Party discourse and prejudiced attitudes towards migrants in Western Europe at the beginning of 2000s

Published in *International Migration Review* 50(3, Fall 2016):599-627.

Abstract

Building on framing research and on cognitive dissonance theory, the paper examines the differentiated moderating effect of party discourse on prejudiced attitudes against immigrants. Using ESS 2002 data, the study finds that those who are positively oriented towards immigrants become more so when confronted with party discourses with anti-immigrant tones. This effect is however visible only when it comes to acceptance in one's private sphere (acceptance of interethnic marriage). The study also found some evidence that friendship with immigrants is not strong enough to impede natives of accepting the idea of exclusion of unemployed immigrants.
Introduction

Introducing the 2013 Queen’s Speech, Prime Minister Cameron noted that “Our resolve to turn our country around has never been stronger”. The Speech outlining future policy directions, included, among others, immigration measures aimed at restricting migrants’ access to healthcare and tackling illegal immigration. Such discourses reflect policy makers' responses to the public’s policy preferences and opinions. But equally important, are means through which politicians and policy-makers actively try to influence the public (Ingram and Schneider 1993). Do they succeed? This article addresses this question, by investigating the effects of discourse on natives' anti-immigrant prejudice.

Political climate and anti-immigrant discourses have been found to have negative effects on attitudes as diverse as generalised anti-immigrant attitudes (Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008; Bohman 2011) and support for redistribution (Schmidt and Spies 2014). However, there are reasons to doubt that the effects of anti-immigrant messages transmitted by parties are negative across the board: Cognitive dissonance theory posits that individuals are driven to seek consonance between new information and held beliefs, values and information. In order to achieve consonance, individuals lower the importance of the discordant information, but if the new information received conforms to held beliefs, it is used to strengthen those beliefs (Festinger 1957). This mechanism has been confirmed by experiments in political communication which have shown that individual predispositions affect the effectiveness of frames. In this light, it is likely that the party discourses have a differentiated effect on the relationships between individual characteristics and attitudes towards migrants. Moreover, as different anti-immigrant attitudes are generated by different sets of characteristics, it is likely that the effects of political discourses differ between attitudes. This study investigates these

---

assumptions by exploring the impact of party discourses on two concrete instances of anti-immigrant prejudice: rejection of interethnic marriage and support for expulsion of unemployed immigrants.

Studying whether and how prejudiced opinions react to party discourse is of utmost importance in the context of integration debates. If integration of migrants is a two-way process, it depends not only on migrants' efforts but also on the natives' attitudes and openness. Thus, the natives’ prejudices and their propensity to reject immigrants from core areas of social interaction (family and labour market) is a major brake against the latter's integration. Understanding the connection between these rejection attitudes and party discourse might improve the calibration of integration measures.

The article brings two contributions to the literature: First, while most of the existing studies focus on the direct effects of anti-immigrant parties, this analysis explores possible indirect paths from party discourse to attitudes. Second, by analysing two rejection attitudes in the blatant prejudice spectrum, the study throws light on a more complex reality. Although previous studies have shown that the anti-immigrant discourse leads to more negative attitudes, this study shows that prejudiced attitudes are affected differently by discourse: the presence of nationalist discourse strengthens the propensity of those positively oriented towards immigrants to support interethnic marriage, but it does not have the same effect in case of expulsion of unemployed immigrants.

The theoretical part builds on framing research and on cognitive dissonance theory to develop hypotheses regarding the differentiated moderating effect of party discourse. The third part presents the data and the method, while the fourth part presents the analysis. The last part discusses the findings and concludes.
Theory

Defined as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization” (Allport 1958:10), prejudice is an attitude related to generalised feelings of threat, perceived competition or overall negative attitudes towards foreigners (Zick, Pettigrew, Wagner 2008; Wagner et al. 2006; Velasco Gonzales et al. 2008; Stephan et al. 1998). According to Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) there are two types of prejudice, blatant and subtle. Blatant prejudice is "hot, close and direct" and is easily recognizable in explicit opposition to intimacy with out-group members (at job or in family life), discrimination and overt racism. Subtle prejudice is "cool, distant, and indirect” and is expressed through exaggeration of cultural differences, defense of national values or denial of positive emotions towards the out-groups (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995:58).

Prejudiced attitudes attracted a great deal of scholarly attention resulting in the thorough exploration of the possible determinants. Several of them have been repeatedly confirmed to matter. First and foremost, they have been found to be strongly associated to competition over labour market positions (Savekoul et al. 2011; Scheepers, Gijberts & Coenders 2002; Coenders and Scheepers 1998; Quillian 1995; Kunovich 2004; Tolsma et al. 2008). Secondly, perception of a zero-sum game between in- and out-groups has led in-group members to display discriminatory attitudes (Schlueter and Scheepers 2010; Esses et al. 2001). Thirdly, it has been showed that contact with foreigners (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) matters. The negative impact of contact on prejudice and discrimination has found widespread support (see for example Schlueter and Scheepers 2010; Wagner et al. 2006), while Hamberger and Hewstone (1997) and Pettigrew (1997) showed that the friendship with foreigners reduces the prejudice of dominant group members. Tolsma et al. (2008) found a nuanced impact of the out-group proximity: at municipality level it reduced the opposition to interethnic marriage, but at neighborhood level it increased it. Their study also found that the presence of out-group members in the neighborhood increases the
opposition to interethnic marriage among the low educated, and decreases it among the highly educated. Fourthly, structural conditions, such as number of foreigners, decreasing GDP and increasing unemployment, have both direct and moderating effects (Hjerm 2007; Pichler 2010; Schlueter and Wagner 2008; Semyonov et al. 2004; Savekoul et al. 2011; Scheepers, Gijberts & Coenders 2002).

**Anti-immigrant discourse**

This article argues that another factor likely to influence prejudice is the discourse of relevant political actors, in particular parties. Parties do not only inform the public about facts such as the number of foreigners or the state of the economy, but also explain and contextualize this information. In doing so, politicians react to public opinion, and, importantly, also attempt to influence it. Through discourse, they “actively participate in values’ formation and perpetuation” (Ingram and Schneider 1993: 70). Exposure to such contextualizing discourses contributes to individuals’ sense-making of reality and consequently, to the formation of their attitudes towards out-groups.

Previous research has shown that parties do influence opinions. For example, the electorate takes cues from party positions and policy information and the effect varies with levels of disagreement among parties, party unity, issue salience and party attachment (Ray 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Bullock 2011). Whether and to what extent parties influence specific anti-foreigners attitudes has gained attention only relatively recently. In fact, it has been the opposite relation that has been mostly researched – namely the anti-immigrant attitudes leading to support for right-wing parties (for example, Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, 2002; Lubbers et al. 2002). Not surprisingly, evidence that parties stir anti-immigrant attitudes has been found in the case of openly anti-immigrant parties (Billiet and DeWitte 2008) or
when these parties gained political visibility (Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007, 2008; Wilkes et al. 2007).

However, the path from discourse to attitudes remains debated. Most of the existing research posits and finds direct effects of anti-immigrant discourse on attitudes. However, some recent articles suggest that the party discourse has more nuanced effects. For example, using the Comparative Manifesto Project data, Bohman (2011) distinguished between different sources of discourse and found that attitudes towards immigrants become more negative when traditional left and right parties produce a pro-national discourse. She also found that left-leaning individuals were more influenced when left parties raised the immigrant-related issues. Using the same data, Schmidt and Spiess (2014) argued that parties strategically use the salience of migration issues to delegitimize the support for welfare state.

Psychology and framing research offer valuable insights on the potential paths from party discourse to attitudes. While it is known that identity, ideological values or symbolic interests make individuals susceptible to discursive influences, the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957) posits that the same discourse does not have the same effect on all recipients. More specifically, if the message is congruent with individual existing orientations and opinions, then it is assimilated and used to reinforce them, while a challenging message is rejected or disregarded.

This theory has found support in studies in political communication, especially framing effects. Plenty of evidence has been brought not only that the way messages are communicated (i.e. the frames, defined as interpretations of facts produced by interested actors with the aim of swinging the public in a particular direction) makes a difference (see Druckman (2001) and Chong and Druckman (2007) for an overview), but also that frames have a differentiated effect in function of individual characteristics. For example, it has been shown that individuals' assessment of source credibility as well as engagement in deliberative activities on the topic of the frame affect frames' effectiveness in influencing individuals
Information in general, and sophistication regarding the topic of the frame in particular, offset or strengthen the effect of frames. For example, Kinder and Sanders (1990) found that better informed individuals are more resistant to frames because they are more likely to develop a coherent understanding of sociopolitical reality on their own. In addition to involvement and information, a factor that has consistently been found to be a particularly strong filter for frames are individual predispositions. Moreover, predispositions, existing beliefs and values, not only result in rejection or acceptance of frames (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2001; Federico & Sidanius 2002), as cognitive dissonance theory predicts, but also may push attitudes in the opposite direction to the frame, because individuals generate counterarguments when confronted with challenging frames (Gross 2000).

This article examines two attitudes belonging to the blatant prejudice spectrum (Pettigrew and Mertens 1995), which capture rejection of immigrants from two arenas of social interaction: support for deportation of unemployed immigrants and opposition to interethnic marriage. They are linked to situations which entail two different logics. On the one hand, support for deportation reflects that fact that relations on the labor market involve a great deal of competitiveness, as jobs are often seen as scarce goods. Moreover, presence of a pool of potential cheap labour is likely to be seen as a threat to wage level, and by implication to life standards. On the other hand, accepting newcomers in the family means opening the private sphere and therefore, the issue of interethnic marriage touches the core of the concept of social distance. Thus, the two prejudiced attitudes are expected to have different correlates at individual level, and consequently, to be differently affected by parties’ discourses.

Based on the cognitive resonance theory, predispositions are expected to interact with discourse in shaping anti-immigrant prejudices. However, in addition to predispositions, it can be argued that individual circumstances also ‘filter’ discourse. Previous findings indicate that
Labour market position and friendships with foreigners are individual circumstances with strong effects on anti-immigrant attitudes. They are therefore most likely to be influenced by party discourses. For example, having a precarious labour market position is likely to generate more receptiveness to discourses that suggest competition between in- and out-groups for scarce resources. Similarly, being in direct contact with foreigners might increase sensitivity to discourses which define "our" vs. "their", communities or cultures.

Summing up the points raised above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1 Precarious labour market position is associated with prejudiced attitudes. Because labour market position is expected to play an important role in positioning individuals vis-a-vis immigrants-as-labour market competitor, but less so in the case of immigrants-as-family members, it is hypothesized that an anti-immigrant discourse strengthens the relationship between labour market position and support for deportation (H1a), and has no impact on the relationship between labour market position and opposition to interethnic marriage (H1b).

H2 Having immigrant friends is expected to generate positive attitudes towards immigrants. Having immigrant friends might increase the sensitivity of natives to political discourses which focus on national community, on nation and foreigners, on cultural differences and similarities. Such a discourse would challenge the existing preferences (expressed though having friendships with foreigners) and according to cognitive dissonance theory would be rejected. It is thus expected that an anti-immigrant discourse has no effect on the relationship between having immigrant friends and support for deportation (H2a), and on the relationship between having immigrant friends and social discrimination (H2b). However, if the challenging discourses stimulate individuals to generate counterarguments, as Gross (2000) suggests, then the presence of anti-immigrant discourse strengthens the effect of friendship,
both in case of support for deportation (H2c), and in the case of opposition to interethnic marriage (H2d).

H3 Predispositions are expected to dampen or enhance the effects of discourse. An anti-immigrant discourse is expected to enhance the effect of negative predispositions on both prejudiced attitudes (H3a). However, positive predispositions are expected to lead to a rejection of the party discourse. Thus, it is posited that anti-immigrants discourse has no effect on the relationships between positive predispositions and both prejudiced attitudes (H3b). Following Gross' (2000) argument, the positive predispositions can turn the effect of discourse in the opposite direction, resulting to the strengthening of their effect on both prejudiced attitudes (H3c).

Data, method and variables

The 2002 wave of the European Social Survey provides the individual level data. Out of the 22 countries included in the survey, data from 17 Western European countries are analysed. Israel was excluded due to its particular approach to immigration. The four Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia) were excluded for several reasons. First, as of 2000, right before the data collection took place, the number of immigrants in these countries was very low: Eurostat records ca. 22000 foreigners in Hungary, 6500 in Poland, 13000 in the Czech Republic and 7800 in Slovenia. Consequently, arguably, their visibility in the public sphere and as a topic for party discourses is likely to have been low (Wallace 2002). At the same time, previous research suggests that the answers to questions about immigrants are likely to reflect the Eastern Europeans' experience with ethnic minorities living on the territories of these countries, but not actual experience with immigrants (Nyiri 2003; Strabac and Listaug 2008). Moreover, a recent analysis of
comparability of indexes of attitudes towards immigrants using ESS data also shows that Eastern European respondents differ from their Western counterparts, and attributes their different response patterns to the experience with minorities (such as Roma) rather than experiences with immigrants (Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet 2009). While the point that the Eastern Europeans' answers to questions about immigrants in fact reflect more general attitudes towards foreigners could be made, it is likely that such an argument tends to ignore that the ethnic minorities living on the territories of Eastern European countries are citizens of these countries, and therefore the label "foreigners" would not be correctly applied. Since the survey questions are specifically refer to "people who come here from another country", and given the evidence presented above, in order to keep the reference category "immigrants" clear, the Eastern European countries were excluded. The effective sample (only cases without missing values) contains 19188 respondents without immigrant background from Western European countries.

**Method**

As the dependent variables are measured on ordinal scales (ie they have a natural ordering, but the distances between adjacent levels are unknown), and are not normally distributed, ordered logit models are applied to test the hypotheses. The standard errors are clustered by country.

**Variables**

The two dependent variables are *approval of deportation of unemployed immigrants* and *opposition to inter-ethnic marriage*. Both are measured on ordinal scales, where the higher end indicates prejudiced attitudes (for details, see Table 1A in the online Appendix). Although both items belong to the blatant prejudice spectrum and, following Pettigrew and
Meertens (1995), could be included in one index, they are analyzed separately for two reasons. First, as argued, they capture interactions on two different social arenas and thus reflect different logics. Second, their correlation is rather weak ($r=0.29$), suggesting that they tap different prejudices and therefore might have different sets of individual and contextual correlates.

The main independent variables are the interactions of party discourse with selected individual characteristics that are theoretically expected to attenuate or enhance the effects of discourse. *Friendship with immigrants* is measured with a dichotomous variable which takes the value 1 for having immigrant friends and 0 for none. Labour market precariousness is tapped by a dichotomous variable (*unemployed*) which takes value 1 when the respondent is unemployed and actively looking for work at the time of interview. Being liberal or conservative are relevant *predispositions* when it comes to acceptance or rejection of immigrants. The conservative orientations of respondents are measured with unequivocal rejection of the statement that gays and lesbians have the right to live their lives as they wish. Rejection has been calculated by summing up ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ response categories of a five-point scale agree/disagree scale. Liberal values are tapped by a proxy, namely compassionate feelings for those worse off, as compassion has been found to be strongly correlated to liberal values (Hirsh et al. 2010). They are measured with a dichotomous variable which takes the value 1 if respondents placed themselves higher than 6 on the ten-point scale, where higher values indicate more compassionate feelings.

Capturing the presence of an *anti-immigrant discourse* presents scholars with several challenges. Some authors have analysed party discourse through party-issued documents or media interventions (Boomgaarden and Vliengenthart 2009; Koopmans and Olzak 2004). While this is the most appropriate way to proceed and has produced valuable insights, it has the disadvantage that it cannot cover many cases. In fact, these studies are single country analyses. For cross-country comparisons other authors have used the proportion of votes
received by extreme right parties as an indicator for the anti-immigrant political and ideological climate (Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008). While the presence of such parties is often associated with anti-immigrant discourse, the use of the right-wing vote share as an indicator of the ideological climate is problematic because the vote share reflects not only the anti-immigrant feelings, but also the opportunity structure of these parties to act in the national political arena (Arzheimer and Carter 2006). More importantly, an (anti)immigrant discourse is not anymore the trademark of right-wing parties. Mainstream parties are increasingly present in the debate about the role of immigrants, their rights and obligations, the definition of national communities or multiculturalism (Stratham 2003; van der Brug and Fennema 2003; Tränhardt 1995). Therefore, a different measure is needed.

An alternative is offered by the Comparative Manifesto Project, which contains information as to the percentage of the electoral manifestos devoted to specific topics. The dataset covers a large number of elections and parties and provides a relatively accurate picture of the salience of the different topics in the parties’ manifestos (for detailed discussion, see Budge et al. 2001). The dataset does not contain explicit immigration- and immigrants-related items, but it provides several items which define the national community "us" and reflect on multiculturalism. This article uses the nationalist and anti-multiculturalist statements in the electoral manifestos as a proxy for anti-immigrant party discourse (see also Bohman 2011; Schmidt and Spies 2014). In order to observe whether a party's manifesto reflects a nationalist or a multicultural tone the proportion of nationalist (per601) and anti-multiculturalism statements (per608) are added. From this sum, the proportion of pro-multiculturalist statements (per607) is deducted. A positive value indicates that the party manifesto contains more nationalist and anti-multiculturalism statements, i.e. a salient anti-immigrant discourse. These differences are calculated for each party. In a subsequent step, they are multiplied with the proportion of votes obtained by the respective party in the election preceding the EVS 2002/2003 wave. If the proportion of votes is an indicator of the
visibility of parties in the public arena, then the multiplication provides an indication of the visibility of the party message.\textsuperscript{2} In a last step, these values are summed up for all the parties in a country. The final values indicate whether nationalist statements (positive values) dominate over multiculturalist statements (negative values) in the overall party discourse. The final values were z-standardised (for a similar procedure see Schmidt and Spies 2014).

Several variables identified by previous research as relevant for anti-immigrant attitudes are included as controls (for measurement, see Table 1A in the Online Appendix). In order to control for general opinions about immigrants’ impact, an index of 6 ordinal scale items (Crombach’s alpha for the pooled sample 0.837)\textsuperscript{3} was used. Left-right self-placement controls for ideological preferences, while perceived number of immigrants controls for perceptions that there are too many immigrants in the country. Political interest controls for attention to political matters and information and EGP controls for status, using 5 status categories, a condensed version of the original eleven category EGP classification scheme created by Erikson et al (1979). In addition, age, gender, area of residence, and education were controlled for. At country level, unemployment rate (average of 1998-2002) is used to control for economic situation. No specific hypotheses are formulated regarding the controls. However, as these variables are well documented in the literature on anti-immigrant attitudes, the usual effects are expected. Table 2A (Online Appendix) includes the correlations between all individual-level variables, indicating that there are no worrying collinearity between the determinants included in the model.

\textsuperscript{2} Multiplying the scores with the party electoral results aims to also take into account the fact that not only the content of discourse matter, but also its visibility in the public sphere. A better measure which would capture aspects such as quality, concert and dynamic of the discourse, as well as information about the actors involved in the production of this discourse is currently not available for cross-countries comparative studies. Therefore, this study is based on the assumption that the proposed measure is a proxy, albeit criticisable, of the salience and visibility of nationalist or multicultural topics in party discourse.

\textsuperscript{3} In single countries, Crombach alpha ranges from .71 (Luxembourg) to .88 (Great Britain) (see Table 3A in the Appendix). In order to reduce the number of missings, the index was calculated if a respondent provided at least 4 valid answers out of 6.
Analysis

Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the analysis for support for deportation of unemployed immigrants and opposition to interethnic marriage, respectively. The two tables are constructed identically: the first models (M1) include only the individual-level controls, models M2 include the variables of interest at individual level, models M3 include the country level variables, and models M4 include the interactions of selected individual characteristics with the anti-immigrant discourse. The column H summarizes the hypotheses: the signs - or + designate the expected effect of individual characteristics, ‘strenghtens’ designates the expected effects of the party discourse on the selected individual-level relationships. Zero indicates expected absence of effects.

Models M1 in both tables indicate that the controls have overall the expected effects. These effects are stable across the models. However, some differences between the two attitudes can be noted. Living in multicultural neighbourhoods, having overall positive opinions about migrants and being female decrease the odds of opposing interethnic marriage, while absence of political interest, being older and leaning towards the political right increase the odds of opposition to interethnic marriage. The odds of supporting deportation are associated to rightist political views and perception of large numbers of immigrants, while higher levels of education and general positive opinions about immigrants decrease the odds.

Models M2 include the individual characteristics of interest. Friendship with immigrants and conservative attitudes have significant effects in expected directions: having immigrant friends decrease the odds of both supporting deportation (Table 1) and opposing interethnic marriage (Table 2), while conservative attitudes have the opposite effect on both dependent variables. Precariousness on the labour market increases the odds to oppose interethnic marriage (Table 2), as expected, but has no effect of support for expulsion (Table
1). The absence of an effect in the latter case is unexpected, as it runs against the logic of competition arguments.

Models M3 include the country-level variables, party discourse and unemployment rate. Both sets of results indicate that these predictors do not have a direct effect on the variables of interest. This result is not completely unexpected, as the previous research is also ambiguous as to the direct effects of country level variables: some studies find an effect (Semyonov et al. 2006; 2008), while others not (Schmidt and Spiess 2014). One possible explanation is that the country-level factors have an effect only through their impact on individual characteristics. Therefore the Models M4 include the interactions between party discourse and the four selected characteristics. Adjusted Wald test indicate that the four interaction terms are not simultaneously equal to zero (for support for expulsion, \( \chi^2 \)(four degrees of freedom)=12.63, prob 0.013, for rejection of interethnic marriage \( \chi^2 \)(four degrees of freedom)=16.73, prob 0.002). In the case of support for deportation (Table1), the expected effects of party discourse on precarious labour market position (H1a), and on conservative values (H3a) have not been observed. The interaction between discourse and liberal values is also nonsignificant, but this absence of an effect was theoretically expected, confirming thus H3b The interaction effect with immigrant friends is significant and has a positive sign, suggesting that as the discourse becomes more nationalistic, it weakens the relationship between having immigrant friends and support for deportation of immigrants. This finding seems to disconfirm both Hypotheses H2a and H2c, which predicted that nationalist discourse will be filtered away or turned around by friendship. In the case of opposition to interethnic marriage (Table 2) the party discourse does not interact with precarious labour market position, as expected by Hypothesis H1b. The nonsignificant interaction between discourse and conservative attitudes disconfirms the expectation formulated in Hypothesis H3a. Party discourse moderates the relationships of opposition to interethnic marriage with both having immigrant friends and having liberal values: as the party discourse becomes more
nationalistic, natives who have immigrant friends and who have liberal values become more supportive of interethnic marriage. This finding confirms Hypothesis H2d, and the insight of Gross (2000) that certain predisposition can push attitudes in the opposite direction to the discursive frames.

Graphs 1-4 illustrate the observed contradictory effects of friendship with immigrants on the two dependent variables, at various levels of party discourse. Graph 1 illustrates the marginal effect of having immigrants friends on the probability of observing rejection of the idea of deporting unemployed immigrants. The effect is weak (the line is almost horizontal) and becomes insignificant as the discourse becomes overtly nationalistic. Graph 2 illustrates that as the discourse includes more nationalist statements, the probability of observing support for deportation among those who have immigrant friends increases slightly, although becomes insignificant as the discourse becomes overtly nationalistic. Graph 3 illustrates the marginal effect of having immigrant friend on the probability of observing support for interethnic marriages. As the discourse includes more nationalist statements the probability of observing support increases. Graph 4 illustrates that the change in the degree of nationalism of party discourse does not affect the probability of observing opposition to interethnic marriage among those who have immigrant friends.4

4 The marginal effect of having liberal values on rejection of interethnic marriage (not shown) has a pattern similar to the one of having immigrant friends.
Discussion and conclusion

What and how is communicated matters a great deal in opinion formation. People use parties’ statements as cues to form, justify or consolidate their own opinions. While there is a lot of scholarly agreement that party discourses influence opinions, it is less clear whether different opinions are similarly affected. In an effort at providing some evidence in this direction, the present article explored whether and how does the anti-immigrant discourse influence Western Europeans’ prejudices towards immigrants. Two attitudes belonging to the blatant prejudice spectrum are in focus: agreement with expulsion of unemployed immigrants and opposition to interethnic marriage. Ordinal logit models with country clustered errors are employed to analyse data for 17 Western European countries provided by the ESS 2002.

The theoretical framework of the article draws on research in sociology, political science and psychology. Contact and competition theories have provided solid ground for sociological and political science accounts to explain Western Europeans’ anti-immigrant attitudes. Building on their findings, this paper draws on the cognitive dissonance theory and framing research to underpin the mechanisms though which political parties’ discourse about nation and multiculturalism influence individuals’ predispositions to express anti-immigrant prejudice. According to this research, individuals ‘filter’ party messages through their predispositions and their socio-economic positions. Therefore, it was expected that the same party message has different impact on various categories of respondents. Moreover, since prejudice can be targeted at different kinds of social interactions, which differ in their openness to public discourse, the effect of party message was expected to differ across attitudes.
The study found that although party discourse does not have a direct effect on prejudice, it is filtered by some individual characteristics, as suggested by psychology and framing research. This finding substantiates the idea of an indirect mechanism from party to prejudice. In addition, the study has found some evidence to indicate that the party discourse has differentiated effects on the two prejudiced attitudes. These results complement earlier findings on the effects of parties and party discourse. On the one hand, the study confirms the recent results of Bohmann (2011) and Schmidt and Spiess (2014) that presence of anti-immigrant party discourse affects natives' policy preferences and their attitudes about immigrants. On the other hand, by analysing the impact of discourse on two different prejudiced attitudes, the study provides evidence that the effect of parties' discourse is more nuanced than previous research might have suggested. In the following, these differences will be discussed and commented upon.

In the case of opposition to interethnic marriage, the increased nationalist character of party discourse makes those holding liberal values as well as those who have immigrant friends more supportive of interethnic marriage. In other words, when presented with anti-immigrant statements, those natives positively oriented towards immigrants become even more open and willing to include migrants in their personal sphere. At the same time, party discourse does not seem to have an effect on the relationships between opposition to interethnic marriage and precarious labour market position and conservative attitudes, respectively. While the absence of an effect in the case of former was theoretically expected, its absence in the case of latter is surprising and suggests that party discourse does not make those with conservative values more opposed to interethnic marriage than they already are. One can read these findings as indicating that when it comes to attitudes which regard the private sphere such as preference for family formation, the party discourse does not manage to make natives more opposed to migrants, but, more importantly, in certain conditions, it makes them even more inclined to accept migrants. Overall, this can be seen as a good sign. If social
integration of immigrants and their being accepted in the host societies (signalled by willingness of natives to accept them as family members) cannot be easily swayed into negative directions by party discourse, it can be taken as a positive sign for the integration prospects of immigrants.

The second prejudiced attitude analysed here tells a slightly different story, however. In the case of support for expulsion in case of unemployment, although with the surprising insignificance of being unemployed, all the other individual-level characteristics display the expected effects, the party discourse does not interact with conservative attitudes, with precarious labour market position and with liberal values. While the absence of interaction with the latter can be interpreted in the light of psychology research as a result of the "barriers" which liberal values raise to discourses which challenge them, the absence of effects in the case of the former two comes as a surprise, as they seem to challenge predictions of competition and psychology theories, which have been often confirmed in previous studies. A possible explanation is the peculiarity of the dependent variable, which asks respondents to which extent they agree with expulsion of unemployed immigrants. This is a radical measure and a sensitive issue, and therefore, it is likely that many respondents refrain to report their true preference. It is also likely that the reticence of respondents is linked to the context of survey. At the beginning of 2000s, the discourse surrounding immigration, although much more present in the public sphere in all Western Europe, it had not taken the strong negative accents that characterise it in the recent years.

At the same time, an interesting effect was observed. While party discourse could not affect the effect of liberal predispositions, it seems to diminish the effect of friendship. This effect appears to be significant as the discourse become more nationalistic, but not overtly nationalistic. This goes against the theoretical expectations and runs against the pattern observed in case to opposition to interethnic marriage. However, an explanation can be put forward, building on the fact that since the early 1990s the mainstream parties are explicitly
involved in the discourse around immigrants and their rights. This explanation cannot be tested with the existing data, as precise cross-country comparative information about the content of discourse is not currently available. Therefore, it is proposed as a future research direction. There is plenty of evidence that the economic position of emigrants focusing on which immigrants and in which conditions should access the labour markets, unavoidably touching the issue of unemployment, has been discussed by parties and in other fora and has been accessible to the national publics (Careja and Andreß 2013). Moreover, it is known that a strong distinction between desired and undesired labour immigrants has been promoted by the mainstream parties in order to make more palatable some policies that opened certain labour market sectors to immigrants (Menz 2010; Caviedes 2009). Assuming that this discourse complements the party discourse captured in the manifestos, the fact that the opposition of natives with immigrant friends to expulsion is diminished under the effect of party discourse below the threshold of outright nationalistic discourse seems to suggest that natives of Western European countries are sensitive to the arguments of mainstream parties. Under this interpretation, the findings of this study support an earlier finding of Bohman (2011) which showed that the effect of anti-immigrant discourse on anti-immigrant attitudes increases as the discourse is articulated by mainstream parties. Thus, while it may seem that in general party discourse does not affect natives' propensity to support expulsion of unemployed immigrants, the anti-immigrant tones of mainstream parties do not fall on deaf ears.

These results cannot be dissociated from the specifics of the context when the study was conducted. At the beginning of 2000s debates surrounding immigration, not least in the light of upcoming EU enlargement, mushroomed, but, importantly, no crisis cloud was looming at the horizon. The immigration discourse was free of some of the acute negative tones it took in the wake of the economic crisis across all old EU member states. To some extent, the weakness of the relationships observed could be explained by the fact that
respondents were asked to express agreement with two strong prejudices at a time when the context was not strongly anti-immigrant. Many things have changed since 2002. The experience of ten years of enlarged Europe accompanied by an increase of intra-European migration from the new to old EU member states, and a major crisis biting European economies’ are likely to leave profound marks on public opinion. Importantly, the immigration discourse has become increasingly open and blunt. Moreover, while for long time expulsion of immigrants was considered only in case of crimes, recently, expulsion in relation to unemployment has been brought to attention and presented as a policy proposal, as in the recent debates in Germany or UK. In spring 2014 German authorities have moved to consider new regulation which allows expulsion of immigrants who are unable to find work within three months after entry (Euractiv News, 27.03.2014; RT News 27.03.2014; Financial Times 26.03.2014). Such debates and regulatory measures are likely to strongly legitimize in the eyes of the public expulsion as a policy measure. Therefore, one could reasonably expect that a 2014 survey would capture clearer relationships of support for expulsion, compared to the 2002 survey used in this analysis. Whether these relationships would take the directions observed in this study, is the task of further research to uncover.

Summing up, taken together the findings of this study also suggest that Western Europeans receive party discourse differently when it comes to different spheres of life. In a non-crisis context, those who are positively oriented towards immigrants become more so when confronted with party discourses with anti-immigrant tones. The propensity of the pro-immigrant native population to socially include immigrants could be interpreted as good news for the integration prospects of immigrants. This effect is however visible only when it comes to acceptance in one's private sphere (acceptance of interethnic marriage). The study also found some evidence that friendship with immigrants is not strong enough to impede natives of accepting the idea of exclusion of unemployed immigrants. This finding is somewhat
worrying because it suggests that certain forms of prejudice can become more accepted, arguably when the anti-immigrant message is produced by more mainstream parties.
References


Gross, K. (2000). *The limits of framing: how framing effects may be limited or enhanced by individual level predispositions*. Presented at Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL


Tables

Table 1 Results for support for expulsion of unemployed immigrants (log odds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immigrant friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.241***</td>
<td>-0.237***</td>
<td>-0.235***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal values</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.120**</td>
<td>-0.120**</td>
<td>-0.119**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservative values</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.280***</td>
<td>0.272***</td>
<td>0.263***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country-level

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unemployment rate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>party discourse</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  * immigrant friends            | 0/strengthens | 0.080*  |        |
  * liberal values               | 0/strengthens | -0.008  |        |
  * conservative values          | strengthens | -0.045  |        |
  * unemployed                   | strengthens | -0.006  |        |

Controls

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opinions about immigrants</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.659***</td>
<td>-0.635***</td>
<td>-0.639***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political interest</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.100*</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left-right scale</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.089***</td>
<td>0.850***</td>
<td>0.085***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egp: high service class</td>
<td>ref</td>
<td>ref</td>
<td>ref</td>
<td>ref</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  lower service class            | -0.099 | -0.108 | -0.110 | -0.110 |
  self employed                  | 0.117  | 0.092  | 0.086  | 0.090  |
  routine non-manual             | 0.050  | 0.330  | 0.026  | 0.029  |
  manual workers                 | +      | 0.026  | 0.004  | -0.006 | -0.003 |
| neighbourhood                   | -      | 0.013  | 0.041  | 0.048  | 0.046  |
| proportion of immigrants       | +      | 0.007** | 0.008*** | 0.008** | 0.008** |
| age                            | -      | 0.002  | 0.001  | 0.001  |        |
| education                      | -      | -0.033** | -0.031** | -0.033* | -0.032* |
| residence area: large city      | ref    | ref    | ref    | ref    |
  suburbs large city             | 0.059  | 0.068  | 0.061  | 0.058  |
  small town                     | 0.053  | 0.049  | 0.045  | 0.043  |
  rural                         | 0.099  | 0.093  | 0.095  | 0.090  |
| female                         | -0.086 | -0.074 | -0.075 | -0.073 |

McFadden’s R2 0.116  0.118  0.119  0.119
AIC 46426.72  46312.64  46292.91  46281.26
N 17543  17543  17543  17543

Source: ESS 2002 (unweighted)
Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
In column H, - indicates an expected negative effect, + an expected positive effect, 0 an expected no effect.
Table 2 Results for opposition to interethnic marriage (log odds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immigrant friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.456***</td>
<td>-0.451***</td>
<td>-0.454***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal values</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.155**</td>
<td>-0.157**</td>
<td>-0.158***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservative values</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.428***</td>
<td>0.416***</td>
<td>0.422***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.107*</td>
<td>0.098*</td>
<td>0.102*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Country-level**

- unemployment rate: +
- party discourse:
  - +
  - * immigrant friends: 0/strengthens
  - * liberal values: 0/strengthens
  - * conservative values: strengthens
  - * unemployed: 0

**Controls**

- opinions about immigrants: -
- political interest: +
- left-right scale: +
- EgP: high service class: Ref
- lower service class: -0.018
- self employed: 0.210**
- routine non-manual: 0.088*
- manual workers:
  - +
  - 0.145***
- neighbourhood: -
- proportion of immigrants: +
- age:
  - +
  - 0.020***
- education: -
- residence area: large city: Ref
- suburbs large city: 0.083
- small town: 0.072
- rural:
  - 0.152*
  - 0.142*
- female:
  - -0.135***

- McFadden's R2: 0.054
- AIC: 72218.91
- N: 17543

Source: ESS 2002 (unweighted)

Note: Standard errors in parantheses. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

In column H, - indicates an expected negative effect, + an expected positive effect, 0 an expected no effect.

Graphs
Graph 1 Conditional marginal effects of having immigrant friends on the probability of observing rejection of immigrant deportation at various levels of party discourse.

Graph 2 Conditional marginal effects of having immigrant friends on the probability of observing support for immigrant deportation at various levels of party discourse.
Graph 3  Conditional marginal effects of having immigrant friends on the probability of observing support for interethnic marriage at various levels of party discourse (95% CI)

Graph 4  Conditional marginal effects of having immigrant friends on the probability of observing opposition to interethnic marriage at various levels of party discourse (95% CI)