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Personality and Euroscepticism: The Impact of Personality on Attitudes Towards the EU

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Abstract

Attitudes towards EU integration are widely studied. Yet we do not know if personality plays a role for EU attitudes. Utilising a framing experiment, encompassing positive and negative frames of EU integration, this article reports on how personality influences attitudes towards EU integration. The study relies on Danish and Swedish data (N=1808). It tests both the direct impact of personality on EU attitudes, and personality's moderating impact on framing effects. I find that extraversion and openness positively correlates with positive EU attitudes, while people scoring high on neuroticism tend to support the EU less. Furthermore, I find that the different EU frames impact people differently depending on their personality. I find no significant country differences between Denmark and Sweden. The study relies on contact theory and evolutionary psychology.

Introduction

Attitudes towards the EU integration are intensively studied (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2011, Hobolt, 2009, Hooghe and Marks, 2007, Karp et al., 2003, Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993, Franklin et al., 1994, Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). Consequently, we have extensive insights into the mechanisms that drive attitudes towards the EU (e.g., Anderson, 1998, McLaren, 2007, Karp et al., 2003, Usherwood and Startin, 2013). Yet little attention is devoted to the psychology of EU attitudes. Though political psychology has risen to stardom over the past years, it has barely entered the realm of EU studies (for more on

psychology and EU studies see Manners, 2014). Recently, the psychological branch of political science shows how personality explains attitudes and ideology (e.g., Mondak and Halperin, 2008, Gerber et al., 2011), and relates political news attentiveness, knowledge, and efficacy (e.g., Mondak, 2010). These dimensions are salient in an EU context to make politics work.

This article bridges the gap between recent explorations into the role of personal predisposition for attitude formation, and the work on attitudes towards EU integration. The main aim is to explore the relationship between personality traits and EU support. Furthermore, I explore how different EU frames moderate the impact of personality on EU attitudes. The latter focus is added to provide a more realistic picture of how personal predispositions might be moderated in real life when different emphasis is provided. Theoretically, the study draws on contact theory (e.g. Allport, 1954), emphasizing how in-group favoritism impact cooperation and view on out-groups. This is particularly pertinent in an EU context, being characterized by enhanced inter-cultural integration between Member States.

This research is timely. We know that personality shapes individual's attitude formation and political behavior (e.g., Schoen, 2007), and more than ever it is important to grasp what determines EU attitude. Though Euroscepticism has been researched since the Danish "no" to the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (e.g., Franklin et al., 1995, Hobolt, 2009, Foellesdal and Hix, 2006, Majone, 1998, Moravcsik, 2002), the events of the Eurozone crisis accelerated the debate about EU integration. Encompassing a new explanation on EU attitudes, this study provides further insights into how people navigate contemporary European politics.

To measure personality, I apply the most commonly used personality instrument - the Big Five personality instrument (*henceforth B5*) - encompassing five personality traits: *extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism* (e.g., Costa and McCrae, 2009, Costa and McCraw, 1992, McCrae and Costa jr, 1999). Using the 10-item battery pioneered by Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann jr. (2003) to measure B5, I report on a survey experiment with six different EU frames on a representative subset of the Danish and Swedish population (N=1808). The dependent variable is the respondents' attitudes towards EU integration. Hence, I test both the direct effect of personal predispositions on EU attitudes and the moderating impact of B5 on EU attitudes, depending on the EU framing treatment.

EU attitudes and the role of personality

In his seminal work on personality and politics, Wolfenstein emphasizes that psychological predispositions are not only needed to understand political individuals, but also political institutions (Wolfenstein, 1964, p. 1). While Greenstein (1971) states: "*The sources of man's behavior (...)are twofold: the external stimuli that impinge on him and the internal dispositions that result from the interaction between inherited physiological characteristics and experience with the world...*" (Lazarus cited in Greenstein, 1971, pp. 7). Both pieces capture the importance of personality when exploring political attitudes.

Though political theories of opinion formation emphasize the importance of individual predispositions (Zaller, 1992, Converse, 1964), it is the pioneering work of

Mondak (2008, 2010), which manifested the impact personality has on critical features like political information, knowledge, discussion-eagerness, ideology and participation (Mondak, 2010). Following his work, several authors have explored the impact of B5 on a variety of political dimensions. We now know that B5 explains attitude formation on salient policy fields like immigration (Dinesen et al., Forthcoming , Carney et al., 2008, Gerber et al., 2010, Gerber et al., 2011, Jost et al., 2009), foreign policy (Schoen, 2007), presidential performance (Rubenzer et al., 2000), and voting behavior (Schoen and Schumann, 2007). Furthermore, B5 explains patterns of political discussion (Hibbing et al., 2011), and predicts social worldviews and ideology (Sibley and Duckitt, 2009). In brief, we have extensive empirical evidence that personality matters when exploring political attitude formation.

Despite the pertinent role of personality, this explanation has hitherto been ignored by research into EU attitudes. From the voluminous amount of research, we possess extensive insights into EU attitudes. Anderson (1998) shows that opinions are largely formed based on domestic politics (Anderson, 1998), though politically aware individuals evaluate EU politics independently from national politics (Karp et al., 2003, McLaren, 2007). Furthermore, economic calculations play a role for EU support (Karp et al., 2003), as well as egocentric utilitarianism is a superior predictor for Euroscepticism (McLaren, 2007). Other studies conversely argue that community identity is stronger than economic calculus when explaining EU attitudes (Hooghe and Marks, 2005), while another highlights the strength of partisan context (Gabel, 1998), or find that national identity and democratic concerns influence EU views (Gabel and Hix, 2005). Furthermore, feelings of a lack of representation impact support for the European

enterprise (Rohrschneider, 2002). While further explorations highlight five important dimensions for EU attitude formation: performance, identity, affection, utilitarianism and strengthening of EU cooperation (Boomgaarden, 2011). Yet although these studies contribute to our understanding of what shapes EU attitudes, none of them explore the role of individual personal predispositions.

Theory: the impact of personality on EU attitudes

The theoretical link between personality and politics is underdeveloped (e.g., Greenstein, 1971, Mondak, 2010). Yet, accumulating the growing studies of personality in politics, several findings are prevalent. Personality strongly predicts democratic values, particularly adherence to authoritarianism (Adorno et al., 1950), ideology (McClosky, 1964), and political tolerance (Stouffer, 1992 (1955)). As political scientists, however, we are interested in how these relationships transfer into political behavior. Mondak (2010) highlights three ways B5 impacts political behavior; Information (i.e. media use and interpersonal discussion), political attitudes, and political participation (Mondak, 2010). I use his findings along with recent work on the B5 to build my expectations about personality's impact on EU attitudes in the next section.

Furthermore, I rely on contact theory. Initially, proponents for the so-called conflict theory argued that out-group members are perceived as competitors for scarce resources, and therefore encounters with other groups or cultures, like those national groups are exposed to when integrating in the EU, generate increased out-group hostility (e.g., Blalock, 1967, Blumer, 1958). Findings of individual conformist tendencies to adapt ideas and practices to within-group standard, contrasting them to out-group

behavior and norms furthermore support conflict theory (e.g., Boyd and Richerson, 1985). Along these lines, evolutionary approaches to political psychology emphasize that in-group bias exists to “(...) *enhance one’s positive social distinctiveness and/or reduce subjective uncertainty*” (e.g., Sidanius and Kurzban, 2003, pp. 161). While Tajfel’s “minimal group experiments” empirically depict in-group favoritism (Tajfel, 1982). Yet it is nevertheless questioned if between-group encounters yield the negative impact predicted by conflict theory. Proponents of contact theory argue that between-group interaction might actually bridge understanding between ethnical groups and cultures, diminishing prejudices (Allport, 1954, McLaren, 2003, Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). The profound core of European integration consists of enhanced cultural and political interaction. Contact theory helps us to understand how the between-group dynamics might play out in an EU context as well as assess potential consequences.

How personality relates to EU attitudes

Here I present hypotheses about how specific B5 traits are expected to relate to EU attitudes, and how negative and positive EU frames might moderate these relationships. Developing these hypotheses, I rely on previous conclusions and contact theory. Hence, I particularly expect extraversion, neuroticism, and openness (e.g., Dinesen et al., Forthcoming) and conscientiousness (e.g., Schoen, 2007) to predict EU attitudes. Importantly, personality traits are not understood as determining political attitudes. Rather, personality – along with a set of factors - shapes responses to the stimuli individuals encounter in the world (e.g., Mondak, 2010). Furthermore, no personality trait

is normatively understood to be better than others, although many are inevitably associated with higher social desirability, depending on context and culture.

First, I expect extraversion is positively related to EU attitudes. Extraversion is measured by the respondents' self-placement on two items (1) extroverted and enthusiastic, and (2) reserved, quiet. Extraversion is linked to people being more politically involved. Extroverted individuals are prone to seek new information and challenge old beliefs, just like they are more adaptable. Testing both the direct and conditional effects, Mondak finds that extroverts tune more into news and are more opinionated (Mondak, 2010: 119). In brief, extroverted individuals are more outgoing and interactive with the political society. Following contact theory, I expect people actively seeking inter-cultural interaction to also perceive inter-cultural relationships as something positive. European integration is characterized by rapid integration between culturally different Member States, encompassing the opening of borders and labor mobility. Due to the inter-cultural characteristic of the integration process I expect – *ceteris paribus* – that extroverted individuals are more prone to endorse EU integration.

H₁: Extraversion is positively correlated with positive EU attitudes

Secondly, I expect neuroticism to negatively correlates with the wish for more EU integration. Neuroticism (also *Emotional stability*) is tapped by the two items (1) anxious and easily upset, and (2) calm and emotionally stable. Neurotic individuals are easily upset by changes and instability (Mondak, 2010, pp. 61). Contact theory predicts that cultural encounters indeed enhance positive perceptions. However, we would expect this to happen only to people that are calm and emotionally stable. Anxious individuals

probably expose less patience and confidence in these inter-cultural exchanges. The changes associated with, for example, the establishment of the Euro affect individual identity creation (e.g., Cram, 2009). Knowing that identity is a strong predictor explaining EU attitudes (e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2005, Gabel and Hix, 2005, Boomgaarden, 2011, Azrout et al., 2011), and that identity affects personality, I expect neurotic people to be less susceptible to EU identity adaptation at the same pace as European integration currently undertakes. Thus I expect neuroticism to be inversely correlated with support for EU integration.

H₂: Neuroticism is inversely correlated with positive EU attitudes

Thirdly, I expect a positive relationship between openness to experience (henceforth *openness*) and EU support. The two items captured by openness are the respondents' self-placement on (1) open to new experiences, possess many different sides, and (2) traditional, not particularly creative. Openness is associated with the ability to adapt to new political institutions. Open individuals possess an attraction to new experiences and willingness to seek new paths. They like the exposure of different cultures, and are more politically aware (Mondak, 2010, pp. 48,50). Hence, I expect openness to positively affect EU attitudes. One causal mechanism is that open people might better cope with the ever-changing nature of EU integration. Contact theory leads us to expect that openness towards out-groups results in less prejudices, and a better out-group understanding. Furthermore, open people also respond positively to novel stimuli, encompassing willingness to support government involvement in, for example, the

economy (Gerber et al., 2011, pp. 269). European integration is particularly characterised by such new governance interventions. Hence, I expect to find the following pattern:

H₃: Openness is positively correlated with positive EU attitudes

Fourthly, I expect an inverse relationship between conscientiousness and EU support. The two items capturing conscientiousness are the respondents' self-placement on (1) dependable and self-disciplined, and (2) disorganized and careless.

Conscientiousness is associated with dependability and high degrees of reliability. I include conscientiousness because Schoen (2007) finds that highly conscientious Germans express less preferences for international cooperation, while being more supportive of the use of military (Schoen, 2007). Because EU integration still is to be understood in terms of international cooperation, I expect to find similar patterns when asking about EU integration. In some ways, conscientiousness contrasts the findings of extraversion. Where extraverted people tend to be more liberal, conscientious individuals tend to favor status quo, and thus be more traditional and political conservative (Mondak, 2010, pp. 51,54). Thus, I expect individuals favoring status quo to also oppose more the ever-changing nature of the EU.

H₄: Conscientiousness is inversely correlated with positive EU attitudes.

Personal predispositions do not play out in a vacuum, and personality generates various interactions with environmental and contextual forces (e.g., Mondak, 2010, pp. 93). On this basis, the study of personality in politics is also criticized. Mischel (1979) holds that behavior exhibits little consistency across situations and circumstances (Mischel, 1979).

It is, in other words, crucial to acknowledge that “*an exclusive focus on psychological factors can lead to neglect of situational constraints*” (Winter, 2003, pp. 111). Most work on personality underlines the conditional nature of personality on attitude formation. For example, studies on attitudes towards immigration show that different ways of framing immigration trigger different personalities (Sibley and Duckitt, 2009, Dinesen et al., Forthcoming). The EU framing treatments introduced in the next section encompass both positive and negative aspects of EU integration. Based on the negativity bias findings (e.g., Ito et al., 1998, Rozin and Royzman, 2001), I expect negative frames – *ceteris paribus* - to have a stronger impact than positive frames.

H₅: Negative frames stronger impact EU opinions than positive frames.

A survey experiment on the role of personality on EU attitudes

I explore the impact of personality on EU attitudes in a survey experiment. Based on an extensive media content analysis in Denmark and Sweden, encompassing all broadsheet national newspapers between 2008 and 2013, I deduce 6 news frames about the EU to anchor the frames in contemporary news (*Author's own work*). These frames are so-called *emphasis frames*, emphasizing certain EU aspects (e.g., Druckman, 2001). The first negative frame (*Greece*) presents the commonly depicted stereotype of the “hardworking German” vis-à-vis the “lazy Greek”. The second (*Welfare*) emphasizes the negative aspects of welfare tourism, while the last frame (*Negative Culture*) focuses on the differences in political culture between the scandalous and corrupt Mediterranean culture vis-à-vis the less corrupt and scandalous Northern political culture. As shown in Table 2, each frame is asked on an interval measure. The frames are included as a dummy

in the analysis (i.e. whether subjects received the particular frame or not). Hence the interval measure is not used analytically.

The first positive frame (*Peace*) emphasizes the peacekeeping mission of the EU, highlighting its receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize (2012). The second positive frame highlights the common European culture (*Positive Culture*), while the last (*Economy*) highlights the economic benefits of the EU, stressing its ability to compete against global economies. All negative and positive frames emphasize aspects of the Euro Crisis. Using the same policy content, while highlighting different pro and con arguments, I expect stronger treatment effects as these aspects were salient in 2013, as well as the Euro constitutes a huge step forward in the symbolic creation of a European polity, affecting individual identity creation (e.g., Cram, 2009).

Importantly, this study does not report on the framing effects *per se*. Rather, the frames serve as a more realistic exploration of B5's explanatory power on EU attitudes, as we cannot expect personal predispositions to take place in a vacuum. Rather, they are triggered by situational or contextual circumstances (e.g., Mondak, 2010, Mondak and Halperin, 2008, Gerber et al., 2010). As the frames are built on frequently used news frames, the findings can be generalized to real world politics. This does not infer that I have covered all possible EU news frames. Yet the realistic setting here imposed by randomly assigning frames that are deduced from actual news reporting provides a crucial stepping stone, assessing the role of personality traits in real world politics.

Most studies on psychological traits use the B5 framework. (e.g., Costa and McCraw, 1992, McCrae and Costa jr, 1999, Goldberg, 1992, Mondak, 2010, Mondak and Halperin, 2008, Costa and McCrae, 2009). The B5 is a hierarchical model with five broad

factors. Each factor has a bipolar counterpart, and each summarizes several sub-factors. The B5 is captured with different instruments, ranging from the extensive 60-item NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (e.g., Costa and McCraw, 1992, Goldberg, 1992, Goldberg, 1993, McCrae and Costa jr, 1999, Mondak, 2010) to the less extensive 5-10 items instruments developed on the basis of the comprehensive schemes (Gosling et al., 2003). I use the 10-item instrument. Though there are tradeoffs in using a less extensive instrument, which might compromise the nuances and accurateness, benefits are also obtained. Most importantly, a less comprehensive instrument ensures that respondents do not leave the survey prematurely (Carney et al., 2008, Gerber et al., 2010, Gerber et al., 2011). The Gosling et al. 10-item instruments is thoroughly tested and widely used (For more on the validation of the 10-item instrument see Muck et al., 2007).

Research design, data and countries

I report on a survey experiment in Denmark and Sweden (N=904 for each country).¹ Data is collected as a web survey, encompassing a representative set of the population based on age, gender and education as these repeatedly show an impact on attitude formation (e.g., Schoen, 2007, pp. 409). The survey was conducted by YouGov. The Danish study was fielded between 18–23 October 2013. The Swedish ran between 21-23 October 2013.

The six different frames were randomly assigned on a sub-set of respondents (N=100 for each frame). It was a between-subject design, where each respondent only received one of the six frames or was allocated into the non-treated control group (N=300

¹ For the translated questionnaires please contact the author.

in each country). The strength of this experimental design is that it induces exogenous situational variation, allowing us to measure how personality moderates the framing effect, while holding everything else constant. The framing treatments free us from relying on self-reported interpretation of situational stimuli, which can be influenced by personality traits (e.g., Druckman et al., 2011, Morton and Williams, 2010). Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the samples. As seen, the randomization maintained gender balance and age (it also worked for education, which is not included in the analysis). The third column reports on the respondent's self-placement on a traditional left-right political scale (0=left and 10=right).

(Table 1)

I replicate the study to explore the robustness of the results. In many ways, Denmark and Sweden resemble each other. They are both placed in Scandinavia, they are both universal welfare states, and they both encompass high levels of social capital, political legitimacy and trust (e.g., Rothstein and Eek, 2006, Rothstein and Stolle, 2008, Gilley, 2006a, Gilley, 2006b). Being high redistribution societies, I expect personal predispositions like altruism (i.e. a sub-concept under agreeableness) to be high. Furthermore, I expect individuals to score highly on openness and extraversion, as these characteristics correlate strongly with trust. Small differences exist between Denmark and Sweden. For example, Sweden is a new EU member (1995), whereas Denmark has been a member since 1973. Yet, I do not expect these minor differences to impact the overall findings.

Descriptive statistics and models

The dependent variable is attitudes towards EU integration. I use the standard item found in the European Social Survey, measuring EU attitudes on an interval scale: *“Some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. From a scale from 0-10 where 0 represents “integration has gone too far” and 10 “integration should go further”, what number on the scale best describes your position?”* The dependent variable was tapped after the framing treatments. Table 2 shows the distribution of answers for the framing questions. As seen, Denmark and Sweden display similar answer patterns.

(Table 2)

Each personality trait consists of four concepts divided into two items, representing each end of a bipolar scale. The mean of self-placement on each item is found in Table 3. Again, the distribution of answers does not differ much between Denmark and Sweden. To maintain the bipolar scale dimension, each personality trait is coded between -6 to 6, where 6 is ranking very high on the particular trait, and -6 is scoring very low.

(Table 3)

I test three models using OLS regression estimation. Model 1 reports the effect of B5 on EU attitudes. Model 2 tests the direct and moderating impact of country on the

relationship between personality and EU attitudes. Lastly, Model 3 adds the framing treatments as controls, and explores the frames' moderating impact on the relationship between personality and EU attitudes. Model 3 also includes controls. Although there are no coterminous effect between personality and central demographic variables (Mondak, 2010, pp. 81), I include gender and age because my investigation is essentially explorative by nature. This way, I get a more comprehensive understanding of individual differences determining EU attitudes. Furthermore, I include past voting behavior. Along with Mondak (2010), I expect individuals ranking high on, for example, conscientiousness are more prone to vote (Mondak, 2010, pp. 162). Lastly, I include respondents' self-placement on a political left-right scale because previous studies show that personality strongly determines ideology (Mondak, 2010, pp. 128).

Results: Do personal predispositions impact EU attitudes?

Table 4 provides the empirical results. As seen in Model 1, none of the five personality traits significantly impact EU attitudes. Yet, both extraversion and openness have the hypothesized positive relationship with EU attitudes. Though it is not significant, it is nevertheless consistent across the three models. Furthermore, as expected, neuroticism is consistently inversely related with EU support. This relationship is significant ($p < 0.1$) in Model 3. Conscientiousness, however, both show positive and negative correlations with EU attitudes (Model 1-3). Hence, no consistent pattern is found between conscientiousness and EU attitudes. Notwithstanding, although I only identify one

significant relationship between the B5 and EU attitudes, we nevertheless observe the predicted correlational relationships from H₁, H₂ and H₃.

(Table 4)

Model 2 reports the country findings. As expected, there are no significant differences between the two countries, both when country is included as a control and as an interaction with personality traits. I did, however, find interesting differences between the two countries in terms of interaction effects. I report them below. Model 3 includes the EU framing effects, and each frame interacted with each personality trait. Furthermore, it includes the controls. Interestingly, no gender impact is found, contrasting previous research, where women are less EU-positive than men (e.g., Pepermans and Verleye, 1998). Additionally, none of the controls significantly impact EU attitudes. However, Model 3 shows that the framing effects impact subjects in the hypothesized directions. The negative Greece and Welfare frames provide a negative impact on EU attitudes vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline group, whereas the positive treatments all show a positive correlation with EU attitudes. One important difference, however, is that the Negative Culture frame surprisingly yield a significantly positive impact. Because this frame does not perform as expected, leaving the results hard to interpret, it is omitted from the analysis.

Model 2 and 3 report the interaction effects between the country dummy and personality traits (Model 2), and the framing effects and personality traits (Model 3). To interpret these effects correctly (e.g., Brambor et al., 2005), I graph each interaction

effect with 95% confidence intervals (*graphs not reported*). Although I do not find any significant moderating country effects, Denmark and Sweden nevertheless show some different results. As reported in Figure 2 and 3, highly conscientious Swedes are slightly more EU positive vis-à-vis Danes, where the opposite relationship (in concordance with H₄) is true. Conversely, and contrary to my predictions in H₃, Figure 3 illustrates that openness in Sweden is inversely correlated with positive EU attitudes. In Denmark, however, openness correlates positively with positive EU attitudes as predicted.

(Figure 2 and 3)

Lastly, Model 3 reports on the interaction effects of the frames on personality traits. Again, I graph each interaction with 95% confidence intervals (*graphs not reported*). In figures 4-16 below, I report the findings where the non-treated baseline and the treatment group yield different directional results with regards to their impact on EU attitudes. I report these findings because there is no significantly different impact between the treatment groups and the non-treated baseline in any of the interaction models.

(Figure 4-16)

Figure 4-6 shows the interaction effects between the frames and extraversion.

Surprisingly, introverted subjects, receiving the Greece and the Welfare frames, actually support the EU to a higher extent than highly extraverted subjects, receiving the frame

(Figure 4-5). Figure 6 shows that introverted subjects exposed to the positive economy frame are more EU positive vis-à-vis non-treated subjects. Yet this pattern changes for extraverted subjects. On average they support the EU less than non-treated subjects. Importantly, however, the confidence intervals are large, leading to less robust results.

Figure 7 –10 report the findings on the moderated relationship between agreeableness and framing effects on EU attitudes. Receiving the negative frames of Welfare and Greece (Figure 7-8), subjects low on agreeableness support the EU less than very agreeable subjects. However, highly agreeable subjects, receiving the negative frames, on average support EU integration slightly more vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline. Figure 9-10 report the moderating impact of the two positive frames (Peace and Economy) on agreeableness. While the positive frames had the predicted positive effects for highly agreeable subjects, subjects ranking low on agreeableness responded slightly negative to the positive frames in terms of EU support. In sum, as observed with extraversion and agreeableness, framing effects are dependent on how the subjects rank on these two character traits.

Figure 11 and 12 report on the interaction between conscientiousness and framing effects on EU attitudes. Exposed for the positive Peace and Economy frames, low-conscientious subjects are positively influenced vis-à-vis the baseline, while the converse relationship is true for highly conscientious subjects. Figure 13-16 report on the findings of openness moderated by framing effects. Figure 13 and 14 show that subjects low on openness become slightly more EU positive when receiving the negative Greece and Welfare frames. Yet the opposite is true for highly open subjects where the non-treated baseline group is more EU positive than subjects receiving the negative frames. Lastly,

Figure 15 and 16 illustrate the impact on EU attitudes when subjects received positive EU frames moderated by openness. Here the least open subjects tend to be positively impacted by the positive frames, whereas subjects ranking high on openness on average are less EU positive vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline.

In sum, where most frames interacted with personal predispositions did not yield any directional impact vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline, Figure 4-16 show that certain frames interacted with B5 yield different EU attitudes. Though none of these effects are statistically significant, we nevertheless observe how personality traits impact framing effects, and in most cases even reverse the framing effects from positive to negative, depending on strength of personality trait.

Discussion and conclusion: personality as explanation on EU attitudes

Interest in popular attitudes towards the EU has provided us with extensive knowledge about explanatory factors that play a role when forming opinions about the EU (Franklin et al., 1994, McLaren, 2007, Boomgaarden et al., 2011, Hobolt, 2009, Hobolt, 2012, Hooghe and Marks, 2007, Karp et al., 2003). This article adds to this work, exploring how personal predispositions play both a direct effect on EU attitudes, and a moderating effect when respondents are presented with different EU frames. Thus, the article moves beyond the already explored territory of socio-demographic, ideological and party-based explanations on EU attitude formation.

On the basis of contact theory and previous findings, I expected extraversion and openness to positively correlate with EU attitudes, while neuroticism and conscientiousness would impact EU attitudes negatively. Although there was no direct statistically significant impact of any of the personality traits on EU attitudes, I nevertheless consistently identified the predicted relationships from H₁, H₂ and H₃ in the three models. Yet, the uneven pattern of conscientiousness leaves me to reject H₄. Hence my results are in line with previous results on, for example, attitudes towards immigration and personal predispositions, showing that openness and neuroticism play a role in similar ways as shown here (e.g., Dinesen et al., Forthcoming), while my findings of the positive relationship between openness and extraversion and positive EU attitudes also speak to the predictive strength of contact theory in this context.

As expected, I did not find any significant country effects. Yet I did find minor differences between the two countries. For example, highly conscientious Swedes had a slightly more positive view on EU integration, compared to Denmark where the opposite relationship (in concordance with H₄) was true. Contrary to H₃, however, very open Swedes had an inverse relationship with positive EU attitudes, whereas Denmark lived up to the predicted positive relationship between openness and EU attitudes. Recall, the two countries were included because I wanted to test the robustness of the results. The results are robust as only statistically insignificant minor differences are observed between Denmark and Sweden.

Furthermore, I tested the interaction effects of EU frames on B5 on EU attitudes. Although none of the interaction effects significantly impacted EU attitudes, they nevertheless yielded an interesting pattern. In H₅ I expected particularly negative frames

to impact subjects. Yet a brief count of the frames included in Figure 4-16 shows that we cannot verify this hypothesis. Out of the twelve framing effects, which had a different impact on EU attitudes vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline group, six frames were negative. Hence, I cannot argue in line with previous findings of a strong negativity bias (e.g., Ito et al., 1998, Rozin and Royzman, 2001).

An important contribution to the framing literature, I find that framing effects are affected by personality. For example, the positive Economy frame positively impact introverted subjects (Figure 6). However, the same frame negatively impacts extraverted subjects vis-à-vis the non-treated baseline group. Similar findings for agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness (Figure 5-16) support the conclusion that framing effects are moderated by personality traits. Because I did find that all frames (with the exception of *Negative Political Culture*) had the expected direct impact on EU attitudes, I conclude that personality moderates framing effects, though more research (with a larger n) is needed to explore when these patterns are statistically significant. Hence, my findings speak to the framing literature, where personality effects should be considered as important moderators in future framing studies. Yet, this finding of course also speaks to the framing of real world EU politics, which - along similar lines - is affected by different political frames.

Personality is particular understood to play a critical role for politics under periods of great changes (Greenstein cited in Winter, 2003, pp. 112). Hence looking at personal predisposition in relation to EU integration is pertinent as the EU is characterized by a set of ever-evolving institutions. I do not claim to have covered all relevant ways of framing the EU here. Rather, I developed a set of identified EU frames

in the Danish and Swedish debate (*Author's own work: reported elsewhere*), highlighting negative and positive dimensions of EU integration. Hence, I call for further investigations both as European integration evolves, but also in recognition that real world EU politics is more complex than here presented, and we would get a better grasp of the role of B5 if exploring the impact of different frames.

Yet, correlation is not causation. What I established here is the correlation between certain psychological traits and EU attitudes. Thus I emphasize that personality traits do not cause people to develop certain attitudes. Rather, the correlations – like the ones here manifested – are functions of an innate underlying inherited feature (e.g., Verhulst et al., 2012). In brief, interplay exists between individual predispositions and political attitudes, and we should not assume that inherited personality traits determine EU attitudes on the basis of the conclusions presented here. Rather what we have here witnessed is that certain individual characteristics determines – in complex conjunction with other contextual determinants – how people perceive of and feel about enhanced EU integration. Understanding what motivates political behavior and attitudes, and how opinions are shaped, is central for the study of EU integration. While research focuses on a variety of explanations on EU attitudes, personality has until now not been investigated as a feature determining EU attitudes. This article shows that personality matters, and adds to our understanding of what shapes EU attitudes.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Denmark and Sweden

Country	Age (average)	Gender (% female)	Political left-right scale (average)
Denmark	46.3 (15.61)	49 %	5.8 (2.47)
Sweden	45.6 (15.52)	50 %	5.7 (2.42)

Note: “Don’t know” answers missing. (N= 1808). Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Sweden and Denmark (2013)

Table 2: Framing Wording and Response Distribution: Denmark and Sweden (percent)

<i>“The Euro has been challenged in the past years... “</i>	Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Observations
... “we often hear about how Greeks do not work as hard as, for example, Germans. On a scale from 0-10, to what extent do you think this is a problem? 0 indicates it is a big problem and 10 indicates it is not a big problem...”	DK	37	18	23	5	7	1	8	0	1	0	87
	SE	43	14	10	1	9	9	7	4	2	0	90
... “we often hear about welfare tourism, meaning the Danish welfare is threatened because EU citizens have access to welfare benefits like scholarships or unemployment benefits. (...)	DK	37	15	8	5	10	3	4	6	2	10	100
	SE	20	8	9	8	15	6	8	3	1	22	100
... “we often hear how political cultural differences between the southern Mediterranean countries and the northern EU members are too big, particularly when it comes to the corruption and political scandals (...)	DK	31	19	12	6	4	9	5	2	13	0	101
	SE	34	11	10	6	7	6	3	3	1	20	101
... “yet the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize (2012) due to its contribution to peace since WW2. On a scale from 0-10, where 0 is “It is a peace project” and 10 is “it is not a peace project” please. indicate your attitude.”	DK	10	13	10	9	10	5	7	11	1	25	101
	SE	9	9	7	9	17	7	11	8	2	20	99
... “yet the cultural ties between the Member States are strong due to the common history” (...)	DK	3	12	13	7	20	6	13	9	3	15	101
	SE	3	7	8	10	17	7	9	5	5	30	101
... “yet the EU remains the world’s largest trading bloc, which is necessary to compete against global economies like China and India”(…)	DK	12	12	9	3	7	4	6	7	7	33	100
	SE	10	9	4	3	12	3	3	11	4	40	99

Note: “Don’t know” answers are missing (N= 1808)

Source: Sweden and Denmark (2013)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for personality items: Denmark and Sweden

Personality trait		Mean (std. dev.) Denmark	Mean (std. dev.) Sweden
Openness	Conventional	3.51 (1.562)	3.34 (1.588)
	Open	5.21 (1.245)	5.28 (1.298)
Conscientiousness	Disorganised	2.87 (1.514)	2.95 (1.637)
	Dependable	5.56 (1.206)	5.25 (1.371)
Extraversion	Extroverted	4.75 (1.424)	5.37 (1.207)
	Reserved	3.62 (1.663)	4.44 (1.634)
Agreeableness	Critical	4.63 (1.559)	2.99 (1.632)
	Sympathetic	5.33 (1.191)	5.64 (1.208)
Neuroticism	Anxious	2.81 (1.511)	3.34 (1.589)
	Calm	5.16 (1.296)	5.28 (1.298)

Notes: “Don’t know” answers are missing (N= 1808). Standard deviation in parentheses.

Source: Sweden and Denmark (2013)

Table 4: Personality and attitudes towards EU integration

VARIABLES	(1) EU support	(2) EU support	(3) EU support
Extraversion	0.0281 (0.0246)	0.0231 (0.0153)	0.0913 (0.0918)
Agreeableness	0.0189 (0.0409)	0.0431 (0.0314)	-0.0614 (0.0530)
Conscientiousness	0.0186 (0.0237)	-0.0150 (0.0375)	0.0548 (0.0618)
Neuroticism	-0.0947 (0.0545)	-0.108 (0.0724)	-0.118* (0.0722)
Openness	0.0206 (0.0744)	0.0302 (0.0648)	0.113 (0.0800)
Country (0=Denmark)		0.419 (0.249)	0.290 (0.147)
Age			0.00873 (0.00438)
Gender (0=female)			-0.00647 (0.187)
Left Right Self-placement			-0.0545 (0.0400)
Voted in EP election (0= voted)			0.0616 (0.142)
Voted in national election (0=voted)			-0.273 (0.203)
Greece *			-0.550 (0.294)
Welfare			-0.0579 (0.845)
Negative culture			0.931** (0.297)
Peace			0.0761 (0.516)
Positive culture			0.0603 (0.524)
Economy			0.154 (0.385)
Country*Extraversion		0.00446 (0.0448)	
Country*Agreeableness		0.00531 (0.0594)	
Country*Conscientiousness		0.0481 (0.0893)	
Country*Neuroticism		0.00375 (0.0952)	
Country*Openness		-0.0772 (0.0523)	
Greece*extraversion			-0.324 (0.208)
Welfare*extraversion			-0.187 (0.174)
Negative culture*extraversion			0.0353 (0.153)
Peace*extraversion			-0.0861 (0.106)
Positive culture*extraversion			0.0275 (0.128)
Economy*extraversion			-0.134 (0.152)
Greece*agreeableness			0.0649 (0.201)
Welfare*agreeableness			0.194 (0.108)
Negative culture*agreeableness			0.267* (0.108)
Peace*agreeableness			0.168

			(0.154)
Positive culture*agreeableness			-0.162
			(0.101)
Economy*agreeableness			0.387**
			(0.0988)
<hr/>			
Greece*conscientiousness			0.0380 <i>Notes:</i>
			(0.138)
Welfare*conscientiousness			0.0409
			(0.180)
Negative culture*conscientiousness			-0.0758
			(0.206)
Peace*conscientiousness			-0.281***
			(0.0426)
Positive culture*conscientiousness			0.145
			(0.262)
Economy*conscientiousness			-0.273**
			(0.0842)
<hr/>			
Greece*neuroticism			0.0735
			(0.136)
Welfare*neuroticism			0.100
			(0.176)
Negative culture*neuroticism			0.245
			(0.228)
Peace*neuroticism			0.111
			(0.171)
Positive culture*neuroticism			0.151
			(0.409)
Economy*neuroticism			0.188
			(0.134)
<hr/>			
Greece*openness			-0.166
			(0.244)
Welfare*openness			-0.118
			(0.169)
Negative culture*openness			-0.193
			(0.158)
Peace*openness			0.111
			(0.191)
Positive culture*openness			-0.256
			(0.198)
Economy*openness			-0.329
			(0.166)
<hr/>			
Constant	3.843***	(0.118)	4.118***
	(0.0752)	(0.0895)	(0.657)
Observations	1,402	1,402	1,136
R-squared	0.004	0.006	0.047

*** denotes significance $p < 0.01$; ** denotes significance at $p < 0.05$, and * denotes significance at $p < 0.1$. Robust standard errors in parentheses clustered on regions in both countries. “Don’t know” answers are missing (N= 1808). *= For the framing treatments (0= non-treated baseline group)

Source: Sweden and Denmark (2013)

Figure 2: Interaction effects of country on the effect of conscientiousness on EU attitudes

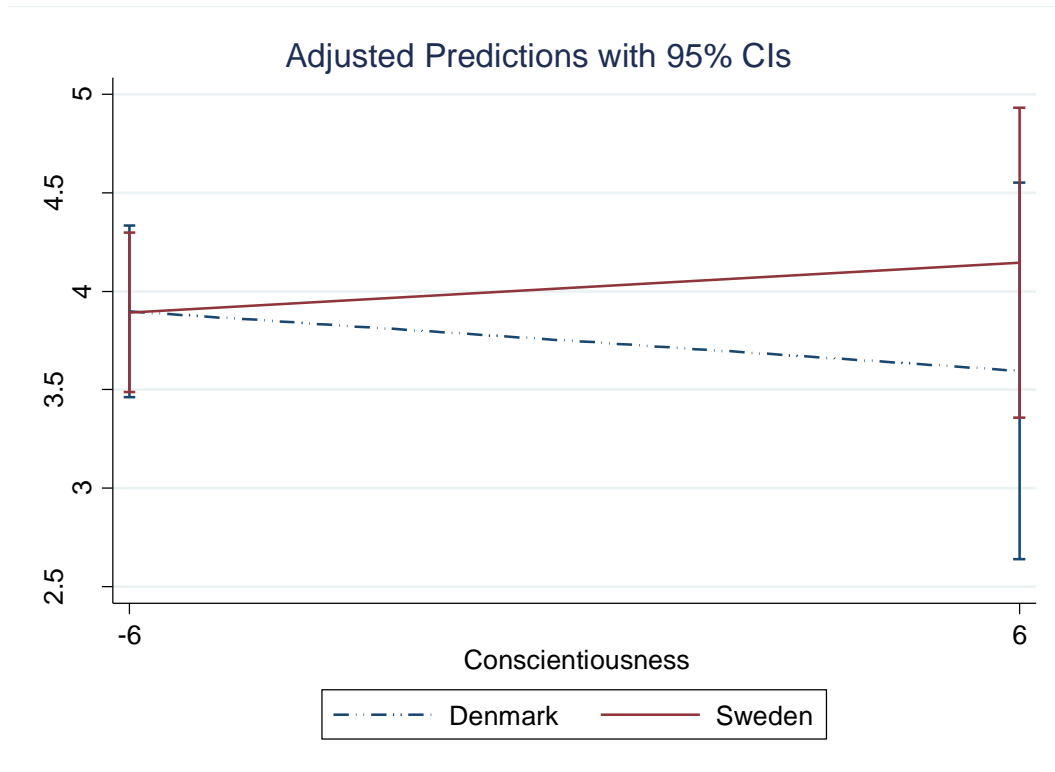


Figure 3: Interaction effects of country on the effect of openness on EU attitudes

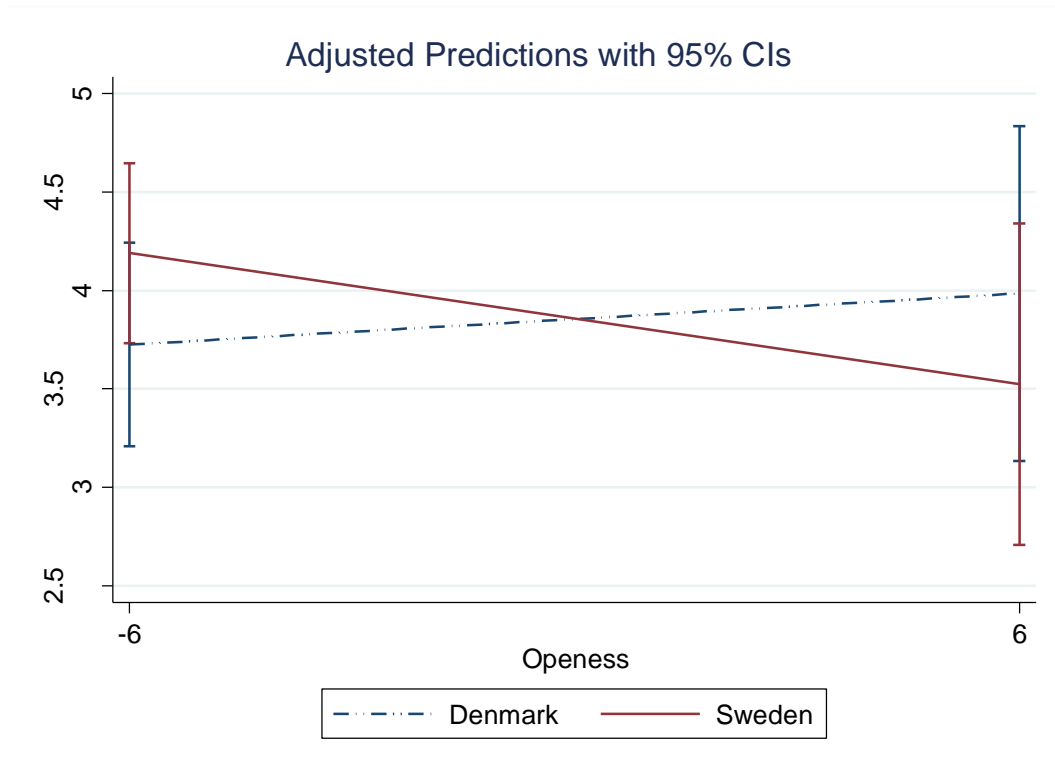


Figure 4: Interaction effects of Greece framing on the effect of extraversion on EU attitudes

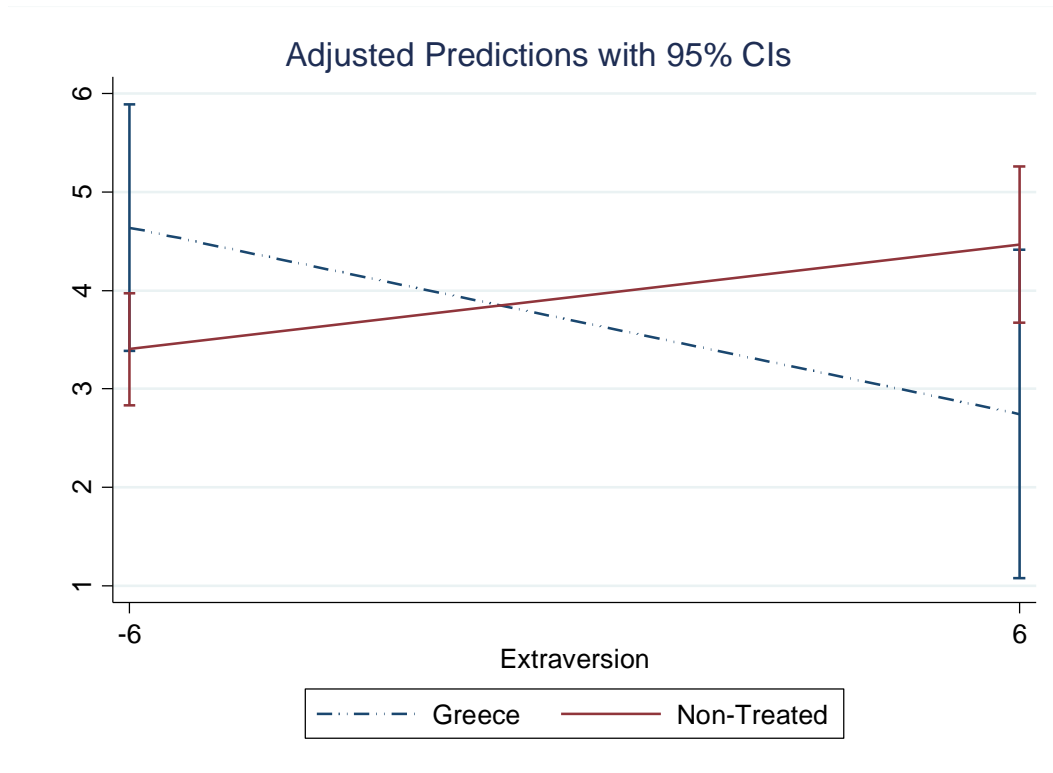


Figure 5: Interaction effects of Welfare framing on the effect of extraversion on EU attitudes

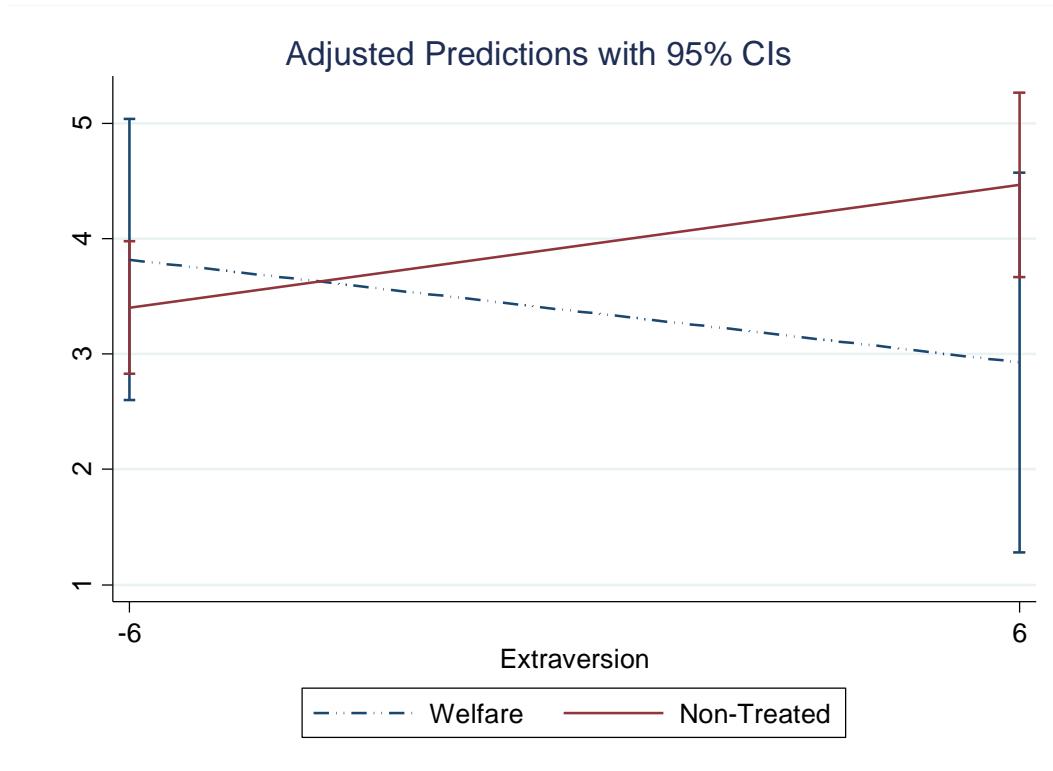


Figure 6: Interaction effects of Economy framing on the effect of extraversion on EU attitudes

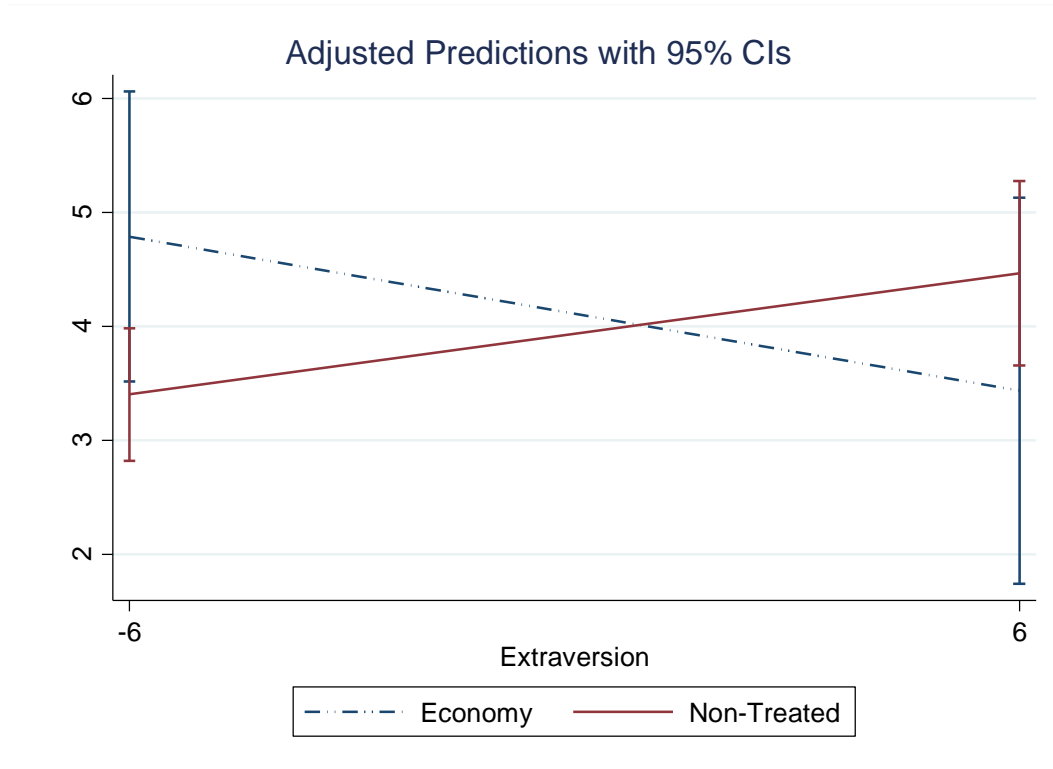


Figure 7: Interaction effects of Greece framing on the effect of agreeableness on EU attitudes

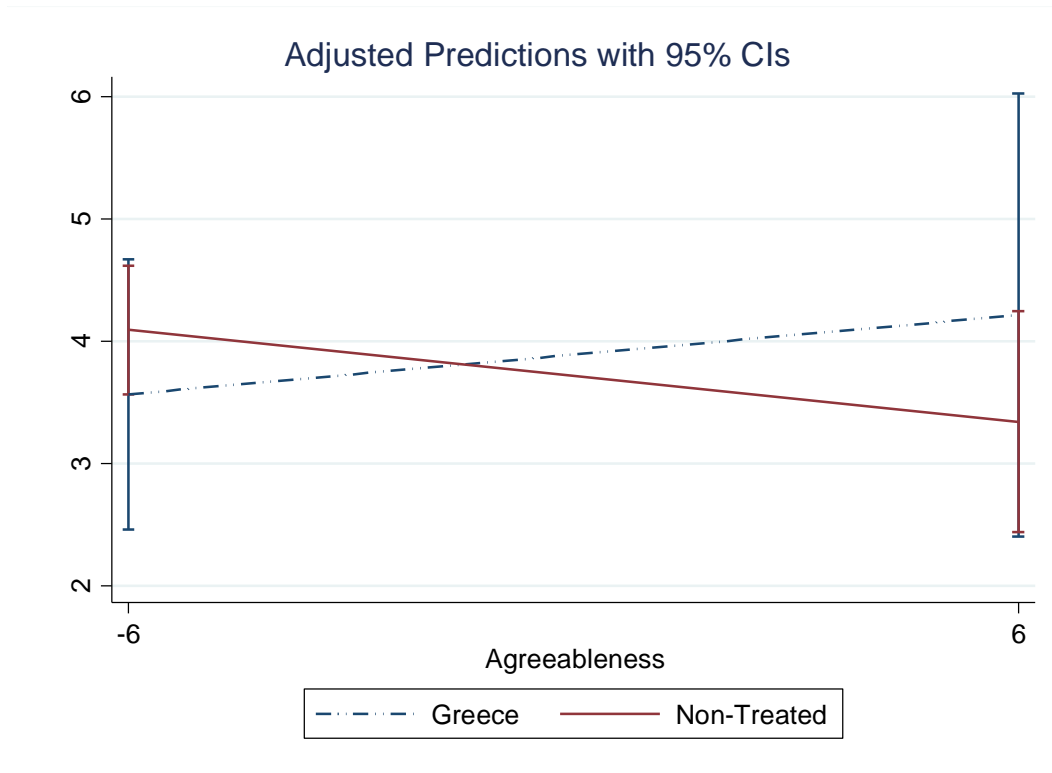


Figure 8: Interaction effects of Welfare framing on the effect of agreeableness on EU attitudes

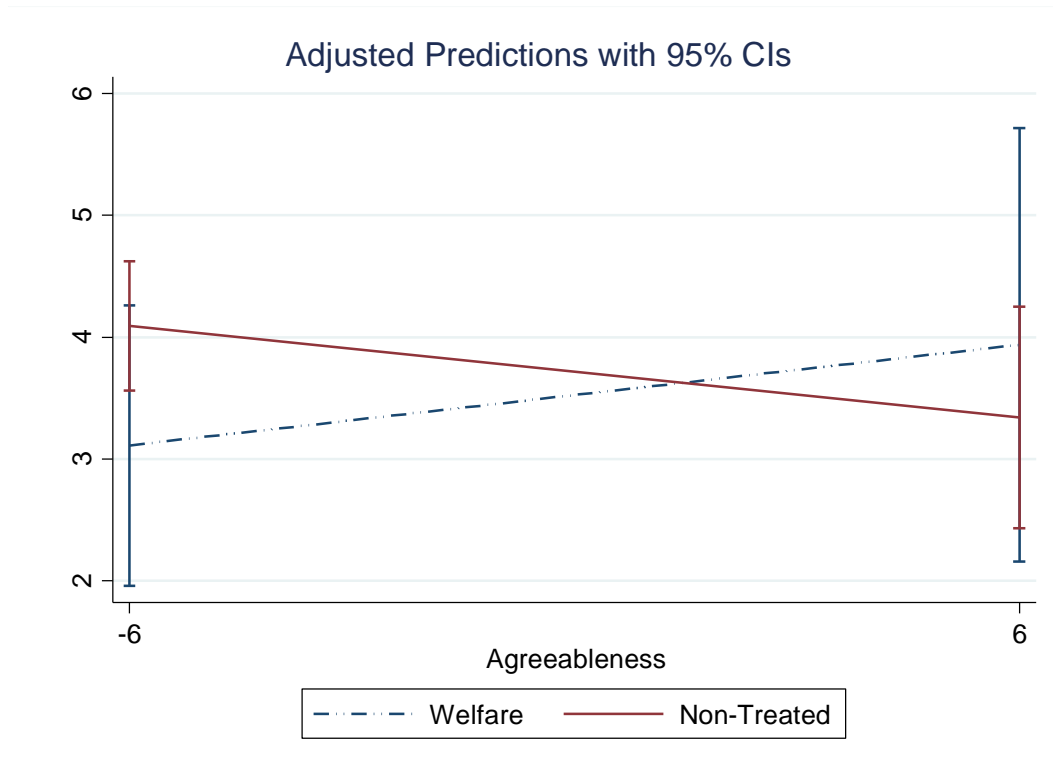


Figure 9: Interaction effects of Peace framing on the effect of agreeableness on EU attitudes

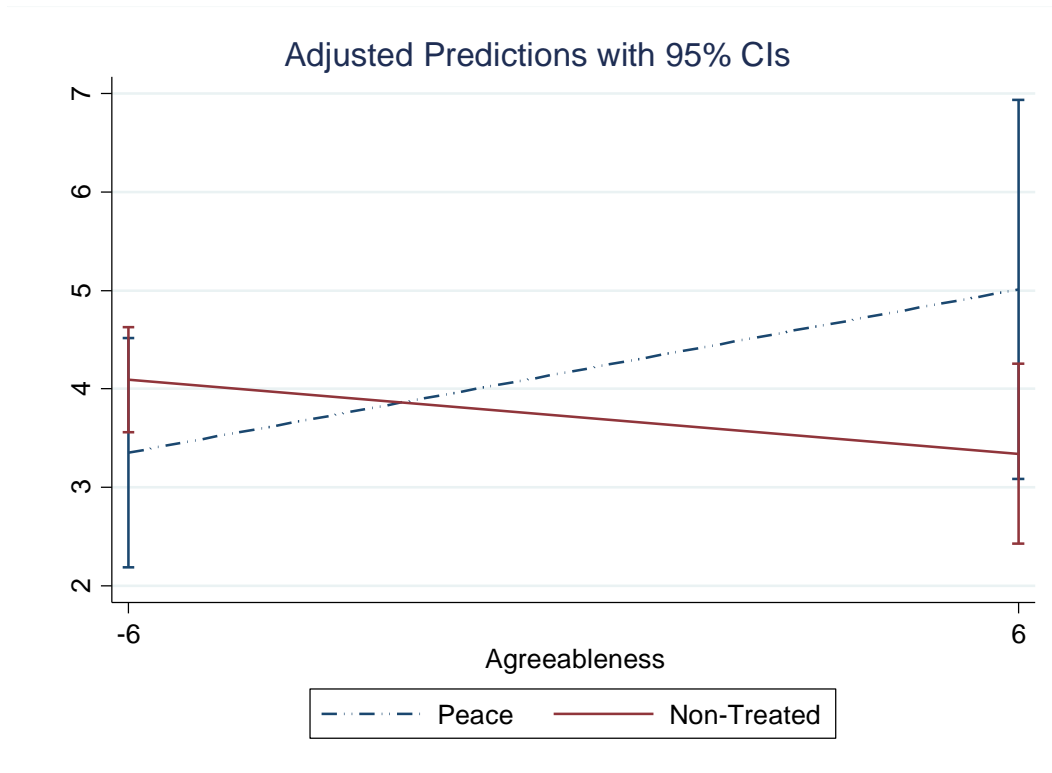


Figure 10: Interaction effects of Economy framing on the effect of agreeableness on EU attitudes

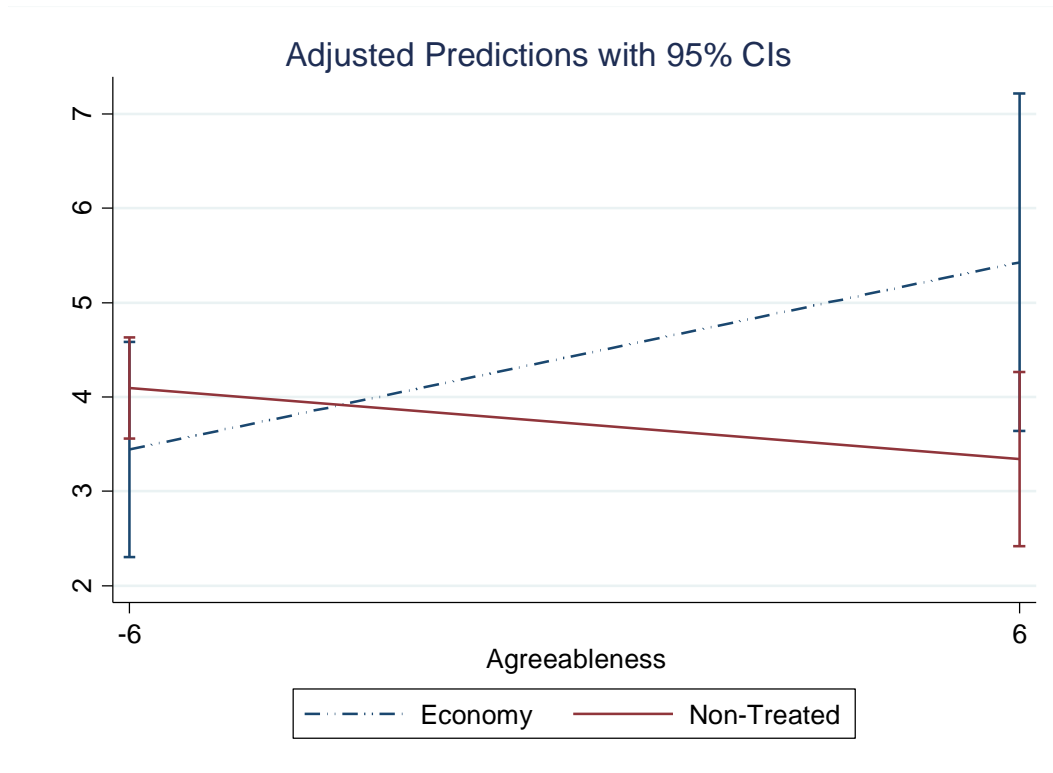


Figure 11: Interaction effects of Peace framing on the effect of conscientiousness on EU attitudes

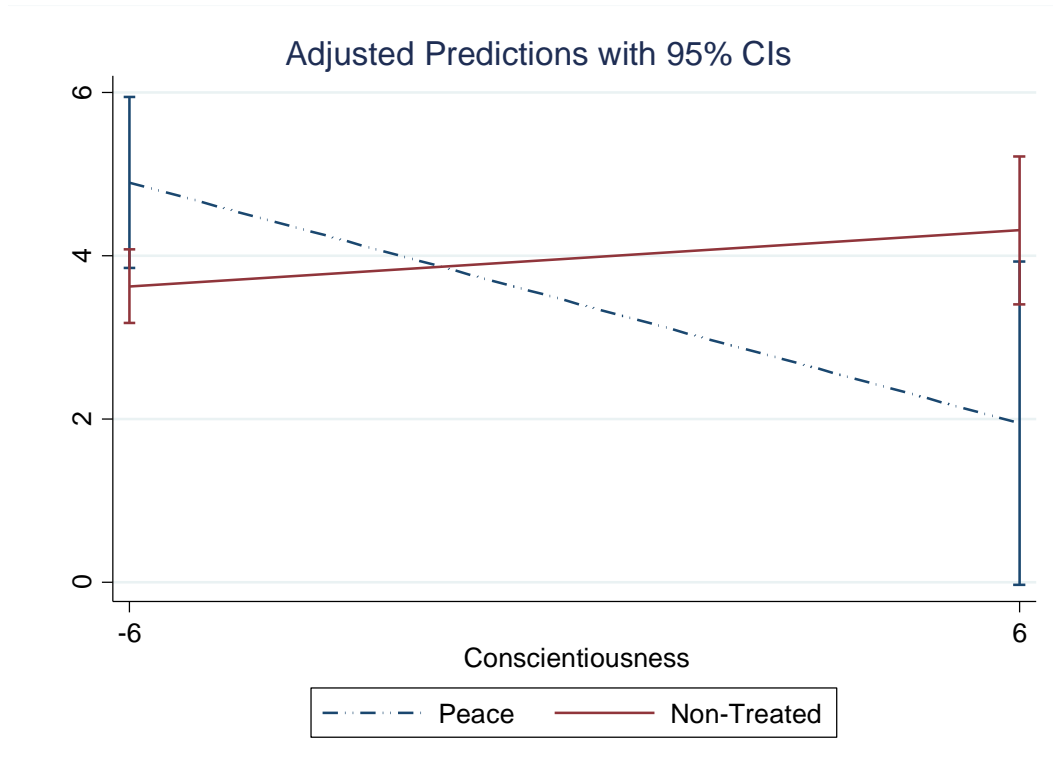


Figure 12: Interaction effects of economy framing on the effect of conscientiousness on EU attitudes

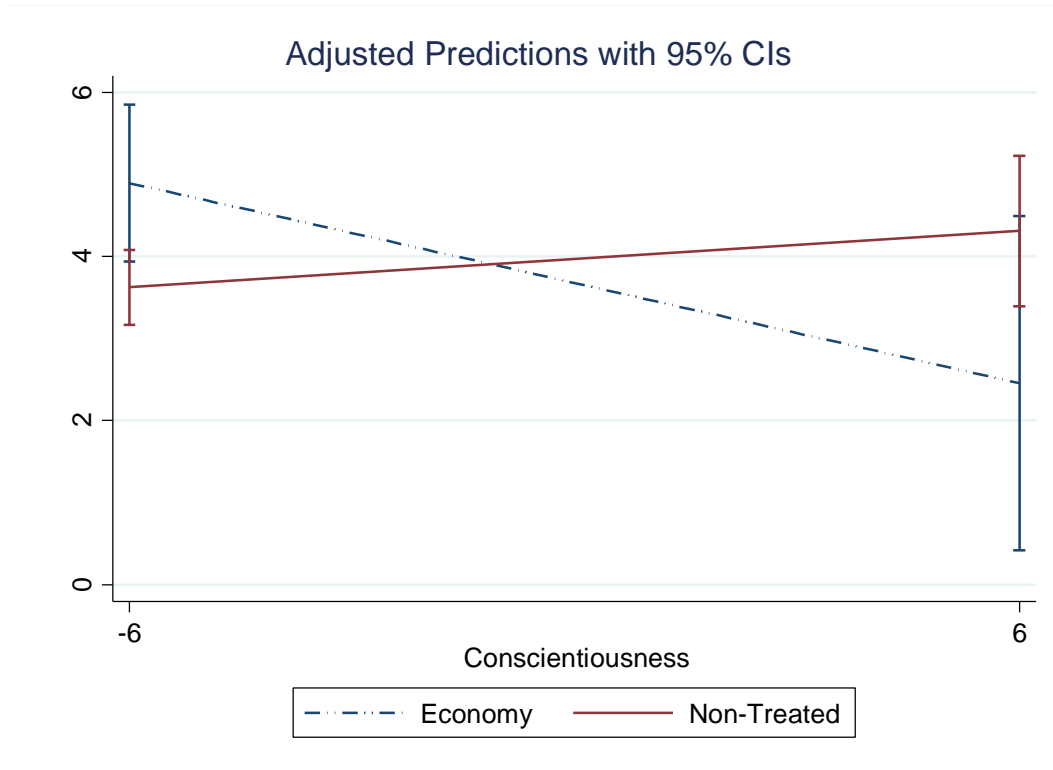


Figure 13: Interaction effects of Greece framing on the effect of openness on EU attitudes

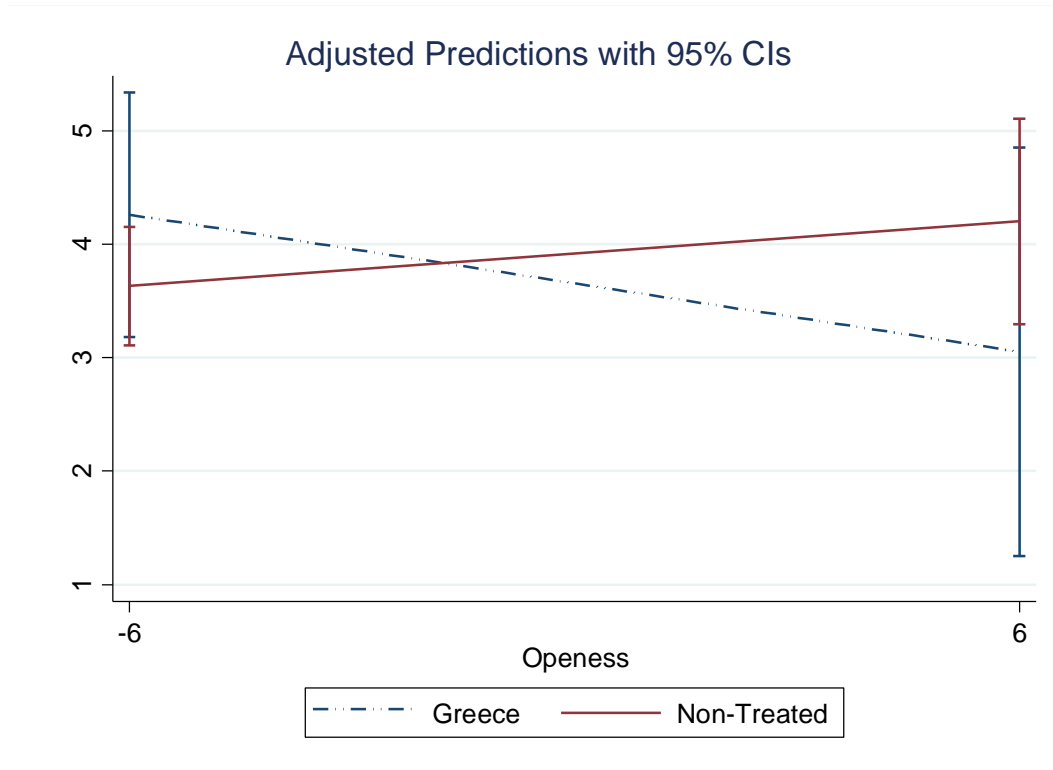


Figure 14: Interaction effects of Welfare framing on the effect of openness on EU attitudes

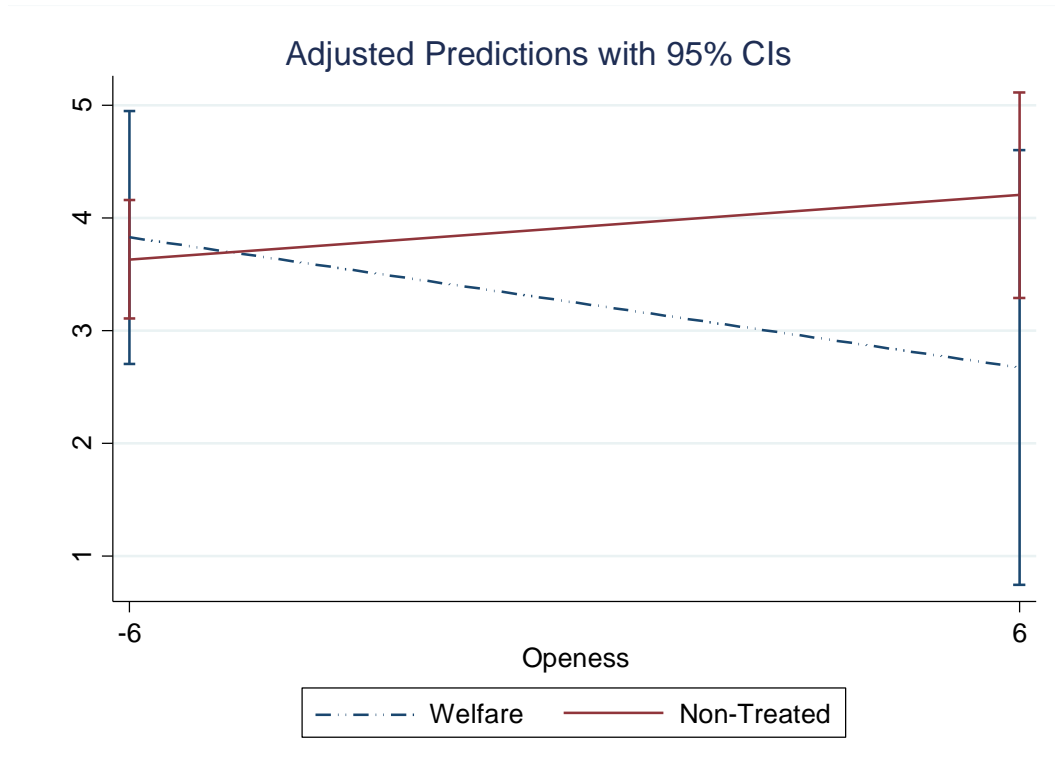


Figure 15: Interaction effects of positive political culture framing on the effect of openness on EU attitudes

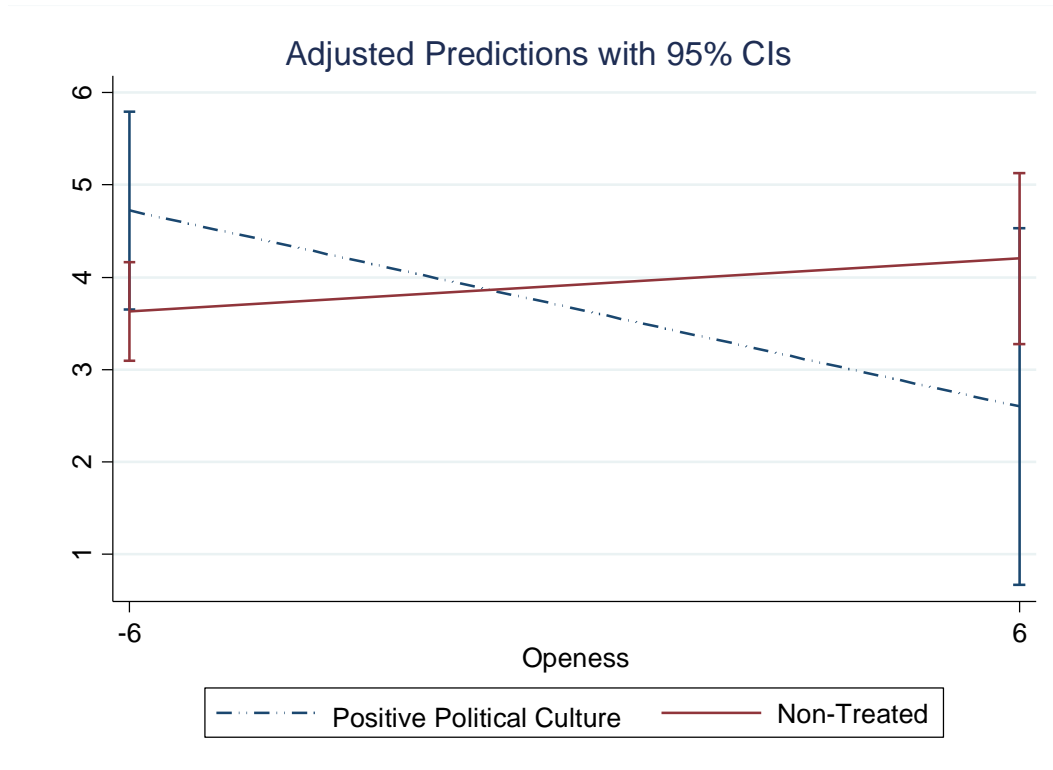


Figure 16: Interaction effects of economy framing on the effect of openness on EU attitudes

