

# HOW ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS SHAPE POLITICAL OUTCOMES

by

MATTHEW A. BUFFORD

(Under the Direction of Shane Singh)

## ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, there has been a substantial increase in immigration throughout Europe and North America and an observable rise in anti-immigrant and nationalist rhetoric by political elites and in the mass public. Several political movements have gained popularity by taking a hard stance against immigration, and far-right extremist parties and politicians have gained support and won important political races. Prior scholarship focusing on immigration often find that people will cite concerns about job security, labor market competition, and welfare system costs as economic reasons to favor immigration restrictions. However, immigration is repeatedly shown to have a positive impact on job growth. Rather than being a purely economic issue, I argue in this dissertation that immigration is viewed primarily as a cultural issue. As such, it is useful to study individual attitudes and behaviors rather than macro-level policy changes. To demonstrate, I conduct three different studies related to this theory. First, I employ a survey experiment of college students to examine the way framing the issue of immigration affects attitudes. I find significant evidence that negative frames and emphasizing cultural concerns impact opinions about immigration but find that positive frames and emphasis on economic issues do not. Next, I show evidence that negative attitudes toward immigrants affects voting behavior by increasing the likelihood that individuals will turn out to

vote. Finally, I examine the impact that negativity toward immigrants has on party choice. I find that individuals who are unsupportive of immigration are more likely to vote for extremist parties, especially far-right parties. This has significant implications for the future of political party systems, polarization, and party realignment.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, Public Opinion, Attitudes, Political Behavior, Survey  
Experiment, Political Parties, Far-Right Extremism

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MATTHEW A. BUFFORD

B.S. International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2008

M.A. European and Mediterranean Studies, New York University, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
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MATTHEW A. BUFFORD

Major Professor: Shane Singh  
Committee: Margaret Ariotti  
Alexa Bankert

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott  
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Why do people vote, choose a political party, or take a particular stance of a political issue? What drives the ways in which people behave politically and think about political issues? These questions are at the core of political science, and new findings in the field of political behavior are constantly enriching the discussion. However, despite all the great work that has tried to answer them, there is still no definitive answer: some scholars point to the influence of political institutions as the primary determinants of behavior while others point to individual-level variables such as attitudes, group membership, or partisanship. With this project, I engage with and enrich the existing political behavior literature by focusing on attitudes individuals have toward immigrants, who are clear political and social out-groups but who are a main focus of many politicians and political parties. Traditionally, much of the literature seeking to explain political behavior focuses on output variables such as turnout and public opinion, and the explanations for these behaviors have often been rooted in a restrictive definition of rationality which assumes political behavior is the result of deliberative choices. I am interested, however, in more clearly understanding the inputs that affect the way individuals behave. In this sense, this project seeks to incorporate the psychological and social forces that shape attitudes about politics, party affiliation, and group membership.

Many of the theoretical components of this dissertation are grounded the assumption that individuals view immigrants, refugees, and foreigners coming to their country as an out-group.

Applying social identity theory (Tajfel 1978) to this framework, natives to a country who view immigrants as an out-group are likely to focus on negative aspects of immigration and harbor negative attitudes toward them. This is especially relevant considering many of the immigrants coming to North America and Europe are members of minority ethnic or religious groups. This dissertation also enriches the existing literature focused on attitudes toward immigrants by testing theoretical applications using data from a wide range of countries. This is an important next step in understanding the ways in which individual-level attitudes affect politics by determining whether previous findings are limited to specific contexts within a particular country or if they describe general trends which can help scholars understand how people interact with politics and society in a broader sense.

Recent literature in political science has emphasized the importance and increasing salience of immigration as a political issue in the last few decades (Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Semyonov et al. 2006; Brader et al. 2008; Ceobanu and Escandell 2010). Furthermore, these studies agree that the way public opinion about immigration and immigrants affects politics is, arguably, more important than metrics such as net migration as there is often a disconnect between attitudes toward immigrants and actual immigration statistics (Brady and Finnigan 2014; Blinder 2015). For this reason, I have centered this project on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration as the focus.

Trends in the prevailing literature typically identifies two competing theories for how attitudes toward immigrants affects political behavior and choices: in-group/out-group identification and labor market competition. Group identification and competition theories emphasize the ways in which natives will view immigrants as outsiders. This theoretical approach focuses on individual identification with ethnic, religious, and racial categories and

their affect toward symbolic values like nationalism and native culture (Berinsky et al 2020; Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Rustenbach 2010; Brader et al 2008; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Citrin and Sides 2008). This is the theoretical approach I believe is most convincing when attempting to explain the way individuals can see immigrants as a challenge to their culture and way of life, and each chapter of this dissertation is more closely aligned with the theory that in-group/out-group dynamics explains the salience of immigration.

The other major theoretical approach which is important to discuss is labor market competition theory. This approach assumes individuals form their attitudes toward immigrants based on rational fears about the impact immigrants will have on the economy, jobs, and the social welfare system (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Rustenbach 2010; Fetzer 2000; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Hainmueller, et al 2015; Mayda 2006). Scholarship focusing on natives' concerns about labor market competition from immigrants is abundant and often class-based, with most assuming negative attitudes toward immigrants is mainly limited to low-skilled immigrants seeking working-class jobs and benefitting from means-tested social welfare programs. Studies that focus on labor market competition are valid, but they are not typically able to decouple the economic concerns with the reality that, for most of the immigration in Europe and North America, immigrants entering the country are often ethnic, racial, and/or religious minorities (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Fetzer 2000; Mayda 2006). Furthermore, studies have shown that when individuals think about the types of people who are immigrants, they are highly likely to imagine them as unskilled and from minority racial and ethnic groups (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Blinder 2015; Brader et al 2008).

With this project, I do not attempt to validate one of these theories over the other. Rather, I believe there is adequate support to suggest these theoretical mechanisms are linked and work together to impact individual attitude formation toward immigrants and immigration. This project approaches the challenge of understanding attitudes toward immigration by answering questions at various levels: what are people thinking about when they think of immigrants, how does their satisfaction with government and democracy impact their opinions, and how do parties and political elites affect their opinions? In chapter 2, I describe a survey experiment I conducted using undergraduate students at the University of Georgia where the types of messaging they received about immigration were manipulated to better understand whether it is typically viewed as an economic or cultural issue and to measure the effect of issue framing on attitudes. In chapter 3, I examine data from the European Social Survey to examine how the effects of attitudes toward immigrants can lead to different expected political behaviors depending on an individual's level of satisfaction with the government, the economy, and democracy. Chapter 4 examines the ways anti-immigrant attitudes are linked with other political attitudes such as nationalism and populism to push individuals toward politicians and parties that represent extremist political beliefs. This helps explain the rise and popularity of far-right and far-left political movements in Europe and the US. The final chapter will provide a short discussion of the implications of these findings and propose ideas for future avenues of study.

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CHAPTER 2  
TRIGGERING SOCIAL FEAR: ISSUE FRAMING AND ATTITUDES TOWARD  
IMMIGRANTS

*“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people”<sup>1</sup>*

In November 2016, the citizens of the United States elected Donald Trump as president, but for more than a year before that, the American electorate tuned into news channels and logged onto social media to witness Trump give rallies wherein he made immigration one of the most important topics of his political platform. The image Trump painted, however, was that immigrants posed a safety issue in America by declaring them criminals, drug dealers, and rapists. Similar rhetoric has been used to describe immigrants all across the North America and Europe, and its effectiveness lies in its ability to label immigrants as others – outsiders that pose some existential threat to society. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) used tactics similar to what was observed in the 2016 and 2020 Trump campaigns, and this trend has been repeated still by the National Front/National Rally (FN/RN) party in France and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in Germany. A recent study of the political rhetoric in Finland found

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from Donald Trump’s speech announcing his candidacy for President of the United States, June 16, 2015

that right-wing parties tapped into nativist identity with racialized, gendered, classist, and anti-immigrant language to garner support (Keskinen 2013). The apparent rise in popularity and influence of these political parties and movements across multiple countries in the West shows that immigration has become a highly salient issue and that immigrants are consistently framed as threats to national identity.

Looking beyond the political rhetoric, immigration is a substantive issue for policymakers across Europe and North America. Both regions are currently experiencing steady increases in the number of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees who arrive each year, a trend that can be seen increasing over the past several decades. European Commission data from 2015 indicate that, in that year, 4.7 million people immigrated to an EU member state. Included in that number are 2.4 million individuals who arrived to an EU country from outside the region, with the largest recipients (in absolute numbers) being Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and Poland. Estimations from the United States Census show the foreign-born population (which includes naturalized citizens and non-citizen) exceeds 40 million (US Census Bureau, 2016), with some recent approximations even suggesting that immigrants make up more than one-fifth of the US population (Garand, Xu, and Davis 2017).

While these data help paint a picture of the scope of this phenomenon, the way the issue is framed and the extent to which it has been politicized is much more important if we are interested in understanding its impact. In much of the West, the issue of immigration has gained salience not just among elites but also among the mass public. This is evidence not just by rhetoric leading up to recent elections in the United States and Europe, but to the relative success that messaging around immigration has in reaching and affecting voters' opinions. This chapter aims to examine the way individuals' attitudes toward immigrants can be influenced by the way

the issue is framed. To explore this, I conducted a survey experiment at the University of Georgia with over 500 undergraduate student participants. In this study, participants were presented information about immigration that could be framed in several different ways and urged them to think about immigration through those lenses. Students were then asked to answer several questions prompting them to rate their level of agreement with statements pertaining to immigration and immigrants in their country. As a result of this study, I found that the framing devices which prompted participants to think of immigration negatively and as a cultural issue were most likely to elicit negative responses to attitudinal questions. Furthermore, the group that received a negative cultural frame were also more likely to agree with statements emphasizing the economic risks of immigration. This suggests that immigration is often conceived as a cultural issue where immigrants are thought of as an out-group, but individuals are more willing to express negativity about the issue through economic, social welfare, and labor market concerns.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRANTS

This study is theoretically grounded in two assumptions. First, that immigration is currently one of the most salient political issues in Europe and North America, and second, that individual formation of issue preferences is largely driven by partisanship and cues from party elites. In a recent exploration of political identity in the United States, Achen and Bartels (2016) assert that affiliation with a political party is often more of an affective process, tapping into issues of identity and individuals' inclination to group with others who are like themselves. Achen and Bartels argue that this allows political elites to emphasize societal cleavages in order to strengthen party ties or prompt individual realignment (Achen and Bartels 2016). It stands to

reason that immigration, which is highly salient and closely linked with the nationalist rhetoric used by extreme right-wing parties and politicians, would be an issue that strengthens the divisions between partisans.

Attitudes toward immigration are often viewed as rational reactions to fears that immigration will have a negative impact on the economic outcomes of native citizens. Concerns that an influx of immigrants will lead to competition for jobs and housing have been observed, especially among members of the working class, who are most expected to be competing with immigrants for low-skilled labor (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Facchini and Mayda 2009; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). Results from the literature struggle to prove that anti-immigrant attitudes are isolated within the working class, however. Studies show that labor market competition is cited by some as rationale for anti-immigrant sentiment, but evidence of class solidarity has also been found, particularly when immigrants are seen as members of the same or similar ethnic group (Fetzer 2000; Igartua and Cheng 2009).

Another way the link between immigration attitudes and other policy preferences has been explored is through comparative studies researching the welfare state. Recent studies have suggested attitudes about immigrants are related to support for welfare state and redistributive policies (Mau and Burkhardt 2009; Brady and Finnigan 2013; Burgoon 2014). Conventional wisdom supports the theory of welfare chauvinism which asserts that individuals will find foreigners and ethnic minorities less deserving of social welfare than members of the native nationality. The link between nationalist resentment of immigrants and access to the welfare state has been discussed by many scholars (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Crepaz and Damron 2009). Looking to the United States, recent work by Garand, Xu, and Davis (2017) on the relationship

between attitudes toward immigrants and support for welfare spending suggests that Americans increasingly conceive the influx of immigrants as a financial burden on government systems. The literature remains inconclusive about whether welfare chauvinism or some other concern such as labor market competition is the primary economic reason for negativity toward immigrants, but the issue clearly remains salient for many political platforms.

Another interesting theme from recent research on the political effects of immigration is that there is no firm consensus governing the expectation for how it affects support for different parties. A multitude of studies (Golder 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006; Arzheimer 2009; Sørensen 2016) suggest increasing immigrant flows into a country may be associated with increased support for political parties with anti-immigrant platforms. However, these effects seem to be mitigated by robust social welfare (Crepaz and Damrom 2009) and with exposure to immigrants (Sørensen 2016). Most of the time, immigration is framed as an economic issue wherein the influx of families strains the welfare state and the increase of workers can threaten job security. While this would provide some degree of justification for individuals seeking a political party with anti-immigrant policy proposals, the economic threat of immigrants is often overstated by politicians (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). Rather, other studies have found that the underlying reasons immigration affects individual attitudes has more to do with cultural effects of diversity and their impact on group identity (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). This project sheds some light on the ways in which individuals' attitudes toward immigrants is linked to conceptions of in-group/out-group dynamics and the effectiveness of framing devices when presenting individuals with information.

## THE POWER OF MEDIA AND ELITE CUES

Studies have shown that mass public opinion on almost any issue is driven by how policymakers or leaders frame the issue (Lahav et al 2012). Issue framing is defined by Goffman (1974) as the “selection, emphasis, and exclusion of news frames that furnish a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events”. A general trend in literature about public opinion toward immigration has observed relatively low support across the political spectrum for expansion of immigration policy (Facchini and Mayda 2008). There are several potential reasons for this: immigrants might be viewed as cultural outsiders, economic burdens to the welfare system, or threats to jobs or safety. The way individuals view members of outgroups has been shown to be influenced heavily by the messaging they receive from the news media and from political elites (Nelson et al 1997; Igartua and Cheng 2009; Schemer 2012; Van Klingeren et al 2015).

Recent scholarship on the way attitudes toward immigrants are influenced by news media and party cues seeks to understand the conditions in which cueing is most successful. Many studies have noted that individuals are commonly more influenced by negative framing of immigration, while efforts to frame the issue positively have more difficulty in changing attitudes (Schemer 2012; Igartua and Cheng 2009; Facchini and Mayda 2008). A notable exception to this comes from a 2015 study comparing attitudes toward immigrants in Denmark and the Netherlands (Van Klingeren et al 2015), where the attitudes of respondents in the Netherlands were found to be positively affected by positive tone and messaging in media coverage that was supportive of immigration. Studies also suggest that effect of media depends on how well-informed the recipient is about the issue (Schemer 2012; Slothuus 2008). Schemer (2012) finds that the influence of media cues in changing attitudes about immigrants is more effective with less-informed individuals, but they were able to be influenced by both negative

and positive messaging. People who were more well-informed about the issue of immigration were resistant to media framing, especially when the messaging was positive. Evidence also suggests individuals who support right-wing political parties are more easily influenced by framing about immigration (Knoll et al 2011).

## METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this project is to better understand the way individual attitudes about immigration can be susceptible to political rhetoric, whether from media or elites. As such, I am interested in how the immigration debate can be framed to alter individual attitudes. Framing effects, as described by Druckman (2001), occur when “in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker’s emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions”. Lahav et al. (2012) argue that the study of opinions on immigration policy is best studied using framing because opinions are formed more subjectively and are responses to the framing from the elites who drive the public debate of the issue.

I designed a survey experiment wherein respondents receive various framing devices designed to encourage them to think about immigration either as a positive or a negative issue. Furthermore, they are prompted to think about either the economic or cultural effects of immigration. While this design does not fully mimic the way political rhetoric influences attitudes since the frames I employ are not replicates of actual media articles or attached to any specific party or politician, it should serve as an approximation. Furthermore, the results I achieve through these experimental frames can be considered to be a conservative test of the

mechanism since it is not difficult to expect people would be even more heavily influenced if a trusted media source or political party attribution were included.

To test the causal link between framing cues and attitudes toward immigrants, I conducted a survey experiment using undergraduate participants from the University of Georgia. The surveys prompted respondents to answer questions regarding the degree to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements about immigrants and society. Respondents were asked to answer questions about their party identification, their satisfaction with the direction of the country, and their identification with a standard series of demographic characteristics. Undergraduate participants were randomly assigned to either one of four experimental groups: two groups received a framing device that portrayed immigration positively, with one focusing on economic issues and the other focusing on cultural issues; the other two groups received the same economic-cultural division, but each frame was presented negatively.

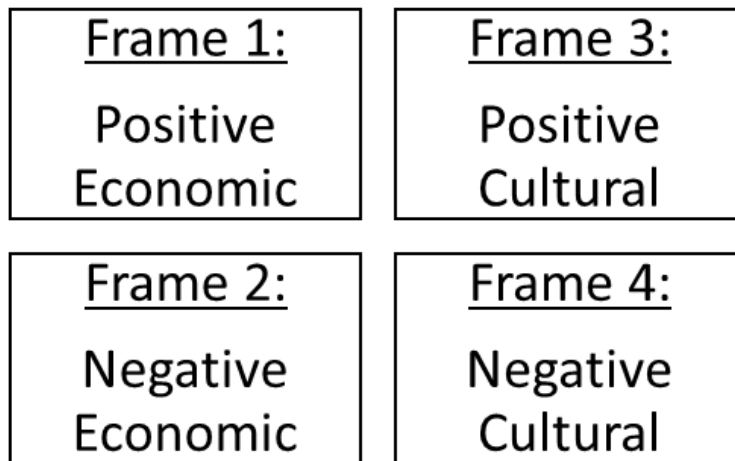


Figure 2.1: Matrix Experimental Design

Survey participants who were given the positive economic frame (Frame 1) were given a short statement before the survey which reminded them of the economic benefits that immigrants

bring. Participants assigned to the group which received Frame 2 read about potential risks immigration can bring on job security and social welfare spending. Those that were given Frame 3 read a statement about the benefits of cultural diversity, and participants chosen to receive Frame 4 were given a statement priming them to think about the ways in which immigrants could threaten national identity. A final group of participants were selected into a control group and were given a completely neutral statement about immigration.

Since immigration is a highly salient issue, my expectation while designing the experiment was that even the relatively short and simple framing devices used here would be enough to trigger different types of responses among members of each group. Specific expectations about which effects individual frames would produce are presented below as a series of hypotheses:

H1: Individuals receiving Frame 1 (Positive Economic) are more likely to respond positively to questions about immigrants compared with participants from other groups

Since Frame 1 is presented in a positive light and economic issues do not evoke identity or cultural threats, I expected this group to demonstrate the most positive attitudes toward immigrants, on average. Conversely, I expected respondents chosen to receive the negative cultural frame would have the least tolerant attitudes to immigrants.

H2: Individuals receiving Frame 4 (Negative Cultural) are more likely to respond negatively to questions about immigrants compared with participants from other groups

This logic is exactly the same as was used in Hypothesis 1, but in this case the negative frame and the cultural primer was expected to evoke feelings of threat and encourage participants to view immigrants as a cultural out-group.

For the survey experiment, I utilized volunteers taking political science classes at the University of Georgia. Student involvement in the survey experiment was presented as an optional activity, and a small amount of extra credit was given to them for participating in lieu of any monetary payment. Students were not told beforehand the purpose of the study other than the fact that it was a broad, omnibus survey about political attitudes and behavior. After reading a short, prepared statement that served as the framing device for the experiment, each participant was asked to rate their degree of agreement/disagreement to a small battery of questions pertaining to immigration and immigrants. These questions were presented as statements wherein participants responded according to a 7-point Likert scale. The specific language that participants in each group read and the questionnaire that followed are included in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

After removing non-responses, I ended up with 557 respondents who were randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups. Each group breakdown is as follows: N=115 (Control); N=123 (Frame 1); N=106 (Frame 2); N=106 (Frame 3); N=107 (Frame 4). I have included a table of post-randomization statistics in the appendix of this chapter showing these numbers as well as control and treatment group means across several variables measuring political ideology, interest, and satisfaction since imbalances in these could affect results. The only post-randomization mean that showed statistically significant separation between control and treatment groups was the mean for political ideology in Group 2 (Negative Economic Frame). Respondents in this group were statistically more liberal than the control group, on

average. While this is not ideal, it is not expected to have biased the results since respondents who are slightly more liberal should be less likely to react to a negative economic message about immigrants compared to conservatives, so this serves as a stronger test of the treatment effect.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Once data had been collected, I conducted analysis using a series of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests for every question on the questionnaire to determine for which questions the treatment had an effect. Following that, I performed the Tukey's HSD post-hoc comparisons test for each of those questions which returned significant results to compare each treatment group mean with the control group mean. Contrary to the expectations I outlined in Hypothesis 1, the results of the experiment instead showed that positive framing generally had little or no effect on participants' responses to the questionnaire. On average, neither the positive economic or positive cultural frame prompted participants to demonstrate significantly different attitudes about immigration compared to the control group. The groups that were given negative frames, on the other hand, were, on average, more likely to display a more negative response to questions as compared to the control group. This was especially apparent with questions about the economy and safety.

The following charts show the between-group difference for five survey questions for which the treatment returned significant results. In each of these, the y-axis denotes the 7 point Likert scale upon which each question is based, and the numbered bar charts correspond to the numbered treatment frames (with 0 being the control group). Each group is compared against the control group and each other group, with a system of A/AB/B denotation to signify which treatment group means are different from the control group mean and statistically significant at

the .05 level. With this notation, the control group is always assigned an “A” and statistically different treatment groups are notated with a “B”. A notation of “AB” indicated that the group mean was not statistically different from the control group mean.

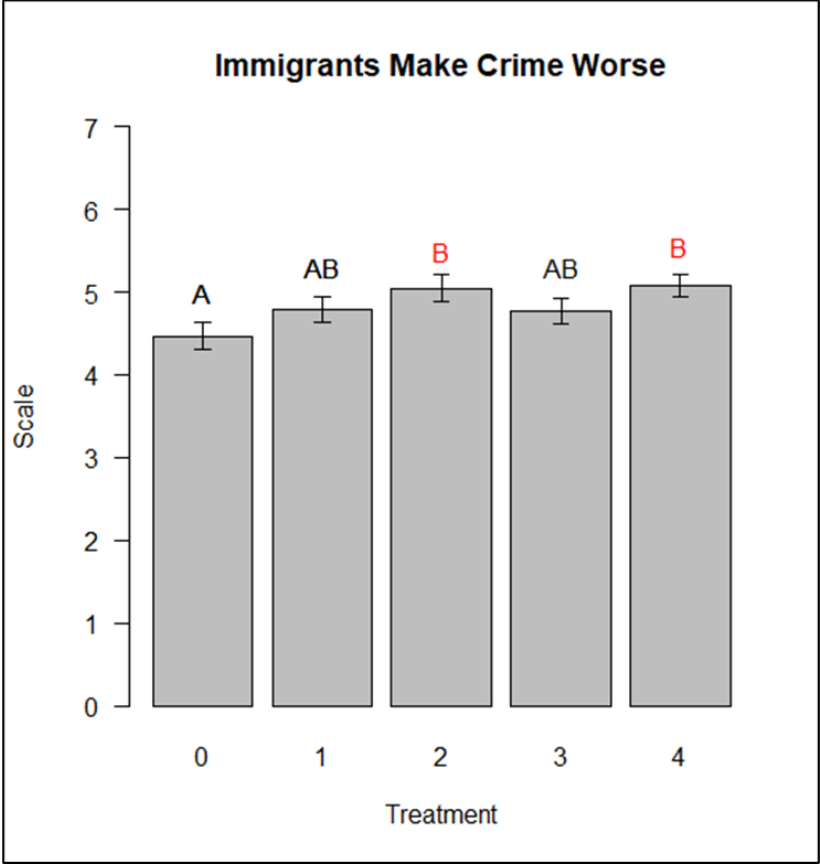


Figure 2.2: Immigrants Make Crime Worse

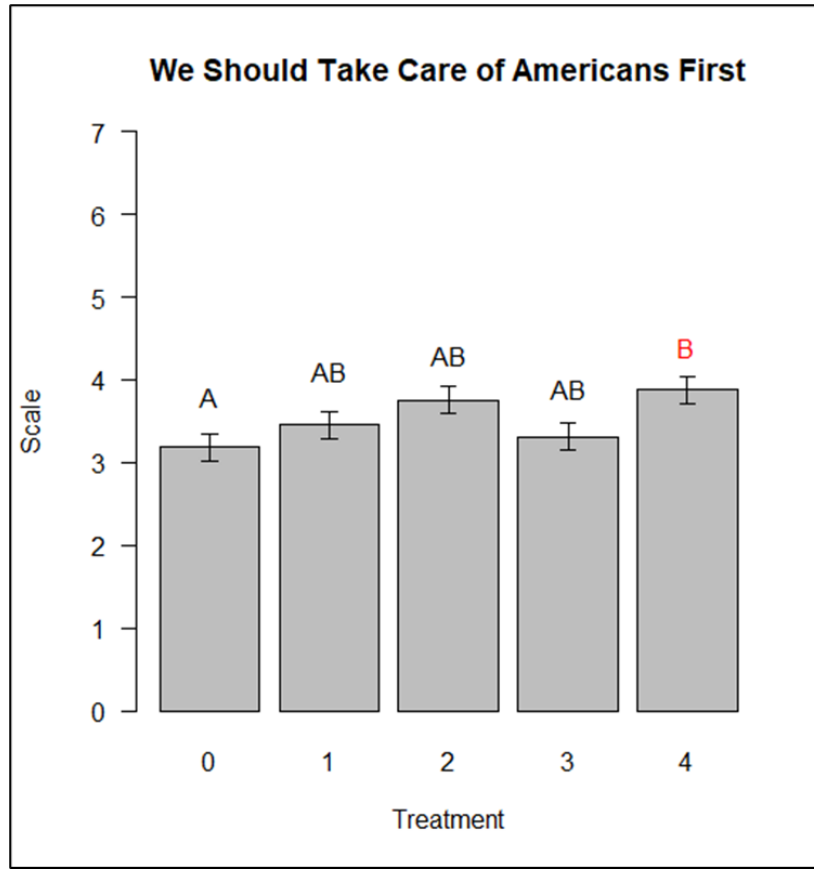


Figure 2.3: We Should Take Care of Americans First

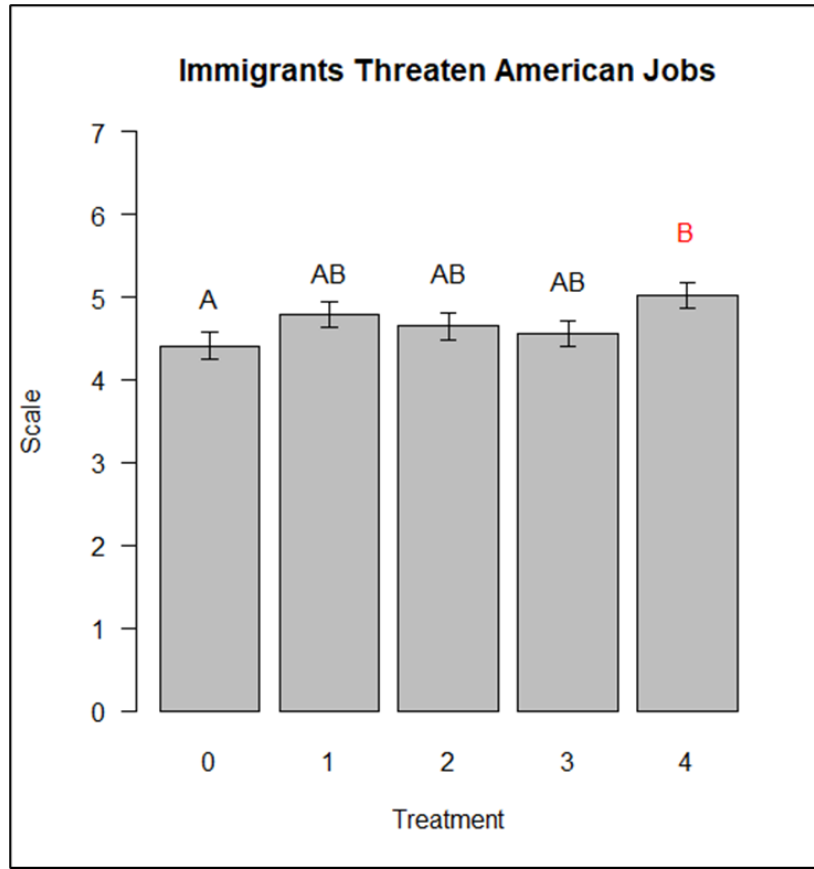


Figure 2.4: Immigrants Threaten American Jobs

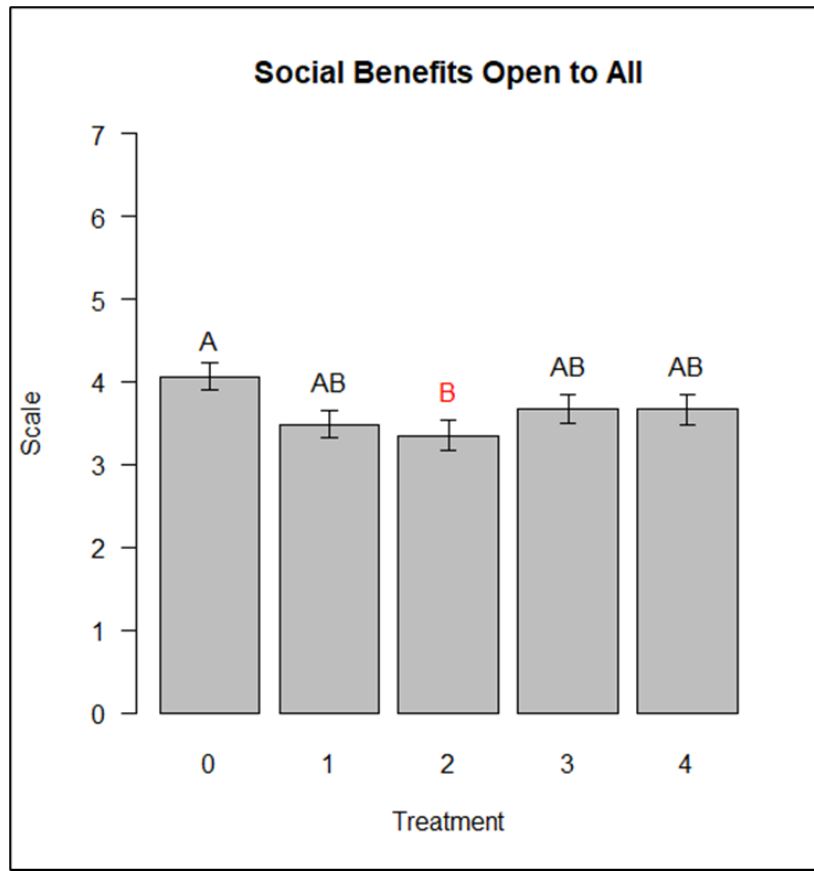


Figure 2.5: Social Benefits Should Be Open to All

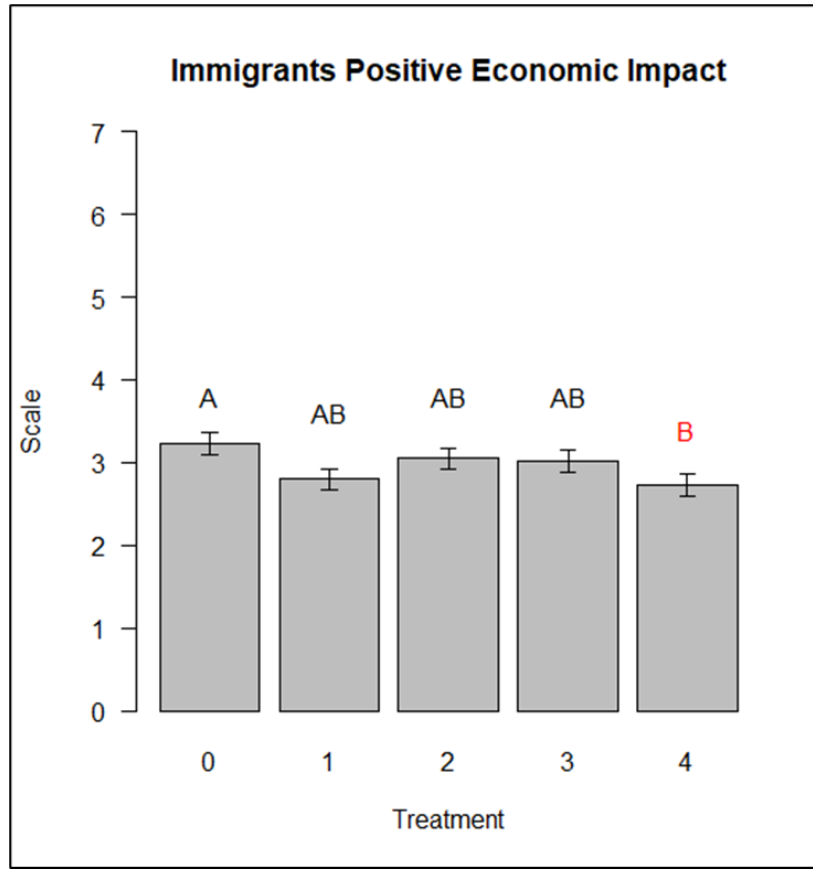


Figure 2.6: Immigrants Have an Overall Positive Economic Impact

Figure 2.2, which illustrates mean levels of agreement to the statement “immigrants make the crime problem in the United States worse” shows respondents who received framed 2 and 4 (negative economic and negative cultural) were significantly ( $F_{4,548}=2.551$ ;  $P \leq 0.038$ ) more likely to agree with the statement as compared to the control group. Figure 2.3 represents the statement “we should take care of Americans before trying to help people from other countries” and shows that respondents who received the negative cultural frame were significantly ( $F_{4,548}=3.117$ ;  $P \leq 0.015$ ) more likely to agree compared to members of the control group. That same frame also made respondents more likely ( $F_{4,548}=2.124$ ;  $P \leq 0.0765$ ) to agree with the statement “immigrants are a threat to American jobs”, as shown in figure 2.4. Respondents who

received the negative economic frame were more likely ( $F_{4,548}=2.4$ ;  $P \leq 0.049$ ) to disagree with the statement shown in figure 2.5 that “social benefits should be open to everyone, even if they are not American citizens”. Finally, in reference to figure 2.6 which represents the statement “immigrants make an overall positive impact on the economy”, respondents who received the negative cultural treatment were significantly ( $F_{4,548}= 2.507$ ;  $P \leq 0.041$ ) less likely to agree compared with individuals in the control group.

The results of this study lend evidence to the notion that framing devices can have an effect on attitudes toward immigration. The results were surprising in that the expectation for positive framing devices to generate more positive attitudes toward immigration was not shown in this study. In fact, results seem to point to the suggestion that attitudinal shifts should only be expected when an individual is presented with negative information. This demonstrates the difficulty in selling positive messages about immigration compared to negative ones. It is likely that individuals are already primed to think about immigration in negative terms since the issue is more commonly framed negatively by politicians, political parties, and media sources. It is also of interest that the negative cultural frame was often able to evoke negative attitudinal shifts in responses to questions about jobs and economic impact. This suggests participants were more triggered into attitudinal shifts by cultural information but felt more comfortable expressing their concerns by talking about less socially divisive issues like jobs and the economy.

There also may be some issues with desirability bias wherein respondents to surveys tend to avoid indicating strong negative attitudes toward immigrants on the questionnaire, measuring the true effect of the framing devices is difficult. However, if this bias is present in these data, then we should assume these experimental results would be conservative approximations of the true effect of framing on attitudes toward immigrants. Another unintended potential source of

bias with this study could be within the language of the framing devices that were used. Though each frame starts with a neutral fact about the number of immigrants living in the United States, if that number is perceived by many respondents to be very high, it could prime respondents in all treatment groups to think negatively about immigrants. Finally, as with any survey experiment that uses student participants, it is always prudent to think about how well this sample approximates the attitudes of the larger American population. In this case, however, the results of this study are, again, likely to be a conservative estimation of the true effect of framing on attitudes since university students are likely slightly more liberal and open-minded compared to the general population, which would make finding significant results more difficult. Furthermore, results from past student survey experiments looking at the effects of framing have historically not been found to differ significantly from survey experiments using broader samples (Kühberger 1998).

This study is an important first step in establishing the causal link between political rhetoric from media and party elites and attitudinal change in the mass public. Future research on this topic can expand upon this work by testing the duration of these attitudinal shifts after respondents are exposed to biased frames about immigration. Questions that remain are centered around how long an individual will hold their attitudinal shift and how easily they will update it upon receiving new information. Testing whether the inclusion of source information in the form of political figures or well-known media outlets would impact these results, particularly when partisanship is accounted for, is another future avenue of study. Finally, the question of how individuals' attitudes about immigration affect their political behavior is crucial in understanding the real impact that messaging can have. Subsequent chapters of this dissertation will focus on the effect of attitudes toward immigrants on behavior by examining voter turnout and party

choice. As evidenced by the political trends in countries like the UK, France, and Germany, it is important that the effect of political rhetoric on attitudes toward immigrants should ultimately be studied comparatively across different countries in Europe and North America. Subsequent chapters of this dissertation will broaden the scope of this study to include data from a wide range of countries where immigration is an important political issue.

## APPENDIX – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The next set of questions ask for your opinion about immigration in the United States

### **Positive Economic Frame:**

Current census estimations show there are over 40 million people living in the United States who were born outside the country. While immigration is a complex social and economic issue, studies have shown that immigrants can bolster the economy by filling job vacancies and skills gaps, and the taxes they pay add to the overall revenue of the United States. Estimates also show that even undocumented immigrants nationwide pay about 8% of their income back in the form of state and local taxes.

### **Negative Economic Frame**

Current census estimations show there are over 40 million people living in the United States who were born outside the country. Immigration is a complex social and economic issue, and many people are concerned about the impact immigrants can have on job security and wages for American citizens. Undocumented workers are also often underpaid, which not only affects their quality of life but also has been shown to keep wages lower for other people in that occupation or region. Immigrants also, on average, have larger families than those in the US, which strain the resources of schools and other forms of social services.

### **Positive Cultural Frame**

Current census estimations show there are over 40 million people living in the United States who were born outside the country. While immigration is a complex political and social issue, many

have pointed out that immigrants enrich this country by adding cultural diversity. The influx of people with different cultures and languages has also been shown to bring new ideas and innovation to the United States.

### **Negative Cultural Frame**

Current census estimations show there are over 40 million people living in the United States who were born outside the country. Immigration is a complex political and social issue, but many fear that having too many cultures and languages will weaken our national identity. Additionally, it can often be difficult for immigrants to adjust to life in the United States, which has been shown to cause friction between people.

### **Neutral Frame (Control)**

Current census estimations show there are over 40 million people living in the United States who were born outside the country.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)

Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

There are too many immigrants in the US

We should attempt to better control immigration into the US

Illegal immigration is a big problem in this country

Immigrants make the crime problem in the United States worse

We should take care of Americans before trying to help people from other countries

In general, immigrants add more to this country than they take away

Immigrants are a threat to American jobs

When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants

Social benefits should be open to everyone, even if they are not American citizens

Immigrants make an overall positive impact on the economy

Preference should be given to immigrants who have work skills the United States needs

Immigrants are a threat to American culture

Foreigners' ways of life can enrich our way of life

Immigrants have an easier time adjusting to American culture when they have familiar names

Immigrants should try to assimilate to American culture

It is important for immigrants to be able to speak English

Preference should be given to immigrants coming from a Christian background

Immigrants should be committed to the way of life in the United States

APPENDIX – POST-RANDOMIZATION STATISTICS

Table 2.1: Post-Randomization Averages Across Treatment Groups

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP	CONTROL	TREATMENT 1	TREATMENT 2	TREATMENT 3	TREATMENT 4
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	115	123	106	106	107
MEAN L/R IDEOLOGY	4.06	4.11	3.59*	4.00	3.84
MEAN POLITICAL INTEREST	2.41	2.39	2.19	2.42	2.38
GOVERNMENT SATISFACTION	4.29	4.64	4.79	4.46	4.68
ECONOMY SATISFACTION	3.89	3.87	3.81	4.03	3.73

\*Indicates mean separation between control and treatment group is statistically significant (p<0.05)

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CHAPTER 3  
HOW PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS AFFECT TURNOUT OF DISSATISFIED  
VOTERS

Comparativists have long been interested in exploring the factors which drive political behavior. This is particularly true when thinking of the ways institutions and political events affect citizens' responses at the ballot box and on public opinion surveys. Putnam, in his seminal book, Making Democracy Work (1993) measured the relationship between citizen participation and the maintenance of healthy democratic institutions in Italy. His findings underscore the power of community, built both through trust in the efficacy of political institutions and through civic engagement, in promoting well-functioning democratic societies. Since Putnam, political scientists have continued to find evidence of a process by which citizens satisfied with and engaged in the democratic process in a country regularly turn out to vote and participate in their community (Almond and Verba 1963; Karp and Banducci 2008; e.g.). So, for much of the scholarship on voter turnout, the issue of engagement is a function of that individual's integration with political and civic institutions. It comes as no surprise, then, when highly engaged citizens regularly turn out to vote; indeed, it is these individuals who maintain healthy democracies.

Much less attention has been paid to the other side of this relationship. That is, what do we know about the behavior of individuals who are dissatisfied with and disengaged from the political process? If individuals who are highly satisfied typically can be expected to also have

high rates of turnout, then logic might suggest individuals with low satisfaction should have lower rates of turnout. However, not turning out to vote does not necessarily point to a lack of satisfaction; some have suggested low voting turnout rates may merely indicate a tacit approval of the current regime (Lipset 1960, p.217). Furthermore, research has shown that the assumption that satisfaction with democracy causes individuals to be more likely to vote may actually be backwards; instead, there is evidence that the act of participating in the political process through the act of voting fosters higher levels of satisfaction (Kostekla and Blais 2018). Evidence from the results of chapter 2 suggests individuals conceptualize and respond to questions about immigrants and immigration as a cultural issue as well as an economic issue. I argue in this chapter that individuals who are unsatisfied with government or their democracies can be mobilized when a divisive cultural issue like immigration becomes salient and highly politicized.

Much of the literature on the subject measures satisfaction with a specific focus on an individual's satisfaction with democracy. A recurring theme in recent scholarship on the subject suggests satisfaction with democracy in a country is a result of being on the "winning side" of a recent election (Anderson and Guillory 1997). This effect was measured by Anderson and Guillory by assessing whether affiliation with the party in power increases satisfaction with the democracy in that country. Other studies suggest measures of satisfaction with democracy can last longer than the results of the most recent election, meaning individuals can feel satisfied with their democratic process even when their preferred candidate or party is not in control (Curini et al 2012). On the other hand, even having your preferred party in power does not guarantee satisfaction as merely voting for the winning party does not produce equal levels of satisfaction among all voters (Singh 2014). While these studies show there is likely a link between

satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the current government in power, a consensus has not been reached in the literature.

Some scholars have pushed back on the concept of satisfaction with democracy, itself. Potential problems with the way survey questions ask respondents to indicate their satisfaction with democracy may not be measuring the concept in the way it is often discussed in the studies that use the data. Linde and Ekman (2003) point out that, rather than gauging an individual's support for democratic ideals and principles, many respondents are merely indicating their support for the current democratic regime. While may not be a problem for some studies, it lends support for the idea that satisfaction with democracy should be expanded to include an individual's overall satisfaction with the state of the government and the economy, if only to more accurately capture the way many individuals conceptualize the term. Indeed, a plethora of literature exists linking economic satisfaction with democratic outcomes (Wilkin et al 1997; Duch and Stevenson 2006); Hernandez and Kriesi 2015, e.g.). Furthermore, democracy has been shown to influence individuals' subjective perceptions of satisfaction in a general sense (Owen et al 2008). For the purposes of this chapter, I will expand the concept of satisfaction to include satisfaction with democracy, satisfaction with the government, satisfaction with the economy, and satisfaction with life as a whole.

## SATISFACTION AND VOTER TURNOUT

Individuals with a high degree of satisfaction in the political system are often expected to have a higher likelihood to participate in the political system. In democracies, this is often thought of as turning out to vote in national elections, among other forms of political participation. Indeed, citizens have been found to regularly place more faith in the political

institutions, with clear linkages having been found between trust in parliament and voter turnout (Grönlund and Setälä, 2007). In the same study, however, the findings suggest that the same relationship does not necessarily hold true for satisfaction and trust in particular politicians. This distinction is important for democratic countries as citizens possess the power to reject incumbents, and they should be able to separate their dissatisfaction with a politician from dissatisfaction with the government, as a whole.

Recent studies have suggested, however, that the link between satisfaction and voter turnout may not be as strong as once thought. Ezrow and Xezonakis (2016) find that, while voter turnout tends to be higher for individuals who indicate their satisfaction with democracy, an opposing effect can be found in people with long-time dissatisfaction with democracy. In an earlier study by the same authors, they also found that satisfaction in a country is linked more to the presence of parties and policy choices that closely align with an individual's ideologies (Ezrow and Xezonakis 2011). These findings support the idea that the mere presence of democratic institutions is not enough to ensure satisfaction with democracy if individuals perceive a large distance between the status quo and their preferred policy outcomes. Singh (2018) reinforces this notion by looking at a host of countries with compulsory voting laws and finds that individuals who are already dissatisfied with democracy do not change those opinions as a result of their participation in the process. Putting these together, it is reasonable to expect that subsets of the population dissatisfied with their country's current state of affairs may still express these feelings through the system without becoming "good democrats" in the long run.

## IMMIGRATION AND SATISFACTION

One of the most prescient political issues facing Europe and North America comes from dealing with social effects that are result of increased immigration. Ethnic heterogeneity, economic strain to the social welfare system, and the fear of losing jobs or opportunities to non-citizens are all often cited as reasons why natives within a country might oppose immigration. Indeed, as Western democracies experienced rapidly growing immigrant populations over the past several decades, native populations have become increasingly more concerned with these issues and the ways they will impact society (Crepaz 2008; Kymlicka and Banting 2006). Perceptions of low-skilled immigrant labor taking jobs away from working class citizens is a common talking point by politicians and parties in opposition to immigration. Some scholars, however, have rejected the hypothesis that individual attitudes about immigration is class dependent. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) argue that the economic impact of immigration on jobs and social benefits is often overstated. Instead, they find that the social effects of increased diversity affect individual perceptions and attitudes. In the United States, increasing ethnic heterogeneity in communities has been linked to lower levels of social trust and satisfaction (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that immigration and the presence of foreign nationals living in a country should have an effect on lowering many individuals' level of satisfaction with the state of their country.

## THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The theory behind this study builds off previous work which has suggested that higher degrees of satisfaction correspond to higher political participation. The opposite may also be

true, then, that individuals with low satisfaction could be expected to be less likely to turn out to vote. This leads to my first hypothesis:

H1: Individuals with low satisfaction are less likely to vote than individuals with high satisfaction

The next part of this theory involves the predicted impact that an individual's attitude toward immigrants has on his or her likelihood of voting. In order for this assumption to hold true, there should be a positive correlation between attitudes toward immigrants and satisfaction, all else equal. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Individuals with positive attitudes toward immigrants are more likely to have high levels of satisfaction

The main point of interest for this chapter is in understanding the causes of voter turnout among individuals with low levels of satisfaction. That is, for the individuals whom one assumes would normally choose to abstain from the political process, what factors are able to increase the likelihood of turnout? Evidence from 2016 exit polls immediately following the Donald Trump's electoral win in the United States showed clear signs that dissatisfied individuals broke hard for Trump (Lee et al 2016), and anecdotal evidence of people who had never before voted who turned out to vote for Trump suggests there is reason to examine this potential relationship between satisfaction and turnout. There is evidence from recent political events and rhetoric in democratic countries to suggest that immigration is one of the most divisive social issues, and it

should have an impact on an individual's decision calculus for whether to vote. Donald Trump famously made immigration, border security, and nationalism main tenants of his campaigns in 2016 and again in 2020.

Since negative attitudes toward immigrants should lower overall satisfaction with the state of their country, I expect it to dampen the likelihood for individuals to vote. However, just like the US elections in 2016 and 2020, right wing nationalism and anti-immigrant policies attract voters even when they are dissatisfied with the status quo. In European countries where multiparty systems regularly afford right-wing nationalist parties a place on the ballot, I expect negativity toward immigrants will moderate the effect of satisfaction and increase the likelihood of voting. This leads to the final hypothesis:

H3a: Lower support for immigrants will dampen the likelihood of voting for individuals with high to moderate levels of satisfaction

H3b: Lower support for immigrants will raise the likelihood of voting for individuals with low levels of satisfaction

To test these hypotheses, I utilize data from the 2014 wave of the European Social Survey (ESS). These data were collected from surveys of individuals in 15 European countries which all experience relatively high numbers of immigrants each year. To model these data, I use a mixed-effects logit model with random effects at the country level to estimate the effect of satisfaction and immigration on the likelihood of voting.

The dependent variable in this model is voter turnout, which is measured as a binary variable based on the individual's response to the question, "Did you vote in the last national

election?” Independent variables include a measure of attitude toward immigrants and measures of satisfaction. Attitude toward immigrants is operationalized as the individual’s response to the following question from the ESS: “Is [country] made a worse or better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? This variable is measured on a 0-10 scale wherein 0 indicates the respondent believes immigrants make the country a worse place to live and 10 indicates they believe immigrants make the country a better place to live.

To measure satisfaction, I average the responses to four different ESS survey questions which each ask respondents about different ways to conceive satisfaction. These questions ask the survey respondents to rank their agreement to statements which measure their satisfaction with life, the economy, the government, and with democracy. Each of these variables is coded 0-10 where 0 indicates the lowest level of satisfaction and 10 indicates the highest. This allowed me to create a new variable, *Satisfaction*, which captures several factors at once. I also include an interaction effect between this variable and the aforementioned attitudes toward immigrants variable to test the effect these attitudes have across varying levels of satisfaction.

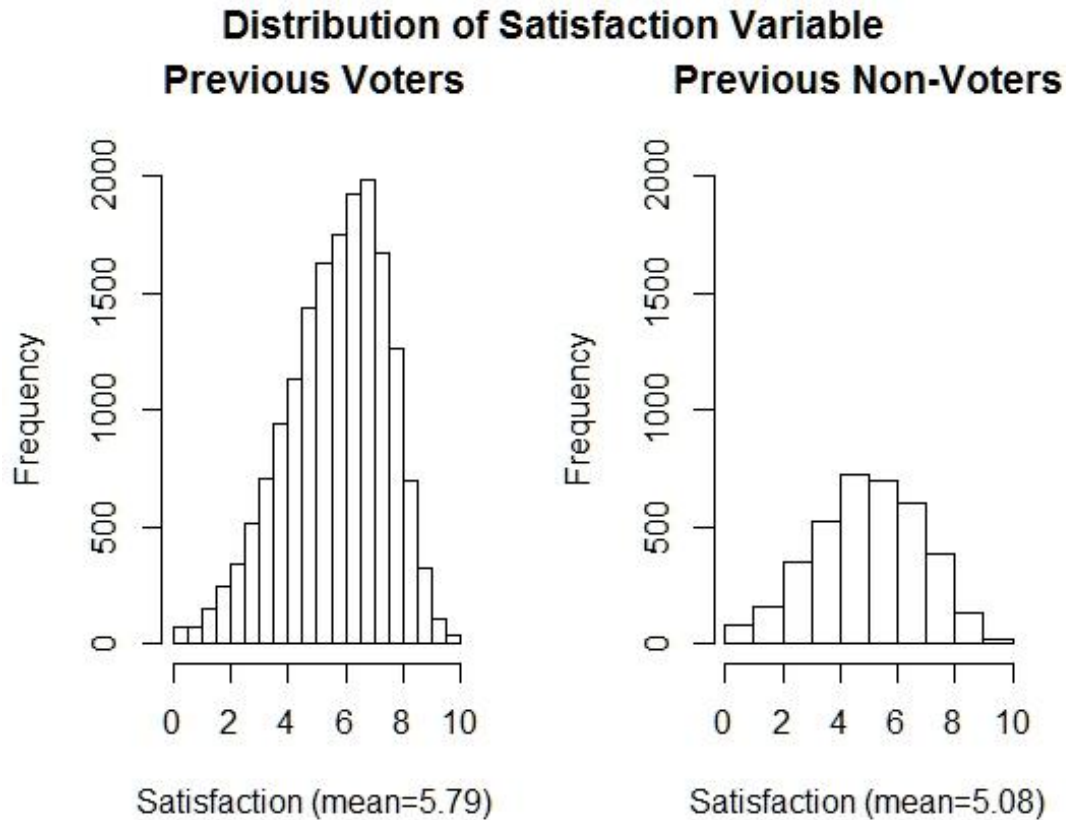


Figure 3.1: Independent variable distribution by voter turnout in the last election

I also include several relevant control variables that have been shown as relevant to attitudes toward immigrants (Pryce 2018). First, age and gender are controlled for to account for natural differences in voter turnout among men and women as well as typically higher turnout among the elderly. I also include a control for political ideology, which is measured by the individual's response to a question asking them to place themselves on a left-right scale. The variable is used to account for recent findings which have shown polarization can affect voter turnout. Finally, I control for political interest. This variable is measured by the respondent's indication of their interest in politics, coded 1-4 where 1 is not at all interested and 4 is very interested. This control is needed since interest in politics has been repeatedly shown to be a

predictor of voter turnout. Finally, I include a variable to measure union membership since it can be expected to have a confounding effect on the primary assumption in this study that attitudes toward immigrants stems primarily from social tensions rather than fears of labor market competition. This variable, measured categorically for whether individuals are currently union members, were once union members, or have never been union members should help absorb variance in the model which would be attributed to labor class.

Hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3 are tested using logit models. Model 1 includes the independent and dependent variables without the interaction term and serves as the main test for hypothesis 1, that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction and voter turnout.

*(Model 1)  $Vote_{ij}$*

$$= \alpha_{ij} + Satisfaction_{ij}\beta_1 + PolInterest_{ij}\beta_2 + LRScale_{ij}\beta_3 + Gender_{ij}\beta_4 \\ + Age_{ij}\beta_5 + Union_{ij}\beta_6 + Country_j\beta_7 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Model 2 adds a term to account for the interaction between satisfaction and support for immigration, and model 3 pools the data without country-level random effects to check that the results remain similar without them. These two models will be used to test hypothesis 3.

*(Model 2)  $Vote_{ij}$*

$$= \alpha_{ij} + Satisfaction_{ij}\beta_1 + PolInterest_{ij}\beta_2 + LRScale_{ij}\beta_3 + Gender_{ij}\beta_4 \\ + Age_{ij}\beta_5 + Union_{ij}\beta_6 + ImmSupport_{ij}\beta_7 \\ + Satisfaction * ImmSupport_{ij}\beta_8 + Country_j\beta_9 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

(Model 3)  $Vote_i$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \alpha_i + Satisfaction_i\beta_1 + PolInterest_i\beta_2 + LRScale_i\beta_3 + Gender_i\beta_4 \\ &+ Age_i\beta_5 + Union_i\beta_6 + ImmSupport_i\beta_7 + Satisfaction * ImmSupport_i\beta_8 \\ &+ \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

Finally, hypothesis 2 seeks to confirm a positive relationship between attitudes toward immigrants and satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, I use a simple linear regression.

(Model 4)  $Satisfaction_{ij}$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \alpha_{ij} + ImmSupport_{ij}\beta_1 + LRScale_{ij}\beta_2 + Gender_{ij}\beta_3 + Age_{ij}\beta_4 \\ &+ Union_{ij}\beta_5 + Country_j\beta_6 + \varepsilon_{ij} \end{aligned}$$

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Testing hypothesis 2 first, the OLS model compared satisfaction and attitudes toward immigrants. This model showed a positive relationship between these two variables where satisfaction covaries positively with attitudes toward immigrants. Table 3.1 shows the results of this test.

Table 3.1: OLS Results for Satisfaction and Attitude Toward Immigrants

<b>Satisfaction</b>	
<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimates</i>
Attitude Toward Immigrants	0.25 *** (0.00)

Political Interest	0.12 *** (0.01)
Conservatism	0.12 *** (0.00)
Gender (Female)	-0.09 *** (0.02)
Age	0.00 * (0.00)
Previous Union Membership	-0.13 *** (0.03)
No Union Membership	0.01 (0.03)

**Random Effects**

$\sigma^2$	2.09
$\tau_{00}$ Country	0.85
ICC	0.29
N Country	15
Observations	20708
Marginal R <sup>2</sup> / Conditional R <sup>2</sup>	0.113 / 0.369

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\*  $p < 0.05$    \*\*  $p < 0.01$    \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The results for models 1-3 are displayed in table 3.2. Model 1 findings show support for Hypothesis 1. To test this, I employed a logit model with only the *Satisfaction* variable and the control variables. This model shows a significant effect for satisfaction on the likelihood to vote. This lends support for the consensus in the literature that there is a preliminary relationship between satisfaction and voter turnout. However, we still do not know the full story about individuals with low levels of satisfaction without including an interactive effect testing attitudes toward immigrants.

Hypothesis 3 is tested using logit models with an interactive effect combining attitudes toward immigration and satisfaction. These results are displayed in table 3.2 as models 2 and 3. The results from these models demonstrate that we should expect the likelihood of voting will decrease as attitudes toward immigrants decreases among individuals with medium to high levels of satisfaction. However, this does not hold for individuals with low levels of satisfaction. Instead, more negativity toward immigrants is expected to increase the likelihood that those individuals turn out to vote. This provides support for both parts of hypothesis 3 and suggests that immigration is an issue which can serve as a catalyst for traditional “non-voters” to become involved in the political process when there is a perception that immigrants are making the country a worse place to live.

Table 3.2: Logit Models Predicting Turnout Likelihood

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>
Satisfaction	1.16 *** (0.01)	1.09 *** (0.03)	1.08 ** (0.03)
Political Interest	2.15 *** (0.05)	2.13 *** (0.05)	2.02 *** (0.05)
Conservatism	1.06 *** (0.01)	1.06 *** (0.01)	1.06 *** (0.01)
Gender (Female)	1.26 *** (0.05)	1.26 *** (0.05)	1.23 *** (0.05)
Age	1.02 *** (0.00)	1.02 *** (0.00)	1.02 *** (0.00)
Previous Union Membership	0.70 *** (0.05)	0.70 *** (0.05)	0.55 *** (0.03)
No Union Membership	0.66 *** (0.04)	0.66 *** (0.04)	0.49 *** (0.03)

Attitude Toward Immigrants		0.97 (0.02)	0.96 (0.02)
Attitude Toward Immigrants*Satisfaction		1.01 * (0.00)	1.01 ** (0.00)
<b>Random Effects</b>			
$\sigma^2$	3.29	3.29	
$\tau_{00}$	0.27 Country	0.26 Country	
ICC	0.07	0.07	
N	15 Country	15 Country	
Observations	20708	20708	20708
Marginal R <sup>2</sup> / Conditional R <sup>2</sup>	0.192 / 0.252	0.195 / 0.254	0.114
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$			

Figure 3.2 represents the predicted probabilities derived from model 3 where individuals' survey results are pooled without country random effects. This graph shows the effect that attitudes toward immigrants has on predicting probability of voting at various levels of satisfaction. Since *Attitudes Toward Immigrants* is a continuous variable, to create these predicted probabilities, I recoded the variable into three factors putting cut points so that responses lower than 3 are categorized as “low”, responses between 3 and 7 are categorized as “medium”, and responses higher than 7 are categorized as “high”.

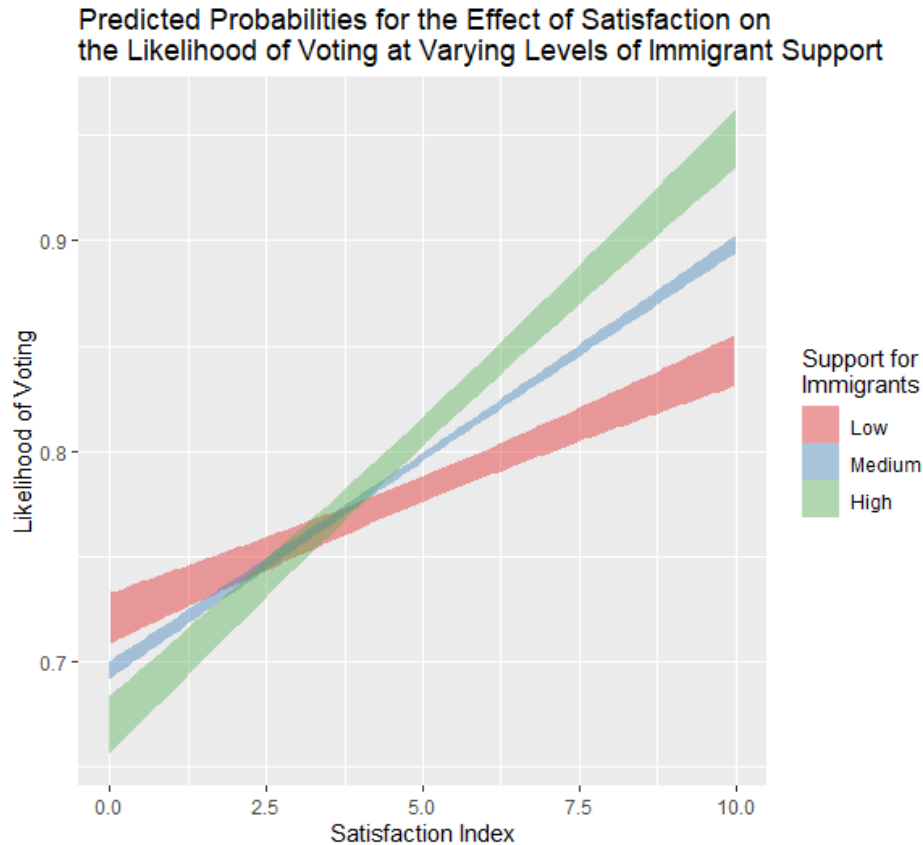


Figure 3.2: Predicted Probabilities at Different Levels of Support for Immigrants

This figure demonstrates that individuals with low satisfaction are predicted to be more likely to turn out and vote when their attitudes toward immigrants are low, compared to individuals who either are categorized with medium or high levels of support for immigrants. This effect becomes non-discernible at mid-levels of satisfaction and then the positive attitudes toward immigrants has a multiplicative effect with satisfaction at higher values and increases likelihood of turnout. The image helps explain the interactive effect of the *Attitudes Toward Immigrants* variable in the model conditioned on the individual's level of satisfaction. At the lowest levels of satisfaction, negative attitudes towards immigrants predict higher rates of turnout. At higher levels of satisfaction and with increasing support for immigration, turnout is

expected to be much more likely. This interaction suggests the effect of satisfaction on turnout is weaker at lower levels and turnout is better explained by attitudes toward immigrants. At higher levels of satisfaction, the turnout likelihood increases regardless of an individual's support for immigrants.

The results of this study help explain how individual political behavior is affected by immigration. The findings in this study support the conventional understanding that satisfaction in life, with government, the economy, and democracy influences an individual's decision to vote, but I also find support for the theory that attitudes toward immigration is linked with an individual's perception of satisfaction. What makes this study unique is the support that was found for the hypothesis that stronger feelings of negativity toward immigrants in one's country can have the ability to increase turnout for individuals who are dissatisfied with the current situation. The implications of this effect could have impact on the political opinions and party choices of these individuals or prompt them to support politicians who include anti-immigrant rhetoric in their campaigns. Future research avenues should seek to build on these findings to better understand the ways in which political actors use immigration as a talking point to mobilize voters.

The last several decades have been characterized by a substantial increase in immigration for most countries in Europe and North America. The way individuals continue to view immigration as a political issue and the impact it has on determining the outcome of elections in advanced democratic countries is a topic scholars should continue to seek to better understand. Chapter 4 of this dissertation will continue to explore these themes and test the way attitudes toward immigrants and immigration effects important political behaviors by examining party choice. As evidenced by the rhetoric in the recent US presidential elections, the success of the

“leave” campaign in the UK, and the continued presence of anti-immigrant, nationalist parties across Europe immigration is expected to be an issue that will remain present in the media and in political messaging for some time to come.

APPENDIX – COUNTRY-LEVEL TRENDS

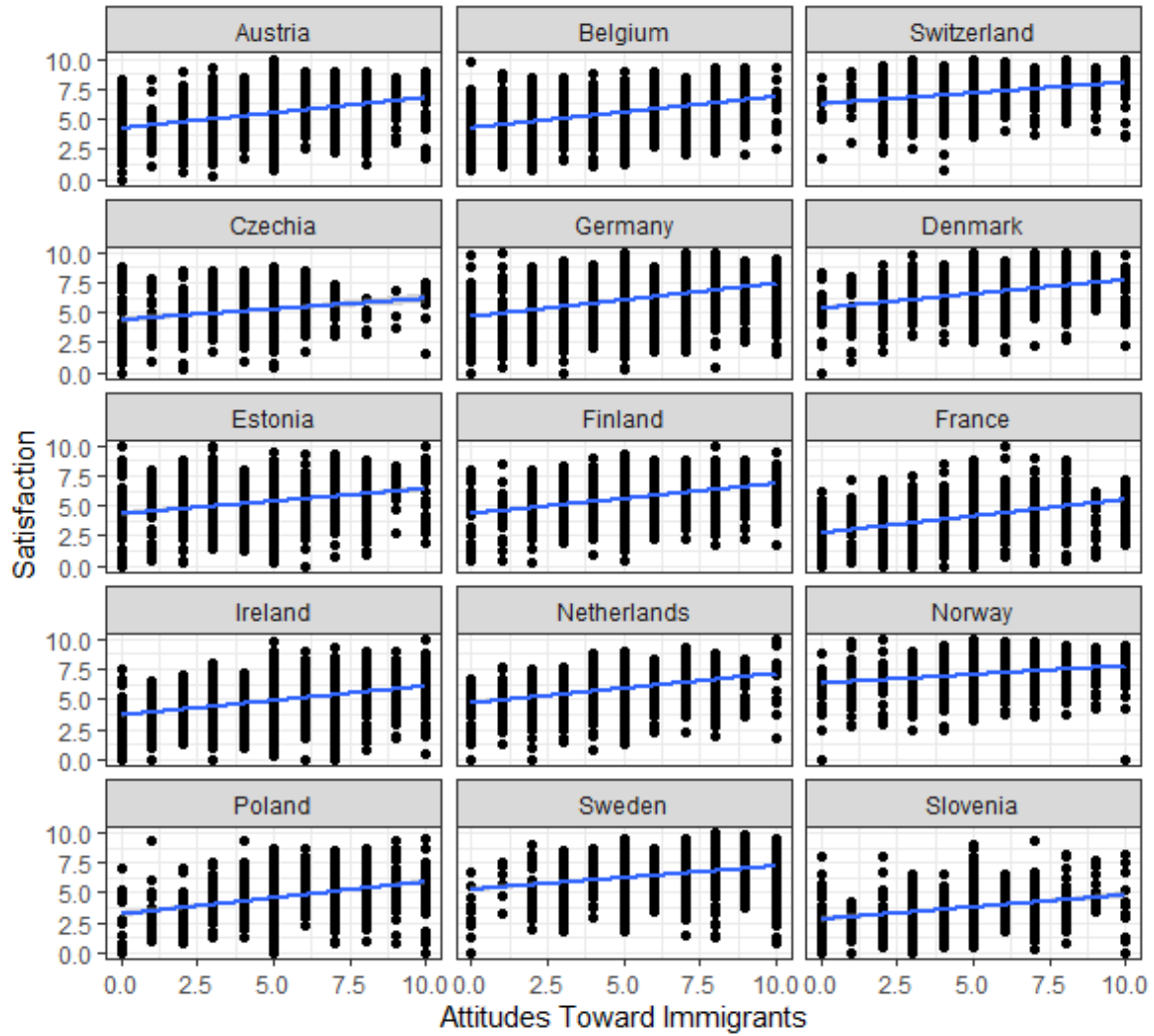


Figure 3.4: Trends for Satisfaction and Attitudes Toward Immigrants by Country

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## CHAPTER 4

### HOW NEGATIVITY TOWARD IMMIGRATION AFFECTS POLITICAL PARTIES

Immigration is well-known to be one of the most complicated and challenging political issues facing Western democracies in the 21st century. The ways in which people think about the issue and the affect they have towards individual immigrants and outgroups has led to highly contentious (and often racially charged) politics. Examples of this can be seen in the United States with the 2016 and 2020 campaigns of Donald Trump as well as in many of his actions and agendas throughout his term as president. Noteworthy examples of contentious politics around immigration can also be seen in the UK with the Brexit debate, in France and Germany with the increasing support for far-right parties such as the National Front (FN) and Alternative for Germany (AfD), and throughout Southern and Eastern Europe as individuals and political systems respond to asylum seekers from Syria and North Africa. These shockingly similar reactions to immigration and the ripple effects they have in so many democratic societies begs the question of how the mass opinion about immigrants is affecting established party structures.

Scholars of comparative politics typically think about political parties being established in correlation with natural cleavages within a society. For example, societies where Catholic/Protestant divisions historically defined societal cleavages are most likely to have developed a Christian Democratic party whereas societies that have been more divided around class issues are more likely to have mass parties focused on labor concerns. This is an oversimplification of Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) work analyzing the genesis of mass political

party structures in European societies, and it is important to note that societies can be divided around more than one historical cleavage. The main question I explore in this chapter is whether attitudes toward immigrants and immigration is currently dividing societies across established party lines, essentially creating a new cleavage which challenges existing party structures. The trend of increased support of parties on the extreme right and extreme left in multiparty systems and the polarization of politics in two-party systems like the US suggests this may be the case.

This chapter will focus on the way individuals' party choices are affected by attitudes toward immigrants. Do negative attitudes toward immigrants predict increased support for extremist, far right, and authoritarian parties, and how do party structures respond? First, I will outline and address relevant literature examining important themes including the way political parties respond to pressures from mass public opinion, explanations of the recent success of extremist right-wing and left-wing politics in Europe and the US, and polarization and realignment of party structures. Then, I employ a mixed-methods approach to answer both parts of the research question. I use data from the 2018 European Social Survey (ESS) and 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) to perform a large-N, quantitative analysis across 29 European countries and find correlation between negativity toward immigrants and voting for extremist parties, far-right parties, and nationalist/authoritarian parties. Finally, to more clearly illustrate the ways in which this is affecting party systems on a national scale, I compare the United States and France as case studies and find that, while the effects of immigration are pressuring party systems in both countries, the number of parties within a system matters greatly when understanding the possible outcome.

## PARTY RESPONSIVENESS TO PUBLIC OPINION

Scholars of political party behavior have long theorized that parties adjust their position on key issues to ensure that they remain competitive in elections (Adams et al. 2004; Adams et al. 2009; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Spoon and Kluver 2015; Warwick 2009). In general, research seems to suggest there is a recent trend toward moderation wherein parties move away from extreme ideological positions on issues and instead cluster more closely around the center (Warwick 2009). Existing scholarship, however, is divided on the question of which forces are the most important causal factors which spart party position changes. Drawing off the median voter theorem (Downs 1957), a common presumption is that political parties are primarily power seekers, and we can predict that they will update their position on key issues to chase the ideological center of the electorate. The way parties behave, though, seems to be more nuanced than that. Research that tests party shifts based on recent election performance suggests that parties are quite reluctant to change their ideological position based only on election results from the previous cycle but instead will respond only when major shifts in public opinion require them to accommodate changes in the electorate (Adams et al. 2004).

Another study breaks this down further to analyze whether the party's placement on the left-right ideological scale can predict its response to changes in public opinion and found that, while centrist and right-wing parties tend to be more reactionary in response to public opinion shifts, platforms for parties on the left are more likely to resist changes (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009). This suggests that parties on the left may be more deeply tied to their ideological position on issues and are more likely to maintain that position even when political and economic pressures are pushing other parties to moderate. This resistance to change is even more pronounced for parties that can be considered niche or that are ideologically located more at the

extremes. Extreme left-wing and right-wing parties and parties that are often strongly associated with one main political issue (eg. environmentalism and climate change for Green parties) are more likely to be punished by voters for moderating their positions even as mainstream parties get rewarded for doing just that (Adams et al. 2006).

## EXPLANATIONS FOR EXTREMISM

Recent behavioral scholars have posited that one of the reasons for this may stem not from the parties, but from the voters. More specifically, the way voters form their partisan identity has been shown to be less of a calculated, cognitive process and more of an affective one based on evaluations of groups in society (Green et al 2002; Achen and Bartels 2016; Greene 2002; Huddy et al 2015, Bankert et al 2017). There has been a recent emphasis in the literature on understanding the way support for and affinity toward radical parties can be best understood as a reaction to larger social forces such as immigration, globalization, and EU integration (Brigevich 2020; Oesch 2008; Santana and Rama 2018; Yilmaz 2012). Indeed, far-right extremist parties have been successful at attracting working class voters even though, when looked at through a traditional left-right perspective, these voters would not initially seem to be a natural fit for these types of parties. Instead of economic issues, these parties use immigration to stoke community and identity-based fears to attract working class voters (Oesch 2008). This messaging becomes even stronger still when the messaging around immigration is specifically centered around Muslims and non-Europeans (Yilmaz 2012).

It is important in discussions of the popularity of extremist political parties to emphasize that leftist voters are also being attracted to extremist parties which use anti-immigrant and anti-globalist rhetoric to stoke fear. Both extremist right-wing and left-wing parties employ populist

messaging to attract voters away from moderate parties, with the main difference being that parties on the extreme right invoke cultural and nationalistic messaging while the extreme left focuses on economic impacts of globalization and EU integration (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017; Brigevich 2020; Santana and Rama 2018). However, this does not mean voters on the left are not activated by immigration as an issue. In examining European Electoral Study (ESS) data from 2014, Santana and Rama (2018) find that leftist voters who view immigration as a threat to their way of life are significantly more likely to align themselves with an extremist party rather than a moderate one.

Party leaders also seem to realize these populist and extremist messages are effective at attracting voters and will strategically emphasize polarizing issues in order to clearly signal their positions to voters (Spoon and Kluver 2015) and become more reactive to changes in public opinion when radical right-wing parties are more popular (Vrânceanu 2019). The literature surrounding behavior of more moderate parties and their tendency to engage with extremist political rhetoric is more mixed, with some scholars noting that mainstream parties will still tend to shy away from populist messaging and maintain moderate stances (Warwick 2009). Recent studies are also ambivalent toward the successes of extreme parties, with Dunn and Singh (2011) demonstrating that multiparty systems' inherent plurality of ideas serves to mitigate the impact that extremist party rhetoric has on mass opinions toward immigrants. Other studies agree that electoral institutions and employment levels are important factors to consider when determining the potency of extreme parties (Golder 2003). Finally, mainstream parties, especially in multiparty systems where forming governing coalitions is common, will often mitigate the impact of extreme parties by refusing to enter into coalitions with them, effectively shutting down the influence those parties would be able to assert in policy making (Mudde 2014).

## PARTY REALIGNMENT AND POLARIZATION

Regardless of whether extreme right-wing and left-wing parties will be able to permanently dismantle existing party structures, increasing levels of voter support and partisan attachment to these parties still presents a unique challenge for democracies. Most recent findings about partisanship suggest that individuals display expressive partisanship. This term, which is juxtaposed with instrumental partisanship, describes partisanship as an expression of one's identity rather than a rational calculation of party fit based on ideological preferences (Green et al 2002; Huddy et al. 2018; Huddy and Bankert 2017). The authors even liken the stickiness of party identity to religious or ethnic identity. Indeed, rational expectations of partisanship are weakened further by evidence showing that group attachment persists, and is possibly stronger, among highly educated individuals (Achen and Bartels 2016, Chapter 10; Rekker et al 2017). There is also evidence that partisanship in European systems functions similarly and conforms with expectations as expressive rather than instrumental. Using survey data from three European countries, the UK, the Netherlands, and Sweden, Bankert et al (2017) find that European partisans resemble their American counterparts in their conceptualization of identity and partisanship.

While this theory of party attachment does lend itself to a more stable notion of partisanship, that does not mean that societal shifts in party loyalties are impossible. Rather, individuals are capable of shifting their party loyalty if perceptions of party identity begin to move away from a person's group identity. A major example of this comes from American politics starting in the 1960's wherein groups in the American South began to shift their alignment away from the Democratic party once the party embraced the enfranchisement of black citizens as a major issue with their support of the Voting Rights Act (Green et al 2002;

Carmines et al 1986). Looking at the way party realignment has happened in the US in the past, it becomes clear that party leaders' positions help inform mass opinion by communicating the official party position on emerging issues and tying strong emotional affect to the topic (Carmines et al 1986). In this case, if issues such as immigration and globalization are creating new cleavages in democratic societies, then party leader cues and party messaging are instrumental in cementing them.

Recent scholarship has focused intently on studying whether Western political systems are experiencing cross-cutting cleavages based around immigration, EU integration, and globalization (Carvalho and Ruedin 2018; Guth and Nelsen 2021; Hooghe and Marks 2018). While some scholarship asserts that European party systems remain largely stable in the face of extremist parties' increasing enticement of the electorate (Mudde 2014), more recent studies measuring polarization in European countries find that many party systems are at least as polarized as the currently much-maligned American two-party system, and the degree of polarization continues to increase each year (Dalton 2021). Much of the reason for this surge of research into this area is that, as societies continue to advance into the Postmodern age, social cleavages like Catholic-Protestant divisions and Marxist views of class are less relevant to individuals than social forces such as authoritarianism and xenophobia (Huber and Inglehart 1995). The recent literature about which political issues and which demographic groups are the main driving force behind new cleavages is mixed, with much left to be explored. Although shifts toward far-right populism is often discussed most often, there seems to be some agreement that transnational impacts of immigration and globalization impact the far-left as well (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Carvalho and Ruedin 2018; Guth and Nelsen 2021). A key difference between the far-right and the far-left regarding immigration is that, due to race and ethnicity not being as

strong of an emphasis on the left, immigration is less of a cross-cutting cleavage for left-wing parties. (Carvalho and Ruedin 2018). Voters on the left are still much more likely to support immigration as compared to their right-wing counterparts who are more likely to be activated by immigration as a cultural issue. Voters most likely to resonate with messaging around economic uncertainty and immigration tend also to skew younger, less educated, and working class (Guth and Nelsen 2021).

The literature on this topic suggests that negativity toward immigration may be part of a larger societal cleavage which impacts individual-level party choice. It is also apparent from the literature that this effect will be seen as a push toward both far-right and far-left parties. Therefore, instead of negative attitudes toward immigrants causing all voters to move ideologically to the right, as it might intuitively seem, I expect voters to move toward the extremes. This means there is likely to be competing effects by which moderate left voters should be more likely to vote for extremist left parties, and moderate right voters should be more likely to vote for extremist right parties. Additionally, I expect negative attitudes toward immigrants to be correlated with voting for more authoritarian or nationalist parties since immigration has been shown in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation to be highly salient as a nativist cultural issue. Finally, it is expected that, while voters are likely to move to the extremes, the literature has shown that the effect of immigration is much more potent for right-wing voters. This means that the aggregate effect will likely still skew toward the right when looking at the total electorate. This leads to three hypotheses which align with these expectations of extremism, authoritarianism/nationalism, and an overall trend towards the far right.

H1: As attitudes toward immigrants become more negative, voters are more likely to vote for extremist political parties

H2: As attitudes toward immigrants become more negative, voters are more likely to vote for authoritarian political parties

H3: As attitudes toward immigrants become more negative, voters are more likely to vote for far-right political parties

## METHODOLOGY

With this study, I am interested in the impact that negative attitudes toward immigration and immigrants in the mass public has on political parties. This question is two-fold and is best addressed using a mixed-methods approach combining a large-N quantitative analysis and a qualitative case study comparison. I test the three hypothesis using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) 9th wave of data released in 2018. These data are from respondents in 29 European countries and are largely focused on public attitudes toward social and political questions. Within this dataset, I utilized the question which asked respondents to indicate which political party they voted for in the last national election. In addition to these data, I also incorporate the 2019 wave of data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). These data are focused on measuring political parties, and I used their metrics to code each political party according to their placement on a traditional left-right, a scale measuring party positions on immigration, and the GAL/TAN (Green, Alternative, Libertarian/Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist) scale which is more focused on defining parties according to social issues (Bakker et al 2015).

The dependent variable associated with my first hypothesis is the extremism, which can be conceptualized as movement toward the polls of a one-dimensional left-right scale. The CHES dataset includes a variable which places political parties on a scale from 0-10 in terms of

the party's overall ideological stance, from extreme left to extreme right. This is not to be confused with similar metrics included in the data which attempt to measure parties along a two-dimensional axis that decouples economic issues and social issues. Since immigration is both an economic and a social issue, the combined scale is more appropriate here. I use the data from this scale to create a new variable, extremism, which is calculated as the absolute value of the number of standard deviations a party lies from the actual mean of all parties in the data. Since this is measured in standard deviations, I rescale the variable by multiplying it by the expected mean of the original variable for ease of analysis.

$$Extremism = abs\left(\frac{Observed\ Party\ Value - Observed\ Mean}{Observed\ Standard\ Deviation}\right) * Expected\ Mean$$

Using the ESS 2018 data which asked respondents to indicate the political party they voted for in the last national election, I use the extremism measure I created to assign a value to each party such that the dependent variable in the model reflects how extreme a party the voter chose. For the second hypothesis, I link the CHES GAL/TAN placement of the political parties to the ESS data on individual party choice as the dependent variable. The main independent variable of interest for both models is individual attitude toward immigrants, which is operationalized using another ESS survey question which asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement to the question of whether they believe immigrants make their country a worse or better place to live. To test both hypotheses, I use ordinary least squares (OLS) models with random effects for countries to account for country-level variation. I also use several standard socioeconomic variables such as age, gender, and education in both models. As a robustness check, I also looked at these models using country clustered standard errors which

produced no meaningful differences in model results. For further robustness checks, I tested models where I replaced the dependent variable with measures of party immigration policy from CHES and found similar model results. Displayed below is a table of descriptive statistics showing information about each variable I use and formulaic representations of each model that was tested.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest

Variable	Mean	Standard Dev	Min	Max	# of Obs
Extremism	4.36	2.44	0.01	11.35	25287
GAL/TAN	5.00	2.50	0.40	9.92	25287
Immigration Policy	5.86	2.45	0.69	10.00	25287
Immigration Attitude	4.73	2.36	0	10	25287
Age	54.04	17.10	15	90	25287
Gender	2	0.50	1	2	25257
Education (Years)	13.60	4.25	0	60	25287
Political Interest	2.36	0.86	1	4	25287

(Model 1)  $Extremism_{ij}$

$$= \alpha_{ij} + Negativity_{ij}\beta_1 + Gender_{ij}\beta_2 + Age_{ij}\beta_3 + Education_{ij}\beta_4 + PolInterest_{ij}\beta_5 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

(Model 2)  $GALTAN_{ij}$

$$= \alpha_{ij} + Negativity_{ij}\beta_1 + Gender_{ij}\beta_2 + Age_{ij}\beta_3 + Education_{ij}\beta_4 + PolInterest_{ij}\beta_5 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

(Model 1)  $LeftRight_{ij}$

$$= \alpha_{ij} + Negativity_{ij}\beta_1 + Gender_{ij}\beta_2 + Age_{ij}\beta_3 + Education_{ij}\beta_4 + PolInterest_{ij}\beta_5 + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

The second part of this study focuses on the way political parties have been affected by the formation of a cross-cutting cleavage centered around immigration and globalization. Recent political events have demonstrated the salience of immigration, and literature shows many western democracies are experiencing increasing polarization of their electorates and affinity toward populist and authoritarian parties and political leaders. However, measuring the impact of polarization on political systems is difficult because each individual country is unique in its political institutions, party structures, and experience with immigration. This makes a large-N approach unwieldy since attempting to control for each relevant variable in a political system would dilute the main focus of the question and likely not yield any meaningful discussion of causality. Using a mixed methods approach that combines large-N and small-N comparisons allows for generalization beyond a purely qualitative approach but still benefits from the richness, complexity, and theory-building that are provided by qualitative study (Coppedge 1999; Lieberman 2005).

For the qualitative portion of this study, I trace the effects of polarization along what Hooghe and Marks (2018) name the transnational cleavage, of which immigration and globalization are key political issues and indicators, on party systems. The expectation is that the formation of a new, cross-cutting cleavage to a political system is likely to result in shifting voter coalitions and have an impact on the popularity of political parties and the salience of issues that relate to this cleavage (Carmines and Stimson 1986). I further expect that this causal mechanism is dependent on the number of effective parties present in the electoral system since countries with multiple viable parties will experience realignment differently compared to countries with a two-party system. This leads to a natural need for a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD), a

case selection technique that utilizes matching countries on as many variables as possible other than the variable of interest (Seairight and Gerring 2008; Gerring and Cojocaru 2016). For the purposes of this study, I compare the United States and France as these countries match well on multiple variables of interest and institutional variables but differ greatly in their electoral systems.

Table 4.2: Variables of Interest for Qualitative Case Selection

	<b>Executive</b>	<b>Immigration Salience</b>	<b>Large Immigrant Population</b>	<b>Far-Right Populism</b>	<b>Number of Parties</b>
<b>France</b>	Semi- Presidential	High	Yes	Present	Multi-Party
<b>US</b>	Presidential	High	Yes	Present	Two-Party

France and the US make natural cases to compare as each country has experienced a wave of far-right populism in recent years which is largely due to the high salience of immigration as a political issue. Institutionally, both are somewhat uncommon in that they are presidential systems (France’s system is semi-presidential, but the French president is still a directly elected executive position that operates independently of the legislative branch of government, and similarly to the American president, is a dominant political figure in national politics) (Linz 1990; Mainwaring 1993). The two countries differ meaningfully on the number of parties present in the electoral system, with the US being the only democratic country that has both a presidential system and only two effective political parties. This uniqueness makes the US an interesting candidate for this analysis as its deviation on these variables of interest are useful in isolating information about causal mechanisms in ways that typical cases cannot (Seawright 2016).

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

From the beginning of this study, the expectation was that individuals with more negative attitudes toward immigrants would be more likely to vote for political parties with more extremist and authoritarian platforms. The results of the OLS models that tested these hypotheses support each one and demonstrate that negativity toward immigrants is linked with individual party choices. Individuals are significantly more likely to vote for extremist parties both on the right and the left, but the effect is even more pronounced when looking at the propensity to vote for authoritarian and right-wing political parties.

Table 4.3: Regression Results for Extremism, Social Dimension, and Left-Right Dimension

<i>Coefficient</i>	<b>Extremism</b> <i>Estimates</i>	<b>Social Dimension (GALTAN)</b> <i>Estimates</i>	<b>Left-Right</b> <i>Estimates</i>
Negativity Toward Immigrants	0.05 *** (0.01)	0.25 *** (0.01)	0.20 *** (0.01)
Gender (Female)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.28 *** (0.03)	-0.28 *** (0.03)
Age	-0.01 *** (0.00)	0.01 *** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Years of Education	-0.01 * (0.00)	-0.04 *** (0.00)	-0.01 *** (0.00)
Political Interest	-0.10 *** (0.02)	0.05 ** (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
<b>Random Effects</b>			
$\sigma^2$	4.98	4.89	4.43
$\tau_{00}$	1.11 <small>cntry</small>	0.84 <small>cntry</small>	0.20 <small>cntry</small>
ICC	0.18	0.15	0.04
N	26 <small>cntry</small>	26 <small>cntry</small>	26 <small>cntry</small>

Observations	25287	25287	25287
Marginal R <sup>2</sup> / Conditional R <sup>2</sup>	0.006 / 0.187	0.080 / 0.215	0.056 / 0.096

\*  $p < 0.05$    \*\*  $p < 0.01$    \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Although these results were expected, a few things are worth noting. First, the effect of negativity toward immigrants seems to be smaller when predicting the likelihood to vote for extremist parties when compared to authoritarian or right-wing parties. The reasons for this are likely both substantive and an effect of the measurement, itself. Since I have defined extremism as party distance from the mean, this includes both extremist left-wing and right-wing parties. Previous studies I discussed in the literature have found that, while both far-left and far-right can be activated by immigration as a political issue, this is much more salient for right-wing voters. The results in the left-right model of this study also support this trend. This difference in polarization between the left and the right is also likely why the predictor of extremism has a smaller effect size when compared to the one-dimensional social and left-right axes. Furthermore, while my measure of extremism was rescaled to be as close as possible to compare to the other variables, it is not bounded by the 0-10 range in the same way as the GALTAN and Left-Right variables since they are results of direct survey responses. The measure of extremism has some values that exceed the maximum range compared with the other scales since any political party that was more than two standard deviations away from the mean were assigned values that exceeded 10 after the scaling function was used.

Looking at the expected effects of each of the key dependent variables of interest, the common trend is that there is a positive relationship with negativity toward immigrants. That is, as negativity increases, so do each of the dependent variables predicting the type of party an

individual is likely to have voted for. The predictions for the GAL/TAN social dimension and general left-right dimension both have larger effect sizes and tighter confidence intervals, indicating negativity toward immigrants has a stronger effect on these dimensions vis-à-vis extremism and higher degree of confidence in the model estimation of the effect.

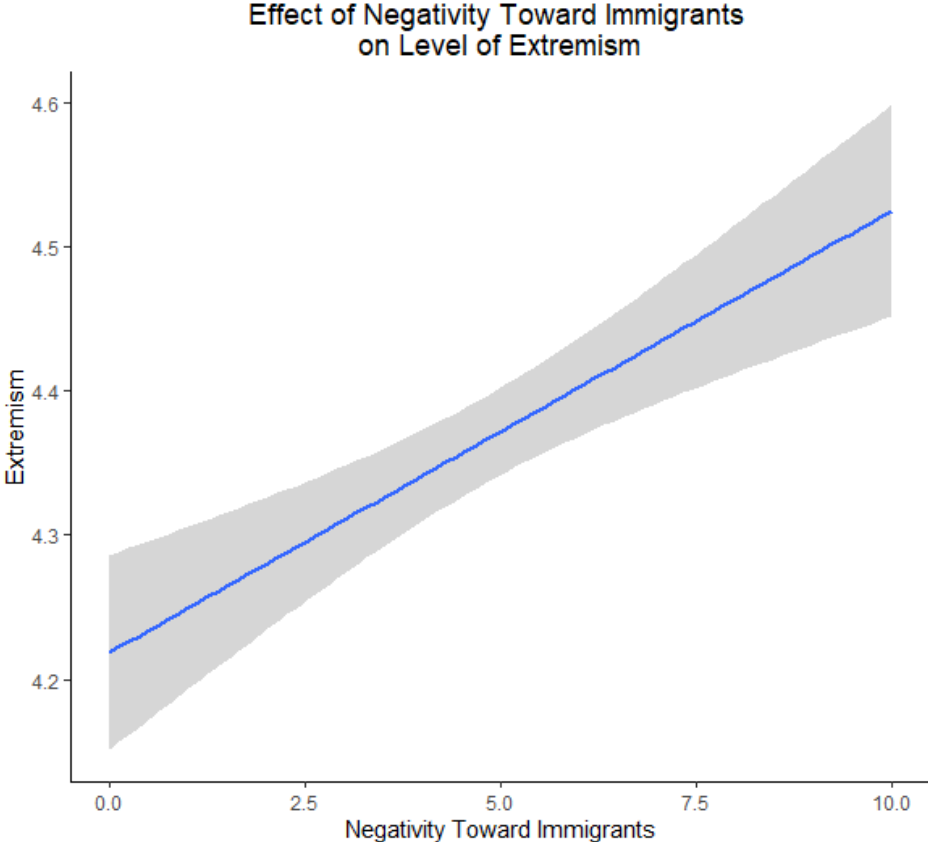


Figure 4.1: Effect of Negativity Toward Immigrants on Extremism

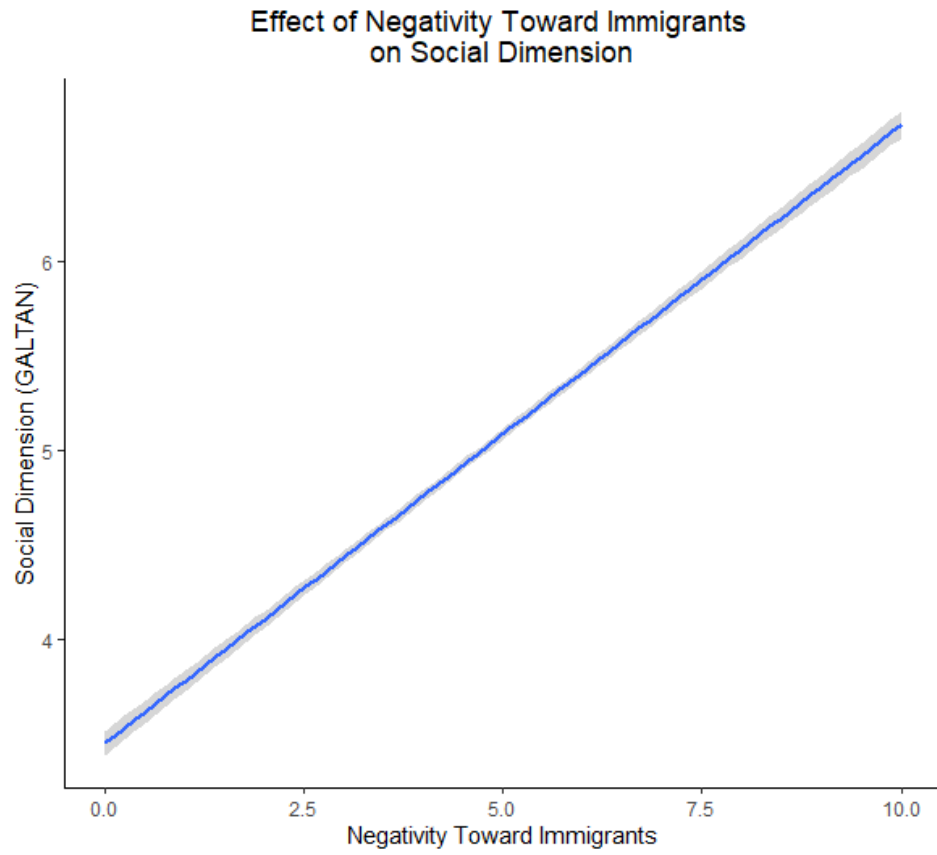


Figure 4.2: Effect of Negativity Toward Immigrants on the Social Dimension

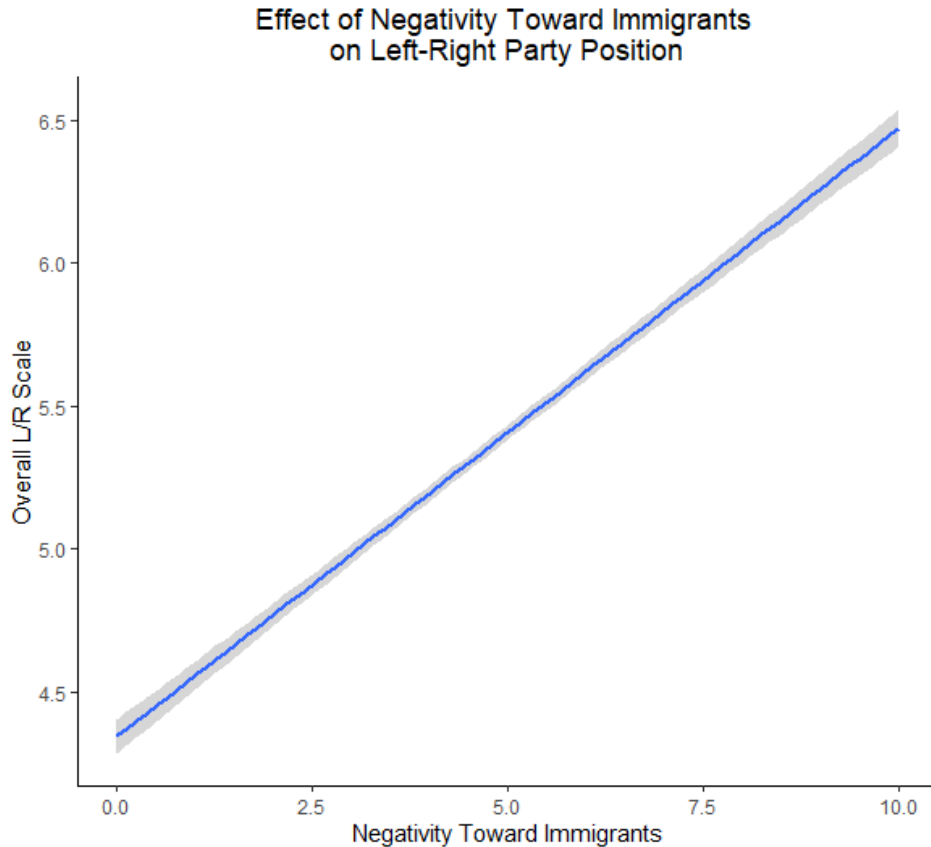


Figure 4.3: Effect of Negativity Toward Immigrants on Left-Right Position

#### FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES: PARTY SYSTEMS IN FLUX

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside of Washington DC on September 11, 2001, immigration and border security have become a defining political issue for the 21st century. Nearly a decade and a half later, in 2015, France experienced multiple terrorist incidents which left deep scars when armed militants stormed into the offices of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper and killed over a dozen people in response to political cartoons that had been published depicting the prophet Muhammad. Later that year, in November, over 350 people were killed in mass shootings and suicide bombings in

and around the Bataclan theatre in Paris. While many political scientists would call these rare events, they had ripple effects throughout the West and are often seen as the cause of increasing Islamophobia and xenophobia in current age. Fear of foreigners and changing attitudes toward immigrants was not the only way these events have contributed to political change. Over the last two decades, Europe and North America has seen an increase in the popularity and political efficacy of far-right political parties which have often made nationalistic, anti-immigrant rhetoric a central part of their political platform. This section will trace the recent political history of the US and France to examine the effect these political shifts have had on the stability of the party system in each country.

In many ways both the United States and France are unusual in terms of their political institutions. The US is the presidential democracy with the longest history of constitutional continuity and stability, which is noteworthy as many comparative scholars argue that presidential systems tend to be inherently less stable than parliamentary systems (Linz 1990; Mainwaring 1993). This has, arguably, led to a substantial increase in the effective power of the US President over time as historical balance between legislative and executive branches have tipped in favor of the Presidency. While there are Constitutional checks and balances in place that allow other branches of government to constrain the president, the office of the US President has nearly limitless power to manage foreign policy, including immigration, while he is in office. France, on the other hand, is one of only a handful of semi-presidential systems in Europe which means there are some separations between the executive and legislative branches in the French political system, but unless in a period of cohabitation wherein the presidency and majority in the legislative branch are held by different political parties, the French president has almost unilateral power in policymaking (Roper 2002; Masters 2017). Additionally, immigration is a

highly salient political issue in both the US and France, and both countries have similar proportions of their populations that identify as immigrants. The main domestic political party-related institutional difference between the two countries is the number of effective parties in the system, with France being a multiparty democracy and the US having its two-party system.

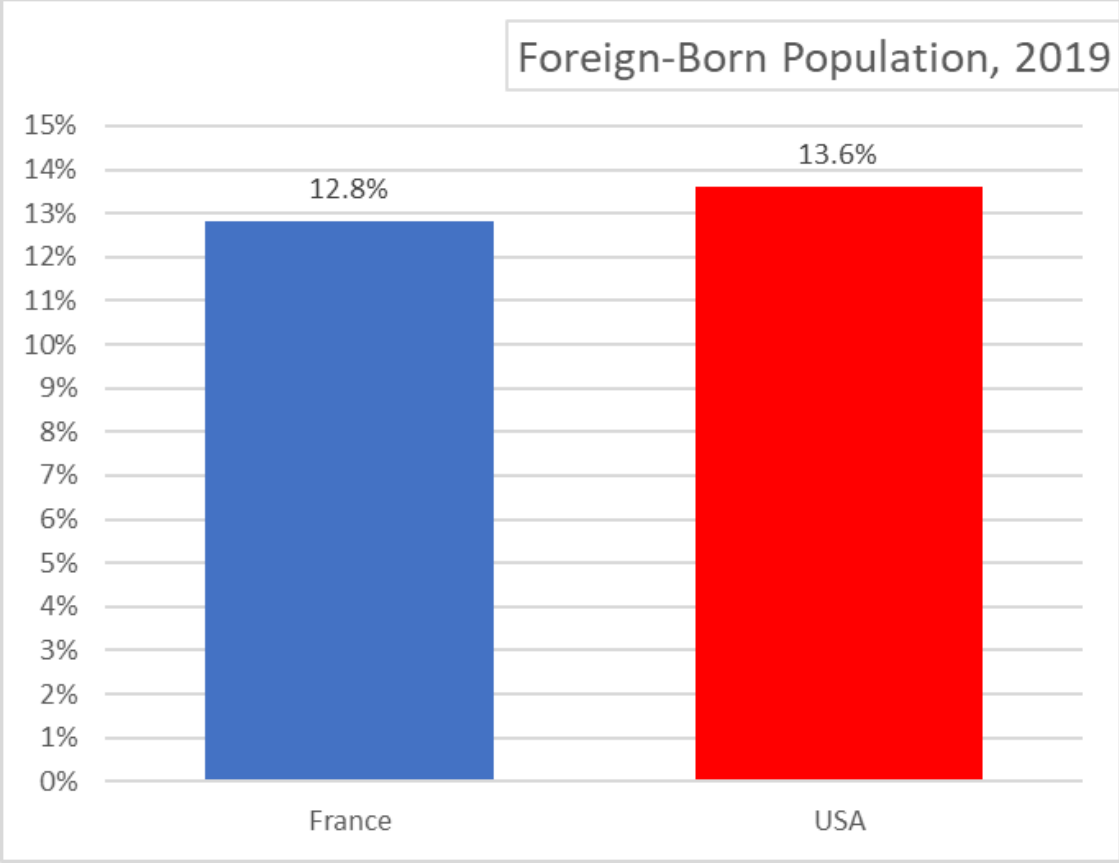


Figure 4.4: Total % of Population. Source: OECD International Migration Database

**FRANCE: RAPID PARTY FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION**

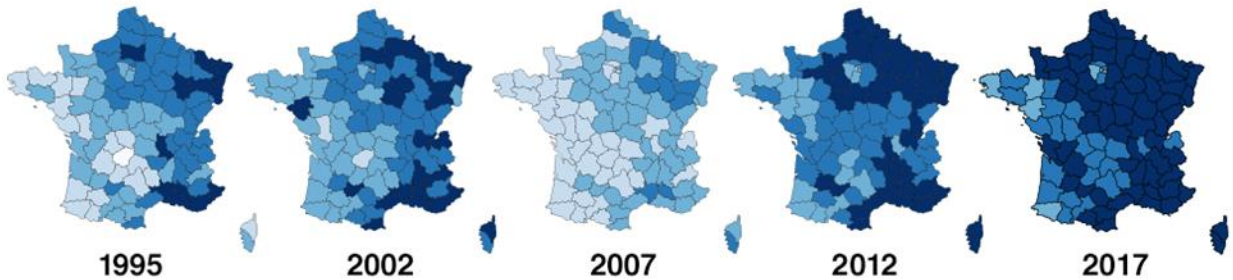
The trend by which France has experienced a surge of support for the main far-right party, the National Rally (known as the National Front until 2018 and hereafter referred to as FN/RN), since the turn of the 21st century has been well-documented and analyzed by journalists

and political scientists. The party is heavily associated with Jean-Marie Le Pen and his daughter, Marine Le Pen, the political dynasty that has served in the forefront of party leadership since the early-1970s. The FN/RN party had, for several decades after its formation, campaigned on social and economic issues such as immigration, crime, and Euroskepticism failed to garner much support until 1988. Explanations for the sudden popularity of the FN/RN party in the 1988 election point to institutional changes in the proportional representation system that allowed the party to gain more recognition with voters as well as comparative trends which show rising affinity for far-right parties across Europe (Goodliffe 2011). Goodliffe further argues that global competition and EU integration that had begun to transform the French economy left many rural and working-class voters feeling the negative effects and were susceptible to the anti-immigrant messaging of Le Pen’s party (Goodliffe 2011). This trend of rising support for the FN/RN would continue up to the most recent 2017 national election (as shown in Figures 4.5 and 4.6).

### The rise in National Front support

First round vote share %

0.1 - 4.9    5.0 - 9.9    10.0 - 14.9    15.0 - 19.9    20.0 - 40.0



Source: French government

BBC

Figure 4.5: FN/RN Regional Support. Source: BBC News

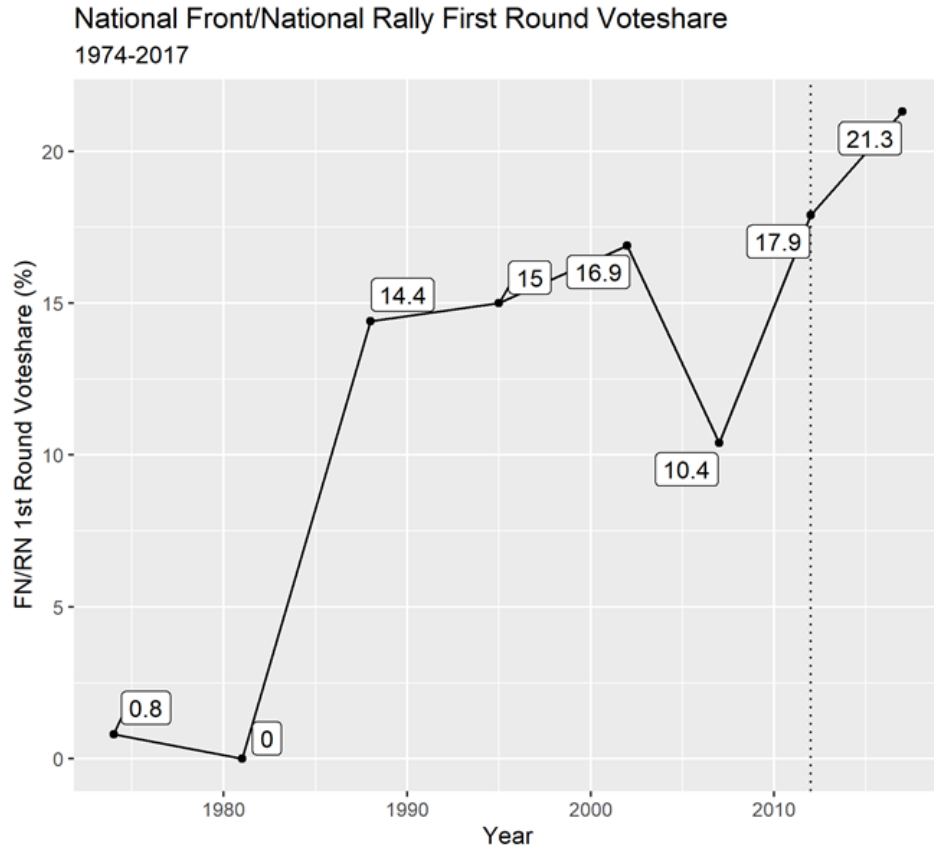


Figure 4.6: FN/RN Vote share over time. Source: <http://electionresources.org/fr/>

Even though the FN/RN party has regularly gained support numbers in the teens and twenties in presidential elections and in the National Assembly, the overall relevance of the party has been largely stymied due to other parties' unwillingness to work with and form coalitions with the far-right (Mudde 2014). This *cordon sanitaire*, a policy instituted by other, more mainstream right-wing parties in the 1990s has ensured the FN/RN would hold only very few seats in the National Assembly, and the party has never held the presidency. However, its anti-immigration and populist messaging continued to have an impact in subsequent elections. The presidential election of 2007, which saw Nicolas Sarkozy and his mainstream right-wing party The Union for A Popular Movement (UPM) narrowly win over Socialist candidate Ségolène

Royal, became a national referendum against the perceived corruption of former-president Jacques Chirac, himself a UPM party leader (Mezey 2013). This election was also centered around issues of French national identity, and Sarkozy had a reputation as being tough on immigration from his time serving as minister of interior, which likely helped him to win despite overall dissatisfaction with Chirac (Gastaut 2012; Mezey 2013). Sarkozy, once in power, informally co-opted much of the agenda of the FN/RN and made immigration a key component of this political agenda, and he set up a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-Development in 2007 (Carvalho 2016). Additionally, Sarkozy made issues of French identity front and center in his time as president, taking anti-immigration, anti-Islamist stances and introducing laws to ban Muslim women from wearing the burka (Gastaut 2012). The way these policies were received heavily divided the French public, with many on the left and toward the center unhappy about Sarkozy's exclusionary definition French identity. However, people on the right believed Sarkozy did not go far enough in his opposition to immigration and Islam.

The French party system, in which multiple political parties regularly win seats in the National Assembly, has largely featured two main blocs with parties on the right and left experiencing relatively stable patterns of bipolarity (Bornschiefer and Lachat 2009). However, the polarization of these blocs can be traced directly to the influence the FN/RN party's electoral successes have had in controlling the narrative about immigration and French identity. The 2012 French presidential election was the first election in which Jean-Marie Le Pen was not representing the FN/RN party as its presidential candidate. Instead, his daughter, Marine Le Pen was the party leader, and her approach to its platform served to strategically soften the party's image and become more palatable to mainstream French voters. The strategy was largely successful, garnering 17.9 percent of the first-round vote and thus improving upon her father's

2007 election showing of just 10.4 percent. This was a historically high showing for the far-right party in France, and even though the Socialist Party candidate, François Hollande, won the election, the re-invigoration of the FN/RN party and the potential for a Marine Le Pen-led far-right to expand upon its success in the 2017 election loomed large. As a result, Hollande and the Socialist Party attempted to appease the far right by continuing to emphasize the integration of immigrants into the French culture and language and initially rejecting the EU's plan to allow asylum-seekers fleeing Syria (Carvalho 2019). These moves fractured public opinion and support for Hollande on the left, however, and after public support continued to show sympathy for refugees, he conceded to allow resettlement into France (Carvalho 2019).

France's party system fractures would become most evident, however, in the 2017 presidential election. During Hollande's five-year term, France saw not only continued public debate over issues of national identity and Europe's response to the Syrian refugee crisis but increasing levels of islamophobia largely as a result of high-profile terrorist attacks in 2015. While much of the overtly anti-Muslim policies at the time came from right-wing mayors at the local level, Hollande allowed local ordinances banning full-body swimsuits (often pejoratively called "burkinis") and other traditionally Muslim attire to be upheld by law (Carvalho 2019). By the time the first round of the 2017 elections took place, both Hollande's Socialist party only received 6.4 percent of the vote. The center-right Republican coalition comprised partially of Chirac and Sarkozy's UMP party fared better, with 20 percent, but the FN/RN party had another historically strong showing, winning 21.3 percent of the vote share (Kriesi 2018). The success of the FN/RN and the surprise success of Emmanuel Macron's La République En Marche! Party meant that neither the main parties of the established bipolar bloc would be advancing to the second round of French elections. While the FN/RN lost the second-round presidential election

to a landslide victory by Macron's party, the future of the established French party system is uncertain. Whether the far-right continues to see electoral gains in France is yet to be determined, but the impact of immigration, identity politics, and globalization on the fracturing French party system is apparent.

#### UNITED STATES: EXTREME POLARIZATION OR FUTURE REALIGNMENT?

For several decades, the polarization of American politics, both among the masses and at the elite level, has been observed and studied by political scientists. While policy positions for both the Democratic and the Republican parties have moved further toward the extremes, many scholars have posited that the right is outpacing the left (Hare and Poole 2014; Bartels 2018; Abramowitz and McCoy 2019; Baker and Bader 2021). Looking at data from the Comparative Manifesto Project's Parties' Immigration and Integration Positions (PImPo) dataset (Lehmann and Zobel 2018), it is easy to see these trends with regard to immigration policy in the United States. Figure 7 shows each party's relative position on immigration (calculated as the difference of negative to positive mentions as a proportion of the party's total mentions) spanning from 2004-2012, and it the polarization trends are apparent. This section will trace the history of how immigration became such a polarized topic in the US and how, like the French case, it has been increasingly used by the right as a tool of identity politics.

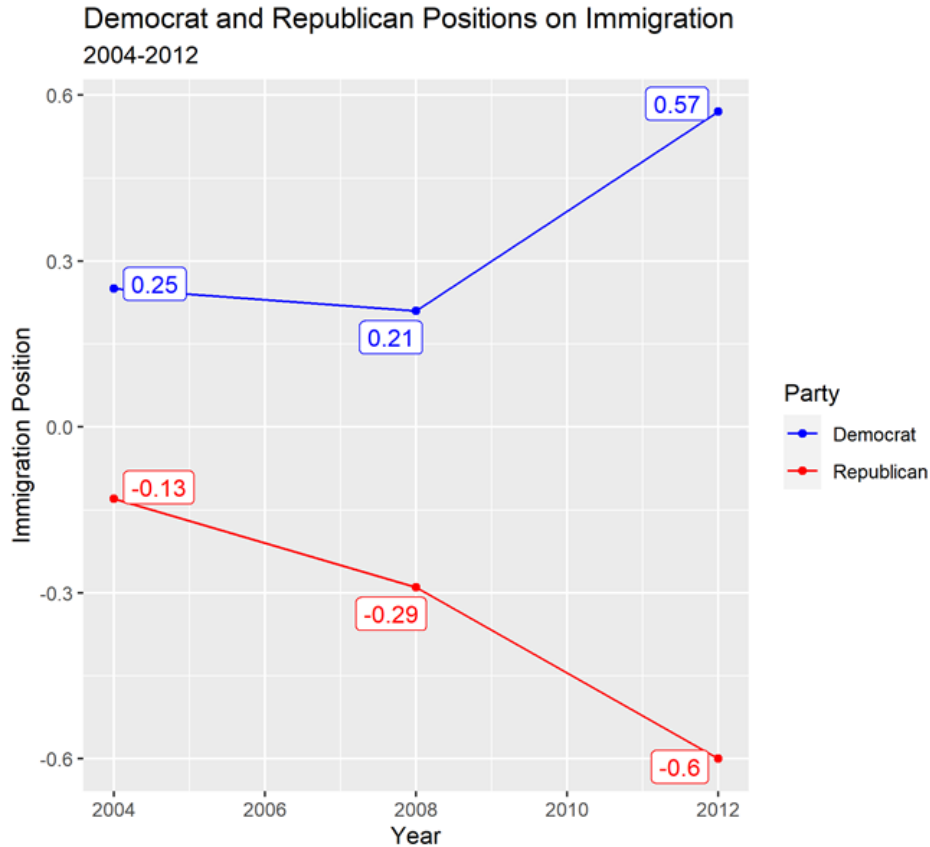


Figure 4.7: US Party Positions on Immigration. Source: Comparative Manifesto Project

In recent history, immigration policy in the US was seen as an issue with the potential for bipartisan support, with politicians from both major parties able to find some common ground and a majority of the American people supporting legalization processes for most undocumented immigrants (Rosenblum 2009). President George W. Bush attempted to pass a bipartisan immigration reform bill in 2007, but the measure was eventually unsuccessful (Rosenblum 2009). The salience of immigration as a cultural issue became more pronounced alongside the Obama presidency and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy which allowed concessions for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US as minors. By the time this policy was made, President Obama was in his second term in office, had already saw a

substantial erosion of the public support he had in 2008, and had seen his administration largely mired in Congressional gridlock and recession (Mezey 2013). Throughout the recession, the US also saw sustained and highly publicized “Occupy Wall Street” protests, railing against the global economic and financial establishments that many Americans felt were responsible for the country’s economic woes.

Underlying the cultural issues of immigration was the fact that Barack Obama was the first black president of the US, which was a historic milestone for racial progress and led some to proclaim that America had entered an era of post-racism. Scholars have theorized, however, that the symbolic nature of Obama’s presidency may have had both an initial rallying effect – bringing the country together – as well as a subsequent polarizing effect and a surge in racial antagonism from right-wing groups (McDermott and Belcher 2014; Hout and Maggio 2021). By the end of Obama’s second term in office, Donald Trump had already begun to gain political influence by leveraging racism against Obama by spreading doubt about his citizenship. When Trump ran for president in 2016, he tapped into the same economic woes felt by the “Occupy” protesters but used immigrants and racial minorities as scapegoats, infusing nationalistic, racist, and anti-immigrant sentiment in nearly every one of his talking points and policy proposals. The previously mentioned “birtherism” conspiracy; his rhetorical attacks on Mexico, China, and the Middle East; and his campaign slogan of “Make America Great Again” were not only blatantly evocative of the kind of identity politics historically used by far-right parties, but they were also highly resonant with white and working-class voters (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019; Baker and Bader 2021). The surge of support from these voters, particularly in the Midwestern US with its historically high density of unionized workers and track record of voting for candidates from the

Democratic Party, pushed Trump to win a surprise electoral victory over Hilary Clinton in the 2016 election.

Populist ideology and partisan shifts toward the extremes were not only hallmarks of Trump and the Republican Party in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. Left-wing populism, most notably anti-elite rhetoric taking aim at hyper levels of income inequality, has become increasingly salient and is most clearly typified by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders but which can also be seen in charismatic figures like Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Elizabeth Warren. Sanders' messaging during his primary campaigns was often centered around wealth inequality and the impacts of globalization on the economy, which, while not the same as the anti-immigrant language used by Trump, aligns similarly with his populist strategies (Staufer 2021). A key difference in the American case and the French case that was outlined in the section above is that the effect of this shift toward populism and the anti-immigrant rhetoric seems to be reinforcing, rather than cross-cutting, partisan divides (Bartels 2018; Abramowitz and McCoy 2019; Hout and Maggio 2021; Baker and Bader 2021). This makes sense in a two-party system where the structure does not allow for viable third parties to succeed electorally. Instead, the extremism happens within the existing party structure, with parties shifting their positions and individuals choose either to retain their partisan attachments or defect. This explains much of the backlash against the Republican party's support of Trumpism by independents and moderates who have become more favorable toward immigrants as a result (Baker and Bader 2021).

While the party structure in the US is more rigid and does not allow for emergent parties to see electoral success in the way Macron's En Marche! Party did in France in 2017, that does not mean an eventual party realignment is impossible. Trump's influence on the American right

wing is likely here to stay, and the impact of increasing nationalism and populism will continue to strain the party structure in the US (Jacobson 2021). Scholars have shown that American partisanship not only continues to be based on affect and identity rather than policy position, but even more concerning is the rise of racial resentment and negative partisanship (Green et al 2002; Bartels 2018; Abramowitz and McCoy 2019). Furthermore, the most recent research on US partisan attachment suggests the lasting impact of anti-establishment populism is the erosion of trust in government and media institutions and increasing attachment to conspiracy theories (Uscinski et al 2021). While there is not enough evidence yet to make any solid claims, the next realignment of American political parties might be the result of a cross-cutting cleavage currently being formed. Only time will tell what the two US political parties would look like if this is the case.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the ways in which anti-immigrant attitudes often correspond with other nationalist, populist, and anti-globalist attitudes. These attitudes are shown to predict higher support for extremist in European multiparty political systems, both on the left and the right. Additionally, negative attitudes toward immigrants also predicts higher levels of support for far right and authoritarian political parties. These findings support acknowledged trends in the literature that attempt to explain recent electoral successes of parties on the far right while also opening up the possibility that anti-immigration attitudes exist as part of a larger, cross-cutting cleavage that impacts both the traditional right and left. These results also align with results from Chapter 2 of this dissertation that show immigration as an issue which triggers social and cultural reactions from individuals, even when it is presented in economic terms.

By taking a closer examination of two countries with recent robust right wing political movements, I trace the type of pressure this puts on a party system. France and the United States offer a useful comparison of countries with meaningful similarities in their political institutions, immigration rates, and public opinion toward the issue. The two differ completely in their party structures, however, which provides a useful theory into the way parties react or reform based on public opinion about highly salient and cross-cutting political issues such as immigration, globalization, and mass-elite relations. France's multiparty system seems to offer enough space for marginal, extremist parties like the FN/RN to gain ground or for completely new political parties to emerge and be successful, as with Macron's LREM party. The US, however, is constrained by its electoral institutions which predictably produce a rigid two-party system. Rather than third parties emerging and gaining meaningful electoral support, charismatic politicians work within the structure of the two main parties and utilize populist and extremist rhetoric to gain support. If successful, the strict mechanism of partisan attachment keeps most voters from defecting or experiencing de-alignment.

Immigration, globalization, and nationalism are just a few related challenges that are part of the current shared experience of Western democracies, and environmental forces such as climate change, global migration, and technological advancement will likely continue to deepen these issues and the divisions they create in society. If recent trends hold, the existing party systems in countries like France and the US will continue to see pressure from extremist parties and populist leaders. Whether those systems will survive the experience and what types of responses can best hold those forces at bay will be a crucial topic for research in the near future.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

With the increasing numbers of immigrants seeking entry to the United States and European Union countries, there has also been a measurable rise in anti-immigrant and nationalist rhetoric. Along with this, radical right-wing political parties in Europe and politicians like Donald Trump in the US have made opposition to immigration the keystone of their political messaging. This is especially seen in the way immigrants are portrayed as threats to safety, job security, national culture and identity, and the welfare state. The results of the three empirical chapters of this project demonstrate the importance of individual-level attitudes toward immigrants as a focus for scholars in political science by linking these attitudes to voting behaviors, party choices, and policy preferences.

This project makes several important theoretical contributions to the understanding of attitudes toward immigration and political behavior. Results from Chapter 2 suggest individuals are susceptible to cues from the media and political elites when thinking about immigrants. Often, this means they will absorb negative messages more easily than positive ones, and messages that portray immigration as a cultural issue are more easily able to affect attitudes. This is the case even when attitudes are expressed as economic fears, suggesting the two main theoretical paradigms often seen in the literature on the topic (in-group/out-group identification and labor market competition) are not mutually exclusive. The findings from Chapter 2 are important in clarifying a theoretical argument in the literature which seeks to understand the reasons for negativity toward immigrants. Rather than individual attitudes being only caused by

reactions to potential economic threats of immigration as labor market competition theories might suggest or caused by prejudice toward out-groups, these results show both psychological processes may be occurring. Immigration is, indeed, viewed as a cultural issue, but it is often expressed through economic language.

Chapter 3 examined the interaction between anti-immigrant attitudes and general satisfaction with institutions like the government, the economy, and democracy. Results from that study found attitudes toward immigrants can activate dissatisfied individuals and that their expected likelihood to turn out to vote is higher than for people who do not espouse anti-immigrant sentiments. This is important in understanding the effect of immigration on satisfaction with democracy and in explaining trends in political behavior. The linkage between dissatisfaction and voter turnout is even more important when party choice is taken into consideration. Chapter 4 linked negativity toward immigrants with extremism and found that individuals with anti-immigrant attitudes are more likely to vote for parties that support radical right-wing or left-wing agendas. The results from Chapters 3 and 4 suggest negative attitudes toward immigrants can explain some of the reason why extremist parties (especially parties on the far right) have been so successful at attracting dissatisfied voters in North America and Western Europe over the last few election cycles. I also examined the potential for this trend to be a sign of societal cleavages based around opposition to immigration, globalization, or supranational organizations like the European Union. I traced the potential effects of this using France and the United States as similar case studies which may experience different outcomes based on their party structures.

The findings from this project also underscore the importance of understanding how individual attitudes affect political change in democratic systems that are responsive to mass

public opinion. Whether exogenous forces such as climate change cause and violence cause refugees to flee their homes or globalization continues to prompt individuals to seek opportunities in highly developed countries, migration will continue to be a political issue. How politicians, political parties, governments, and individual citizens think about and react to these patterns of immigration will be an important topic for the field of political science to explore.