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Adapting to party lines: the effect of party affiliation on attitudes to immigration

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ABSTRACT

Public opinion on immigration is increasingly relevant for political behaviour. However, little is known about the way in which citizens' political allegiances in turn shape their attitudes to immigration. Abundant existing evidence suggests that voters often take cues from the parties they support. Using panel data from the Netherlands and Sweden, this article investigates the dynamic relation between attitudes to immigration and party preferences. The longitudinal nature of the data allows for making stronger claims about causal mechanisms than previous cross-sectional studies. The analysis shows that voters who change their preference to the Radical Right become stricter on immigration, whereas voters changing to the Greens become less strict on immigration over time. This confirms that citizens' support for anti- and pro-immigration parties results in a 'radicalisation' of their views on immigration along party lines. A similar 'spiral' of radicalisation can be found around the issue of European integration.

KEYWORDS Attitudes on immigration; voting; heuristics; polarisation; public opinion

In recent decades, matters of immigration and integration have become highly salient in West European politics. These issues, often regarded as the core of the political dimension of cosmopolitanism versus nationalism, increasingly shape voters' and parties' behaviour (Azmanova 2011; Kriesi *et al.* 2008), and do so in at least two ways. First, electoral studies show that cultural issues are an increasingly important element of citizens' political world view (De Vries *et al.* 2013). Second, the issue of immigration divides mainstream parties while at the same time creating potential for mobilisation at both the cosmopolitan

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and nationalist ends of the new dimension (De Vries and Edvards 2009; Kriesi *et al.* 2008; Mudde 2007).

While public opinion on immigration is thus increasingly relevant for political preferences, little is known about the way in which citizens' political preferences in turn shape their attitudes to immigration. After all, abundant evidence exists that voters take cues from the parties they support (Druckman *et al.* 2013; Fortunato and Stevenson 2013; Popkin 1994; Slothuus 2015). Our study shows that Dutch and Swedish citizens' support for (especially non-mainstream) anti- and pro-immigration parties results in an adjustment of their views on immigration in the direction of their preferred party's position. This in turn is likely to lead to a polarisation of these issues, as well as an increasing alignment between parties and voters along the immigration issue.

Models of voting behaviour usually take the distribution of attitudes as given, and subsequently describe how this results in electoral outcomes. In this article, we propose a more dynamic relation between public opinion and party support. As noted by Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014: 3), 'scholarship on immigration attitudes has too often treated immigration attitudes as isolated from partisanship and political ideology, leaving important questions about the role of party cues in immigration attitudes unanswered'.

Our key point is that support for a party not only *reflects* but also *shapes* voters' opinion. The reason for this is that citizens, who are often sub-optimally informed and whose opinions have not always fully crystallised, tend to take cues from political elites and adjust their own views accordingly (Steenbergen *et al.* 2007). The most logical place for citizens to search for such cues is in the party they already support most. After all, 'their' party is most likely to reflect 'their' interests. Evidence for this mechanism has been found in various contexts. For instance, Rooduijn *et al.* (2016) show that voters not only express discontent by voting for populist parties, but, as a consequence, also become further dissatisfied. In a more general sense, this study thus reflects and underlines the growing scholarly awareness that citizens' world view, media exposure, and electoral decisions are dynamically linked by positive feedback loops (Slater 2007; Slothuus 2015; Van der Eijk *et al.* 2007).

In this article, we apply this mechanism to the crucial topic of immigration and test it using panel data from the Netherlands and Sweden. We argue and show that voters not only use their stance on immigration as *input* when deciding what party to vote for, but also subsequently *adjust* their views on this issue after they choose to support a party, especially if a party takes a vocal position on the issue. Specifically, we show that voters who change their preference to the Radical Right become *stricter* on immigration, whereas voters changing to the Radical Left or Greens become *less strict* on immigration. Voters of centrist parties are less affected by cue-taking. While attitudes remain a stronger predictor of subsequent party choice than vice versa, the data show robust evidence that an adaptation mechanism is at work shaping citizens' attitudes.

We argue that our findings have important consequences beyond the issue of immigration. We show that a similar process of radicalisation due to party cues was present around the – similarly recently politicised – issue of European integration. This points to a general phenomenon, which results in public opinion on all freshly salient issues becoming more polarised along party lines. As a result, such issues become more aligned with the existing axis of political competition. This suggests that there is room for political entrepreneurs to affect political dynamics by introducing new issues, but also that a certain tendency exists among both parties and citizens to incorporate new issues among existing lines.

Theory and previous research

We first briefly discuss why voters' party support is likely to reflect – to a lesser or greater extent – their views on immigration. We then discuss how party affiliation might in turn influence citizens' views. We subsequently discuss extant evidence regarding these assumptions and conclude this section by introducing the two cases.

Issue positions and party support

Most theories of voting behaviour predict some degree of ideological correspondence between voters and the parties they prefer. Standard spatial models predict that voters will vote in a way that minimises the distance – on one or more ideological dimensions – between their own ideological placement and that of their selected party (Downs 1957).

In the more specific case of immigration, its (allegedly increasing) relevance for voters' electoral decision has been widely discussed. As economic issues make way for competition along a cultural dimension, the issues of immigration and integration appear to (have) become a hallmark issue of politics in globalised Western democracies in the twenty-first century. It strongly demarcates the differences between nationalism versus cosmopolitism, or demarcation versus integration (Kriesi *et al.* 2008). Indeed, studies show that immigration is an increasingly important element of citizens' political world view (De Vries *et al.* 2013). Several new parties, most importantly Radical Right ones, have been able to mobilise large groups of voters by campaigning against immigration (Mudde 2007). By contrast, New Left parties have often presented themselves as defenders of a multiculturalist view of society. Mainstream parties, meanwhile, have been more divided in their response to this issue, partly reflecting the heterogeneity in their traditional electorate concerning the topic (Bale *et al.* 2010). Voters who have traditionally supported mainstream parties, but for whom the immigration issue has become a more salient and important issue (in either a multiculturalist or nativist way), have therefore been forced to look

for political alternatives with firm stances on the immigration issue – regardless of prior loyalty and party identification.

The directional theory of issue-voting assumes that voters are not fully able to perceive slight differences in the positions held by parties on various issues. Parties that hold views that are more extreme on an issue dimension thus have the advantage of conveying messages in a more consistent and credible manner (Macdonald *et al.* 1991; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Westholm 1997). A voter who holds the immigration issue to be one of the more salient issues might therefore choose to support a party holding a flank position on this dimension. By voting for a party with a more extreme position, a voter can be more certain that the party per se is positioned on 'the voter's own side' on the issue. Voting for a party on the basis of direction suggests that there will often not be a perfect match in terms of proximity in a metric sense. However, it will still imply that citizens' views on immigration matter for their party support. We therefore expect the following.

Position expression hypothesis**:** *Citizens are more likely to vote for a party that supports their position on immigration, be it for or against.*

Taking a party cue

Research has established that citizens' views on societal issues are not exogenous to their political preferences (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Lenz 2009). In the words of Steenbergen *et al.* (2007: 17), 'citizens take cues from political elites, including party leaders, and adjust their views to be more in line with those elites'. A reason why they do so can be found in the literature on heuristics. Despite the implicit assumption of informed citizens that underlies most theories of democratic representation, the knowledge of most citizens regarding societal and political issues is far from perfect (Bartels 1996; Converse 1964; Luskin 1987; Page and Shapiro 1992). It is well established that citizens therefore employ heuristics or cues – informational shortcuts – to arrive at meaningful vote choices (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). One such cue can be what trusted elites, including parties, have to say about political matters (Lau and David Redlawsk 2006). Indeed, citizens have been shown to often adapt their views to become more in line with the party or candidate they support (Lenz 2009). Most evidence for this assertion comes from experimental studies in which participants were asked to give their opinion about a statement or proposal. When the sender of this message is changed to a politician from the respondents' preferred party, the extent to which respondents will agree with a statement will increase. This mechanism thus presupposes a smaller or larger uncertainty around the 'true' position of a voter, which then crystallises in the direction of their preferred party.

To the extent that vote decisions are based on direction rather than proximity (as discussed above), gradual adjustment of voters' positions towards those of their preferred party is especially likely. A voter who holds the immigration

issue to be one of the more salient issues might choose to support a party with a flank position on this issue, even though the voter and the party are not necessarily in complete alignment. Given the mechanisms mentioned above, this voter is subsequently likely to adjust their views over time.

As mentioned earlier, the immigration issue has become one of the most polarising issues in many Western democracies in recent years, which has in turn increased the level of conflict on the topic in the public debate. This polarised opinion might make supporters more willing to adjust their views to their party camp, but also to be more selective in their exposure to news (Garrett 2009; Lin 2009; Slater 2007). By opting for media material and online news that confirm prior attitudes and support the party line, voters might further adjust their attitudes to immigrants in their parties' direction. At the same time, all this suggests that party cue-taking is most likely to occur with regard to more extreme, rather than centrist, parties.

At this point it is relevant to note that voters not only react to the parties they like but also to parties they *dislike*. Parties with strong anti-immigrant positions can be considered by non-supporting voters to violate social norms regarding unacceptable prejudice (see Blinder *et al.* 2013; Harteveld and Ivarsflaten 2016). In that case, such voters are likely to be triggered to strongly disregard cues coming from anti-immigrant parties, which results in a further move away from the anti-immigrant position. This mechanism would be in line with the one discussed above, and is indeed likely to amplify it.

Despite a vast literature on party cues (e.g. see Slothuus 2015 for an overview), and despite a large number of studies that focus on how anti-immigrant attitudes are affected by immigration frames (e.g. Brader *et al.* 2008; Sniderman *et al.* 2004) and media content (e.g. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Schemer 2012), surprisingly few studies have explored how political parties affect the formation of anti-immigrant attitudes. Brader *et al.* (2008) note that 'we know little about the effects of political discourse' on anti-immigrant attitudes. Usually, scholarship treats anti-immigrant attitudes as isolated from partisanship, political ideology and party cues (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014), and Ceobanu and Escandell (2010: 323) stress the need for 'greater attention to sociopolitical and institutional contexts in which [anti-immigrant] attitudes surface'. Given that the mechanism of cue-taking is firmly established, we argue it should be at work with regard to immigration values.

> Party cue-taking hypothesis**:** *Citizens adjust their views on immigration in the direction of their preferred party: voters who vote for anti-immigrant parties will become more nativist over time, whereas voters who vote for pro-immigrant parties will become less nativist over time.*[1]

If this mechanism holds, it has several consequences for aggregated outcomes. On the macro level, the party cue-taking mechanism does not inherently lead to changes in the *average* position of a party's electorate. After all, if as many voters are drawn towards the multiculturalist side as there are moving towards

a more nativist side, these trends will cancel each other out. This would rather result in higher levels of polarisation. This is likely because, on many issues, though with some notable exceptions, voters are more centrist than the elites of the parties they support (Dahlberg 2009). Adjusting one's views towards those of a trusted party will thus often mean a less centrist view. In that case, adjusting a position towards the party line will mean *radicalisation*.

Earlier evidence

The few studies on how political elites shape anti-immigrant attitudes have primarily focused on anti-immigrant parties' role. Ivarsflaten (2005) finds that individuals who feel unsafe are more negative to immigration in countries where anti-immigrant elites are strong. Semyonov *et al.* (2004, 2006) and Wilkes *et al.* (2008) show that electoral support for anti-immigrant parties is positively and strongly associated with anti-immigrant attitudes. However, the studies mentioned use (repeated) cross-sectional data and therefore cannot disentangle the causality of associations at the individual level. In Semyonov *et al.*'s (2004: 842) words, 'the causal relation between support for [anti-immigrant] parties and anti-foreigner sentiment is not clear'. The studies also primarily focus on relations between other variables and anti-immigrant attitudes, and do not go into detail on *why* we should expect anti-immigrant party success to affect anti-immigrant attitudes. Nonetheless, the association found is strong and robust enough to warrant further investigation. Semyonov *et al.* and Wilkes *et al.* also suggest that anti-immigrant parties may contribute to a social climate that fosters anti-immigrant attitudes. However, they do not discuss, or test, whether other parties too may influence anti-immigrant attitudes.

The only study we know of that explicitly focuses on how political articulation in general influences attitudes on immigrants is Bohman (2011), although she focuses on *anti*-immigrant attitudes only. Using the Comparative Manifesto Data and the European Social Survey, Bohman finds a strong positive association between political parties' endorsement of nationalistic and patriotic frames and anti-immigrant sentiments among the citizenry. She also finds some indication of partisanship, as left-wing parties' endorsement of nationalistic and patriotic frames is more strongly associated with left-leaning citizens' anti-immigrant attitudes than with right-leaning citizens' anti-immigrant attitudes. This may indicate that it is mainly left-leaning citizens who are affected by left-wing parties' endorsement of nationalistic and patriotic frames. The associations found seemingly confirm that elite rhetoric and citizens' attitudes mimic each other. However, Bohman's study is based on cross-sectional data and thus also suffers from endogeneity concerns. We cannot know whether it is the elites that influence the citizens, or the citizens that influence the elites. Moreover, Bohman studies only the effect of *nationalistic* frames on attitudes to immigrants and assumes that such frames always drive voters to develop

more negative attitudes toward immigrants. We argue that elite cue mechanisms could also result in citizens adopting more *immigrant-friendly* attitudes due to a preference for multiculturalist parties. Hence, there is a need for studies that use more refined longitudinal data that can capture the causality between elite messages and citizen attitudes. Our study aims to do just that.[2]

Cases and expectations

In short, we hypothesise that a reciprocal connection exists between voters' views on immigration and their party choice: voters' stance on immigration affects their party preference; and their party choice in turn affects their views on immigration. We test this in two countries in which the immigration issue has become increasingly politicised during the period of the data collection: Sweden and the Netherlands. According to Odmalm and Super (2014), corporatist arrangements in both countries long resulted in de-politicisation of the immigration and integration issues, and national narratives 'accepted as well as promoted ethnic difference' (Odmalm and Super 2014: 664). However, they argue that politicisation has increased since the 1990s, due to rising immigration levels and polarising public opinion. Using manifesto data, they show that, in the last two decades, parties in both countries became increasingly polarised on the issue.

As noted, cue-taking is most likely to happen for parties that have outspoken views on an issue. In concrete terms, we therefore expect this effect to be most clearly visible among Green and Radical Right voters. We expect voters who switch to – or remain loyal to – a Green party to become more multiculturalist, whereas voters who switch to – or remain loyal to – a Radical Right party are likely to become more anti-immigrant. After all, these two party families are often considered to be at the poles of the cosmopolitan vs nationalist dimension. With regard to the Dutch Green party Green Left (GL), this is confirmed on the basis of manifesto data by Odmalm and Super (2014), who show that, of all Dutch parties, GL is most strongly and consistently located at the 'Liberal/Multiculturalist' end of the immigration dimension. In the case of the Swedish Green Party (MP), they do not find such a clear position, but the party does make a strong shift towards multiculturalism.

With regard to mainstream parties, there might be some adjustment among voters too. To be sure, mainstream parties across the board take a more centrist or ambiguous position on the issue of immigration, leaving less space for cue-taking. Still, Odmalm and Super (2014) show that centrist parties are at times quite outspoken on immigration topics as well. Mclaren (2012) argues that the mainstream Right is often a credible issue owner of immigration topics (rivalled only by the Radical Right), which makes it quite likely that voters pick up this party family's views on the topic. The mainstream Left is usually relatively more multiculturalist, but, according to McLauren, more divided on

the issue. We therefore refrain from formulating strong expectations about adjustments due to cue-taking among mainstream Left voters.

Furthermore, we expect the process to be more pronounced in countries where the immigration issue is new to the political agenda and has not yet been fully adopted by the left–right dimension. For this reason, we expect clearer findings for Sweden, where the immigration issue only obtained strong political articulation when the anti-immigrant party Sweden Democrats entered Parliament as late as 2010. In the Netherlands, by contrast, the immigration issue has been on the agenda for a longer time (for a discussion, see Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), and quite centrally so since the rise of Pim Fortuyn in the early 2000s.

Finally, to tentatively investigate whether any effects we find are indeed representative of a general phenomenon, we repeat our models using a measure concerning European integration. Like immigration, this issue has become polarised since the 1990s (Hooghe and Marks 2004) and is increasingly shaping Western European party systems (Kriesi *et al.* 2008). This test is available only in the Dutch panel. We expect voters of the Radical Right Party for Freedom to radicalise over Euroscepticism. By contrast, we expect voters of the Green Left party to adopt a more pro-integrationist stance.

Data, design and operationalisation

In the current article we use two different panel datasets, one from the Netherlands and one from Sweden. The LISS (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) panel data are collected and administered by CentERdata at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. The LISS panel is a representative sample of Dutch individuals who participate in monthly Internet surveys. The panel is based on a probability sample of households drawn from the population register. A longitudinal survey is fielded in the panel every year, covering a large variety of domains including work, education, income, housing, time use, political views, values and personality.[3] Questions regarding nativism and voting behaviour are available in these yearly surveys for the period (end) 2007 until (end) 2013, resulting in seven waves.

The Swedish Citizen Panel is administrated by the Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORe) at the University of Gothenburg. The first round of the Citizen Panel was launched in November 2010. The respondents have since then been surveyed twice a year, once in the spring (April–May) and once in the autumn (October–November). The main part of the recruitment to the Citizen Panel was initiated during the Swedish general election campaign in 2010 and was mainly done through Internet advertising on the websites of newspapers and on Twitter, Facebook and blogs. This implies that the Citizen Panel consists of self-recruited participants who are not representative of the Swedish population as a whole. With regard to questions concerning nativism and voting, we rely

on seven waves between autumn 2011 and autumn 2014. Additional surveys were sometimes conducted shortly before the main wave; if available, we use these to fill in missing values in the main wave.

Research design

The aim of this paper is to establish the causal relation between nativism and Radical Right voting. Previous papers have established a strong correlation between the two using mostly cross-sectional data or have established the effect of party cues on public opinion using experiments. We aim to make causal inferences by using a cross-lagged panel design. We explain the key variables – nativism and party preference – at each time point t by both variables at time t_{-1}. For each variable, we thus control for respondents' scores in the last round, which allows us to assess whether the remaining variation in voting and nativism can be explained by the other variable. To control for any lingering effects, we also control for variables at t_{-2} and t_{-3}. Because all variables are only explained by variables in *previous* models, we can make stronger inferences about their causal order here than cross-sectional studies can. Figure 1 gives a schematic overview of this model.

Operationalisation

The operationalisation of the key variables is as follows. To measure voting for various parties, a dummy takes the value of *1* if the respondent intends to vote for that party and *0* if the respondent intends to vote for another party, intends to vote blanc, or does not know. We re-estimated the models with 'don't

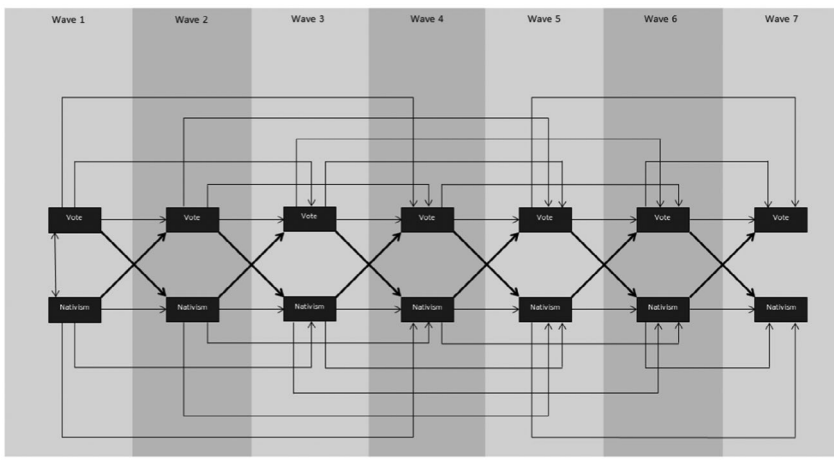


Figure 1. Cross-lagged panel model.

know' options modelled as missing values, which led to very similar results. We used different measures in the two surveys to measure nativism, as specified in Online Appendix A. Only one item was available on refugees in the Swedish Citizen Panel. While this item touches upon only one aspect of the broader field of immigration and integration, other research shows that it is strongly correlated with other items related to immigration and integration (Demker 2014). A battery of items was available in the Dutch LISS data (in each wave, Cronbach's α is ±0.85). Because the Swedish results rely on only one indicator, they are probably somewhat less reliable than the Dutch. Still, they allow us to investigate whether the expected patterns are visible in both countries.[4]

Not all respondents participated in all rounds. This is especially the case with the Swedish data, because the immigration questions were included in individual waves among a sizeable random subset of the respondents.[5] To ensure enough variation, we selected respondents who took part in at least four of the waves. Still, models with multiple lags are difficult to estimate if mid-panel values are missing, which leads to a bias towards the small group of the most consistently present respondents. To prevent this, we filled in missing values by substituting the last non-missing value. This leads to a large number of imputations in the Swedish data, but, because the missing values in that dataset are for a large part the result of randomisation, we believe this to be preferable to relying on a small subsample of respondents that took part in every wave. Furthermore, because our procedure downplays variation in the data, it will make any effects we *do* find conservative. On the other hand, because substituting missing values boosts the power of the analysis, we also estimate all models without this procedure.

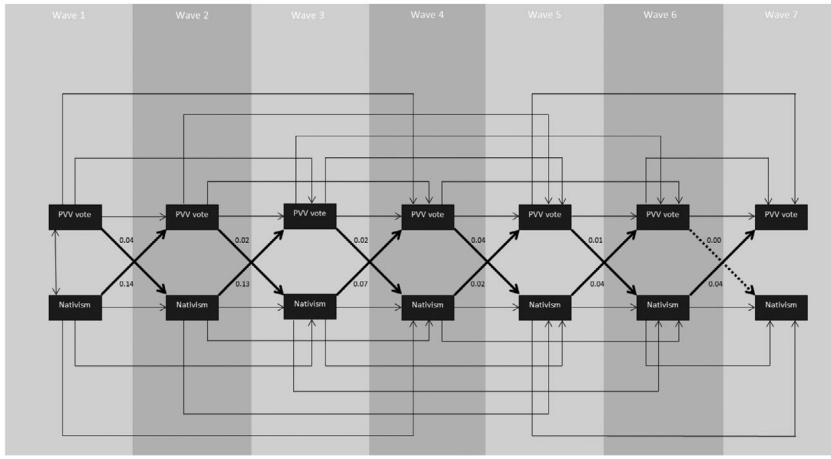
Results

Due to space constraints, we do not present the full Structural Equation Models (SEMs) below. Rather, we highlight the most important findings and refer the reader to Online Appendix B for the remaining results. We start with presenting the full path model for the party families for which we expect cue-taking to be most clearly present – the Radical Right and Greens – and then move on to assess this mechanism among other parties.

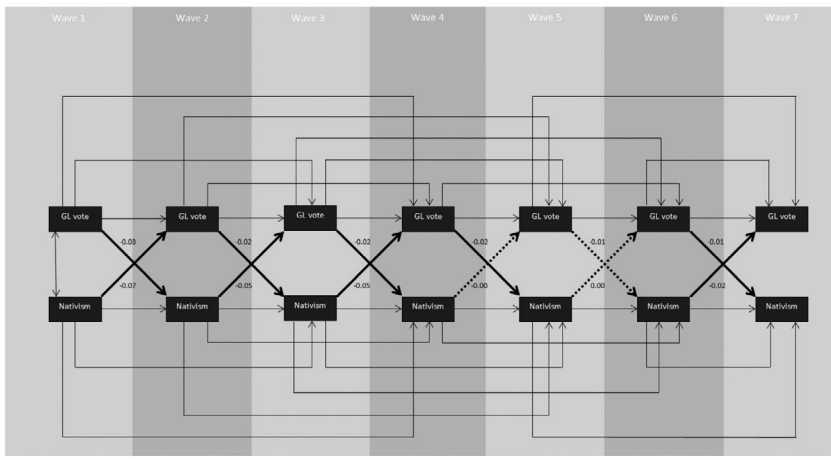
Radical Right and Green parties

Figure 2 shows the standardised solution result of a cross-lagged SEM for the Dutch parties Party for Freedom (PVV) and Green Left. Both models have an acceptable model fit in terms of Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and χ^2. Dotted lines indicate non-significant effects.

Figure 2 presents clear evidence that voters adjust their position towards their parties' line in the Netherlands. In line with earlier studies, Figure 2(a)



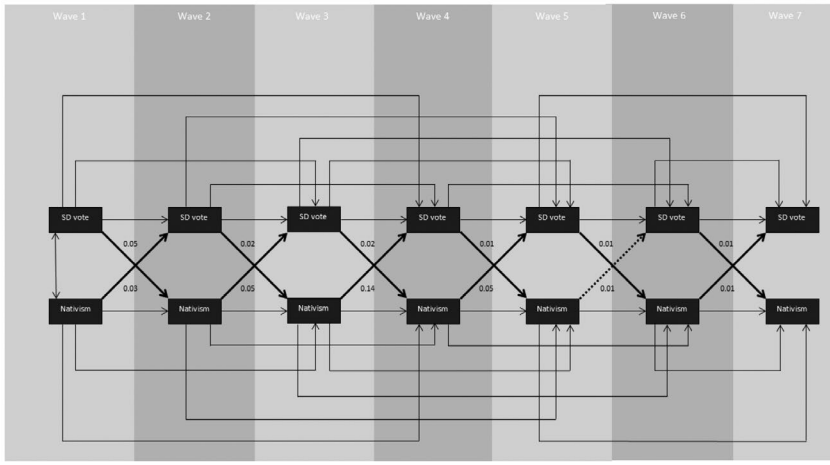
(a)



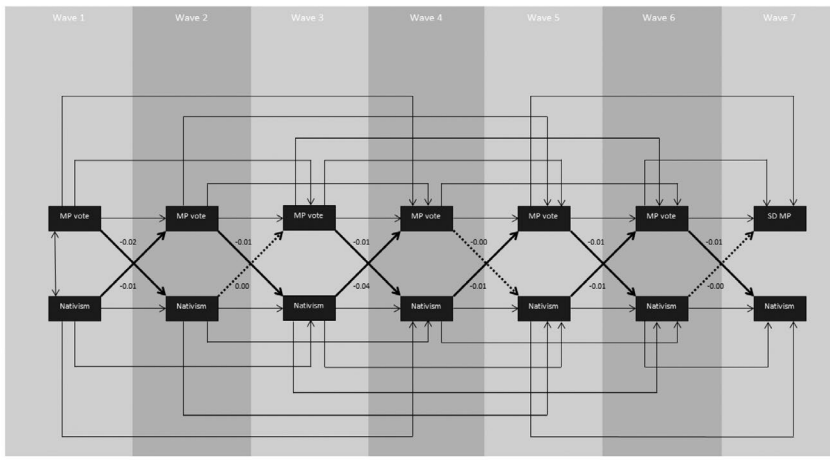
(b)

Figure 2. Cross-lagged SEM, standardised solution. (a) Party for Freedom (PVV), 90% RMSEA CI: [0.049, 0.055]. Dotted lines indicate non-significant effects at the 5% level. (b) Green Left (GL), 90% RMSEA CI: [0.048, 0.054]. Dotted lines indicate non-significant effects at the 5% level.

confirms that respondents' nativism is a significant predictor of a PVV voting preference. This is consistently the case throughout the panel. At the same time, and in line with our hypothesis, *PVV voting is also a significant predictor of nativism*. This is the case in all except the last wave. It is important to stress that this consistent effect exists under the control for both PVV voting intention and nativism in the previous wave, which allows us to make a stronger causal claim. To give some estimate of the relative strengths of these two directions,



(a)



(b)

Figure 3. Cross-lagged SEM, standardised solution. (a) Sweden Democrats (SD), 90% RMSEA CI: [0.036, 0.042]. Dotted lines indicate non-significant effects at the 5% level. (b) Green Party (MP), 90% RMSEA CI: [0.028, 0.034]. Dotted lines indicate non-significant effects at the 5% level.

on average, the effect of PVV voting on nativism is roughly 28% of the reverse effect. This shows that, while attitudes remain a stronger predictor of subsequent vote choices than vice versa, the extent of adjustment is not insubstantial.

A similar pattern is visible in Figure 2(b) regarding the Green Left party. Here, the signs are reversed. A higher level of nativism results in a *lower* probability to vote GL. This effect is smaller than nativism's effect on PVV voting, which suggests that these issues are not as central to the Greens as they are

to Geert Wilders' party. Still, nativism significantly predicts GL voting in the next wave in all but two panels. Even more interesting, we find evidence that a GL vote intention in turn *decreases* respondents' level of nativism. This effect is significant for all but one of the panels. So it seems that GL voters too pick up their party's views on nativism. The average effect of vote preference on nativism is almost 60% of the average effect of the reverse path. This higher ratio seems to reflect the fact that, while nativism is not a very strong predictor of GL voting, their voters pick up the party's views on this issue as strongly as PVV voters do for their party. Apparently, after voting on the basis of issue A, voters start absorbing their party's views on issue B.

We now turn to the Swedish results. Both models have a good model fit in terms of RMSEA and χ^2. The nativism measure in Sweden consists of only one variable, contains more missing data and has a lower overall *N*, and is thus somewhat less reliable. Nevertheless, a pattern strikingly similar to the Dutch data is visible. Figure 3(a) confirms that a vote preference for the Sweden Democrats (SD) is significantly predicted by nativism. At the same time, SD vote preference is likely to increase a respondent's level of nativism in the next wave (in all but one of the waves; roughly 41% of the effect size). This is especially striking because nativism is measured with only one variable, on which many SD voters already score highly. Nevertheless, a further trend upwards *following* an SD preference is visible.

Figure 3(b), which presents the results for the Green Party, shows that nativism is (inversely) related to MP voting, but not significantly so ($\alpha < 10\%$) in two instances. In turn, a MP vote preference decreases nativism in all but one of the waves, even though the effect is weaker than nativism's effect on SD voting. Thus, like their Dutch counterparts, Swedish Green voters also follow their preferred party's multiculturalist message.

To investigate how the substitution of missing data affects our result, we re-analysed the models without such substitution. This replicated the pattern of results in terms of direction and size, showing even somewhat stronger effects of party preference on attitudes than before. About a quarter of the previously significant effects lose significance, but this is mostly due to greater standard errors in smaller samples rather than smaller nominal effect sizes. This strengthens our confidence in the robustness of the findings.

Other parties

The full SEM models of all parties are shown in Online Appendix B. As stated earlier, we expect alignment dynamics between voters and mainstream parties as well, but to a lesser extent than among Radical Right and Green parties. Furthermore, we expect this to be most clearly the case among mainstream right-wing parties. Table 1 summarises the effect for the most important mainstream parties. For reference purposes, Radical Right and Green parties are

Table 1. Summary of findings.

		The Netherlands			Sweden		
		Party	# Adjusted	Note	Party	# Adjusted	Note
Anti-immigration	Mainstream Right	VVD	1		M	3	Until spring 2013
	Radical Right	PVV	5		SD	6	
Pro-immigration	Mainstream Left	PvdA	−4	Until end 2011	S	−1	
	Green	GL	−5		MP	−5	

also included. The bars and numbers indicate the number of instances (out of a maximum of six) of adjustments along party lines, which can be considered a summary of the extent to which there is cue-taking. A negative number indicates that the adjustment takes place in a *multiculturalist* direction; a positive number indicates the *nativist* direction.

As expected, voters of the mainstream Right show some cue-taking, though less clearly than the Radical Right. For the Dutch VVD, however, adjustment occurs in only one wave. Perhaps the lack of cue-taking can be explained by the fact that the VVD had an inconsistent stance on immigration and did not give the issue much attention, thus providing voters with relatively weak cues on immigration (at least in comparison to the PVV and GL). In Sweden, adjustment among *Moderaterna* (M) voters occurred in the first part of the panel, until autumn 2013. This too might mean that M gave weak cues on immigration to its voters. Alternatively, it might reflect that after 2013 many anti-immigrant M voters switched to, by then, a somewhat less stigmatised SD. Among voters of the mainstream Left, the reverse is visible: cue-taking (in the multiculturalist direction) in the Netherlands, but not much in Sweden. Still, the effect is most clearly present among Green and Radical Right party voters.

Cumulative effects among loyalists

We thus find strong evidence that vote preferences affect voters' views on immigration. If the proposed mechanism – internalisation of party cues – holds, we should observe that voters who *continue* to prefer a party should also *continue* to move towards that party's position. After all, loyal voters continue to be exposed to a party's view, and might thus also continue to change their views accordingly. However, at a certain point it is likely that congruence is achieved or a 'ceiling' is reached. To tentatively investigate whether this is the case, we estimated a regression model in which we predict (standardised) nativism by the number of waves in which a person has voted for the Freedom Party in the Netherlands. Because the effect is probably not linear, we include a squared

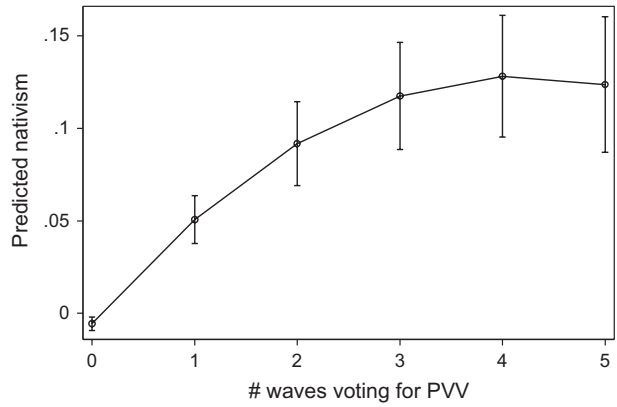


Figure 4. Effect of continued PVV voting.

term. The regression model indicates that both the main effect and the squared term are significant. Figure 4 shows predicted probabilities based on this model.

Unsurprisingly, those who initially prefer the PVV (the number of waves is one) are more nativist than those who do not vote for the PVV (the number of waves is zero). The latter score just below the mean score on the standardised variable. Voters who continue to prefer the PVV are predicted to become more nativist with each wave until, after four years, there seems to be no further effect. It is important to note that these effects are estimated regardless of *when* respondents start preferring the PVV: this might be early or later in the panel – only the duration counts. Still, it might be true that those who are most loyal and thus vote PVV many times in a row are tougher on immigration to begin with, which might partly drive these findings. Nevertheless, Figure 4 provides further evidence, although tentative, for the party cue-taking mechanism.

A general phenomenon? Extending to European integration

We expect the pattern of adjustments towards the party line that we observe with regard to immigration to be part of a general phenomenon pertaining to newer issues. To tentatively assess whether this is the case, we investigated whether a similar process occurs with regard to the issue of European integration. This analysis, presented in Online Appendix C, confirms that voters become more Eurosceptic after switching their vote preference to the PVV. By contrast, a Green Left preference decreases |Euroscepticism. These two effects are comparable in degree to those observed surrounding immigration. The mechanisms we describe are thus not restricted to attitudes on immigration: with regard to European integration, too, there is strong evidence for cue-taking.

Conclusions

Previous studies have established that voters take cues from the parties they support and adapt their views to be more in line with those of 'their' party. We took this – largely experimental – finding as a starting point and investigated whether the same mechanism also affects citizens' attitudes on immigration and the European Union. Our panel design allows us to draw stronger causal conclusions about the relation between public opinion and voting than has been possible in earlier cross-sectional studies, while our survey contexts allow for a more ecologically valid test than is provided by earlier experimental studies.

We find that voters indeed adjust their views in the direction of the position taken by their preferred party. This is more clearly the case for voters of extreme parties than of centrist parties. Voters switching to the Radical Right in both the Netherlands and Sweden subsequently become more strongly opposed to immigrants. Those switching to the Green Party, by contrast, change their views in a more multicultural direction, although this is less clearly the case in Sweden. Furthermore, we present preliminary evidence in the Netherlands for a similar pattern regarding voters' Euroscepticism. Because stances on immigration and Euroscepticism function as an input for citizens' party choice at a later stage, views on immigration and the European Union are likely to become increasingly more aligned between parties and voters over time. It seems that this is exactly what we observe in the period under study in the Netherlands and Sweden. Even though we find that the effect of attitudes on party choice is stronger than vice versa, we conclude that attitudes and party preferences are thus characterised by a positive feedback loop (Slater 2007; Slothuus 2015).

These conclusions are also clearly compatible with De Vries *et al.*'s (2013) finding that the general political dimension – as defined in Left-Right terms – is becoming increasingly correlated with attitudes on immigration. While the latter is usually explained as an increased salience of 'cultural' issues, our study suggests that part of the correlation may in fact originate in a realignment of voters along an already existing axis of political competition. On the other hand, we have not been able to distinguish whether voters crystallise ambiguous preferences, or adopt new ones. Fine-grained measures of saliency could help to answer this question.

Because we observe that voters for more extreme parties are most likely to adjust their views in the light of their preferred parties' position, it is likely we will observe further polarisation on immigration and EU issues in the future – polarisation that is partially elite-driven. Given that we observe a positive feedback loop, an important question is what the end-point of this process is. It is unlikely that all voters will end up at extreme positions; nor will they all align exactly with their party. While more theorising is necessary to define the limits of this mechanism, we propose at least three limitations that could be a subject of further research. First, a feedback loop regarding an issue is likely

only to occur as long as the issue is salient; when salience shifts, positions on the formerly salient issue might start to align with parties whose position on the newly salient issue is most congruent with citizens' existing views. Second, people are not blank sheets, and there are likely to be boundaries limiting the extent to which they can become fiercely anti- (or pro-)immigrant, depending on context, personality, and a host of other established factors that determine interethnic views. Third, people are most likely to adopt a party line when they are ambiguous about their position; after a long period of continued politicising, positions are likely to become crystallised or even entrenched, thus limiting further updates.

In this respect, a related question is *for whom* party cue-taking is most prominent. While one might expect more politically sophisticated citizens to have fuller knowledge of parties' positions, which is a crucial precondition for cue-taking, such informed citizens have also been found to be less volatile in terms of both vote choices and world view (Van der Meer *et al.* 2012) – which would imply they will be affected less. At this point, however, these implications remain speculative, and more research is needed.

The refugee crisis has brought the relevance of the party cue-taking mechanism even more to the forefront. After all, a lack of alignment between voters and parties occurs not only when new issues or dimensions enter the political arena, but also when parties (suddenly) change their position. It appears that, in several countries, the refugee crisis has caused left-wing parties to partly reconsider their views on immigration, while many mainstream right-wing parties appear to take up stronger positions. The extent to which this will affect their supporters' positions, or whether it was actually preceded by such a shift, are very interesting questions that deserve further study.

Notes

1. There are actually two different situations in which party messages start resonating among their voters. The first occurs when citizens are already relatively outspoken on – and assign salience to – an issue, and subsequently change their views to become (even) more in line with the party they support. This could be called *adaptation*. In simple terms, this happens when voters vote for a party regarding issue A, and subsequently become more radical about A. However, a party can also influence its voters' views on 'peripheral' or non-central issues, regarding which many of its voters might be ambivalent, divided or not at all interested. This could be called *adoption*. In this case, citizens vote for a party because of issue A, and subsequently adopt this party's stance on B. However, we cannot disentangle these two, and are mainly interested in the shared outcome – stronger alignment between voters and parties on the immigration issue. We therefore refrain from making inferences about the exact mechanism and use the word 'adjusting' as an overarching term.
2. While we cannot distinguish, as noted in the previous footnote, between *adoption* and *adaptation*, there are good reasons to expect differences between

parties in their relative weight. In the case of Radical Right parties, for which immigration is the core issue (Mudde 2007), we expect voters to already be outspoken about the immigration issue, in terms of both position and salience. Among these voters, the main mechanism will be radicalisation. For Green voters, on the other hand, the immigration issue will probably be a substantial one but less of a key determinant of their vote. However, as noted before, we cannot disentangle the two empirically, and rather ask the question whether we observe increasing ideological congruence between parties and supporters.

3. More information about the LISS panel can be found at http://www.lissdata.nl.
4. There is one shortcoming that needs to be addressed here for the Swedish panel data, and that is that the survey question used to measure party sympathy at each time point differs somewhat across the specific panel waves. The two survey questions that are used are highly related but differ in perspective. In some panel waves, the question reads: 'if an election were to be held today, for which party would you vote?' while the other question reads: 'which party will you vote for in the upcoming election?' Comparing a contemporary question with a prospective one is not optimal. However, in a survey carried out by the Swedish National Election Study programme during autumn 2008, both questions were posed to the same respondents. For the established parties, the correlation between the two questions is r = 0.85. The main difference seems instead to be that around 25% of the respondents answer 'don't know' to the prospective question, while only 5% do the same to the concurrent question.
5. The core module was randomised in order to keep the survey short.

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