since Daenekindt et al. (2017) demonstrate that there is a correlation between belief systems and electoral preferences in a multi-party system (pp. 13-4), we may expect the relationship between attitudes toward welfare recipients and support for redistribution to vary by political preference. For purposes of illustration, Table A.10 through Table A.12 in the Appendix provide a preliminary analysis of this question by comparing the correlations between vignette evaluations and support for redistribution by treatment for supporters of the Conservative Party, the Labor Party, and the PRR UK Independence Party. In line with heterogeneous belief systems by political preference, the tables show that the patterns of correlations for the different treatments differ for each party. While the sample size of the present study is too limited to base conclusions on this additional analysis, these preliminary results suggest that we may find evidence for interest-based explanations of attitudes toward immigrants when focusing on (groups of) individuals with different cognitive belief structures rather than approaching the electorate as a monolithic whole. Future research should aim to form a more thorough understanding of this issue by taking into account this heterogeneity, as well as other types of variation that may shape preferences for both immigration and redistribution, such as socioeconomic factors (Helbling & Kriesi, 2014; Naumann & Stoetzer, 2015).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Why is there so much variation in attitudes toward immigrants? As we have seen throughout this dissertation, attitudes toward immigrants tend to vary across time and between countries, as well as between groups with different education levels and socioeconomic status. Moreover, people hold different attitudes toward different types of immigrants. This dissertation has aimed to explain why this is the case.

There is a rich body of research on the drivers of attitudes toward immigrants, which we can broadly divide into contact- and competition-based explanations. Both accounts start from the same premise (that the presence of immigrants is ultimately related to the prevailing attitudes), but the hypothesized outcomes are fundamentally different. Whereas explanations based on the contact hypothesis (e.g. Allport, 1954/1958) argue that certain types of contact with immigrants should lead to more positive attitudes, competition-based accounts (e.g. Esses et al., 2012) expect the opposite result. As I outlined in Chapter 1, both accounts provide plausible explanations of variation in attitudes toward immigrants in some cases, but their overall explanatory value is only limited. For example, these traditional theories cannot explain why we often observe high levels of anti-immigrant sentiment in areas with low immigration rates. To account for this issues, as well as for unexplained variation across the dimensions discussed above, I proposed adopting a, what I called, sociocognitive perspective.

As I explained in Chapter 2, the sociocognitive approach builds on two fundamental human needs: the need to belong (Maslow, 1954, as cited by Forsyth, 2010, p. 58) and the need to understand (e.g. Kahneman, 2011/2012). I proposed that the first of these fundamental human needs drives processes of social identification and normative influence, while the other creates a susceptibility to issue framing.

A theory about attitudes toward immigrants is fundamentally a theory about group dynamics. Therefore, in my discussion of the need to belong, I considered the classical social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity theory posits that humans organize the social world by categorizing themselves and others in their social environment into groups, and thereby establish a social identity. Research shows that people generally

display more positive attitudes toward in-group members (e.g. Brewer, 1996), and that the mere presence of an out-group can lead to intergroup competition (ibid.), especially in situations of perceived competition over resources (Esses et al., 2001).

Social groups carry with them social norms, rules that describe how people ought to behave (e.g. Villatoro et al., 2014). Compliance with these social norms increases as a function of level of identification (e.g. Reynolds et al., 2012), and if norms concerning out-group members are negative, group members are likely to adjust their behavior accordingly (ibid.). Importantly, group-based attitudes toward out-group members (such as immigrants) do not necessarily have to be negative, as the repeatedly cited example of the Canadian identity shows. In groups with shared pro-immigration attitudes, we should therefore expect to find positive attitudes toward immigrants. It follows from this discussion that:

- We should find stronger anti-immigrant attitudes among people who identify more strongly with their social group (Hypothesis 1a), and;
- The effect of social identification processes on attitudes toward immigrants depends on the shared set of social norms within the group (Hypothesis 1b).

With regard to the need to understand, I argued that humans have a fundamental need to make sense of the world surrounding them, and that their cognitive representations of the world drive their behavior. Importantly, this does not mean to imply that people are driven by a quest for *truth* – a cognitive representation that suffices to make sense of the world and the events taking place in that world is generally deemed acceptable by the human mind. The assumption – implicit in this reasoning – that people can hold different frameworks explains why we observe variation in attitudes toward immigrants. At the same time, this reasoning begs the question how interpretations of the world are shaped: I argued that the concept of framing could provide a useful explanation in this respect. Specifically, exposure to different types of frames should lead to different attitudes.

I further argued that, in case people are confronted with a state of the world that does not match their cognitive frameworks – that is, if they experience a violation of the need to understand – this should lead to subjective uncertainty. Driven by the need to make sense of the world, uncertainty should increase people's susceptibility to ideas that can resolve this negative state. It follows that the nature of these ideas could account for resulting attitudes. If the type of ideas that is most attractive to people experiencing subjective uncertainty are anti-immigrant ideas, and I demonstrated that this should be the case, we can ultimately explain variation in attitudes toward immigrants from variation in uncertainty. At the same time, we should observe that exposure to different types of ideas in conditions of uncertainty should lead to variation in resulting attitudes.

Based on this reasoning, I formulated the following hypotheses:

- Variation in attitudes toward immigrants is explained by exposure to different (media) frames (Hypothesis 2a);
- Framing effects should be stronger in situations with high subjective uncertainty (Hypothesis 2b), and;
- We can observe covariation between uncertainty and attitudes toward immigrants (Hypothesis 3).

In the concluding chapter of this dissertation I review my findings in the light of these hypotheses, ask which contributions they have made to our understanding of variation in attitudes toward immigrants, and discuss implications.

6.1 A sociocognitive approach to attitudes toward immigrants

Starting from the need to belong, my research identifies normative influence processes as an important factor driving attitudes toward immigrants. The groups we identify with determine the norms we adhere to, and thereby drive behavior. The case of Rucphen (Chapter 4) provides a clear example of this. Residents are expected to follow certain norms of behavior, and failing to do so leads to negative reactions. While social cohesion is generally interpreted as a positive factor, I argue that it is the content of the prevailing norms that determines (electoral) outcomes. In a context with populist norms, as seems to be the case in Rucphen, this mechanism can ultimately explain the relationship between a strong local identity and substantial levels of support for the populist radical right. This interpretation of the local voting behavior in terms of normative influence processes seems to have greater explanatory value than traditional accounts based on protest voting and policy preferences. Thereby, this study supports the hypothesis that the relationship between social identification and attitudes toward immigrants is contingent upon the prevailing norms.

While social identification and consequent normative influence processes can serve to provide cognitive frameworks by simplifying the social world and providing a collective worldview (e.g. Kruglanski et al., 2006; Hogg, 2000; Friedkin & Johnsen, 2011; Hedström, 1998), interpretations of events in the media can also serve this purpose. Chapter 3 provides an example of this by analyzing changes in public opinion on immigration after a number of shocking events. Contrary to common expectations, my analyses do not reveal negative effects of Muslim terrorist attacks on attitudes toward immigrants. For the case of the murder of Theo van Gogh, this finding is in line with previous studies (Finseraas et al., 2011; Gijsberts, 2005; Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2007). I propose that we can explain this surprising result by taking into account the way the murder was framed in

the media. A qualitative text analysis reveals different ways of interpreting the event in the Dutch media, however none of them related to immigration. This implies that the murder was not linked to immigration in the public mind, and therefore we do not observe a change in attitudes toward immigrants. This result highlights the importance of framing for attitude formation.

Besides highlighting the importance of framing, the results presented in Chapter 3 are consistent with the uncertainty theory outlined in Chapter 2. The theory states that violations of frameworks – and we may share terrorist attacks under this category – prompt a need to understand, thereby increasing susceptibility to ideas. Much like the relationship between social identification and attitudes is moderated by the prevailing social norms, the outcomes of uncertainty for attitudes should depend on the nature of the available ideas. For the case of Theo van Gogh, absent interpretations related to immigration, people experiencing uncertainty should not adopt anti-immigrant ideas. While these results are in line with the uncertainty hypothesis, at this point it remains unclear to what extent the effects of framing are amplified by uncertainty, as stated in hypothesis 2b.

While the cases of Rucphen and Theo van Gogh speak in favor of a sociocognitive approach to attitudes toward immigrants, they do not consider interest-based explanations of anti-immigrant sentiment, and therefore we should not be too hasty in dismissing these. For this purpose, Chapter 5 tested the possibility that attitudes toward immigrants are driven by welfare state attitudes. A survey experiment using a representative sample of the UK population showed that, whereas welfare state attitudes seem to depend on interest-based concerns, the relationship with attitudes toward immigrants is negligible. My study suggests that the way in which British perceive welfare recipients affects their support for redistribution. People who believe that a described welfare recipient is likely to have more children, or not likely to prioritize finding a job, are less supportive of the welfare state. While evaluations of welfare recipients on these two dimensions depend on the described person's ethnicity, with more negative evaluations of the non-European immigrant's vignette, the correlation between the vignette ratings and support for redistribution is largely similar across the three treatments. Since a causal relationship between welfare state and immigration attitudes would imply a strong correlation, these results speak against an interest-based interpretation of attitudes toward immigrants – leaving room for a sociocognitive interpretation. Moreover, the importance of perceptions of welfare recipients suggests that framing could again be a relevant explanatory variable for resulting attitudes.

In summary, my findings indicate that attitudes toward immigrants depend on what we believe - whether that concerns narratives of shocking events, proper ways to behave, or immigrants' motivations to come and live in a country (i.e. welfare tourism or not). This conclusion points at normative influence- and framing processes as powerful drivers of attitudes.

6.1.1 Reflections on methods

Throughout this dissertation project, I have tested my hypotheses using a wide range of methods, each with their advantages and disadvantages. As for the quantitative methods – most notably the natural experiment, the lost-letter experiment, and the survey experiment – they have proven extremely useful tools to test specific research hypotheses. If shocking events lead to more anti-immigrant sentiment we should observe that in the results of the ESS; if PVV support is driven by anti-immigrant sentiment we should observe lower return rates for foreign names in places with high PVV support; if social cohesion drives PVV support we should observe a positive correlation between the two across Dutch municipalities, and; if attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution are correlated we should be able to observe that in a survey experiment. While the quantitative methods I adopted were highly useful to show that the answer to all these questions is negative, they proved less useful to explain *why* that was the case.

This is where qualitative methods turned out to be valuable tools. The absence of any effect in the Theo van Gogh case suddenly made sense when I considered (admittedly with some skepticism at first) the media discourse on the event. Similarly, I would not have gained my insights on social cohesion in Rucphen had I not noticed the recurring themes of cohesion and normative pressure in the interviews. In the final chapter, qualitative measures could have helped to understand whether framing is indeed a factor determining how different types of attitudes are cognitively aligned. Of course, these qualitative methods have their disadvantages too, most notably in terms of replicability and sample sizes. By themselves, the qualitative results have limited explanatory value. So do the quantitative measures however. It is by combining these types of measures that we can paint a picture of how attitudes toward immigrants *depend* – on your cognitive frameworks and on those of the groups you identify with.

6.1.2 The added value of the sociocognitive perspective

Importantly, the present dissertation does not aim to dismiss established explanations for variation in attitudes toward immigrants, such as ethnic competition theory or the contact hypothesis. Rather, it intends to demonstrate how a sociocognitive perspective can add to these existing accounts. I find that, while the approach adopted here cannot explain attitudes toward immigrants in and of itself, it indeed offers a valuable contribution to our understanding of the negative attitudes toward immigrants that seem so widespread in Europe today.

As I have repeatedly observed throughout this dissertation, not all people and not all people at all times resist or resent immigrants equally. Surely interests matter. Surely racism plays a role as well. But this analysis has shown that even when there are terrorist events, these are not necessarily interpreted as threats from immigrants. The question,

as we have seen above, is how these events are framed. Put differently, how people *make sense* of the particular events is of great importance for their resulting attitudes. Similarly, we have seen that there is significant variation in support for an anti-immigration party in the Netherlands, even when there are no obvious objective explanations for why people in one town should be more drawn to such a party than people in the next town. While classical hypotheses based on policy preferences and protest-voting prove to have only limited explanatory value for the overwhelming electoral support in the town in question, the sociocognitive perspective helps to shed light on this type of variation by pointing us at the impact and nature of social identity- and normative influence processes in different places.

Finally, while intuitively it makes sense that people who experience labor competition by immigrants should display more negative attitudes against them, my experimental evidence demonstrates that we cannot speak of a straightforward relationship between attitudes toward different types of immigrants and more general preferences for redistribution. In other words, there is no obvious or one-off way in which interests and immigration attitudes are aligned. Indeed, as Mark Blyth (2003) has shown, interests themselves are subject to interpretation. That interpretation is in fact a sociocognitive exercise.

I began this thesis with the expectation that uncertainty would play an important role in explaining variation in attitudes toward immigrants. I cannot say that I have proven this hypothesis. Partly, this is because of the difficulties of measurement and definition inherent in the concept. Having said this, my expectations have not necessarily been violated either. I still believe that uncertainty can play a role in explaining why, when, and how people are open to new ideas and interpretations. As we have seen in the case of the shocking events in the Netherlands, Sweden, and France (Chapter 2), framing plays an important role in the process of uncertainty reduction. Of course, had the elites adopted alternative interpretations of the events, we would likely have observed more negative attitudes toward immigrants as a result. In short, while terrorist attacks seem like obvious instances that should lead to higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, it is difficult to predict how people will react without relying on a sociocognitive perspective.

In sum, the sociocognitive perspective does not in and of itself explain outcomes for attitudes toward immigrants. However, it helps us to make sense of observed outcomes, leaving us with a more comprehensive understanding of attitudes toward immigrants than purely traditional explanations could.

Alternative explanations

Aside from competing accounts, we could think of a number of approaches that could explain my results without necessarily contradicting the sociocognitive framework. The most notable examples of this are national nostalgia (Smeeke, Verkuyten, & Martinovic, 2015; Smeeke & Verkuyten, 2015) and authoritarianism. Group-based nostalgia is defined

as “the nostalgic reverie (...) that is contingent upon thinking of oneself in terms of a particular social identity or as a member of a particular group” (Wildschut, Bruder, Robertson, Van Tilburg, & Sedikides, 2014, p. 845). This collective nostalgia can be triggered by social change (Smeekes et al., 2015), an observation which should not come as a surprise in the light of the uncertainty hypothesis. More specifically, if people face expectations of violations, they may long for a time when everything was more simple (a lost “heartland” in the words of Elchardus and Spruyt (2016)). As Smeekes et al. (2015) argue, people experiencing national nostalgia are likely to engage in social categorization processes due to their power to “repair a sense of identity discontinuity” (p. 562). In line with the object of national nostalgia, the evoked identity should be one that distinguishes between natives and immigrants – given that the latter were not part of the historical “us”. The authors show that feelings of national nostalgia can spark autochthony and, in turn, opposition to Muslim expressive rights.¹

While there is no reason to assume that my results (the absence of a change in attitudes after the Van Gogh murder, the high support for the PVV in Rucphen, and the lack of a connection between attitudes toward immigrants and support for redistribution) were driven by national nostalgia, it should be clear how this account relates to the uncertainty hypothesis, both in terms of onset and consequences. With its cognitive component and political mobilization mechanism, the uncertainty hypothesis complements the idea of national nostalgia.

A second concept of interest is authoritarianism, one of the three defining characteristics of the PRR party family (see Section 4.1). In the psychological literature, authoritarianism is defined as a “chronically accessible, learned social attitude with three covarying traits – submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward outgroups” (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011, p. 547), which is activated when group norms and conformity are threatened (Stenner, 2005, p. 17). The activation of authoritarianism by such normative threats triggers “both personal coercion of and bias against different others (racial and ethnic out-groups, political dissidents, moral deviants), as well as political demands for authoritative constraints on their behavior” (ibid.). It should be evident how these behaviors relate to the nativist and authoritarian elements of the PRR party family (Rooduijn, 2014). Indeed, research suggests that people with higher authoritarian predispositions were more likely to vote for Trump in the recent US elections (Taub, 2016). For the purposes of the present dissertation, it is relevant to note that the proposed mechanism, by which authoritarianism is activated by norms violations, renders it an especially interesting factor for PRR support in contexts with high levels of normative pressure, such as Rucphen. Future research should aim to better understand the interplay

¹In a similar vein, the satirical TV show *South Park* suggests that eating so-called “member berries”, special nostalgia-provoking fruits, makes people in the fictional town of South Park more likely to support Trump (Parker & Stone, 2016).

between social cohesion, norms, and authoritarian responses.

6.2 Implications

I started this dissertation describing statistics of people who arrived in Europe by sea. Having arrived at the end of the dissertation now, it should be clear that immigration is more than numbers of people crossing the Mediterranean. Just as important is *who* decides to migrate, and often it is merely about the *idea* or interpretation of people migrating – hence the finding that those in the areas least affected by immigration often hold the most negative attitudes toward immigrants. The power of ideas about immigration is used for political gain throughout the Western world. For instance, it is commonly argued that the Brexit referendum was framed in terms of immigration (Beauchamp, 2016), and as discussed in Chapter 4, the rise of the populist radical right can be largely interpreted in terms of concerns about immigration. Outside of the European context, an illustration of political mobilization on attitudes toward immigrants is provided by US President Trump, who proposed a wall on the southern border with Mexico already during his campaign, and is currently working on a ban on Muslims entering the US.

As tempting as it may be to dismiss supporters of these movements as racists – at least from the perspective of the liberal elite (Haidt, 2016) – this is not likely to be very helpful or productive. As I have shown in the present dissertation, many processes by which groups of people are pitted against each other are inherently human. In agreement with the American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2016), I believe that judging people who oppose immigration may just alienate them, and drive them further into the arms of the populist radical right.

The fact that certain attitudes are the result of natural human processes, however, should not be taken to mean that they are positive or that we should take them for granted. Immigration is undeniably part of today's reality and ongoing conflicts and climate change can only serve to increase its salience. Against this background, it seems wise to consider how we can deal with immigration and tailor public policies to limit negative effects both for host populations and between different groups in society.

A first direction of interest could relate to protection against violations of (economic) expectations. My work suggests that uncertainty following violated expectations can be a pivotal moment for attitude change, thereby increasing the explanatory power of media frames. Similarly, Friedman (2005) suggests that economic stagnation (i.e. violation of economic expectations) is related to higher levels of intolerance. These notions point in the direction of policies aimed at economic growth and equality: given that most Western countries have been struggling with exactly this issue since the onset of the financial crisis in 2007, this is likely not the most fruitful way to improve attitudes toward immigrants. While my study on Theo van Gogh illustrates the potential impact of issue framing in

this respect, liberal democracies have only limited influence on which ideas dominate the public discourse, thereby rendering this another unfeasible way to improve attitudes toward immigrants.

Secondly, my research highlights the importance of social identity and normative influence processes for attitudes toward out-group members, in this case immigrants. Moreover, according to the authoritarianism literature cited in the previous section, violations of social norms should spark authoritarian reactions, which are related to exclusionary attitudes and support for the populist radical right. In this light, we may think of a number of policy measures to improve inter-group dynamics. First, since research suggests that expressions of prejudice are largely driven by normative pressure (see Section 2.1.2), actively changing social norms to promote tolerant attitudes could reduce anti-immigrant sentiment. Alternatively, policy measures could aim to prevent authoritarian reactions by limiting the potential for norm violations. This could be done for example by pre-selecting immigrants, or by avoiding large concentrations of immigrants (as suggested for instance by Haidt, 2016). This way, even if immigration implies increased diversity, the normative threat it poses in the eyes of authoritarians should be limited. Finally, there is a strong potential for integration policies here. Emerging new identities encompassing (the offspring of) immigrants should carry with them inclusive social norms and recognition of mutual similarities. Additional research should identify the most effective policies in this respect.

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Appendix

A.1 Appendix Chapter 3

Table A.1: *Codebooks of the demographic variables.*

Variable	Value	Label
Gender	0	Female
	1	Male
Education	1	Less than lower secondary education (ISCED 0-1)
	2	Lower secondary education completed (ISCED 2)
	3	Upper secondary education completed (ISCED 3)
	4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education completed (ISCED 4)
	5	Tertiary education completed (ISCED 5-6)
Education (Sweden and France)		Three-digit code with the first digit indicating the ISCED level and the other digits indicating the sublevel
% Work or education	0	Work or education was not main activity
	1	Work or education as main activity
Political Orientation		Dummy variable based on answer to main activity in the past 7 days
	0	Left
How interested would you say you are in politics?	10	Right (11-point scale)
	1	Very interested
	2	Quite interested
	3	Hardly interested
	4	Not at all interested
Urbanization	1	Big city
	2	Suburbs or outskirts of big city
	3	Town or small city
	4	Country village
	5	Farm or home in countryside
Amsterdam region	0	Not from the larger Amsterdam region
	1	From the larger Amsterdam region
Average time spent reading newspapers per weekday		Dummy variable based on the region variable
	0	No time at all
	1	Less than 0,5 hour
	2	0,5 hour to 1 hour
	3	More than 1 hour, up to 1,5 hours

Continued on next page

Table A.1 – *Continued*

Variable	Value	Label
	4	More than 1,5 hours, up to 2 hours
	5	More than 2 hours, up to 2,5 hours
	6	More than 2,5 hours, up to 3 hours
	7	More than 3 hours

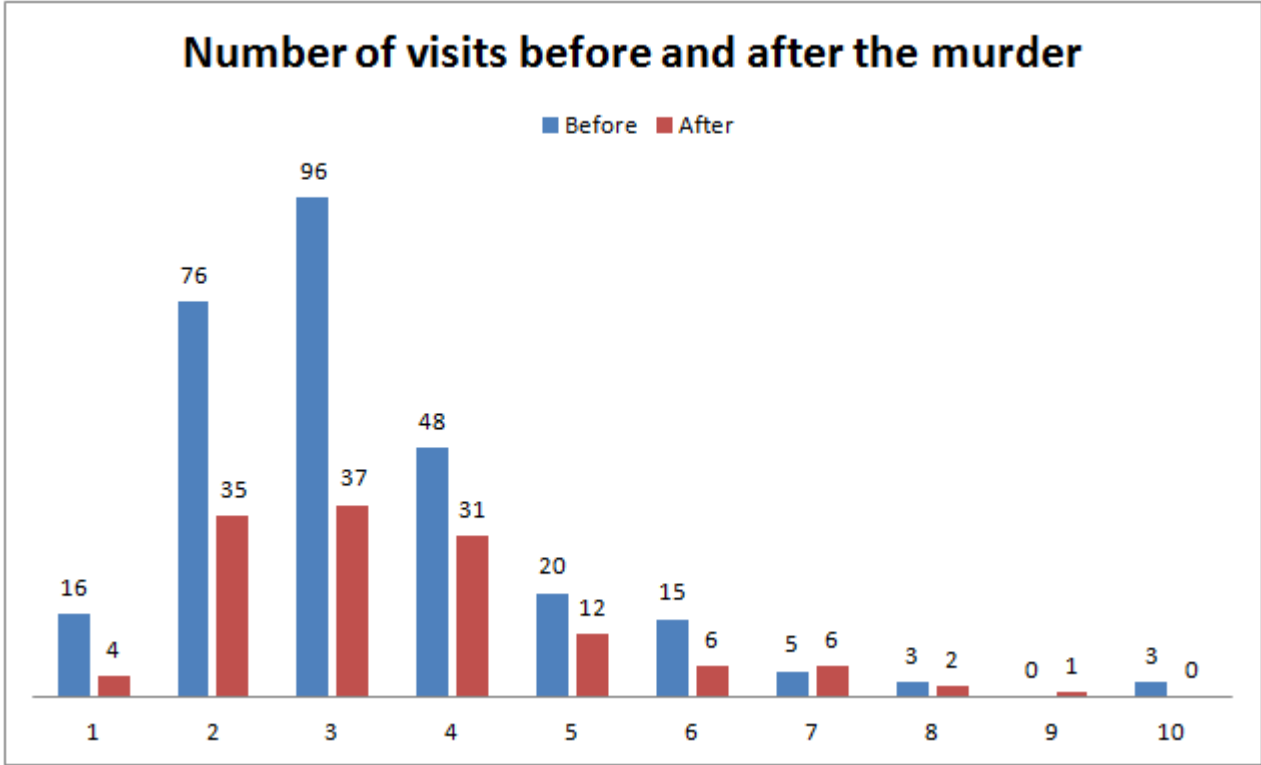


Figure A.1: *Frequencies of number of the visit at which the interview took place for respondents before and after the murder of Theo van Gogh.*

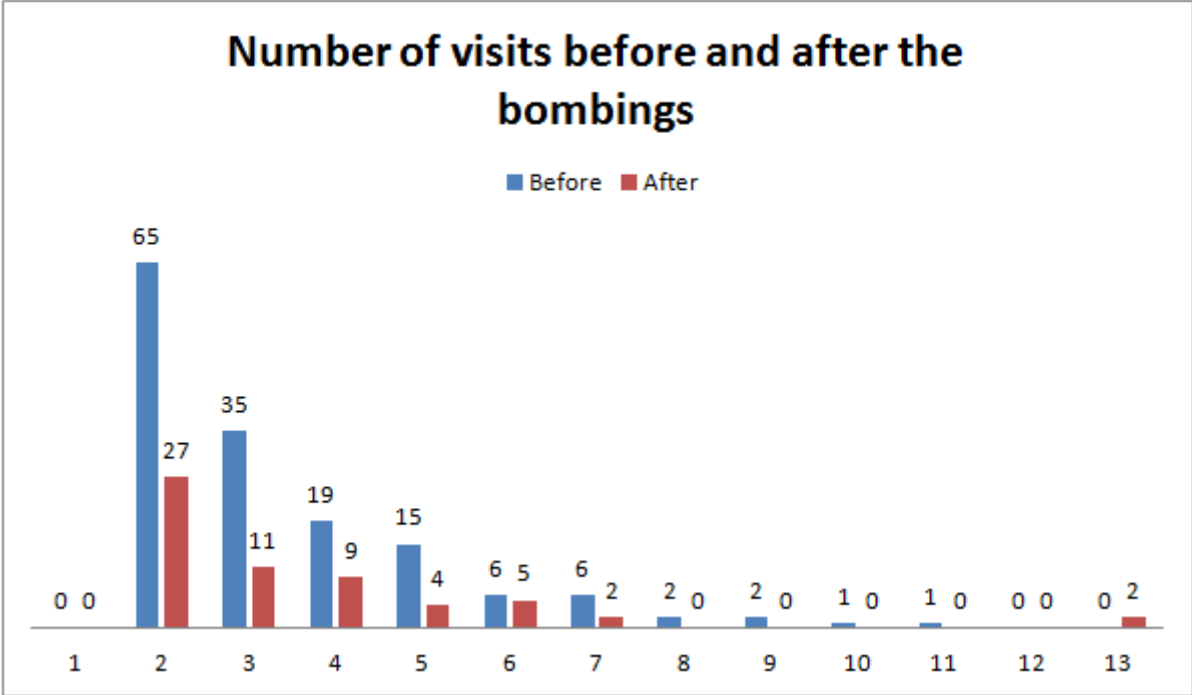


Figure A.2: *Frequencies of number of the visit at which the interview took place for respondents before and after the Stockholm bombings.*

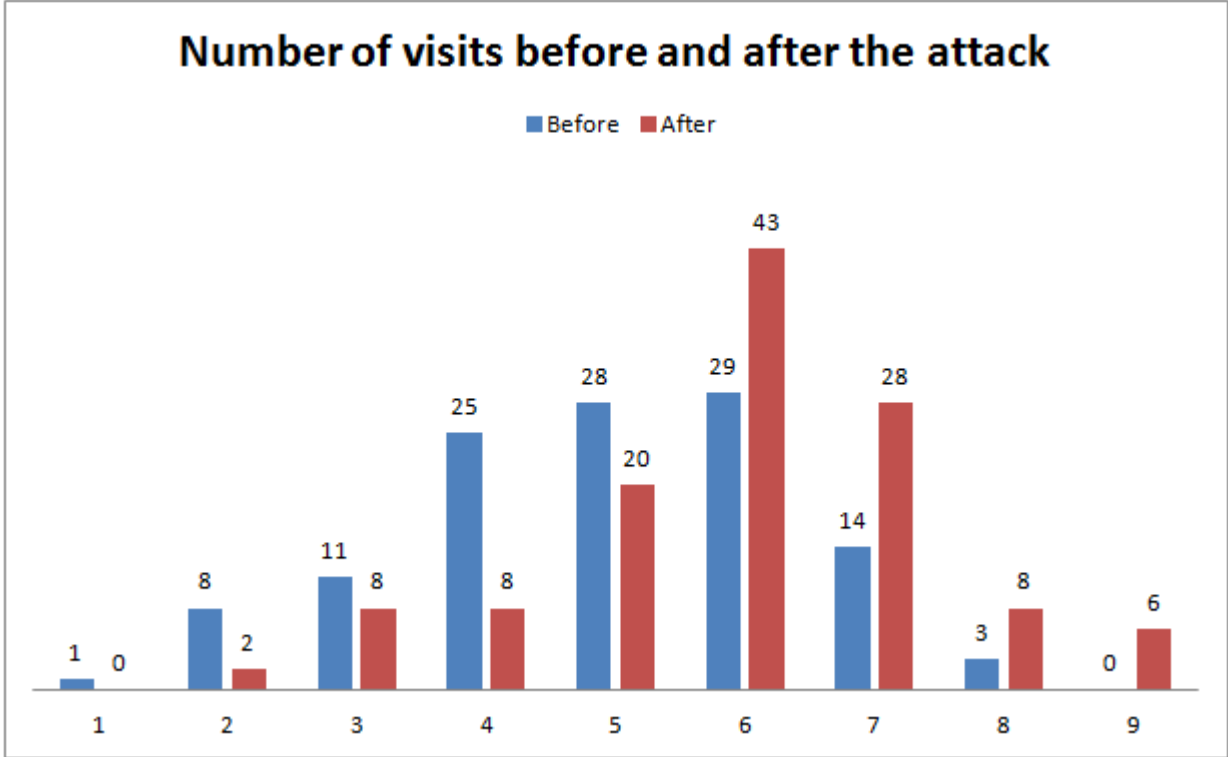


Figure A.3: Frequencies of number of the visit at which the interview took place for respondents before and after the Charlie Hebdo attack.

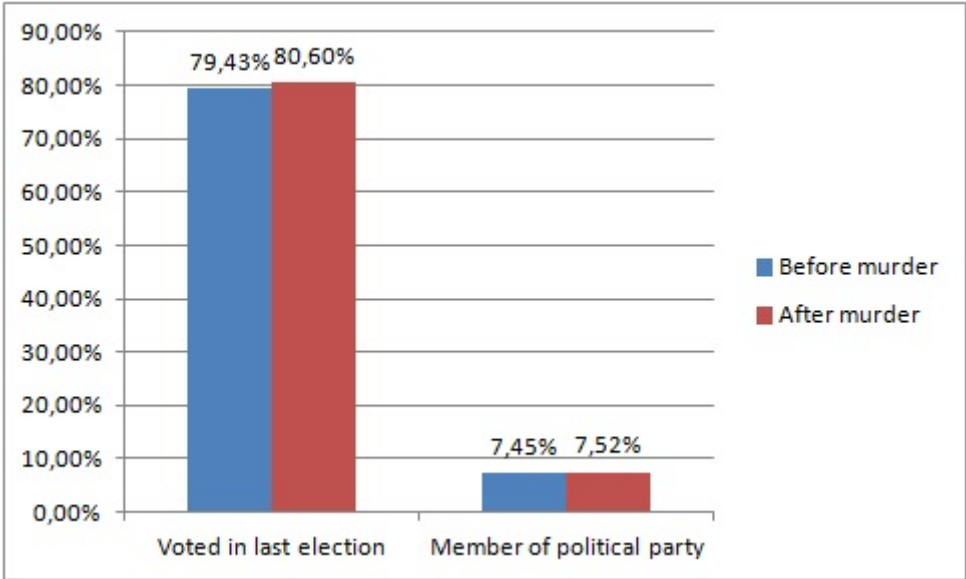


Figure A.4: Percentage voted in last election and party membership per treatment in the 14-day bandwidth for the Van Gogh case. Differences are not statistically significant.

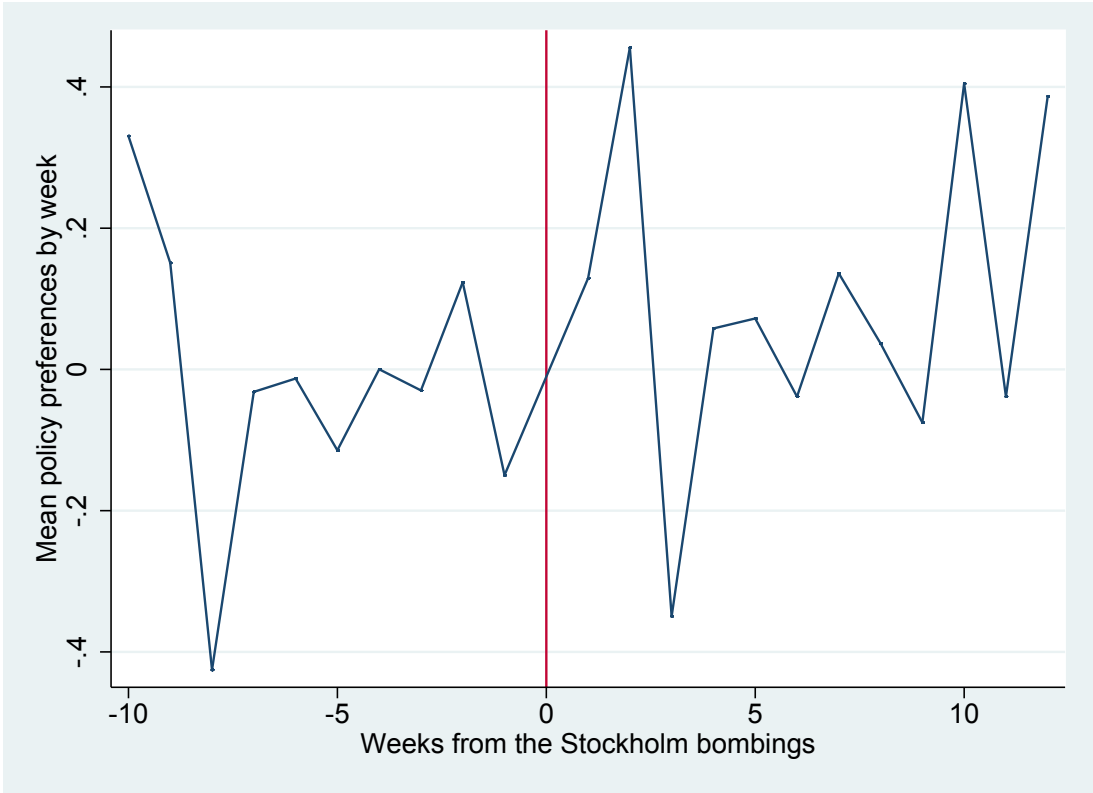


Figure A.5: Average immigration policy preferences by week from the Stockholm bombings.

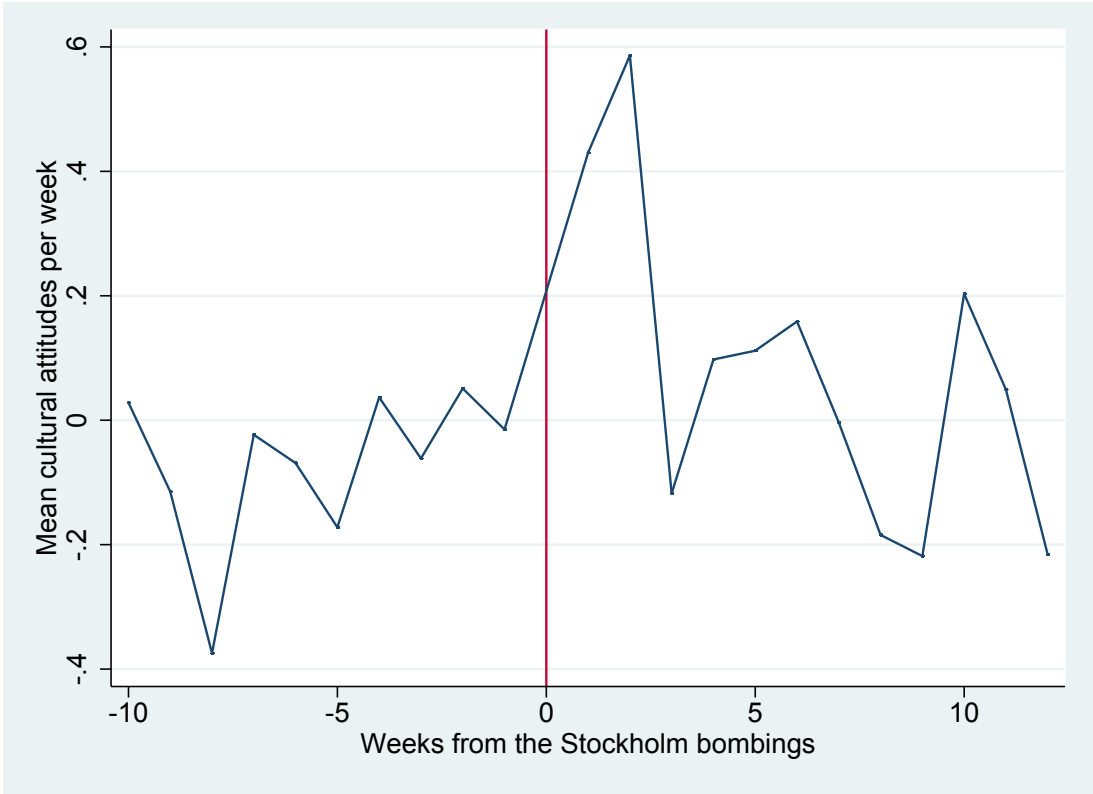


Figure A.6: Average cultural attitudes by week from the Stockholm bombings.

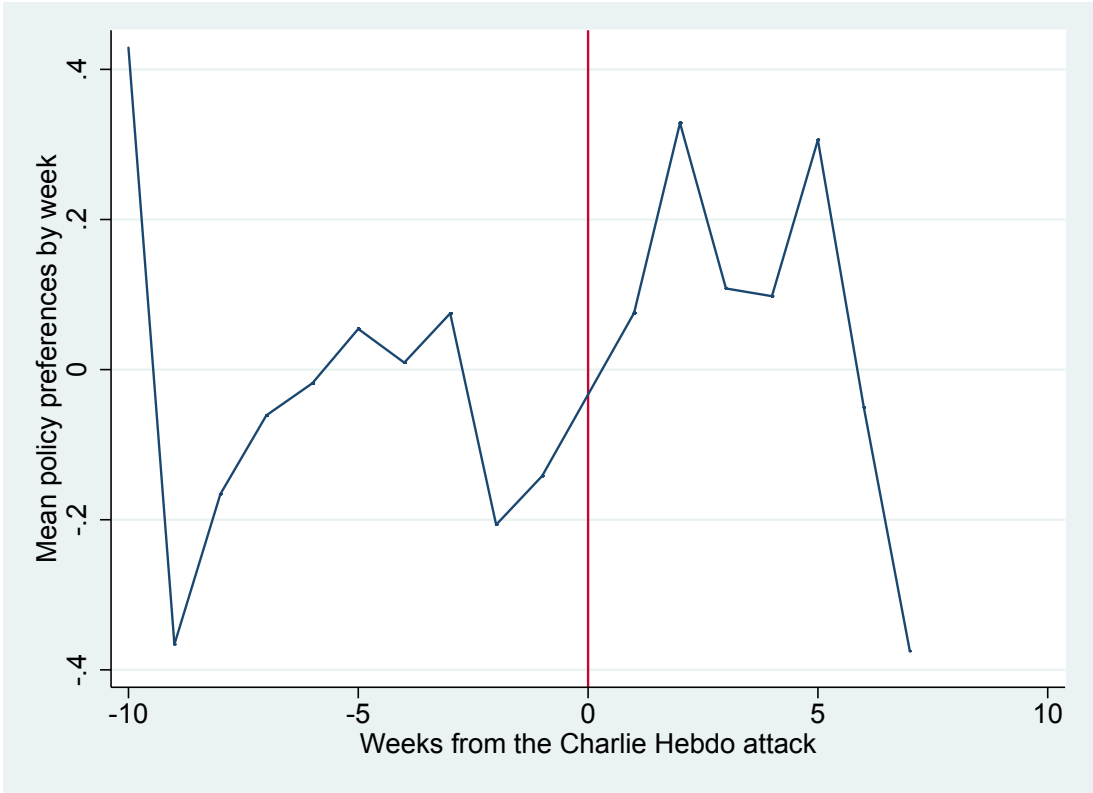


Figure A.7: Average immigration policy preferences by week from the Charlie Hebdo attack.

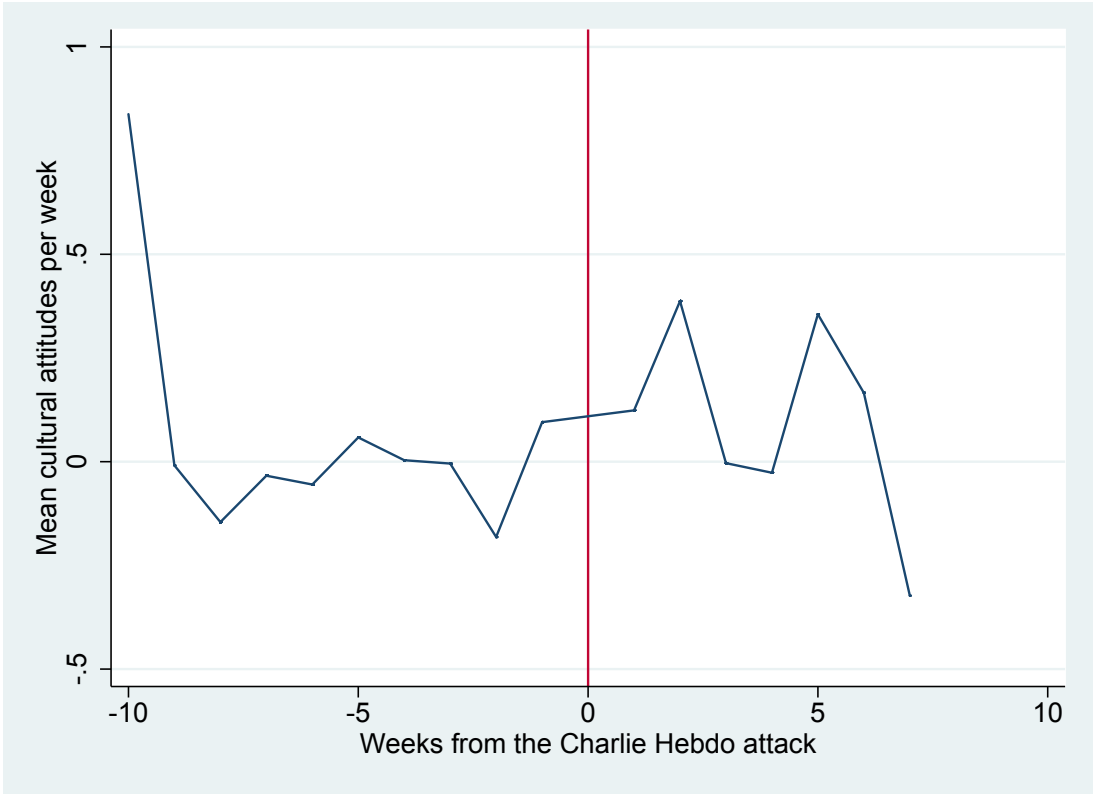


Figure A.8: Average cultural attitudes by week from the Charlie Hebdo attack.

Table A.2: Multivariate regression models for the effects of the three events on policy preferences and cultural attitudes toward immigrants. *P-values in parentheses.*

Variable	Van Gogh		Stockholm		Charlie Hebdø	
	Policy	Cultural	Policy	Cultural	Policy	Cultural
Event	0.02 (0.83)	-0.13 (0.13)	0.12 (0.40)	0.37** (0.01)	0.18 (0.11)	0.22 (0.08)
Media use	-0.04 (0.65)	0.15 (0.08)	0.29 (0.11)	0.10 (0.55)	0.08 (0.46)	0.02 (0.86)
Media ²	0.02 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.23)	-0.06 (0.23)	0.01 (0.80)	-0.01 (0.64)	0.00 (0.79)
Left-right scale	-0.09*** (0.00)	-0.08*** (0.00)	-0.05*** (0.14)	-0.04 (0.18)	-0.11*** (0.00)	-0.15*** (0.00)
Employment status	-0.03 (0.11)	0.00 (0.87)	-0.02 (0.70)	-0.02 (0.56)	-0.02 (0.63)	0.00 (0.91)
Education level	0.08* (0.04)	0.14*** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.38)
Household income	0.00 (0.89)	0.04 (0.08)	0.00 (0.88)	0.01 (0.73)	0.01 (0.72)	0.07* (0.01)
Respondent age	0.00 (0.34)	0.00 (0.16)	0.00 (0.44)	0.00 (0.92)	0.00 (0.85)	0.00 (0.42)
Male	0.01 (0.92)	0.06 (0.47)	0.15 (0.29)	0.06 (0.64)	0.00 (0.97)	0.00 (0.99)
Voted last election	0.22 (0.09)	0.22 (0.06)	0.09 (0.77)	-0.08 (0.78)	-0.20 (0.14)	-0.07 (0.65)
N	330		182		185	
R ²	0.206	0.128	0.164	0.148	0.250	0.282

p-values in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A.3: *Typical examples of frames in the discourse analysis.*

Frame	Typical example
Freedom of speech (positive)	The obviousness with which a radical freedom of speech, as practiced by Van Gogh, was defended, was encouraging. (...) I have never believed in the approach that Hirsi Ali and Van Gogh used to fight Muslim fundamentalism. But I strongly believe in their right to try.
Freedom of speech (negative)	Such a wrong-doing cannot be excused, but we should see things in the right perspective. Theo van Gogh was not killed for his opinion, as is suggested, but for his hurtful barrages of abuse.
Responsibility	Young Muslims have increasingly high expectations of their opportunities in the host society, especially when they are highly educated. (...) Their sense of pride risks to be hurt, because their identity and self respect are questioned, their social and economic desires are not fulfilled and their capacity to self criticism is unripened. They feel hurt and frustrated and blame the host society. Family, social networks, and peer groups are rooted only fragilely into society and therefore do not manage to provide sufficient relief for these disappointments and frustrations. Therefore, a process of self-isolation starts, which is used by politically extremist Muslims who hang around mosques and other places.
Identity	[Theo van Gogh was] a loud and eccentric artist who found a stage in Amsterdam to work on his ideals: an indivisible city, where everyone can be who they are.
Extremism	We are fed up with being compared to this extremism. Our ideas correspond to those of the liberal state and not those of repression. We were born here, this is the the country we belong in and where we are who we are.

Table A.4: *Most frequent words used after the murder as compared to articles with the same search words published before the murder.*

Keyword	English	Category	Frequency	%	Ref. frequency	Reference %
1. Gogh	Gogh	Factual	1686	0.61	35	0.04
2. Moord	Murder	Factual	977	0.36	7	
3. Theo	Theo	Factual	957	0.35	12	0.01
4. Amsterdam	Amsterdam	Factual	546	0.20	44	0.05
5. B	B	Factual	523	0.19	8	
6. Mohammed	Mohammed	Factual	472	0.17	10	0.01
7. Hirsi	Hirsi	Factual	310	0.11	31	0.04
8. Moskee	Mosque	Muslim extremism	275	0.10	19	0.02
9. AIVD	(intelligence service)	Muslim extremism	229	0.08	6	
10. Vrijheid	Freedom	Freedom of speech	199	0.07	15	0.02
11. Brief	Letter	Factual	196	0.07	2	
12. Verdachte	Suspect	Factual	170	0.06	6	
13. Vrije	Free	Freedom of speech	169	0.06	15	0.02
14. Meningsuiting	Expression	Freedom of speech	167	0.06	1	
15. Radicale	Radical	Muslim extremism	161	0.06	12	0.01
16. Cohen	Cohen	Factual	156	0.06	3	
17. Mening	Opinion	Freedom of speech	154	0.06	5	
18. Remkes	Remkes	Factual	152	0.06	3	
19. Ayaan	Ayaan	Factual	145	0.05	11	0.01
20. Dader	Perpetrator	Factual	131	0.05	2	
21. Donner	Donner	Factual	112	0.04	5	
22. Jihad	Jihad	Muslim extremism	101	0.04	4	
23. Zalm	Zalm	Factual	87	0.03	1	
24. Daad	Act	Factual	86	0.03	3	
25. Imams	Imams	Muslim extremism	82	0.03	1	

A.2 Appendix Chapter 4

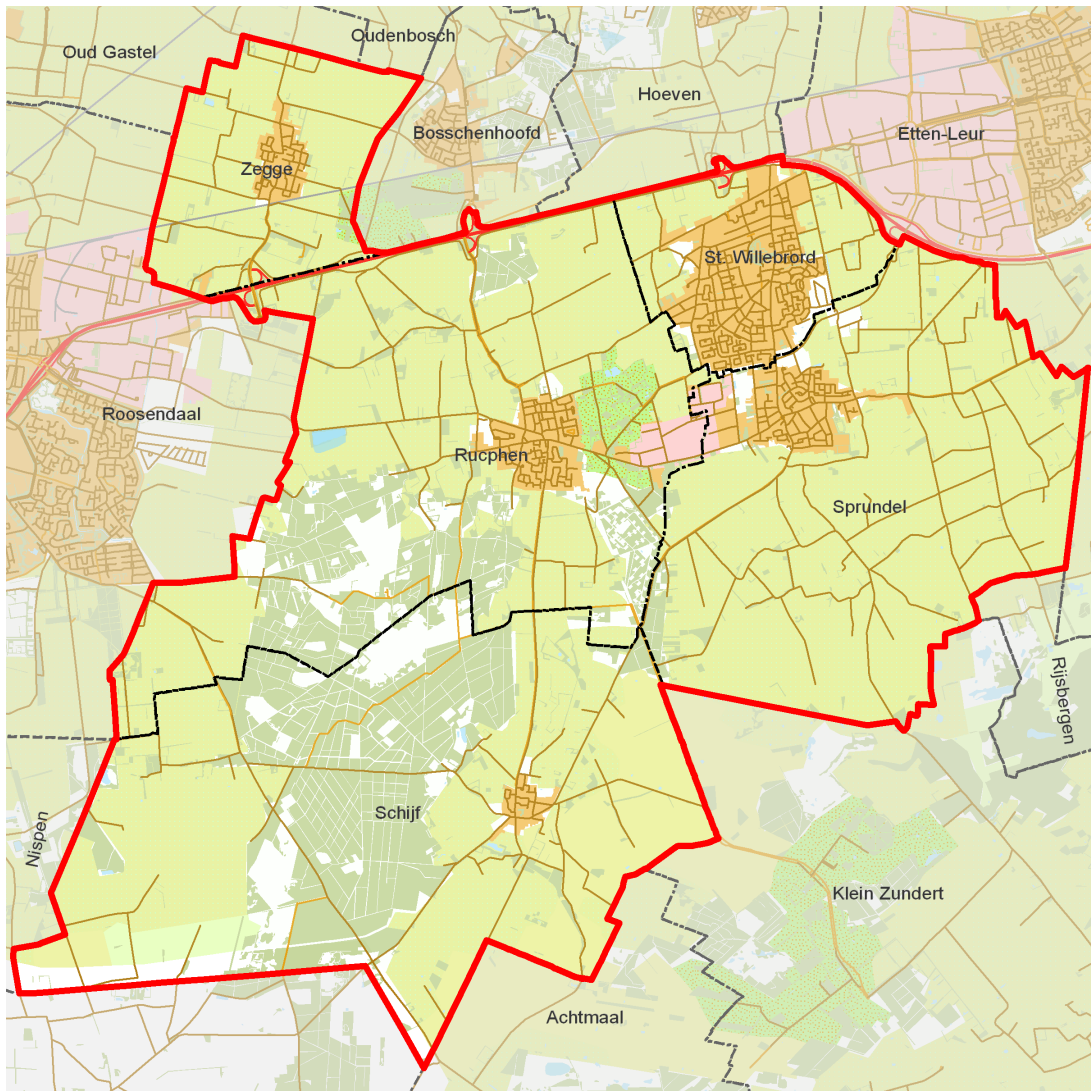


Figure A.9: *The five “church villages” of the municipality of Rucphen. Source: Wikipedia, 2014.*

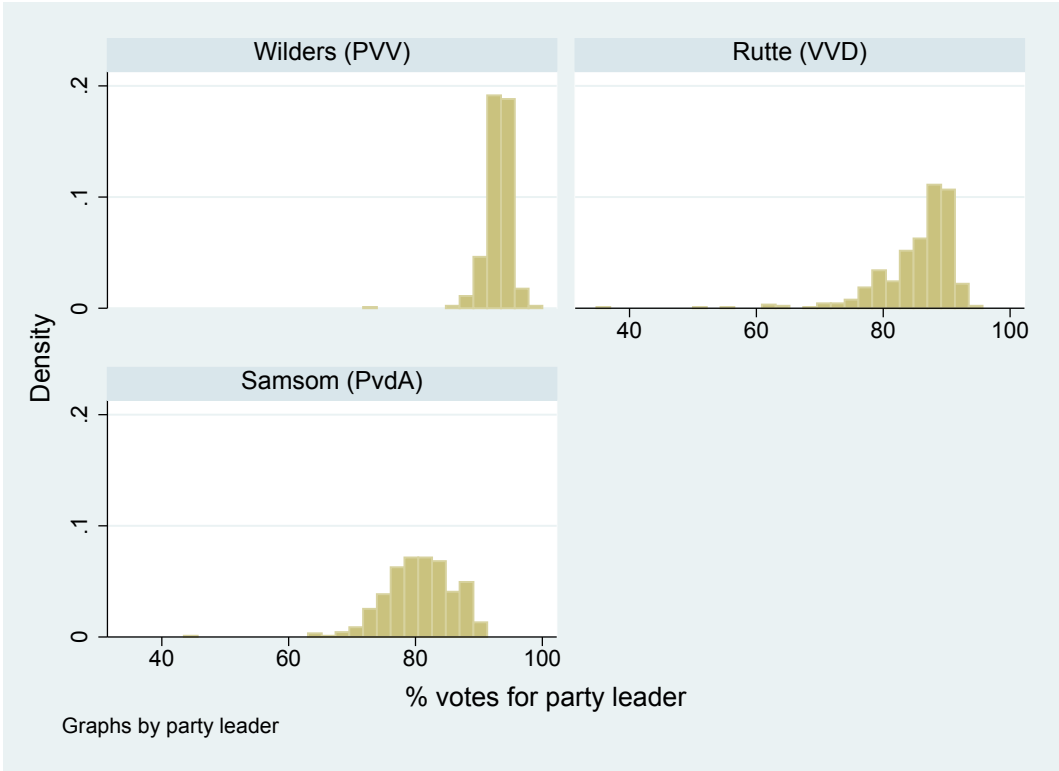


Figure A.10: *Histograms of preference votes by party by municipality in the 2012 Dutch General Elections.*

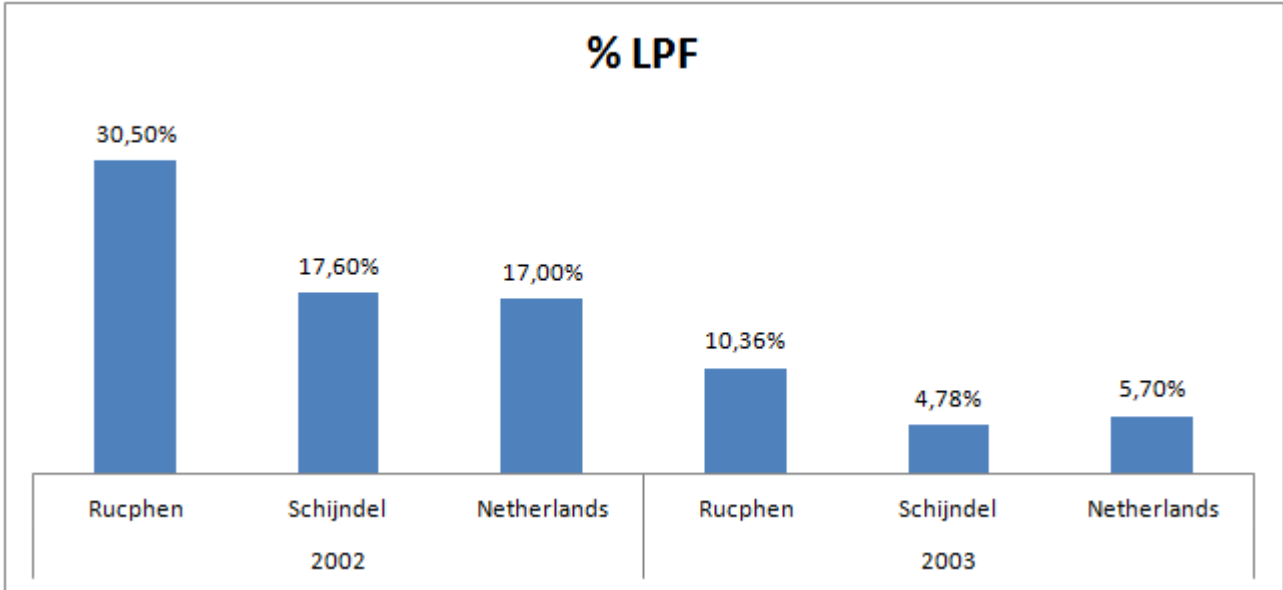


Figure A.11: *Support for the LPF in Rucphen, Schijndel and the Netherlands in the 2002 and 2003 General Elections.*

Table A.5: *List of interviewees*

Town	Date	Gender	Age	Occupation
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Female	78	Retired bus driver
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Female	60	Housewife
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Male	60	Civil servant
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Female	39	Employee of accountancy firm
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Male	56	Retired construction worker
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Male	77	Retired restaurant and bar owner
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Female	57	Unemployed health care worker
Rucphen	8 July 2015	Male	63	Civil servant
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Male	53	Unemployed road mender
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	28	Secretary
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	60	Hospital employee
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Male	55	Lathe operator
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	60	Housewife
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Male	61	Unemployed construction worker
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Male	73	Retired dock worker
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	25	Student
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	51	Cafeteria employee international firm
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	58	Daycare employee
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	48	Housewife
Rucphen	11 July 2015	Female	59	Butcher's employee
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Female	53	Addiction care worker
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Male	62	Civil servant
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Male	47	Unemployed
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Female	40	Home care worker
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Female	61	Employee wholesale company
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Male	42	Travel guide
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Female	25	Employee clothing store
Schijndel	10 July 2015	Female	60	Owner shoe store
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Female	63	Retired medical taxi driver
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Female	46	Unemployed chef
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Female	54	Unemployed
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Male	52	Bakery employee
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Female	70	Retired market stand owner
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Male	66	Retired plasterer
Schijndel	15 July 2015	Female	68	Dental assistant
Schijndel	18 July 2015	Male	28	System administrator
Schijndel	18 July 2015	Male	53	Mailman
Schijndel	18 July 2015	Male	28	Elementary school teacher
Schijndel	18 July 2015	Female	63	Retired home care manager
Schijndel	18 July 2015	Female	20	Student

Table A.6: *Outline of the semi-structured interviews.*

1. For how long have you lived here now?
2. (If interviewee was not born in Rucphen/Schijndel):
Was it hard to integrate when you first arrived?
3. Did the town change during the time you have lived here?
4. What is different?
5. What would you say is the biggest problem facing the town nowadays?
6. Do you feel the municipality has the means to cope with this problem?
7. Are there many foreigners living here?
8. How do you feel about that?
9. (Rucphen only): As you may know, Rucphen is the municipality with the highest percentage PVV voters in the Netherlands. What do you think makes the PVV so attractive to the Rucphen citizens?

Table A.7: *Description of letters returned “with extra effort”.*

Letter number	Municipality	Condition	Action
16	Rucphen	Dutch	New envelope
42	Rucphen	Moroccan	Taped shut
47	Rucphen	Dutch	Opened
102	Schijndel	Moroccan	Taped shut
140	Schijndel	Dutch	Comment (“found in the rain”)
146	Schijndel	Dutch	New envelope and comment

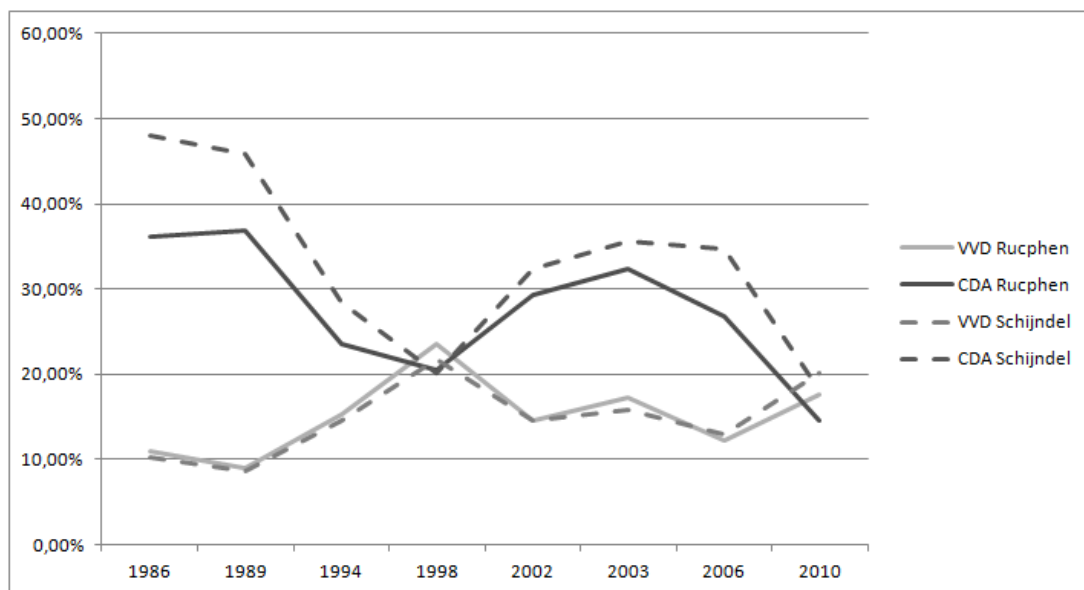
Figure A.12: *Support for the CDA and the PVV in Rucphen and Schijndel in the General Elections between 1986 and 2010.*

Table A.8: *Coding scheme for the interviews.*

Hypothesis	Indicator	Typical example
Populism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Referring to the political style that is typical for populist parties 2. Expressions of political disappointment or anti-elitism 	<p>“Because it’s simply direct, it comes from the heart, no nonsense, that’s what a Willebrorder stands for”.</p> <p>“I don’t vote because it doesn’t matter. In the end they’ll do what they want anyway”.</p> <p>“Immigrants are not very clean, they have lots of kids, their food is smelly, they make noise... it’s a different culture and it clashes”.</p> <p>“They spend so much money on immigrants. While we have poor people around here too, it’s not fair”.</p> <p>“It wasn’t easy to integrate here. You speak differently and they hear that right away”.</p> <p>“People around here work hard and once they finish working they start working again, but then to help others”.</p> <p>“There are very strict norms and also within families or even streets or villages there are strict unwritten rules you’re supposed to follow”.</p>
Anti-immigrant sentiment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General (negative) statements about groups of people 	
Welfare chauvinism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Referring to redistribution and fairness issues 	
Social cohesion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Referring to difficult integration (for interviewees not born in town) 2. Referring to social trust and helping behavior 	
Social norms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Referring to norms and traditions and the importance of following these. 	

A.3 Appendix Chapter 5

Table A.9: *Ordered logit models for the interaction between treatment and evaluation on the job finding item on welfare state attitudes. The British vignette is the reference category.*

Variable	b	p (one-tailed)	Standard error
Irish	0.27	0.29	0.48
Pakistani	0.47	0.16	0.46
Prioritize job	0.45	0.00	0.13
Irish x job	-0.10	0.28	0.17
Pakistani x job	-0.11	0.27	0.18

Table A.10: *Ordered logit models for the impact of the two vignette rating items on welfare state attitudes in the British treatment by party voted for in the 2015 elections. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	Conservative		Labor		UKIP	
	b	p (one-tailed)	b	p (one-tailed)	b	p (one-tailed)
More kids	-0.04 (0.27)	0.44	0.07 (0.21)	0.37	-0.44 (0.35)	0.11
Prioritize job	0.31 (0.24)	0.10	0.04 (0.26)	0.43	1.03 (0.43)	0.01
N	104		59		36	

Table A.11: *Ordered logit models for the impact of the two vignette rating items on welfare state attitudes in the Irish treatment by party voted for in the 2015 elections. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	Conservative		Labor		UKIP	
	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
More kids	-0.01 (0.24)	0.48	-0.60 (0.30)	0.02	-0.68 (0.59)	0.12
Prioritize job	0.12 (0.28)	0.34	1.11 (0.29)	0.00	0.83 (0.48)	0.04
N	99		60		37	

Table A.12: *Ordered logit models for the impact of the two vignette rating items on welfare state attitudes in the Pakistani treatment by party voted for in the 2015 elections. Standard errors between parentheses.*

Variable	Conservative		Labor		UKIP	
	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)	b	<i>p</i> (one-tailed)
More kids	-0.47 (0.30)	0.06	0.19 (0.26)	0.24	-0.24 (0.38)	0.27
Prioritize job	0.28 (0.28)	0.16	0.58 (0.33)	0.04	-0.55 (0.45)	0.11
N	88		72		44	