Political Attitudes in a Rapidly Changing European Landscape:

Methodological and Substantive Insights
from the ESS-Netherlands Panel Component

Sedef Turper

POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE

**METHODOLOGICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE INSIGHTS FROM
THE ESS-NETHERLANDS PANEL COMPONENT**

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DISSERTATION

to obtain
the degree of doctor at the university of twente,
on the authority of the rector magnificus,
Prof. dr. H. Brinksma,
on account of the decision of the graduation committee,
to be publicly defended
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Istanbul, April 2016
Sedef Turper

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POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE

1

The European political landscape has been rapidly changing due to the economic, political and social transformations that Europe has been facing over the last few decades. While political discussions in Europe had been marked by the financial crisis and large influx of immigrants in late 1990s and early 2000s, the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks and the Syrian refugee crises have shifted the focus of political discussions in many European countries. These recent developments sparked off heated public discussions on national security and immigration policies that have far reaching implications for social, economic and political policy making in almost all European countries.

Europe's changing social, political and economic landscape has also been reflected in the changing political attitudes of European publics as evinced by the increasing appeal of anti-immigrants parties and their party programs to voters in almost all European countries. Academic research into support for anti-immigrant parties draws attention to eroding legitimacy of political regimes and increasingly negative attitudes towards immigrants as possible explanations for increased vote shares of right-wing parties. Therefore, identifying and explaining trends in political attitudes, especially in attitudes towards political institutions and towards immigrants, have become crucial in understanding current European politics as the former signals the citizens' beliefs in legitimacy of the political system and the latter is considered to be the basis of policy appeal of right-wing parties.

The European Social Survey (ESS), a biannual cross-sectional survey fielded in more than 30 countries, provides researchers with valuable opportunities to chart and explain such trends in political attitudes of European publics. Analysis of the ESS data covering the time period between 2002 and 2014 reveals that European citizens' levels of trust in political institutions and immigration policy preferences have significantly changed over the last decade (Boelhouwer, Kraaykamp, & Stoop, 2016). However, as it is the case with any cross-sectional survey with non-experimental design, the ESS study has a couple of methodological shortcomings especially for identifying the micro-level attitude change patterns and the causal mechanisms that account for associations between political attitudes. Firstly, the cross-sectional design of the ESS has certain limitations in identifying the patterns of change separately from measurement errors, and in shedding light on the micro-level attitude change processes. While cross-sectional measures of political attitudes provide a general overview of aggregate trends in political attitudes, it only becomes possible to simultaneously inspect the stable trait, attitude change, and measurement error components of observed attitudes, and hence, to distinguish between genuine attitude change and attitude uncertainty by utilizing panel studies with a minimum of

three waves (Alwin, 2007, 2009). Secondly, non-inclusion of experimental treatments in the survey design of the ESS imposes certain limitations on the researchers' ability to clarify the causal mechanisms that bring about various political attitudes. Although the cross-sectional design of the ESS study provides researchers with attitudes measured before and after naturally occurring events, and hence allows for identification of causal order for observed associations between various variables, the inferences on causal mechanisms are still "threatened by history, or the possibility that an event other than the one of interest to the researcher might have caused the attitude change" (Holbrook, 2011, p. 145). Survey experiments, like those conducted in the current research, however, open up new avenues for investigating political attitudes in a way that overcomes the shortcomings of observational survey research and provide researchers with complementary data that facilitate the interpretation of causal mechanisms.

The *Panel Component of ESS in the Netherlands*¹, that constitutes the primary source of data for the current thesis, is a developmental project that aims at overcoming the shortcomings of ESS study design. The *Panel Component* is a four-wave panel study consisting of a repeated core module and supplementary survey experiments on political attitudes. This thesis is primarily based on the longitudinal and the experimental data from the panel study, and its aim is two-fold. On the one hand, it aims at investigating ways of improving political attitudes research by employing robust analytical strategies that identify attitude change patterns separately from measurement errors for examining citizens' attitudes towards political institutions and democratic regime. On the other hand, it aims at thoroughly investigating the causes and consequences of attitudes towards immigrants by means of innovative survey experiments. As such, this study contributes to existing knowledge on the study of political attitudes while at the same time and equally importantly, it contributes to public opinion research as the methodological findings would be applicable to attitudes research in general.

This introductory chapter begins by presenting an overview of the research questions within the framework of theory and previous research on political attitudes and survey methodology. Subsequently, the technical terminology that is central to the current study is described. The introductory chapter concludes with an overview of the studies that are conducted within the context of current thesis.

¹ *Panel Component of European Social Survey* is funded by Dutch Research Foundation (NWO) under the grant number 471-09-003, and the research project is based at the University of Twente.

1.1 Political Attitudes and Political Sophistication: Attitude Stability, Attitude Change and Measurement Errors

In the field of political attitudes research in particular, and the public opinion research in general, standardized attitude measures are employed for studying the trends in and the relationships between the attitudes in the general public. This practice, however, makes an implicit assumption that every member of the population can hold meaningful attitudes and those attitudes can be captured and reflected by the attitude measures employed. Yet, in the field of public opinion research, whether the mass public holds consistent and meaningful political attitudes remains unclear. Sceptics suggest that the mass public is incapable of holding meaningful and consistent attitudes evidenced by response instability observed in survey data. Schumpeter ([1942] 2006) argued that the typical citizen lacks interest in and knowledge of politics and his/her judgments of political matters are manufactured through 'political advertising'. Therefore, he suggests, political attitudes of general public are incoherent in nature and susceptible to change. This criticism was put forward most incisively by Converse ([1964] 2006) in a well-known study when he argued that the mass public is generally ignorant about politics and a majority of respondents tends to formulate their opinions on the spot on a random basis. His findings demonstrate that a majority of the public expresses strikingly inconsistent policy preferences in subsequent waves and their responses within the waves are also logically incoherent. In the light of this study, Converse concluded that only a small group of elites holds coherent attitudes, while most of the public displays "non-attitudes". Schumpeter's propositions and Converse's confirmatory findings aroused a great deal of attention among scholars, especially among political scientists, as they challenged the main postulates of normative theories of democracy in which the majority of the mass public, if not all, is assumed to have deliberate preferences and be able to communicate them by casting their votes at elections. With its rather unpleasant, yet striking implications for the normative theories of democracy, the 'ignorance of mass public' thesis has been called into question and stimulated a growing body of literature on potential explanations for inconsistency of survey responses.

The discussion on whether or not mass publics can hold stable and coherent attitudes is closely linked to the quality of the measures used, since the inadequacy of survey measures has been put forward as one of the possible reasons for observed instability and inconsistency of respondents' attitudes. In other words, some scholars attributed the observed response inconsistency to measurement errors that are in play and hence proposed a counterargument to the 'non-attitudes' proposition. They suggested that public opinion is considerably stable and predictable at the aggregate level (Page & Shapiro, 1992). Therefore, any observed response inconsistencies can be attributed to the inadequacy of the methods employed in measurement (Achen, 1975; Erikson, Mackuen,

& Stimson, 2002; Erikson, 1979; Judd & Milburn, 1980). Erikson (1979) pointed out that at the aggregate level, attitudes display a great level of stability and conceal meaningful attitude change patterns over time. He proposed this to be evidence for the existence of random measurement error which is salient at individual level yet cancelled out at aggregate level. Achen (1975) also illustrated that over time measures are highly stable once corrected for measurement error.

These two lines of reasoning in the field of public opinion research generated a substantive body of literature and it continues to be one of the major debates in the public opinion research with important normative implications. The current research intends to contribute to the discussion on whether the mass public holds consistent and stable political attitudes. To this end, the current study focuses on the differences in the levels of stability of political attitudes and susceptibility to measurement errors among high and low political sophistication groups by employing the recently developed quasi-Markov simplex approach which makes it possible to distinguish between stable trait, over-time change and measurement error components of attitude measures (Alwin, 2007, 2009). Through the investigation of the differences in attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns across political sophistication groups, the current study examines how much of the observed attitude change can be attributed to measurement errors and tests the 'non-attitudes of mass public' proposition by comparing levels of attitude stability among low and high political sophistication groups.

As mentioned, the quasi-Markov simplex approach utilized in the current study allows for simultaneous inspection of stable trait, over-time change and measurement errors components of attitudes and hence for evaluation of measurement quality and attitude change at the same time. However, despite the many merits of this approach, the evidence it provides for the mechanisms through which attitude change and measurement errors take place is indirect and needs to be verified with findings shedding light on cognitive processes. Moreover, it is also necessary to test some of its underlying assumptions, such as independence of non-adjacent measurements, since these assumptions sometimes might be unrealistic. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no attempt so far to examine to what extent the simplex method separates error and change on the basis of cognitive evidence.

In order to address this gap in the survey methodology literature and provide evidence for the cognitive foundations of attitude change and susceptibility to measurement errors, current study further adopts a cognitive interview approach and undertakes an (in) consistency experiment in order to provide direct evidence needed to complement the findings of the quasi-Markov simplex analysis of attitude change and measurement errors.

1.2 Political Trust and Political Sophistication: A Critical Look at Common Analytical Strategies

Political trust is generally defined as citizens' confidence in political institutions and it is considered to be an important indicator of political legitimacy. Trust in the political institutions of a country constitutes a reservoir of good will for when the day-to-day performance of the regime fails to meet expectations, and hence, it is regarded as an essential component of the civic culture that is necessary for stability of democratic systems (Almond & Verba, 1963; Easton, 1975).

Given its crucial implications for the stability of democratic regimes, seemingly declining levels of political trust in Western democracies over the last couple of decades have attracted considerable scholarly attention (Dalton, 2004, 2005; Klingemann, 1999). The presumed decline of political trust is often attributed to long-term processes of modernization and globalization, and the discussion is centred on the relationship between political trust and political sophistication. According to the modernization theory, individuals become increasingly better educated and more interested in politics, yet at the same time, their respect for traditional authorities and institutions erode with modernization, and these developments lead to a growing dissatisfaction of higher-educated citizens with the working of the political system (Aarts, Thomassen, & van Ham, 2014; Dalton, 2004; Thomassen, 2005), which translates into a decrease in the political trust levels of highly educated and politically interested individuals. Economic globalization, on the other hand, is expected to have negative consequences for the lower strata of the labour market which tend to be the lower-educated citizens, and it is expected that the negative experiences of less educated citizens who in the process become less competitive on the labour market in turn lead to a decrease of political trust among this group (Dalton, 2005). To put it briefly, both lines of theories expect there to be gap between the political trust levels of highly and less sophisticated individuals, but the over-time developments in trust for these groups to differ considerably.

The empirical studies into political trust confirm that highly and less sophisticated individuals differ in their levels of political trust (Bovens & Wille, 2010; Listhaug & Wiberg, 1995). However, these empirical studies often utilize analytical strategies that are criticized for making a couple of unrealistic assumptions that jeopardize the robustness of statistical findings (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007, pp. 314–15), and hence, the neglect of potential measurement problems of political trust raises doubts about the findings of these earlier studies documenting the gap between the levels of political trust among high and low sophistication groups. Therefore, the current study investigates to which extent the differences between the political trust levels of highly and less sophisticated

individuals may be attributed to methodological artefacts, in particular shortcomings in the measurement of political trust.

1.3 Attitudes towards Immigrants and Immigration Policy Preferences

The study of attitudes towards immigration has far-reaching implications for the policy making in all European countries as Europe faces increasing numbers of internal and external immigrants. Immigration policies attempting to deal with the increasing number of immigrants have become a dominant issue that marks election campaigns and public discussions in many European countries as they witnessed large inflows of immigrants over the last few years (Card, Dustmann, & Preston, 2005). Previous research has firmly established that immigration-related attitudes are closely linked to the levels of support for right-wing parties, which are gaining power in many European countries (Knigge, 1998; Lewis-Beck & Mitchell, 1993; Lubbers, Scheepers, & Wester, 2002). Consequently, public attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy preferences have become even more crucial in understanding contemporary European politics and immigration policy outcomes. And it has become a vital necessity to understand the underlying dynamics of the relationship between the immigrant groups and the local residents in order to produce well-informed immigration policies.

Research on attitudes towards immigrants has a long-standing tradition in the social sciences. Previous research on attitudes towards immigrants is mainly shaped by two prominent streams of theories, namely; the realistic group conflict theory and the social identity theory. These two perspectives on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy preferences are mainly concerned with threat perceptions and their implications for natives' attitudes towards immigrants who are conceptualized as out-group members. In other words, threat perceptions constitute the cognitive underpinnings of these two theories that are frequently employed in the study of immigration-related attitudes. These theories are often employed in the individual level analysis of the increasing public support for more exclusionary immigration policies and prejudice against immigrant groups through employment of threat frames.

Realistic group conflict theory, also referred as group conflict theory, focuses on the inter-group relations and the role of competition over resources in breeding inter-group hostility (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1983; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). It suggests that when groups engage in a competition over conflicting goals, the members of the out-group will be unfavourably stereotyped since they would constitute a real or perceived threat to collective interests of dominant group (Jackson, 1993). In most group conflict theories, the source of conflict is hypothesized to be a clash of rival economic interests (Hardin, 1995). Realistic group

conflict theory, as it is applied to immigration studies, suggests that immigrant groups pose a threat to economic interests of the dominant group members as they enter into a competition over scarce resources. From a realistic group conflict theory perspective, prejudice against immigrants is argued to be a consequence of holding the subordinate group accountable for the economic hardships by the dominant group members. Within the context of immigration attitudes research, economic threat conditions are usually conceptualized as competition over job positions and tax increases necessary to cover the costs of growing demands for social security benefits. The empirical findings of previous studies confirm the role of objective and perceived economic threat conditions as catalysers of anti-immigrant attitudes (Austin & Worchel, 1979; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Malchow-Møller, Munch, Schroll, & Skaksen, 2008; Quillian, 1995).

Social identity theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of cultural threats in shaping immigration related attitudes and policy preferences. Social identity theory postulates that individuals' self-identity usually relies on the groups they belong to, and since they strive for a positive self-perception, they often positively evaluate groups that constitute basis of their social identity (Tajfel, 1981) and evaluate other groups negatively (Brewer, 2001). In the study of immigration-related attitudes, social identity theory hypothesizes that anti-immigrant attitudes are mainly driven by the beliefs that the immigrants are posing a threat to cultural unity of the society by introducing distinct cultural practices, and that immigrants are unwilling to 'fit in' the native society. Many studies document that perceptions of social and cultural threat play an important role in shaping attitudes towards immigrants (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Schneider, 2008; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004).

Although an extensive amount of previous research has explored the role of economic and cultural threat perceptions in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments towards various immigrant groups, only a handful of studies examine the role of economic and cultural threats as cues for evaluating individual immigrants (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013), and to our knowledge no previous research examined the impact of individual characteristics of immigrants on immigration-related attitudes in the Netherlands. Addressing this gap, the current study expands the scope of previous studies on attitudes towards individual immigrants to the previously unexplored Dutch case, and examines the role of economic and cultural characteristics of individual immigrants in shaping evaluations of individual immigrants in the Netherlands and in the USA.

Furthermore, although studies focusing on economic and cultural threat perceptions profoundly contribute to our understanding of the factors that affect immigration-related attitudes and policy preferences, one major pitfall of these studies is that they overlook the

impact of newly emerging security concerns on immigration-related attitudes. Security threats are increasingly employed in the political discourse and in the media coverage of immigration issue over the last few years. Recent studies exploring the influence of security threats on immigration-related attitudes illustrate that increasing concern over 'national security' threats leads to more restrictive immigration policies (Bigo, 2002) and exclusionary public opinion towards immigrants (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012). These studies hint that the security threat framework can contribute to our existing knowledge on immigration-related attitudes, yet, they focus solely on aggregate-level, life and property threatening risks that are rare and highly destructive such as events on 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks. The impact of perceived threats to security, which are less destructive, but more likely, on the other hand, is still an understudied area in research on attitudes towards immigrants. Therefore, the current study addresses this gap by investigating the impact of minor threat perceptions on immigration-related attitudes. To explore the factors that affect attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy preferences, the current study examines the expectations from economic and security threat frames in a comparative perspective and subsequently, elaborates further on the extent to which minor individual and collective threats to bodily integrity and property ownership are affecting immigration-related attitudes in the Netherlands.

1.4 Values, Attitudes and Opinions

This section aims at introducing the readers with the conceptual inventory of public opinion research in order to help them to follow the nuances between the concepts that are central to current study. The conceptual inventory of public opinion research consists of various concepts such as values, attitudes, and opinions. Campbell (1963) describes values, attitudes, and opinions as acquired behavioural dispositions, which he defines as mental residues produced as a result of some transaction with the environment. These mental residues, which are acquired through first time encounters with new objects, predispose individuals to provide consistent responses in subsequent encounters with the same or similar objects. These acquired behavioural dispositions not only provide the basis of consistent responses to similar objects but they also influence the development of other dispositions by channelling individual's attention towards certain objects and creating tendencies to respond these objects in particular ways.

Being defined as behavioural dispositions, the distinction between these constructs (values, attitudes and opinions) is often overlooked and they are mostly employed indiscriminately and interchangeably. However, although these constructs share much in common and they are closely linked to one another, interchangeable and indiscriminate use of these concepts leads to confusing theoretical arguments and misleading interpretation of

empirical findings (Bergman, 1998). Therefore, these constructs need to be defined clearly on the basis of their distinguishing characteristics.

Values are defined as relatively stable beliefs that constitute the principal unpinning of an individual's perceptions, evaluations and behaviours (Morris, 1956; Pepper, 1958; Rokeach, 1973; Scott, 1965). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) point out that values transcend specific situations but at the same time they guide evaluations of specific situations and they channel the appropriate course of action in given settings. In other words, values can be considered as a set of stable and broad behavioural predispositions that constitutes the basis of context specific evaluations and behaviours. However, it should be stressed that the relationship between values and lower order constructs such as attitudes, opinions and preferences is not deterministic. Earlier research illustrated that the relationship between values and attitudes is mediated by various factors such as value importance (Feather, 1995; Stern, Kalof, Dietz, & Guagnano, 1995) and self-monitoring (Meliema & Bassili, 1995), and values cannot always predict attitudes and behaviours of individuals. To put it simply, although values may shape attitudes and behaviours, it is also possible that two individuals holding the same values might evaluate the same object differently and respond to the same situation in a different way.

Attitudes, on the other hand, are defined in variety of ways in the literature and there is no universally agreed-upon definition of an attitude despite the long tradition of attitude research. Various definitions of attitudes, however, emphasize the affective component of it and define attitudes primarily in terms of evaluation of an object (Ajzen, 2001; Anderson & Fishbein, 1965; Eagly & Chaiken, 1992; Osgood, Succi, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Shaw & Wright, 1967; Sherif & Sherif, 1971). Attitudes are considered as 'enduring positive or negative feelings about some person, object or issue' (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 7) and they are often assumed to vary not only in terms of their direction but also in their intensity (Alwin, 2007, p. 31). Therefore measures of attitudes often attempt to measure attitudes on a continuum which allows respondents to express both the direction and the degree of favourability of their evaluations.

The distinction between attitudes and opinions is disputable as these two concepts are often used interchangeably to refer to the same construct, namely evaluations of objects. Earlier theorists advocated opinions to be different constructs than attitudes and they proposed to draw the line between attitudes and opinions by referring to the presence or absence of the affect component of the evaluation (Ajzen, 1988; Shaw & Wright, 1967). Accordingly they suggested that attitudes can be distinguished from opinions by virtue of having an affective component whereas opinions can be referred as emotion-free evaluations of objects. However this distinction has been subject to criticism in the light of recent cognitive studies presenting affect component as an inextricable part of

all sorts of evaluations (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Lazarus, 1982). Therefore, in the absence of a clear distinction between attitudes and opinions, they will be treated as synonyms for the same construct and they will be employed interchangeably to refer evaluations of objects in the current study.

1.5 Chapter Structure and Contents

In this dissertation political attitudes are explored from both a methodological and a substantive standpoint. On the methodological side, political attitudes are decomposed into stable trait, attitude change and measurement error components by a quasi-Markov simplex model as proposed by (Alwin, 2007) in order to develop an understanding of micro-level attitude change processes while at the same time investigating reliability of political attitude measures. The statistical inferences on measurement quality and micro-level attitude change processes are also supplemented by experiments designed to verify the cognitive foundations of attitude change and measurement error. The attitude model developed in and the insights from the methodological part of the research are then utilized in the inspection of substantive research questions on the relationship between political trust and political sophistication. The causes and consequences of attitudes towards immigrants are also explored through innovative survey experiments conducted as part of the panel study.

Chapter 2 will focus on the research design of the panel study and it will briefly introduce the supplementary datasets utilized in the current research. The chapter will provide detailed information on the panel design, sample characteristics and the experimental design of the panel study. The following two chapters in the first part of the study will address methodological research questions on attitude stability and measurement quality. Chapter 3 will examine the political attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns among high and low political sophistication groups. This part of the thesis will start with the investigation of the differences between high and low political sophistication groups in terms of their levels of susceptibility to measurement errors and attitude change through a quasi-Markov simplex analysis with four-wave panel data. Next, the findings of the (in)consistency experiments designed for exploring the cognitive foundations of attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns across sophistication groups will be presented. The section will conclude with the discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the research findings. Chapter 4 will build upon the discussion presented in Chapter 3, and revisit the relationship between political sophistication and political trust in order to explore to which extent the differences between the political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups may be attributed to the methodological artefacts, in particular shortcomings in the measurement of political trust.

The next two chapters will concentrate on attitudes towards immigrants. Chapter 5 will explore the impact of economic and cultural threat considerations on attitudes towards immigrants through the vignette experiments. Chapter 6 will open up with a comparison between the explanatory power of economic and safety threat frames in explaining immigration-related attitudes and will further explore the role of various individual and collective safety threats in shaping attitudes towards immigrants. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation with a general discussion of the main conclusions which can be drawn from individual chapters.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The empirical basis of the studies that comprise this dissertation consists of a panel study and various survey experiments. In the current research, various data sets are utilized. The *Panel Component of European Social Survey* in the Netherlands constitutes the primary source of data for the majority of the individual papers that constitute the empirical chapters. In addition to the panel data and the survey experiments conducted as parts of the panel study, the cross-sectional ESS data from the Netherlands is utilized to complement the analysis of the panel data in Chapter 4. Furthermore, vignette experiments conducted as parts of the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS Panel) in the Netherlands and the YouGov Panel in the USA constituted the empirical basis of the Chapter 5.

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the survey studies that are employed in the current dissertation. The chapter starts with a discussion of the *Panel Component*, and will provide detailed information on the panel design, sample characteristics and the experimental design of the panel study (Section 2.1). Section 2.2 will briefly introduce the cross-sectional bi-annual ESS in the Netherlands, and the chapter will conclude in Section 2.3 with a discussion of the experiments that have been conducted as parts of the LISS Panel and the YouGov Panel studies.

2.1 Panel Component of European Social Survey

Panel Component of European Social Survey is a developmental project aiming at extending the biannual cross-sectional ESS in the Netherlands and funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). While ESS aims at ‘charting and explaining the interaction between Europe’s changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations’ (Levecque, Ronda-Pérez, Felt, & Benavides, 2014, p. 67), the cross-sectional design of the survey has certain limitations in identifying the patterns of change separately from measurement errors. With the quasi-Markov Simplex model, developed about a decade ago, it becomes possible to simultaneously inspect the stable trait, attitude change, and measurement error components of observed attitudes by utilizing panel studies with a minimum of three waves (Alwin, 2007, 2009). Therefore, our *Panel Component* study is designed as a four wave panel study in order to overcome the shortcomings of the ESS in identifying the patterns of genuine attitude change.

The current panel study also accommodates survey experiments in order to shed light on the micro-level attitude change patterns and also substantively to explain attitudes towards immigrants. While the (in)consistency experiment aims at providing much-needed direct evidence for testing the assumptions of the quasi-Markov analysis of the panel data, the vignette experiments on attitudes towards immigrants aim at overcoming the methodological challenges inherent in the survey research on immigration attitudes.

2.1.1 Research Design

The first wave of the panel study is represented by the ESS round 5. Interviews of this round have been completed between October 2010 and December 2010 with the participation of 1829 respondents recruited by probability sampling of addresses and representative of the Dutch population over 16 years of age. At the end of this interview, all respondents have been asked for participation in the panel. Eventually 1501 respondents out of 1829 respondents of ESS round 5 agreed to take part in the panel study. A random selection of 500 respondents has been asked for face-to-face interviews and the remainder for web-based surveys. In order to enhance the coverage and participation rate, respondents without access to internet have also been offered face-to-face interviewing.

Figure 2.1 Research Design of the Panel Component of ESS

2.1.2 Overview of Panel Data

The sample characteristics over the four waves of the panel study are presented in Table 2.2. Inspection of table reveals that the percentage of male respondents was 45.7 for the first wave of the study and it slightly increased in the subsequent waves. The percentage of male respondents rose up to 46.9, 48.3, and 48.7 in the second, third and the fourth waves of the study, respectively. While the mean age was 50.1, 50.8, 50.6, and 51.3, the average years of formal schooling was recorded as 13.4 for the first wave, and as 13.9 for the subsequent waves of the panel study.

Table 2.1 Number of Respondents and Response Rates by Interview Method and Panel Waves

Method of Interview	Panel Wave 1 (ESS R5)				Panel Wave 2				Panel Wave 3				Panel Wave 4			
	Gross	Net	Response Rate		Gross	Net	Response Rate		Gross	Net	Response Rate		Gross	Net	Response Rate	
CAP	3048	1829	.60		500	406	.81		406	308	.76		308	284	.92	
CAWI	-	-	-		1001	671	.67		671	445	.66		445	363	.82	
Total	3048	1829	.60		1501	1077	.72		1077	753	.70		753	647	.86	

Figure 2.2 Experimental Design of the Panel Component of ESS-

Table 2.2 *Sample Characteristics by Panel Waves*

	Sample size (raw numbers)	Gender (perc. of males)	Age (mean, SD)	Years of formal schooling (mean, SD)
Panel Wave 1	1829	45.7	50.1 (17.5)	13.4 (4.3)
Panel Wave 2	1077	46.9	50.8 (16.6)	13.9 (4.2)
Panel Wave 3	753	48.3	50.6 (16.3)	13.9 (4.1)
Panel Wave 4	647	48.7	51.3 (16.3)	13.9 (4.1)

The comparison of initial and final samples in terms of key demographic variables suggests that panel mortality is not at random. While the differences in the mean levels of age are found not to be statistically significant, we observe that panel attrition rate is higher for female and less educated respondents when compared to their male and highly educated counterparts, respectively. This selective panel mortality is not uncommon and might have been expected in advance (Weisberg, 2005, pp. 161–162).

2.1.3 Experimental Design

The experimental design of the panel study comprised a core module and the survey experiments that accompanied the core module. The core module consisted of the measures of various political attitudes, and the full sample of the panel respondents have been asked to participate in the core module in all waves of the panel study. As illustrated in *Figure 2.2*, the survey experiments have been conducted as parts of the third and the fourth waves of the panel. The (in)consistency experiment has been conducted as part of the third wave of the panel study with a subsample of 158 respondents. While the first vignette experiment has been conducted in the third wave of the panel study with a subsample of 275 respondents randomly assigned to three experimental groups, the second vignette experiment has been conducted as part of the fourth wave with the full sample of respondents randomly assigned to four experimental groups.

2.1.3.1 Core Module

The repeated measures of political attitudes form the empirical basis of Chapter 3 that investigates political attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns among political sophistication groups, and also of Chapter 4 that explores the extent to which the differences between the political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups may be attributed to methodological artefacts. To this end, the full sample of panel respondents has been requested to complete the core module in all four waves of the panel study. The core module of the panel study consisted of questions comprising the political attitudes section of the ESS Round 5 core questionnaire, and included measures of political interest, trust in various institutions, electoral and other forms of participation, party allegiance,

political ideology, satisfaction with politics and public services, policy preferences and immigration attitudes.

More specifically, the module consisted of questions assessing political interest (1=very interested; 4=not interested at all), and measuring trust in seven institutions, namely; national parliament, legal system, police, politicians, political parties, European Parliament and United Nations (0=not trust at all; 10=complete trust). Electoral and other forms of participation are measured through questions asking whether the respondents have voted in the last elections (1=yes; 2=no; 3=not eligible to vote) and have engaged in any of the following activities during the last 12 months; contacting a politician, working in a political party or action group, working in another organization or association, wearing a campaign badge or sticker, signing a petition, taking part in a lawful public demonstration, and boycotting certain products (1=yes; 2=no). Party allegiance is measured through questions tapping on the political party that the respondents feel closer to than all the other parties, how close they feel to this party (1=very close; 4=not close at all), and whether or not they are members of any political parties (1=yes; 2=no). In the core module, political ideology is measured on an 11-point left-right scale where higher values indicate higher levels of conservatism (0=Left, 10=Right). For measuring respondents' levels of satisfaction with politics and public services, respondents have been asked to state how satisfied they are with each of the following: life in general, current state of economy, national government, the way democracy works in the country (0=extremely dissatisfied; 10=extremely satisfied), and also to indicate their opinions on the current state of education and health services (0=extremely bad; extremely good). Respondents' policy preferences have been measured by using their evaluations of the following four statements: (i) 'the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels'; (ii) 'gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish'; (iii) 'Political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned'; (iv) 'Modern science can be relied on to solve our environmental problems' (1=agree strongly; 5=disagree strongly). For assessing immigration policy preferences, respondents have been asked to state the extent that immigration should be allowed for (i) people of same race or ethnic group; (ii) people of different race or ethnicity; (iii) people from poorer countries (1=allow many; 4=allow none). Lastly, immigration attitudes have been measured through the questions asking whether immigration is bad or good for the country's economy (0=bad for the economy; 10=good for the economy), whether immigrants undermine or enrich country's cultural life (0=undermine cultural life; 10=enrich cultural life), and whether the country is made a worse or better place to live by the immigrants (0=worse place to live; 10=better place to live).

2.1.3.2 (In)Consistency Experiment

The (in)consistency experiment that is utilized in Chapter 4 has been conducted in the third wave of the panel study in order to explore the underlying mechanisms explaining self-reported attitude change by adopting a cognitive interview approach. To this end, a subsample of 158 respondents have first been introduced to the question on banning of political parties that wish to overthrow democracy with a five point ‘agree/disagree’ response scale. After providing an answer to the question, respondents have automatically been assigned to different treatment conditions depending on whether their responses were identical to or different from the responses they provided for the same question in the previous wave of the panel study. Subsequently, respondents whose responses were different from their responses in the previous wave have been assigned to ‘inconsistent group’, whereas, the respondents providing identical answers in both waves of the study have been assigned to ‘consistent group’.

Following this procedure, the respondents in the ‘inconsistent group’ have been reminded of their responses from the previous wave, and they have been requested to state whether or not their opinion on the subject matter has changed during the time elapsed between the two measures, or whether they think the reported inconsistency is due to a mistake in our database. The question is read as ‘According to our records, you replied this question with the response option of [*the response from Panel Wave 2*]. Did you change your opinion on banning of the parties that wish to overthrow democracy over the last eight months, or do you think this can be a mistake in our database?’, and response options are given in dichotomous format (1=opinion has changed, 2=it is a mistake in the database).

Respondents in the ‘consistent group’ have also been requested to respond to a similar question inquiring whether or not the respondents’ opinion on banning of parties that wish to overthrow democracy has changed during the time elapsed between the second and the third waves of the panel study or they think there has been a mistake in our database. However, instead of being reminded of their responses from the previous wave, respondents in the consistent group have been confronted with a set of pre-decided responses different from their own answers. In other words, although the respondents of the consistent group provided the same response in both waves, they have been told to have responded to the question differently in the previous wave of the study. As illustrated in *Table 2.3*, those respondents who said that they ‘agree strongly’ with the statement asserting that parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned in both waves of the study, have been told to have responded to the question with response option of ‘agree’ in the second wave of the panel study. In a similar vein, those respondents providing ‘agree’, ‘disagree’ and ‘disagree strongly’ responses in both waves of the study have been confronted with the pre-decided response options of ‘agree strongly’, ‘disagree

strongly' and 'disagree', respectively. Those respondents who chose the 'neither agree nor disagree' response option in both the second and the third waves of the study have been told to have responded to the question with a 'don't know' answer in the second wave. Similarly, those respondents who provided a 'don't know' answer in both waves have been told to have responded to the question with 'neither agree nor disagree' option in the second wave of the study.

After providing an answer to the question inquiring whether or not the respondents' opinion on banning of the parties that wish to overthrow democracy has changed during the time elapsed between the second and the third waves of the panel study, those respondents who stated that their opinions on the subject matter have changed have further been requested to provide reasons for their self-reported attitude change behaviour in an open ended question format in both experimental groups. These reasons for self-reported attitude change are also utilized for supplementing our analysis for identifying attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns.

Table 2.3 *Pre-decided Response Options for (In)Consistency Experiment*

Respondent's Answer	Pre-decided Replacement
Agree strongly	Agree
Agree	Agree strongly
Neither agree nor disagree	Don't know
Disagree	Disagree strongly
Disagree strongly	Disagree
Don't know	Neither agree nor disagree

2.1.3.3 Vignette Experiments

In order to investigate to what extent concerns about economic costs of immigrants and the threats to social law and order that those immigrants pose to the host society affect the level of support for individual immigrants and the views on their deservingness of punishment, we conducted two sets of vignette experiments conducted as parts of third and the fourth waves of the panel study in Chapter 6.

Vignette Experiment I. The vignette experiment conducted in the third wave of the panel study investigates the extent to which concerns about economic costs of immigrants and the threats to social law and order that immigrants pose to the host society affect the level of support for individual immigrants. To this end, a subsample of 275 respondents has been randomly assigned to three experimental groups. Respondents in each experimental condition have been presented with two brief vignette texts describing immigrants who placed a request for extending their residence permits. The vignettes manipulated

immigrants’ economic attributes as well as their levels of respect for law and order. Respondents have then been asked to decide whether they would approve or reject the residence permit extension application placed by the immigrant presented to them.

As presented in *Table 2.4*, we employed a 3*2 factorial design with six experimental conditions corresponding to three economic (low economic prospect, or medium economic prospect, or high economic prospect) and two respect-for-law-and-order (complete respect for law and order, or no complete respect for law and order) attribute treatments. The respondents in the first experimental group have been asked to evaluate law-abiding immigrants who want to apply for unemployment benefits once their resident permits are approved, and also to evaluate not-law-abiding immigrants who want to start up their own businesses. The respondents in the second experimental group have been asked to evaluate law abiding and not-law-abiding immigrants who want to seek a new job position and to apply for unemployment benefits, respectively. The vignettes presented to the respondents in the third experimental group featured law-abiding immigrants who want to start up their own businesses, and not-law-abiding immigrants who want to seek a new job position (Appendix A).

Table 2.4 *Experimental Treatments by Experimental Groups of the Vignette Experiment I*

Law Compliance	Economic Prospects		
	Low	Medium	High
Law-abiding	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Not law-abiding	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1

Vignette Experiment II. The second vignette experiment, which has been conducted as part of the fourth wave of the panel study, focuses on concerns over law and order, and it explores to what extent different types of minor criminal offenses that are frequently associated with immigrants affect the levels of support for individual immigrants and also the views on immigrant defendants’ deservingness of punishment in comparison to native defendants. To this end, the full sample of 619 respondents has been randomly assigned to four experimental groups. Respondents in each experimental condition have been presented with a brief vignette describing either an immigrant who placed an application to extend his residence permit, or a native citizen. The vignettes manipulated the criminal background of both the immigrants and the natives described in the vignettes. Respondents who have been presented with immigrant vignettes have first been asked to decide whether they would approve or reject the application for an extended residence permit. Secondly, they have been asked to indicate how severely they would like the immigrant to be punished provided that he would actually be proven guilty for committing the criminal offense described in the vignette. Respondents who have been

presented with vignettes featuring native citizens, on the other hand, have only been asked to indicate how severely they would like this person to be punished provided that he committed the described criminal offense.

As illustrated in *Table 2.5*, we employed a factorial design with eight experimental conditions corresponding to a 2×4 factorial design with two nationality (Dutch citizen, or non-naturalized immigrant), and four criminal offense (public property, or individual property, or public safety, or individual safety) treatments. We included one further experimental condition where the immigrant is depicted as not accused of any criminal activities. Respondents presented with this vignette have been requested only to state whether they would approve or disapprove the residence permit extension application placed by the immigrant described in the vignette, and they have not been presented with the severity of punishment question. While in three of the experimental groups respondents have been asked to evaluate two vignettes, respondents in the fourth experimental group have been asked to evaluate three vignettes.

Table 2.5 *Experimental Treatments by Experimental Groups of the Vignette Experiment II*

Citizenship Status	Criminal Background				
	Public Offense		Individual Offense		No Criminal Offense
	Safety	Property	Safety	Property	
Immigrant	Group 1	Group 2	Group 2	Group 1	Group 4
Native	Group 3	Group 4	Group 4	Group 3	-

Respondents in the first experimental group have been asked to evaluate two immigrants who are described as being accused of drunken driving and house squatting offenses in the public safety and individual property conditions, respectively. The vignettes presented to the respondents in the second experimental group corresponded to public property and individual safety experimental conditions, and the respondents in this experimental group have been asked to evaluate two immigrants who are described as being accused of making an exaggerated insurance claim and slight bodily assault, respectively. Respondents in the third experimental group have been presented with vignettes featuring two native citizens who are accused of drunken driving and house squatting offenses which correspond to public safety and individual property conditions, respectively. While the first vignette presented to the respondents in the fourth experimental group features an immigrant with no criminal records, the second and the third vignettes that this group respondents have been asked to evaluate feature native citizens who are accused of making an exaggerated insurance claim and slight bodily assault corresponding to public property and individual safety experimental conditions (Appendix B).

2.2 European Social Survey in the Netherlands

The cross-sectional ESS data from the Netherlands, covering the time period between 2002 and 2012, are used in Chapter 4 for the purpose of exploring the over-time changes in the relationship between political trust and sophistication. To this end, the full sample of respondents who participated in the second, third, fourth, fifth and the sixth rounds of the Dutch ESS study have been included in the analysis.

2.2.1 Research Design

For the study reported in Chapter 4 we utilized data from ESS Round 2, Round 3, Round 4, Round 5, and Round 6 in the Netherlands. In all waves of the study, respondents have been recruited by probability sampling of addresses, and the samples are representative of the Dutch population over 16 years of age. Interviews of the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth round of the ESS study in the Netherlands are completed with the participation of 1881, 1889, 1778, 1829, and 1845 respondents, leading to the response rates of 64.3, 59.8, 49.8, 60.0, and 55.1, respectively.

2.2.2 Overview of Data

The sample characteristics for ESS studies conducted between 2002 and 2012 are presented in *Table 2.6*. Inspection of the table reveals that male respondents comprise 41.6, 46.0, 46.0, 45.7, and 46.4 percent of the samples of the five consecutive waves of ESS (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012), respectively. While the mean age was 49.2, 48.6, 49.0, 50.0, and 51.1, the average years of formal schooling is recorded as 12.3, 13.3, 13.3, 13.4, and 13.6 in the final samples of second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth rounds of ESS, respectively.

2.3 LISS Panel and YouGov Panel Studies

The vignette experiments presented in Chapter 5, where the role of economic and cultural threat considerations on attitudes towards immigrants is explored, have been conducted as a parts of the LISS Panel and the YouGov Panel studies.

LISS Panel is an online household panel administered by CentERdata (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) through the Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences (MESS) Project funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

Table 2.6 *Sample Characteristics by ESS Rounds*

	Sample size (raw numbers)	Gender (perc. of males)	Age (mean, SD)	Years of formal schooling (mean, SD)
ESS Round 2	1881	41.6	49.2 (17.4)	12.3 (3.8)
ESS Round 3	1889	46.0	48.6 (17.7)	13.2 (4.6)
ESS Round 4	1778	46.0	48.9 (17.8)	13.3 (4.4)
ESS Round 5	1829	45.7	50.1 (17.5)	13.4 (4.3)
ESS Round 6	1845	46.4	51.0 (18.0)	13.6 (4.3)

The panel has been set up in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands, and it is based on The YouGov Panel Study. The YouGov Panel Study is an online panel recruiting panellists mostly through different forms of online advertising, and also by telephone-to-web and mail-to-web recruitment methods. The panel adopts a two-stage stratified sampling procedure, and mimics the random probability sampling method with in a large pool of online panel participants².

2.3.1 Research Design

For the vignette experiments in the Netherlands, a total number of 6657 LISS Panel respondents have been asked to take part in the experiment. The respondents have been informed that the research concerns the public's view on immigration and some closely related political issues. The fieldwork for the survey experiments has been conducted between 3 and 31 October 2011, and has been completed with the participation of 5049 respondents. The response rate for the study is 75.8 percent. For the vignette experiment in the USA 3428 respondents have been approached to take part in the study and the fieldwork has been completed with the participation of 2057 respondents in 2010. The response rate for the study is 60.0 percent.

2.3.2 Experimental Design

The vignette experiment conducted as part of the LISS and YouGov Panel studies investigates the extent to which economic and cultural threat considerations play a role in shaping attitudes towards immigrants. To this end, the respondents in both studies have been randomly assigned to 16 experimental groups. Following a set of questions assessing their immigration policy preferences and their beliefs about different immigrant groups, respondents in each experimental condition have been presented with a vignette briefly describing a potential immigrant accompanied by a photo of the immigrant described in the vignette. The vignettes manipulated the potential immigrant's economic and cultural attributes. After reading the vignette, respondents were asked to play the

² More information about the YouGov panel can be found at (Shanto Iyengar & Vavreck, 2012)

role of government officials and decide either to approve or reject the temporary work permit and citizenship requests made by the candidate presented to them.

The Dutch study design corresponds to a $2 \times 2 \times 4$ factorial design with two economic status (high or low status), two skin complexion (light or dark skin complexion), and four country of origin (Canadian, or Colombian, or Libyan, or Pakistani nationality) experimental conditions. The USA study design corresponds to a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design with two economic status (high or low economic status), two family dependents (none or three family dependents), two skin complexion (light or dark skin complexion), and two country of origin cultural (Kuwaiti or Mexican nationality) experimental treatments.

The country of origin, economic status and presence or absence of family dependents of the immigrants have been manipulated through the vignette text (Appendix C), whereas the skin complexion of the immigrants has been communicated through the visual images accompanying the texts presented to the respondents. In order to manipulate for skin complexion, we used a morphing procedure where the original images are blended with either a Eurocentric or an Afrocentric image (Appendix D). For this procedure, we selected different images for each immigrant group, and we generated images for light complexion condition by blending the original image of each immigrant with the Eurocentric image in the ratio of 6:4. In a similar vein, the images for the dark skin complexion condition are obtained mixtures of original immigrant images (60%) and the Afrocentric image (40%). While Dutch respondents in each experimental group have been asked to evaluate one immigrant, in the US study, each respondent has been asked to evaluate two immigrants (Appendix E).

2.3.3 Overview of Data

The sample characteristics for the LISS Panel and YouGov Panel studies are presented in *Table 2.7*. As illustrated in the table, male respondents comprised 46.4 percent of the LISS Panel sample and 51.4 percent of the YouGov Panel sample. The mean age was 49.9 and 51.4 in the Dutch and US samples, respectively. In the Dutch sample, respondents are highly evenly distributed across educational groups. While the respondents with no college degree comprised the 35.3 percent of the Dutch sample, respondents with some college education and with college diploma comprised 33.6 and 30.8 percent of the Dutch sample, respectively. In the USA, respondents with college degree constituted the largest group of respondents (36.8%) followed by respondents with no college degree (36.5%) and with some college education (26.0%).

Table 2.7 *Sample Characteristics of LISS Panel and YouGov Panel Studies*

	LISS Panel (the Netherlands)	YouGov Panel (United States)
Sample size (raw numbers)	5049	2057
Gender (perc. of males)	46.4	51.4
Age (mean, SD)	49.9 (17.5)	51.3 (15.4)
Education (percentages)		
No degree	35.3	36.5
Some college	33.6	26.0
College graduate	30.8	36.8

2.4 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the comprehensive overview of the *Panel Component of European Social Survey* in the Netherlands and various other survey studies that constitute the empirical basis of this dissertation. As illustrated in *Table 2.8*, the following chapter (Chapter 3) utilizes a simplex analysis of the core module of the panel study and a qualitative analysis of the (in)consistency experiment in order to explore the differences in attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns across political sophistication groups. Chapter 4 investigates to which extent the differences between the political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups may be attributed to the methodological artefacts by employing multi-group confirmatory factor analysis of the ESS data from the Netherlands covering the period between 2002 and 2012, and a simplex analysis of the core module of the panel data. While Chapter 5 utilizes logistic regression analyses of the vignette experiments conducted as parts of the YouGov and LISS Panel studies to investigate the extent that cultural and economic threat perceptions affect the level of support for immigrants, Chapter 6 explores the role of economic and safety threat perceptions in shaping attitudes towards immigrants by employing a logistic regression analysis of the vignette experiments conducted as part of the panel study.

Table 2.8 Organization of Empirical Chapters

	Part I		Part II	
	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Question	How much of the observed over-time attitude change stems from measurement error? Do attitude reliability and stability vary as a function of respondents' political sophistication levels?	To what extent the previously established differences between the political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups may be attributed to the methodological artefacts?	To what extent economic and cultural threat perceptions shape attitudes towards individual immigrants in the Netherlands and in the USA?	To what extent economic and safety threat perceptions shape attitudes towards individual immigrants in the Netherlands?
Data	Four-wave panel data (In)Consistency Experiments	ESS data for the Netherlands (2004-2012) Four-wave panel data	Vignette Experiments	Vignette Experiments
Analysis	Quasi-Markov simplex analysis Qualitative analysis	Multi-group confirmatory factor analysis Quasi-Markov simplex analysis	Logistic Regression	Logistic Regression

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND SOPHISTICATION: ATTITUDE CHANGE AND ATTITUDE UNCERTAINTY*

3

3.1 Introduction

The question of whether only the politically sophisticated can hold coherent and meaningful political attitudes remains central in the field of public opinion research. Attitudinal models ascribe a central role to political sophistication in explaining the organization of political attitudes in the general public. Accordingly, individuals with lower levels of political sophistication are theorized to differ from their more sophisticated counterparts in two ways. Firstly, given that unsophisticated individuals lack interest in and knowledge of politics, they are expected to rely more on political advertising in their judgments of political matters (Schumpeter [1942] 2006). Since these summary judgments advertised in the political discourse are not subject to frequent change, unsophisticated citizens are predicted to display lower levels of political attitude change when compared to their sophisticated counterparts who are more likely to be recipients of detailed political information, and who are hence more likely to update their political preferences in response to new information (Althaus, 2003). To put it differently, less sophisticated individuals are anticipated to display higher levels of attitude stability since they are less likely to update their political attitudes when compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts. Secondly, those less sophisticated individuals who are cognitively less engaged in politics are assumed to hold political considerations that are less coherent with one another (Converse, [1964] 2006; Luskin, 1987, 1990). Therefore once they are asked to express their opinions on political matters, their top-of-the-head considerations on which they base their judgments are expected to vary to a large extent depending on situational factors. This, in turn, is anticipated to lead to higher levels of random errors in responses of unsophisticated individuals in different occasions of measurement (Zaller, 1992). To put it simply, political attitude measures are expected to be affected by non-systematic measurement errors to a greater extent, and therefore to have lower levels of reliability among the less sophisticated.

The vast majority of empirical research into these theoretical expectations has focused on the differences in the extent to which political attitudes are stable and also in the extent to which those expressed opinions are affected by random errors. While earlier research mostly concentrated on inspection of responses to open ended questions (Converse, [1964] 2006), a great amount of later research concentrated on differences in the levels of political attitude stability and response consistency by examining correlations between

* Turper, S., & Aarts, K. (being prepared for submission). Political attitudes and sophistication: Attitude change and attitude uncertainty.

attitudes (Achen, 1975; Feldman, 1988; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Wayman & Stockton, 1983). Those procedures, however, have some methodological problems (for a review see Judd, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1981). The quasi-Markov simplex model overcomes the limitations of those earlier studies by allowing researchers to inspect attitude stability, over-time change and measurement error components. A substantive amount of recent research employed quasi-Markov simplex models to simultaneously evaluate the stability of underlying attitudes and inspect the extent to which the responses are affected by measurement errors (Alwin, 1989, 2007; Krosnick, 1991). However, despite the many merits of this approach, the evidence it provides for the mechanisms through which opinion change and measurement errors occur is indirect and needs to be verified from a cognitive perspective. Moreover, it is also necessary to test some of its underlying assumptions, such as the independence of non-adjacent measurements, since these sometimes might be unrealistic. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no attempt so far to examine to what extent the simplex method separates error and change on the basis of cognitive evidence. Addressing this gap, the current study investigates cognitive underpinnings of attitude change and susceptibility to measurement errors through an (in)consistency experiment adopting a cognitive interview approach.

In the current study, we employ the quasi-Markov simplex model to investigate the differences in the levels of stability of political attitudes and susceptibility to measurement errors among high and low political sophistication groups defined on the basis of political interest and cognitive sophistication. To this end, we use four-wave panel data obtained from European Social Survey *Panel Component* conducted between 2010 and 2012 in the Netherlands. In the second part of the study, we provide evidence for the cognitive foundations of opinion change and susceptibility to measurement errors through an (in)consistency experiment which adopt a cognitive interview approach. On the basis of this experiment, we provide much needed direct evidence to complement the findings of the quasi-Markov simplex analysis of attitude stability and measurement errors.

3.2 Theoretical Background and Previous Research

The discussion about whether the mass public displays non-attitudes remains central in the field of public opinion research. The debate has been triggered by Schumpeter as he put forward that the typical citizen lacks interest and knowledge of politics and his/her judgment of political matters are manufactured through ‘political advertising’ ([1942] 2006). According to Schumpeter, in political affairs that do not directly touch upon one’s private world people show “a reduced sense of responsibility, a lower level of energy of thought and greater sensitiveness to non-logical influences” ([1942] 2006, p. 257). In his well-known study, Converse ([1964] 2006) also suggested that the majority of the public

expresses strikingly inconsistent policy preferences in subsequent waves of panel studies and their responses within the waves are also logically incoherent. In the light of this study, he concluded that only a small group of politically sophisticated holds meaningful attitudes, while most of the public displays 'non-attitudes'. Schumpeter's propositions and Converse's confirmatory findings aroused a great deal of attention among scholars, especially among political scientists, as they challenged the main postulates of normative theories of democracy in which the majority of mass public, if not all, is assumed to have deliberate preferences and be able to communicate them by casting their votes at elections. With its rather unpleasant, yet striking, implications, the 'non-attitudes of mass public' thesis has been called into question and stimulated a growing body of literature exploring the link between political sophistication and organization of political opinions in the general public.

Political sophistication can be broadly defined as 'cognitive participation in politics' (Luskin, 2003) and more specifically, it refers to the 'quantity and organization of a person's political cognitions' (Luskin, 1987). Sophistication is considered to be crucial for understanding how people receive, organize, retrieve and use their political cognitions. Hence, many theoretical approaches suggest political sophistication to be one of the key explanatory variables for attitude stability and also for susceptibility to measurement errors.

In his highly influential work, Zaller (1992) ascribes a central role to political sophistication in explaining public opinion formation in his encompassing RAS (Reception-Acceptance-Sample) model. The basic assumption of the RAS model is that individuals store multiple and also conflicting considerations in their memories, and while expressing their opinions they retrieve a sample of 'on the top of their head' considerations. To form their opinions, individuals assess this sample of considerations by evaluating the proportion of favourable considerations for a particular opinion. Each time individuals are asked to state their opinions on a subject matter, they retrieve a sample of stored political considerations in their memory. According to this approach, if the stored political cognitions are less conflicting with one another, then the variation in their sampled considerations on different occasions would more likely be smaller. Therefore holding less conflicting and more coherent considerations in effect would lead to higher response consistency on different occasions of measurement.

However, the coherence of stored political considerations is considered to be strongly influenced by the level of political sophistication of the individual. More specifically, the sophisticated and unsophisticated individuals are expected to differ in the degree that their political considerations conflict with one another as these two groups of individuals are expected to differ in the ways they process information. The level of coherence between

stored opinions is affected by the information reception and acceptance processes. Zaller argues that political sophistication plays a role in the levels of reception and acceptance of considerations. He suggests that highly sophisticated citizens are more likely to pay attention to surrounding information, and therefore, they are more likely to be exposed to new information. If the individuals are selectively exposed to information that is already in line with their existing predispositions, this practice might reinforce their existing opinions. However, it is also likely that the increased level of information will also produce a more diverse set of considerations. With regards to acceptance, on the other hand, sophisticated individuals are also expected to be more critical about the information they encounter. In other words, highly sophisticated citizens are expected to assess the compatibility of the new information with the already existing predispositions and to be resistant to conflicting information. Therefore, one would expect sophisticated citizens to reject conflicting information unless they update their attitudes and opinions on the basis of that particular information.

To sum up, sophisticated individuals are anticipated to hold more coherent considerations as they will reject conflicting information, and when they do accept new information that is conflicting with their pre-existing beliefs they will update their attitudes to eliminate the conflict. In the light of these theoretical propositions, sophisticated and unsophisticated citizens are expected to differ in two ways: Firstly, because sophisticated individuals are more likely to be recipients of political information, they are expected to update their political attitudes more frequently than their less sophisticated counterparts, and therefore to display lower levels of political attitude stability when compared to less sophisticated (Althaus, 2003). Secondly, since sophisticated citizens are postulated to hold more consistent considerations, their sampled considerations on different occasions of interviewing are expected to vary to a lesser degree. This in turn suggests that their responses will be less affected by situational factors that causes random variation caused by measurement errors when compared to those of less sophisticated individuals (Zaller, 1992). To put it differently, highly sophisticated individuals are anticipated to express highly reliable but less stable attitudes, whereas less sophisticated individuals are expected to have less reliable but more stable attitudes. Therefore, both high and low sophistication groups are expected to display response inconsistency due, predominantly, to different factors: for the former response inconsistency is expected to stem from measurement errors whereas for the latter it is expected to be a result of attitude change.

Empirical studies linking political sophistication to opinion stability and susceptibility to measurement errors date back to early works of Converse ([1964] 2006). While a great amount of earlier research concentrated on differences in the levels of political attitude stability and response consistency by examining correlations between attitudes (Achen, 1975; Feldman, 1988; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Wayman & Stockton, 1983),

the recently developed quasi-Markov simplex approach overcomes the methodological problems of previous studies. Earlier research utilizing simplex models to explore levels of attitude stability among high and low sophistication groups illustrated that sophisticated respondents hold attitudes that are more stable over time when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts (Alwin, 1989, 2007; Feldman, 1988). A few studies using education as a proxy for political sophistication, however, demonstrate that low and high education groups are not significantly different in terms of stability of their political attitudes (Judd, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1981; Judd & Milburn, 1980). With regards to susceptibility to measurement errors, empirical findings are in agreement. Empirical findings demonstrate that sophisticated citizens' responses are less affected by random fluctuations and their responses are better representing their underlying attitudes (Alwin, 1989, 2007).

In the current study we explore the link between political sophistication on the one hand, and stability of political attitudes and reliability of political attitude measures in the mass public on the other hand. In the first part, we utilize quasi-Markov simplex models in order to simultaneously evaluate stability and reliability of attitudes towards the banning of political parties that wish to overthrow democracy, across sophistication groups. However, despite the many merits of simplex approach, the evidence it provides for the mechanisms through which opinion change and measurement errors occurs is indirect and needs to be verified from a cognitive perspective. Therefore, in the second part of the current study we further investigate the cognitive foundations of attitude change and susceptibility to measurement errors through a series of studies adopting experimental and cognitive interview approaches.

3.3 Theoretical Expectations

In the first part of the study we investigate whether there are differences between high and low sophistication groups in the extent to which political attitudes are stable and also in the extent to which those expressed opinions are affected by measurement errors. As we already discussed in the previous section, highly sophisticated individuals are expected to receive and process more political information than their less sophisticated counterparts, and hence also to update their political attitudes more frequently. Consequently, we expect highly sophisticated individuals to display attitude stability to a lesser extent than the less sophisticated individuals. We formulate our hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Less sophisticated individuals will hold more stable political attitudes compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts.

Although the less sophisticated group of individuals is expected to hold more stable attitudes, they are also expected to be more susceptible to measurement errors than their highly sophisticated counterparts. We expect their responses to be affected by random measurement errors to a larger extent, and hence we predict that the reliability of political attitude measures would be lower for the low sophistication group when compared to that of high sophistication group. Therefore we formulate our second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Responses of less sophisticated individuals will display higher levels of random variation as compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts.

3.4 Empirical Studies

3.4.1 Study I: Quasi-Markov Simplex Analysis

Data. The data used for the current study is obtained from *Panel Component of European Social Survey (ESS)* in the Netherlands³. This panel study started with ESS Round-5 in October 2010 with the participation of 1829 respondents recruited through probability sampling of addresses and representative of the Dutch population over the age 16. After completing the ESS survey, all the respondents were asked to take part in the panel study and 1501 of those respondents agreed to participate in the panel study. The subsequent waves of the study were conducted between May 2011 and January 2013 with eight month intervals in-between. The response rates for the panel study recorded as .60 for the initial ESS study and .72, .70 and .86 for the subsequent waves, respectively.

For the current study, we used list-wise deletion of missing values, which yielded a total sample of 613 respondents who participated in all four waves of the panel study. The final sample had a highly even gender distribution of 303 male (49.4%) and 310 female (50.6%) respondents, with a mean age of 51.7 (SD=15.95) and with an average of 13.9 (SD=4.11) years of formal schooling.

Variables. We assess political sophistication on the basis of educational attainment and level of interest in politics. Although education and political interest are not causally related to political sophistication, they are strongly correlated with sophistication (Althaus, 2003; Highton, 2009; Luskin, 1990). Accordingly, we measure sophistication in two categories (1=high; 2=low). As presented in *Table 3.1*, the high political sophistication group consists of those respondents who held a college or high vocational school degree⁴,

³ Panel Component of European Social Survey is a developmental project aiming at facilitating biannual cross-sectional ESS survey and funded by Dutch Research Foundation (NWO).

⁴ High vocational degree refers to a university diploma (WO, OU-certificate) or a diploma from a university of applied sciences (HBO).

and also expressed that they are very interested or quite interested in politics at the time of the first interview. The low political sophistication group, on the other hand, is composed of those respondents without a college or vocational degree and/or those who expressed little or no interest in politics. Consequently, the low political sophistication group consisted of 1337 respondents (73.1%), while 485 of those respondents are categorized into the high political sophistication group (26.5%)⁵.

The link between political sophistication and political participation is well-established in the political participation literature. Accordingly, politically sophisticated citizens are expected to display higher levels of political involvement compared to their less sophisticated counterparts (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Therefore, we test the validity of the political sophistication construct we utilize for the current study by examining the relationship between political participation and sophistication. In line with the expectations, we observe that high and low political sophistication groups differ in their levels of political involvement. As presented in *Figure 3.1*, highly sophisticated individuals engage in conventional and unconventional forms of political participation more often when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts; they have a higher turnout rate in the last elections, they more often work in political parties and other organizations and sign petitions.

Table 3.1 *Political Sophistication*

Education	Political Interest	
	Not interested at all/ A little interested	Interested/ Very interested
No university degree	L	L
University degree	L	H

Note. Cells marked with 'L' and 'H' represent low and high political sophistication groups, respectively.

We analyse the stability of policy preferences using the respondents' evaluations of the statement proposing that "political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned" (1=agree strongly; 5=disagree strongly). We choose this variable since attitudes

⁵ We were unable to categorize 7 cases that have missing values in either educational attainment or political interest variables. In the final sample we had 409 and 204 respondents in the low and high political sophistication groups, respectively. The overall panel attrition rate is observed to be higher among low political sophistication group (.69) compared to high sophistication group (.58). Comparison of initial and final samples in terms of key demographic variables reveals that missings are at random for both low and high sophistication groups. However, we observed that those less sophisticated respondents who stayed in the panel and participated in all four waves were slightly more involved in politics than those who opted out.

towards banning of parties that wish to overthrow democracy is one of the core political attitudes that is closely linked to discussions on political legitimacy.

Figure 3.1 *Political Participation in Low and High Sophistication Groups*

Model. The quasi-Markov simplex model employed in the current study has also been referred as the “quasi-simplex model” (Saris & Andrews, 1991) or simply as “simplex model” (Alwin, 1989). The model was first suggested by Heise (1969) as an alternative to the parallel test model of reliability which is likely to overestimate reliability of survey items due to memory effects. The proposed quasi-Markov simplex model overcomes the recall effects by allowing a considerable amount of time between the interviews while also allowing latent attitudes to change in between measurements, unlike the parallel test model.

In the model observed variables are modelled as a function of both measurement errors and true traits. The model assumes a lag-1 or Markovian process, meaning that the distribution of trait variables at time t is dependent only on the distribution at time $t-1$ and not directly dependent on the earlier distributions. Using structural equation modelling techniques, the quasi-Markov simplex model is specified as:

$$Y_t = \lambda_t \tau_t + \varepsilon_t \quad (1) \qquad \tau_t = \beta_{t,t-1} \tau_{t-1} + \zeta_t \quad (2)$$

Where:

Y_t is the observed variable at time t

λ_t is the reliability of Y_t

τ_t is the latent attitude (true score for Y_t)

ε_t is the random error component of Y_t

$\beta_{t, t-1}$ is the stability of latent attitude during the period from $t-1$ to t .

ζ_t is the change over time in the latent attitude

The first part of the model suggests over-time measures to be tau-equivalent⁶ except for the true score change, and measurement error is assumed to be random. The second equation defines a lag-1 or Markov process with a random disturbance term allowing for true score change over time. In order for this model to be identified further restrictions need to be imposed on the model. It is possible to estimate parameters by assuming either equal reliability over time (Heise, 1969) or equal measurement error variances (Wiley & Wiley, 1970). In the current analysis measurement error variances are restricted to be equal over-time and reliability estimates are allowed to vary in each wave. Although the quasi-Markov simplex approach has been subjected to criticism on the grounds that the model produces biased estimates of reliability when attitude stability is low (Coenders, Saris, Batista-Foguet, & Andreenkova, 1999), under the condition of high stability of the true scores and the assumption of non-violation of the Markov process, panel studies with at least three waves allow researchers to estimate over-time attitude stability parameters. As far as the relatively short period of time elapsed between our measures is concerned, we expect attitude stability to be high and therefore we argue that quasi-Markov simplex model is appropriate for this inquiry.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the path diagram of a quasi-Markov simplex model for a four wave panel design. In the model, the observed variables y_1, y_2, y_3 and y_4 denote the measurement of the same trait with identical methods in each wave of the panel whereas τ_1, τ_2, τ_3 and τ_4 correspond to the true scores for these variables. The parameters $\lambda_{11}, \lambda_{22}, \lambda_{33}$ and λ_{44} are the reliability estimates for the relevant measures. Variances of true traits represent true score change over time. The parameters β_{21}, β_{32} and β_{43} can be interpreted as stability coefficients of the true traits over time.

In the four wave model where we assume equal error variances over time, there are eight different pieces of information to be estimated by the model, namely; latent trait error variances ($\zeta_1, \zeta_2, \zeta_3, \zeta_4$), stability coefficients ($\beta_{21}, \beta_{32}, \beta_{43}$) and one single error variance (ε_t).

⁶ Tau-equivalence means time invariant or constant over time, and the tau-equivalence of the measures refers to the assumption that the true score of the variable at T_{t-1} and T_t are the same.

Figure 3.2 *Quasi-Markov Simplex Model*

Results. We first start our analysis by inspecting observed frequencies of consistent and inconsistent responses provided by low and high political sophistication groups in each of the two subsequent waves of the panel study. In our analysis, the consistent category consists of the respondents who provided identical responses in two subsequent waves, whereas the inconsistent group includes cases of which the responses from two consecutive waves were observed not to be identical. *Table 3.2* presents the frequency of consistent and inconsistent responses observed among high and low sophistication groups for each of the three time intervals elapsed between our measures. Accordingly, the time interval denoted by t_1 - t_2 indicates a comparison of the responses provided in the first and second waves of the panel. In a similar vein, the intervals denoted by t_2 - t_3 and t_3 - t_4 refer to comparisons of the responses from the second and third waves with the responses from third and fourth waves, respectively.

Inspection of *Table 3.2* reveals that response inconsistency is very frequently observed among both sophistication groups. Approximately half of the respondents in low and high sophistication groups, alike, provided inconsistent responses in subsequent waves of the panel study. More specifically, the percentage of the less sophisticated respondents providing inconsistent responses in two consecutive waves of the panel study ranged between 53.4 and 57.8. Highly sophisticated respondents are found to be slightly less likely to display response inconsistency when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. The percentage of those highly sophisticated respondents providing different responses in two consecutive waves ranged between 47.6 and 53.5. However, the differences between the percentages of high and low political sophistication group respondents providing

Table 3.2 *Response Inconsistency by Political Sophistication (raw numbers; percentages)*

	t1-t2		t2-t3		t3-t4	
	Low Sophistication	High Sophistication	Low Sophistication	High Sophistication	Low Sophistication	High Sophistication
Consistent	297 (42.2)	155 (46.5)	217 (44.8)	118 (49.6)	197 (46.6)	108 (52.4)
Inconsistent	406 (57.8)	178 (53.5)	267 (55.2)	120 (50.4)	226 (53.4)	98 (47.6)
N	703	333	484	238	423	206

Note. ‘Consistent’ category consists of the respondents who provided identical responses in two subsequent waves, and ‘inconsistent’ category consists of the respondents who provided different responses in two subsequent waves.

inconsistent responses are found not to be statistically significant. In other words, we find that high and low sophistication groups are equally likely to display response inconsistency, and that approximately half of the respondents in both sophistication groups provide different responses for the same question in measurement occasions that are eight months apart.

However, inspection of response inconsistency on its own, cannot account for the underlying mechanisms that bring about inconsistency. As discussed before, observed inconsistency might be an indicator of a genuine attitude change as well as an indicator of measurement error. In other words, the observed inconsistency of the responses from two consecutive waves might indicate that respondents updated their opinions about the subject matter on the basis of new information they acquire during the time elapsed between two measurement occasions. In that case, response inconsistency would be an indicator of genuine attitude change. Alternatively, observed inconsistency might be pointing at existence of measurement errors that occur during the processes of reporting the attitude. To put it differently, although the respondent might have identical attitudes in two measurement points, his or her responses might not be identical due to some ambivalence in the question wording or due to contextual factors. Therefore, we need to further investigate whether the observed response inconsistency among high and low sophistication groups are accounted for by attitude change and measurement errors to the similar extents.

To explore the factors explaining observed response inconsistency, we employ a multi-group analysis of the quasi-Markov simplex model across low and high sophistication groups. In our first model, we allow the model to produce different reliability and stability estimates for the two groups. In the second model, we restrict the error variances of observed variables to equality across groups in order to test the hypothesis suggesting that the reliability of our measures is equal for high and low sophisticated groups. The expectation is that if the error variances, and hence, reliability of our measures significantly differ for low and high sophistication groups, then the restrictions we imposed on the model will deteriorate the model fit considerably. To put it differently, we compare χ^2 fit statistics of the Model 1 and Model 2 for testing the null hypothesis asserting that reliability estimates for low and high sophistication groups are equal.

As presented in *Table 3.3*, the comparison of model fit statistics from the first ($\chi^2=3.962$, $df=4$) and the second model ($\chi^2=7.746$, $df=5$) reveals that reliability estimates for the low and the high sophistication groups differ significantly ($\chi^2(1)=4.055$, $p=0.044$). In other words, the results indicate that, in one of our sophistication groups, our questions can relatively better reflect underlying attitudes of the respondents and are less affected by random measurement errors.

Table 3.3 *Global Fit Measures for Models Testing for Equal Reliability and Stability across Sophistication Groups*

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Unconstrained	3,691	4	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.014
Equal Reliability	7,746	5	0.992	0.981	0.042	0.026
Equal Reliability & Stability	25,193	12	0.961	0.961	0.060	0.072

We hypothesize the reliability of the survey measures to be higher for the highly sophisticated respondents. Therefore, we further inspect the reliability estimates for high and low sophistication groups. *Table 3.4* presents the reliability estimates for high and low sophistication groups at each of the four measurement occasions. The inspection of the reliability scores for sophistication groups confirms our theoretical expectations. The reliability scores for the low sophistication group ranged between .620 and .649. For highly sophisticated respondents, on the other hand, the reliability estimates are observed to be significantly higher as they ranged between .768 and .813. Our findings illustrate that highly sophisticated individuals are better able to convey their attitudes and their responses are less contaminated by measurement errors.

In our third model, we further restrict stability coefficients and latent trait error variances to be equal across groups. In other words, we constrain our final model in a way that it would estimate equal stability and reliability coefficients across groups. Then we compare χ^2 fits of the Model 2 and Model 3 to test whether the low and high sophistication groups display equal levels of attitude stability. The expectation is that if attitude stability is a function of political sophistication and therefore differs for high and low sophistication groups, then the model fit would significantly deteriorate as we constrain our stability estimates to equality across groups. In that case, our null hypothesis for the statistical test is that stability estimates for low and high sophistication groups are equal. As the comparison of the model fit statistics presented in the second and the third rows of *Table 3.3* demonstrates, the equality constraints we introduced in our final model significantly deteriorate the fit statistics ($\chi^2(7)=17.447$, $p=0.014$), and hence, indicate that the level of political attitude stability is not equal for low and high sophistication groups. To put it differently, we find that sophisticated and unsophisticated citizens display different levels of attitude stability.

Table 3.4 *Reliability Estimates for Low and High Sophistication Groups (standardized)*

	Reliability T ₁	Reliability T ₂	Reliability T ₃	Reliability T ₄	Mean Item Reliability
Low Sophistication Group	0,622	0,649	0,634	0,620	0,631
High Sophistication Group	0,813	0,804	0,805	0,768	0,798

In *Table 3.5* we present stability estimates for high and low sophistication groups. Our findings demonstrate that political attitudes are highly stable over time among the low sophistication group. Stability coefficients estimated for the low sophistication group range between .914 and .970. The results demonstrate that less sophisticated individuals hold highly stable attitudes on banning of political parties throughout the panel study. Our findings further illustrate that highly sophisticated individuals update their attitudes more frequently when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. The stability coefficient estimates for the high sophistication group ranged between .682 and .990. A closer inspection of stability estimates for the highly sophisticated group reveals that this group's expressed level of agreement with the statement asserting that political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned dramatically changed in the second wave of the study. This can be explained by specific circumstances in the Dutch political context. The first wave panel study had started in October 2010 when the judicial trial of politician Geert Wilders on charges of inciting racial hatred against Muslims took a new twist, after allegations emerged that a judge might have tried to pressure one of the defence witnesses. Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV), won an appeal for the trial judges to be dismissed (Waterfield, 2010). During the time elapsed between the first and the second waves of the study, the trial of Geert Wilders received immense media attention, and the media attention on the court case faded away during the subsequent waves of the study as Wilders was acquitted by the court on 23 June 2011 ("Geert Wilders cleared of hate charges by Netherlands court", 2011). The significant change in the attitudes towards banning of the political parties that wish to overthrow democracy suggests that highly sophisticated respondents updated their attitudes in the light of new political information and public discussions that they were exposed to during the time elapsed between the first and the second waves of the panel study. This is again in line with our expectations, since we would expect less sophisticated citizens to rely on heuristic cues that are updated relatively more slowly. Therefore, we conclude our first hypothesis suggesting that less sophisticated individuals will hold more stable political attitudes compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts is partially confirmed.

Our findings from the simplex models illustrate that susceptibility to measurement errors and attitude stability levels significantly differ for high and low political sophistication groups. We find that less sophisticated individuals are more susceptible to measurement errors when compared to highly sophisticated individuals, which means that they display attitude uncertainty to a greater extent than their more sophisticated counterparts. Furthermore, our findings illustrate that highly sophisticated individuals display less attitude stability and they are more likely to update and change their attitudes when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. All in all, our findings from the simplex models are in agreement with the expectations from RAS model and they indicate that the

Table 3.5 *Stability Estimates for Low and High Political Sophistication Groups (standardized)*

	Stability T1-T2	Stability T2-T3	Stability T3-T4	Mean Item Stability
Low Sophistication Group	0,934	0,970	0,914	0,939
High Sophistication Group	0,682	0,904	0,990	0,859

response inconsistency observed in high and low sophistication groups is predominantly induced by different mechanisms; response inconsistency among less sophisticated is more likely to be a consequence of attitude uncertainty whereas response inconsistency observed for highly sophisticated is more likely to be induced by genuine attitude change. In order to explore whether these identified patterns of attitude change and attitude uncertainty that are evidenced by stability and reliability coefficients can be verified with findings shedding light on cognitive processes, we conducted an (in)consistency experiment. We start our analysis by exploring whether political sophistication groups differ in their levels of attitude change and attitude uncertainty awareness. Then we proceed to (in) consistency experiment where we adopt a cognitive interview approach and explore the underlying mechanisms explaining self-reported attitude change.

3.4.2 Study II: (In)Consistency Experiment

We start our analysis by investigating whether highly and less sophisticated individuals differ in their levels of attitude uncertainty and attitude change awareness. To this end, the full sample of panel respondents who participated in all waves (N=595) is first introduced to the question on banning of political parties that wish to overthrow democracy. After providing an answer to the question, respondents are requested to state whether or not their opinion on the subject matter has changed during the time elapsed between the two measures. In other words, respondents are asked to recall their responses from the previous measurement occasion and report whether they think that their attitudes on the subject matter have changed over the last eight months.

On the basis of a comparison between respondents' self-reports and their observed response patterns, respondents are then categorized into two groups, namely; the correctly reporting group and the incorrectly reporting group. The correctly reporting group consisted of respondents who stated that their opinion on banning of political parties that wish to overthrow democracy had changed over the last eight months provided that their answers from the two consecutive measurement occasions were inconsistent, and also of those respondents who stated that their opinion on the subject matter remained the same provided that their answers from the two measurement occasions were identical. In a

similar vein, the incorrectly reporting group consisted of those respondents who did not report an attitude change although their responses from the two waves were inconsistent, and also of those respondents who reported that their attitudes have changed although their responses from the two measurement occasions were consistent.

As *Table 3.6* shows highly sophisticated individuals are slightly more likely to correctly identify their attitude stability and attitude change patterns when compared to less sophisticated individuals. Fifty-three per cent of highly sophisticated respondents correctly identified their attitude change and attitude stability patterns, whereas a smaller group of less sophisticated respondents (48.9%) correctly reported whether their attitudes have changed or remained the same. In other words, when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts, sophisticated individuals are found to be slightly more likely to indicate that their attitudes has changed when their responses from the two consecutive measurement occasions were inconsistent, and also to indicate that their attitudes on the subject matter have not changed when their answers of the two consecutive measurement occasions were consistent. However, these observed differences between high and low sophistication groups did not reach a statistically significant level.

In order to explore the underlying mechanisms explaining self-reported attitude change we adopt a cognitive interview approach for the (in)consistency experiment. In the research design of the (in)consistency experiment, a subset of panel respondents (N=158) are first introduced to the question on banning of political parties that wish to overthrow democracy. After providing a new answer to the question, respondents are automatically assigned to different treatment conditions depending on whether they provided a consistent or an inconsistent answer. Subsequently, respondents of the latter group are made aware of the inconsistency in responses. The respondents with consistent answers, however, are instead confronted with a set of pre-decided responses different than their own answers. In other words, although the consistent group provided the same answer in both waves, they are told to have responded to the question differently in the previous wave. Following this procedure, respondents in both experimental conditions are requested to state whether or not their opinion on the subject matter has changed during the time elapsed between the two measures, or whether they think the reported inconsistency is due to a mistake in our database. They are also requested to provide reasons for verified attitude change.

On the basis of a comparison between respondents' self-reports and their observed response patterns, we again categorized respondents into correctly reporting and incorrectly reporting groups. However, since we are interested in analysing the respondents' accounts of self-reported attitude, this time the correctly reporting group consisted only of those respondents who correctly stated that their opinion on the subject matter has changed

over the last eight months, whereas the incorrectly reporting group consisted only of those respondents who reported that their attitude has changed despite the fact their responses from the two waves indeed were identical.

Table 3.6 *Self-evaluation by Political Sophistication (raw numbers; percentages)*

	Low Sophistication Group	High Sophistication Group
Correct evaluation	194 (48.9)	105 (53.0)
Incorrect evaluation	203 (51.1)	93 (47.0)
N	397	198

To start with the correctly reporting group, when reminded of the inconsistency between their responses from two consecutive waves, a greater proportion of less sophisticated individuals reported that their attitudes have changed over the last eight months when compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts. However, their accounts for their reported attitude change less often provided a contextual or cognitive explanation and more often signalled attitude uncertainty when compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts. The majority of highly sophisticated respondents in the correctly reporting group provided accounts of genuine attitude change on the basis of recent political developments around the trial of Geert Wilders or personal experiences that occurred during the time elapsed between the two measurement occasions as oppose to less than half of the less sophisticated respondents in the correctly reporting group. A larger group of less sophisticated individuals in correctly reporting group, however, signalled attitude uncertainty since they indicated that their attitudes indeed have not changed but they might have failed to respond to the questions similarly in both measurement occasions due to a misunderstanding of the question on their part or due to difficulties in translating their opinions into response options.

The analysis of accounts provided by highly and less sophisticated individuals in the incorrectly reporting group also reveals a similar pattern. Our findings illustrate that when challenged with fake responses, highly sophisticated individuals were less likely to incorrectly report that their attitudes have changed over the last eight months when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. Furthermore, when providing accounts for their incorrectly reported attitude change, majority of the highly sophisticated respondents referred either to difficulties in translating their attitudes into response options or listed reasons justifying their latest responses for the question, and they indicated that their opinions indeed did not change over the course of two measurement occasions. In other words, majority of the highly sophisticated individuals incorrectly reporting an attitude change expressed that their opinions actually have not changed

despite the fact that they admitted they might have provided different answers in two measurement occasions. On the contrary, a large group of less sophisticated respondents incorrectly reporting that their attitudes have changed during the time elapsed between the two measurement occasions, referred to the changes in their viewpoints due to personal experiences or political developments over the last eight months despite the fact that they indeed have provided identical answers in both waves of the study, and hence, less sophisticated individuals in this group more often signalled attitude uncertainty when compared to highly sophisticated respondents.

3.5 Discussion

In this study we investigated the differences in the levels of stability of political attitudes and susceptibility to measurement errors between high and low political sophistication groups. To this end, in the first part of the study we utilized four-wave panel data obtained from *Panel Component* of the Dutch ESS and we inspected attitude stability, over-time change and measurement error components of observed political attitudes among highly and less sophisticated individuals by employing quasi-Markov simplex analysis. In the second part of the study, we investigated the cognitive foundations of opinion change and susceptibility to measurement errors through an (in)consistency experiment which adopts a cognitive interview approach in order to provide much needed direct evidence to complement the findings of the quasi-Markov simplex analysis of attitude stability and measurement errors.

Our findings illustrate that although highly and less sophisticated individuals display response inconsistency to a similar extent, response inconsistency observed among these two sophistication groups is predominantly induced by different mechanisms. We demonstrated that susceptibility to measurement errors and attitude stability levels significantly differs between high and low political sophistication groups, indicating that the observed response inconsistency among high and low sophistication groups is accounted for by genuine attitude change and attitude uncertainty to different extents.

Our analyses demonstrated that less sophisticated individuals are more susceptible to measurement errors, meaning that less sophisticated individuals are more likely to display response inconsistency due to attitude uncertainty when compared to their highly sophisticated counterparts. Our findings further illustrate that highly sophisticated individuals are not only less susceptible to measurement errors but they are also more likely to update their attitudes in the light of new information. Therefore highly sophisticated individuals are more likely to display response inconsistency due to genuine change in their attitudes when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. On the whole, our

findings from the simplex models are in agreement with the expectations from the RAS model and they illustrate that response inconsistency among less sophisticated individuals stems predominantly from measurement errors and signal attitude uncertainty, whereas response inconsistency observed for highly sophisticated is more likely to be induced by genuine attitude change.

The (in)consistency experiment explored the underlying mechanisms of self-reported attitude change through cognitive interviews, and confirms our findings from simplex models. Our experiment reveals that when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts, highly sophisticated individuals are more likely to explain their correctly identified attitude change by referring to recent political developments or personal experiences that have taken place during the time elapsed between the two measurement occasions. Less sophisticated individuals correctly reporting that their attitudes have changed during the time elapsed between the two consecutive measurement occasions, however, more often proposed explanations indicating that the inconsistency between their responses are indeed induced by difficulties in understanding the question or in translating their attitudes into response options. All in all, the experimental findings shed light on the cognitive processes that account for observed response inconsistency in high and low sophistication groups, and support our findings from the simplex models suggesting that response inconsistency observed among highly sophisticated individuals is more likely to be induced by genuine attitude change, whereas attitude uncertainty is a more likely cause of observed inconsistency among less sophisticated individuals.

Our findings have important implications for practitioners of political attitudes research. Our findings illustrate that inconsistency observed in the responses of highly and less sophisticated individuals signal genuine attitude change and attitude uncertainty to differing extents. We suggest that measurement characteristics of political attitudes significantly differ for highly and less sophisticated individuals. Hence, overlooking differing measurement characteristics of political attitudes for high and low political sophistication groups can lead to biased estimates of attitude change patterns in the general public. Therefore, we underline that it is crucial for public opinion researchers to take differing measurement characteristics of political attitudes across high and low political sophistication groups into account especially when they are investigating over-time political attitude change patterns. We strongly recommend researchers to employ statistical models that can account for differences in the levels of susceptibility measurement errors and attitude stability across political sophistication groups.

POLITICAL TRUST AND SOPHISTICATION: TAKING MEASUREMENT SERIOUSLY*

4

4.1 Introduction

Political trust remains a prevalent topic in political science research. A vast amount of empirical research into consequences of political trust has shown that citizens with lower levels of trust in political institutions engage less often in institutionalized forms of political participation and more often undertake system-challenging political behaviour (Hooghe & Marien, 2013), and they are less likely to comply with the laws (Marien & Hooghe, 2011). Having crucial implications for political participation and law-abiding behaviour, political trust is considered to be an essential indicator of legitimacy in democratic regimes (Levi & Stoker, 2000), and therefore seemingly declining levels of political trust in Western democracies over the last couple of decades have attracted considerable scholarly attention.

In this paper, we address the question to which extent these trends, or the absence thereof, may be attributed to methodological artefacts, in particular shortcomings in the measurement of political trust. Cross-national and over-time studies attempting to chart and explain the trends in levels of political trust commonly employ additive indices of multiple survey items tapping on confidence in various political institutions. A major pitfall of these empirical studies is that they overlook basic measurement considerations of political trust. Firstly, the composite score model unrealistically assumes that trust in different political institutions equally weights and loads on the latent political trust construct. Secondly, the composite score model that is frequently employed in studies on political trust assumes indicators to be free from measurement errors. However, as Dekker (2012) illustrates, incidental measurements of political trust are highly sensitive to context. Measures from different simultaneous surveys and panel measures that are only 1 month apart from each other can still vary to a substantial degree. Measurement error and index artefacts should of course not be confused with real differences. Therefore, political trust measures need to be analysed with statistical models that allow for different weights for each indicator and that control for random fluctuations in those measures.

The neglect of potential measurement problems of political trust raises doubts about the findings of earlier studies. Therefore, in the current study, we revisit the measurement of political trust through robust statistical analysis. We utilize European Social Survey (ESS) data for the Netherlands across five time points (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and

* Turper, S., & Aarts, K. (2015). Political trust and sophistication: Taking measurement seriously. *Social Indicators Research*, doi: 10.1007/s11205-015-1182-4.

2012) and four-wave panel data from the *Panel Component* of ESS in the Netherlands. While panel data allows us to identify the measurement error, stable trait and over-time change components of political trust, the cross-sectional time series data from the ESS study allows us to explore the comparability of the political trust construct over a longer period of time.

We pay special attention to differences between political sophistication groups. Debates on the development of political trust have pointed to political sophistication as a key explanation (Bovens & Wille, 2010; Dalton, 2004). We start our analysis by testing measurement invariance of the political trust constructs among political sophistication groups in order to establish whether it is meaningful to compare the means of political trust constructs across groups and over time. We then utilize multi-group confirmatory factor analysis and autoregressive simplex model analysis to estimate and compare mean political trust scores for high and low political sophistication groups.

The empirical domain of this paper is restricted to the Netherlands, in the period 2004-2012. This restriction is substantively not important as the methods and –most likely– the results too can be generalized to other settings. First, the measurement items used in this study are common measures of political trust and are used in a variety of countries and settings. Secondly, although the Dutch case in the period 2004-2012 does exhibit some particularities with regard to the trend in political trust, the structural relationships of political trust with other theoretical constructs are comparable to those in other countries (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Hooghe & Marien, 2013). Short term deviations are attributed to idiosyncratic changes in political culture (Bovens & Wille, 2008, pp. 301–303; van der Meer, 2010).

The contribution of this paper to the literature is thus twofold. First, our analyses highlight the general importance of explicating and testing assumptions about the measurement properties of concepts. Taking such assumptions for granted may result in flawed conclusions about trends and relationships. Our findings show that composite score models that implicitly assume trust indicators to have equal validity and also to be free from measurement errors, tend to overestimate the level of trust for both high- and low-sophistication groups. Our analysis further illustrates that composite score models yield exaggerated estimates of the differences between the trust levels of high- and low-political sophistication groups when the condition of full scalar invariance is not met. Secondly, the current study revisits the relationship between political sophistication and political trust by employing statistically robust analyses. Our findings illustrate that, when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts, highly sophisticated citizens do display higher levels of trust in three key components of democratic regimes, namely;

parliament, politicians, and political parties. However, in sharp contrast with earlier research these differences are found to be minor.

4.2 Theoretical Background and Previous Research

4.2.1 *Trends in Political Trust*

Political trust, generally defined as citizens' confidence in political institutions, is an important indicator of political legitimacy – the belief in the righteousness of these political institutions and the regime of which they are part. A widespread belief in legitimacy is commonly regarded as a necessary condition for the survival of political regimes. Therefore, measuring the level and development of political trust may provide us with important information about the stability of political systems (Easton, 1965, 1975). Trust in the political regime of a country constitutes a reservoir of good will for when the day-to-day performance of the regime fails to meet expectations. Given these crucial implications, political trust is often considered as an essential component of the civic culture that is necessary for stability of democratic systems (Almond & Verba, 1963). Therefore, the seemingly decreasing levels of political trust in Western democracies over the last couple of decades (Dalton, 2004, 2005; Klingemann, 1999) have stimulated a growing body of research on the causes and consequences of political trust.

The presumed decline of political trust (and, by implication, the presumed decline of the legitimacy of political systems) is often attributed to long-term processes of modernization and globalization. At the level of the individual citizen, modernization implies among other things a rise in the level of education (Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995). Modernization theory states that the increased level of education, in combination with increasing political interest and a decreasing respect for traditional authorities and institutions leads to a growing dissatisfaction of higher-educated citizens with the working of the political system (Aarts, Thomassen, & van Ham, 2014; Dalton, 2004; Thomassen, 2005). This growing dissatisfaction presumably translates into a decrease in the trust in political institutions, as these institutions apparently fail to do what modern citizens expect from them.

The effects of economic globalization, on the other hand, work in a different direction. Economic globalization primarily impacts on those citizens who in the process become less competitive on the labour market. In Western countries, these citizens are primarily workers in those production segments of the economy which can relatively easily be moved to other countries or other parts of the world where the costs of production can be optimized (see for example Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, & Dolezal, 2008). For these workers, replacement jobs are hard to find since their level of education is relatively low. Higher

educated persons, in contrast, are much better suited for jobs in economic sectors that will survive the first waves of globalization, e.g. the service sector, research and development, and other jobs with relatively high qualifications. In short, economic globalization will likely have negative consequences for the lower strata of the labour market, which tend to be the lower-educated citizens. It is to be expected that these negative experiences will in turn lead to a decrease of political trust among this group.

Modernization and globalization are thus expected to have diverging effects on the development of political trust of different groups in society. The modernization process is assumed to lead to a decrease of political trust especially among the higher-educated citizens. This assumption is also known as ‘positive effects hypothesis’. The globalization process, on the other hand, is thought to lead to a decrease of trust among the lower-educated citizens. This is known as the ‘negative effects hypothesis’ (Dalton, 2005).

While the Netherlands has long been considered as an exceptional case with rising rather than declining levels of political trust, there has been a significant drop in political trust levels of Dutch citizens in the first half of the 2000s (Bovens & Wille, 2008; Hendriks, 2009). The sudden decline in the political trust levels stimulated a growing body of literature on political trust in the Netherlands (Bovens & Wille, 2008; Hendriks, 2009; van der Brug & van Praag, 2007; van der Meer, 2010).

Recent research into the case of the Netherlands has stressed the central role of education in understanding and explaining attitudes towards politics, including political trust. According to this view, on top of the important consequences of economic globalization, the political arena itself has increasingly become a domain where only highly qualified, politically sophisticated citizens can exert influence and hence the less educated citizens become more and more alienated from politics (Bovens & Wille, 2009, 2010). Supporters of the diploma democracy thesis argue that this feeling of exclusion from politics is causing cynicism and distrust among the less educated and less politically sophisticated citizens. These feelings of political exclusion add to the threat of economic exclusion as a result of economic globalization (Bovens & Wille, 2010, pp. 415–16).

The empirical studies investigating the differences in political trust levels between the higher and lower educated citizens suggest that there is a gap between the two. The extent of this gap is not fully clear. Bovens and Wille (2010, pp. 412–413) quote several studies that find a positive relationship between education and trust. Other studies point to rather weak relationships, especially when other explanatory factors are taken into account (e.g. Listhaug & Wiberg, 1995). However, the neglect of potential measurement problems of political trust raises doubts about the findings of these earlier studies documenting the gap between the levels of political trust among high and low sophistication groups.

4.2.2 Political Trust: Critical Look at the Common Analytical Strategies

In the current section, we discuss the common analytical strategies in political trust research and their methodological shortcomings that we briefly presented already in the introduction section. In the study of political trust, two practices seem to be widespread. The first of these is single-item measurement. Individual items asking about trust in parliament, or trust in the government, are analysed as if these are valid and reliable indicators of the concept to be measured (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2008; Newton, 2001; Rudolph & Evans, 2005; van der Meer, 2010). However, when a concept is measured by a single item, the validity and reliability of the measure cannot be assessed at all, as it is impossible to distinguish between the various components of the measurement (true score, systematic error, random error) through single occasion measurement designs⁷. Single item measurement thus results in a poor form of operationalization. Not only is 'trust' defined as what is measured by a survey item, but the survey item also deliberately refers to only one object of political trust.

The second, and more commonly employed practice is that researchers construct political trust indices by adding or averaging the levels of confidence that individuals have for a set of political institutions (Bovens & Wille, 2008; Brewer, Aday, & Gross, 2005; Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Hendriks, 2009; Marien & Hooghe, 2011; van der Brug & van Praag, 2007). However, these sum or composite score models that are frequently employed in political trust research have often been criticized for making a couple of unrealistic assumptions that jeopardize the robustness of statistical findings (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007, pp. 314–15). Firstly, in sum or composite score models, each indicator is assumed to be equally contributing to the underlying latent construct. As far as the political trust constructs are concerned, utilizing these models means that the measures of trust in different political institutions equally weight and load on the latent political trust construct. However, previous research illustrates that validity coefficients for individual trust indicators vary to a substantial extent, and therefore the regression coefficients for each indicator needs to be corrected for by applying appropriate weights while calculating sum scores for obtaining robust findings (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007). Secondly, composite score models further assume constitutive measures of the construct (the survey items) to be free of measurement errors. In other words, in these models, indicators are treated as perfectly reliable measures of the underlying political trust construct. Yet, MTMM experiments⁸ conducted with ESS measures tapping on trust in institutions demonstrate

⁷ Reliability of single items can be assessed under the (random) parallel test model assumptions through item response theory (IRT) and generalizability theory.

⁸ MTMM stands for Multi-Trait Multi-Method; see (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

that political trust indicators are susceptible to measurement errors⁹. Furthermore, not taking measurement errors into account also means that the reliability of survey questions is assumed to be equal across groups. Previous research, however, demonstrated that the reliability of the survey items is significantly contingent upon respondents' levels of political interest and education (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Judd, Krosnick, & Milburn, 1981; Judd and Milburn 1980), and hence measurement errors are not invariant for low and high political sophistication groups. Therefore, when comparing political trust scores across sophistication groups the differences in reliability of trust indicators need to be factored in the statistical models.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) models can overcome the shortcomings of the analytical approaches mentioned above by allowing different factor loadings and accounting for measurement errors. CFA models are frequently employed in the study of various attitudes such as attitudes towards immigration (Meuleman, Davidov, & Billiet, 2009; Savelkoul, Sheepers, & van der Veld, 2012), welfare (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012) and democracy (Ariely & Davidov, 2010) with the purpose of comparing latent constructs means across populations and over-time. However, there are only a few studies on political trust that actually employ these measurement models that takes validity and reliability considerations into account (Allum, Read, & Sturgis, 2011; André, 2014; Davidov & Coromina, 2013; Poznyak, Meuleman, Abts, & Bishop, 2014; van Elsas, 2014).

4.3 Current Study

In the current study, we revisit the 'diploma democracy' argument that was put forward by several scholars attempting to chart and explain recent trends in levels of political trust in the Netherlands. Scholars endorsing the 'diploma democracy' argument stress that politically less sophisticated citizens become increasingly alienated from politics through the global processes that the negative effects hypothesis postulates, and that they display substantially lower levels of political trust when compared to their politically sophisticated counterparts. However, these studies often lack robust statistical methods to control and account for measurement errors and also for possibly different latent factor models. Therefore, we start our analysis with testing across-group and over-time measurement equivalence of the political trust construct among high and low political sophistication groups. Then we run multi-group confirmatory factor analyses and autoregressive simplex models to obtain and compare mean political trust scores of these two political sophistication groups.

⁹ The MTMM experiments conducted in the ESS Round 2 estimated the reliability of trust in parliament, legal system and politicians to be 0.82, 0.85 and 0.84, respectively (for further information on these MTMM experiments see <http://sqp.upf.edu/>).

4.3.1 Data

For the first part of the study, we utilize European Social Survey data from 2004 to 2012 for the Netherlands. The data used for the second part of the study is obtained from *Panel Component of European Social Survey*, a developmental project aiming at facilitating biannual cross-sectional ESS survey and funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). The panel study started with ESS Round-5 in October 2010 with the participation of 1829 respondents recruited through probability sampling of households and representative of the Dutch population over the age 16. After completing the ESS survey, all respondents were asked to take part in the panel study and 1501 of those respondents agreed to take part in the panel study¹⁰. The subsequent waves of the study were conducted between May 2011 and January 2013 with 8 month intervals in-between. The last wave of the panel study completed with the participation of 647 respondents. The response rates for the panel study were 0.60 for the initial ESS study and 0.72, 0.70 and 0.86 for the subsequent waves, respectively.

For the current study, we used list-wise deletion, which yielded total samples of 1831, 1841, 1745, 1785, 1812 respondents for five consecutive waves of ESS (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012), respectively, and a total sample of 543 respondents in the panel study. While the mean age was 49.2, 48.6, 49.0, 50.0, and 51.1, the average years of formal schooling is recorded as 12.3, 13.3, 13.3, 13.4, and 13.6 in the final samples of subsequent waves of ESS, respectively. In the panel study, the final sample had a highly even gender distribution of 273 male (50.3 %) and 270 female (49.7 %) respondents, with a mean age of 51.6 (SD=16.24) and with an average of 13.9 (SD=4.07) years of formal schooling.

4.3.2 Variables

We measure political sophistication in two categories (1=high; 2=low). We assess political sophistication on the basis of educational attainment and level of interest in politics¹¹ (Table 4.1). Although there is no causal relation, there is a strong correlation between education, political interest and political sophistication (Althaus, 2003; Highton, 2009; Luskin, 1990). The high political sophistication group consists of those respondents holding a university or university of applied sciences degree, who also expressed interest in politics (very interested or quite interested), at the time of the first interview. By the same token, the low political sophistication group is composed of those respondents without a college or vocational degree and/or those expressed little or no interest in politics.

10 A random selection of 500 panel participants are asked for Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), and the remainder for Computer Assisted Web-based Interviews (CAWI).

11 Although education is used as a proxy for political sophistication in a vast majority of studies on political trust, an operationalization on the basis of levels of education and political interest is preferred as it better reflects the inherent meaning of the concept.

Table 4.1 *Political Sophistication*

Education	Political Interest	
	Not interested at all/ A little interested	Interested/ Very interested
No university degree	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low</i>
University degree	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>

Note. Cells denoted by ‘*Low*’ and ‘*High*’ refers to ‘low’ and ‘high’ political sophistication groups, respectively.

Consequently, in the consecutive waves of the ESS study, approximately 30 percent of the respondents are grouped into the high political sophistication group (28.9% in 2004; 30.6% in 2006; 33.4% in 2008; 30.2% in 2010; 29.6% in 2012). Similarly, in the panel study, the high political sophistication group consisted of 193 respondents (35.5%), while 350 of those respondents are categorized into the low political sophistication group (64.5%)¹². As Table 4.2 illustrates, high and low political sophistication groups display different demographic characteristics. The high political sophistication groups contain a significantly higher proportion of males when compared to the low political sophistication groups. Age and average years of formal schooling differences between high and low political sophistication groups were also found to be statistically significant in all datasets we employed in the current study. The mean age of the low political sophistication groups was on average 5 years higher when compared to their high sophistication group counterparts, whereas average years of formal schooling was observed to be higher among the high sophistication groups.

We further test the criterion validity of our political sophistication variable through inspection of its relation to political participation. Politically sophisticated citizens are expected to display higher levels of political involvement compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. In line with the expectations, we observe different levels of political involvement among high and low political sophistication groups. In all datasets, high political sophistication groups were found to display higher levels of engagement in conventional and unconventional political participation compared to their less sophisticated counterparts; they have a higher turn-out rate in the last elections, they more often sign petitions and work in organizations and associations.

12 The overall panel attrition rate is observed to be higher for the low political sophistication group (0.67) than for the high sophistication group (0.56). Comparison of initial and final samples in terms of key demographic variables suggests that missings are at random for both low and high sophistication groups. However, we observed that those less sophisticated respondents who stayed in the panel and participated in all four waves were slightly more involved in politics than those who opted out.

Table 4.2 *Demographic Characteristics of Political Sophistication Groups*

	Sample size (raw numbers)		Gender (perc. of males)		Age (mean, SD)		Years of formal schooling (mean, SD)	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
ESS 2004	530	1301	50.9	38.4	45.4 (16.0)	50.7 (17.6)	15.5 (3.3)	11.0 (3.2)
ESS 2006	563	1277	50.8	44.6	45.2 (16.4)	50.0 (17.9)	16.3 (4.4)	11.9 (3.9)
ESS 2008	582	1163	51.7	43.4	45.4 (16.9)	50.7 (17.8)	16.3 (4.0)	11.8 (3.7)
ESS 2010	539	1246	54.2	42.5	46.3 (16.3)	51.6 (17.6)	16.8 (3.9)	11.9 (3.5)
ESS 2012	537	1275	51.6	44.5	46.9 (17.1)	52.8 (18.0)	17.2 (3.7)	12.1 (3.5)
ESS Panel	193	350	58.3	46.0	48.1 (16.5)	53.5 (15.8)	16.8 (3.9)	12.3 (3.2)

Note. Labels ‘Low’ and ‘High’ refers to ‘low’ and ‘high’ political sophistication groups, respectively.

To operationalize political trust we follow Dalton’s definition of key elements of representative democracy (Dalton, 2004, p. 37), and we measure political trust by expressed levels of trust in three representative institutions, namely; national parliament, politicians, and political parties (0=no trust at all; 10=complete trust). We expect these three indicators to load on a single factor as earlier theoretical and empirical research illustrated that trust in representative institutions forms a one-dimensional construct (Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Marien & Hooghe, 2011; Newton & Zmerli, 2011; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2011; Zmerli, 2006). Furthermore, we expect that political trust measured in the form of confidence in the political institutions displays a one-dimensional structure regardless of respondents’ level of political sophistication (Hooghe, 2011).

4.3.3 Analytical Models

4.3.3.1 Measurement Model and Measurement Invariance Test

The comparison of means of multiple-item constructs across groups and/or across time is problematic unless the measurement invariance of these constructs can be established through statistical testing (Beuckelaer & Swinnen, 2011; Davidov & Coromina, 2013; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998; Van Deth, 2009). While various statistical techniques have been developed to test for measurement equivalence such as item response theory and

latent class analysis, the most frequently used approach to test measurement equivalence is the multi-group confirmatory factor analysis model (Bollen, 1989; Braun & Johnson, 2010; Jöreskog, 1971; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998; for a review of statistical tests for detecting measurement invariance, see also Braun & Johnson, 2010).

Figure 4.1 *Measurement Invariance Models*

Note. Arrows and indicators in red demonstrate the factor loadings and indicator intercepts constrained to equality across groups, respectively.

To establish the extent of measurement invariance through MGCFA models three hierarchical levels of measurement invariance need to be tested, namely; configural invariance, metric invariance and scalar invariance (*Figure 4.1*). These models are nested, and the test for invariance is conducted by comparing global model fit indices. Configural invariance refers to the model where only the factorial structures are invariant across groups whereas all the parameters for the model are freely estimated in each group. Configural invariance is the least restrictive level of invariance and it constitutes the baseline model for more restrictive tests.

Metric invariance requires factor loadings of indicator variables to be equivalent across groups. If this restriction applied to the configural model does not significantly deteriorate the overall model fit, then metric invariance holds, and the relationships between latent constructs and other constructs can be meaningfully interpreted across groups. Metric invariance constitutes a more restrictive level of invariance when compared to configural invariance, and it allows for comparisons of regression coefficients across groups. However, a meaningful comparison of latent construct means requires an even more restrictive equivalence, namely scalar invariance. In the scalar invariance model, not only the factor loadings of indicators are restricted to equality but also all the indicator intercepts are required to be invariant across groups. This is called full scalar invariance. When full scalar invariance does not hold, latent means can still be compared if partial scalar invariance can be attained. Partial scalar invariance requires factor loadings and indicator intercepts of at least two indicators of each latent construct to be invariant across groups.

For evaluating the model fit of each invariance model we employ several goodness-of-fit indices, namely; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). We consider RMSEA values lower than 0.05 and SRMR values lower than 0.09, together with CFI and TLI values higher than 0.90 as an indication of acceptable fit for the models. In order to evaluate whether the restrictions introduced at each level of invariance test decrease the model fit within acceptable limits, we adopt a bottom-up strategy where we start with the least restrictive model and proceed with more restrictive models. We use Chi-square (χ^2) test statistics and CFI values for evaluating the decrease in the model fit as we move from the configural to metric and scalar invariance models. We consider Chi-square test p-values greater than 0.05, and a change in CFI values less than or equal to 0.01 as an indication that the null hypothesis of invariance should not be rejected (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Furthermore, we examine the modification indices (MI) and expected parameter change (EPC) for detecting possible model misspecifications.

Figure 4.2 Auto-regressive (Simplex) Model with Four Waves

4.3.3.2 Multi-Group Latent Mean Comparison

For estimating the mean levels of political trust among high and low political sophistication groups across five time periods (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012) with ESS data, we utilize single factor MGCFA model. In the panel study, on the other hand, for identifying the mean structure of the latent political trust construct over time for high and low sophistication groups we utilize an autoregressive (simplex) model. *Figure 4.2* illustrates the path diagram of an autoregressive model for a four-wave panel design. In the figure, the observed variables are labelled as $Parl_i$, $Polit_i$, $Party_i$ and they represent trust in parliament, trust in politicians and trust in political parties at i^{th} wave of the panel study, respectively. In the model, $Parl_i$, $Polit_i$, $Party_i$ are modelled to be indicators of latent political trust construct at time i . The parameters denoted by λ_{ij} and ε_{ij} refer, respectively, to the factor loading and error term of the j^{th} indicator at time i . To put it differently, while lambda parameters indicate the degree to which each trust indicator represents the underlying political trust construct, error terms illustrate the extent to which the observed variables are affected by random measurement errors.

The model assumes a lag-1 or Markovian process, meaning that the distribution of political trust construct at time t is dependent only on its distribution at time $t-1$, and not directly dependent on the earlier distributions. The parameters β_{21} , β_{32} and β_{43} can be interpreted as stability coefficients of the political trust construct over time. The variances of political trust construct are denoted by ζ_2 , ζ_3 , and ζ_4 , and they represent the extent that political trust changes over time.

For the current study, we preferred the marker variable method (Little, Slegers, & Card, 2006) for estimating latent political trust means for low and high sophistication groups. The latent mean estimates obtained through the marker-variable method preserve the metric of the marker indicator, and hence provide us with a latent mean estimate on the same scale as the marker variable. Since we utilize marker political trust indicators measured on an 11-point scale, the estimates for latent political trust means will also be adopting the same scale.

4.3.4 Results

We start our analysis by testing the measurement equivalence of political trust construct across high and low political sophistication groups between the years 2004 and 2012 by utilizing five rounds of the ESS dataset for the Netherlands. As we mentioned earlier, we employ MGCFA analysis starting with the least restrictive invariance model and gradually moving towards the more strict invariance models. *Table 4.3* summarizes the global fit indices for MGCFA models for different levels of measurement invariance. We do not provide global fit statistics for the configural invariance in the table below,

as the model for a single latent construct with three indicators is just identified and fit indices cannot be obtained.

The global model fit indices for the metric invariance model reported in the first row of *Table 4.3* indicates a good fit of the model with RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.05, as well as, CFI and TLI values above 0.90. Inspection of MI and EPC statistics also did not reveal any significant model misspecifications. Based on the model results, we conclude that factor loadings of the political trust indicators are equivalent across high and low political sophistication groups at five time points. Next, we proceed with testing scalar measurement invariance. The model fit indices for scalar invariance model indicate that introducing equality constraints on indicator intercepts resulted in a significant reduction in model fit. As we moved from the metric invariance model to the scalar invariance model, the increase in Chi-square was highly significant ($\Delta\chi^2(18)=203.849$, $p < .000$). In a similar vein, CFI and TLI values also decreased more than .01 points and the RMSEA value for the invariance model fell below the acceptable limit of 0.05. Thus we reject the full scalar invariance model. In order to assess partial scalar invariance, we released the equality constraints on six indicator intercepts through inspection of MI and EPC values for model misspecifications. Although the increase in Chi-square relative to the metric invariance model was still significant ($\Delta\chi^2(12)=41.849$, $p < .000$), RMSEA values improved significantly and the decrease in CFI fell within acceptable limits for the partial scalar invariance model. Furthermore, MI and EPC values did not suggest any considerable model misspecifications. Therefore, partial scalar invariance for the high and low political sophistication groups across five time points between 2004 and 2012 is supported. This means that latent political trust means can be meaningfully compared across high and low political sophistication groups at each measurement point.

Table 4.3 *Global Fit Measures for Models Testing for Measurement Invariance of Political Trust*

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Metric Invariance	28.047	18	0.998	0.997	0.025	0.029
Full Scalar Invariance	231.896	36	0.968	0.973	0.078	0.057
Partial Scalar Invariance	69.896	30	0.993	0.993	0.038	0.037

Notes. χ^2 =chi-square; df=degrees of freedom; CFI=comparative fit index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation; SRMR=standardized root mean

Having established partial scalar invariance, we proceed with estimating the latent political trust means for high and low political sophistication groups. *Table 4.4* presents political trust mean estimates from the CFA models for each political sophistication group at each measurement point. As mentioned earlier, the latent political trust means

estimated by the model adopts the response scale of the indicator variables, and hence they should be interpreted as mean scores of a latent scale ranging from 0 to 10.

Comparison of latent mean estimates for high and low political sophistication groups at each time point reveals that politically more sophisticated citizens consistently display higher levels of political trust than their less sophisticated counterparts at each of the five measurement points (*Table 4.4*). More specifically, the model implies that political trust means for high political sophistication groups range between 5.21 and 5.77, whereas latent mean estimates for the low political sophistication group fluctuate between 4.41 and 4.98 levels. However, closer inspection of the latent mean differences between high and low political sophistication groups reveals that differences are indeed minor. Comparison of high and low political sophistication groups on mean trust levels between 2004 and 2012 shows that the differences between group means are on average 0.79 points, and the gap between political trust levels of high and low political sophistication groups never exceeds one point on an eleven point scale¹³.

Furthermore, we compare latent and composite score estimates for the two sophistication groups across five consecutive waves of the ESS. *Table 4.5* reports the mean estimates obtained through the composite score models for the identical groups and time points utilized for estimating latent political trust means. The comparison of composite score means with previously presented latent means (*Table 4.4*), suggests that the composite score models yield slightly different results. Composite score models tend to overestimate political trust means in both high and low political sophistication groups, yet to differing extents. While the composite score models estimated political trust means on average 0.05 points higher than CFA models for the low sophistication groups, the overestimation bias was 0.12 points for the high sophistication groups. Consequently, the differences between high and low political sophistication groups tend to be greater when political trust means are obtained by utilizing composite score models.

Table 4.4 *Implied Latent Means for Political Trust, 2004-2012*

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
High Sophistication	5.213	5.457	5.645	5.775	5.737
Low Sophistication	4.411	4.861	4.975	4.935	4.704
Difference in group means	.802	.596	.670	.840	1.033

Note. Estimates are based on CFA models with marker-variable method.

¹³ Replication of the analysis with low- and high-education groups (Low Education=no university or university of applied sciences degree, High Education=university or university of applied sciences degree) yielded to similar results.

Table 4.5 *Composite Score Means for Political Trust, 2004-2012*

	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
High Sophistication	5.253	5.622	5.805	5.886	5.867
Low Sophistication	4.431	4.938	5.015	4.991	4.781
Difference in group means	.822	.684	.790	.895	1.086

Note. Estimates are based on composite score models.

In the second part of this study, we investigate the mean trust levels among high and low political sophistication groups by utilizing panel data with four waves. As discussed earlier, comparison of latent construct means can only be meaningful if the structure of the latent factor is similar in each group and at each time point of measurement. Therefore, we again start our analysis by testing the measurement equivalence of political trust constructs among high and low sophistication groups across four waves of measurement. To this end, we conduct a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis with eight groups to test for across sophistication groups and for over-time invariance of political trust construct.

Table 4.6 summarizes measurement invariance test results with four wave panel data¹⁴. The model fit indices for the metric invariance model are high, with an RMSEA value of 0.000, as well as CFI and TLI values above 0.99. Hence, metric invariance of the political trust construct is supported. In a similar vein, the full scalar invariance model fits the data reasonably well with an RMSEA value below 0.05 and SRMR value below 0.09. Although the Chi square increase in comparison with the metric invariance model is significant ($\Delta\chi^2(14)=28.782$, $p < 0.000$), the increase in CFI value ($\Delta CFI=0.004$) is well below the cut-off criteria of 0.01. Further inspection of MI and EPC statistics also does not suggest any considerable model misspecifications, and hence the full scalar invariance model was supported in the panel study.

Table 4.6 *Global Fit Measures for Models Testing for Measurement Invariance of Political Trust*

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Metric Invariance	7.704	14	1	1	.000	.038
Full Scalar Invariance	36.486	28	.996	.997	.033	.052

Notes. χ^2 =chi-square; df=degrees of freedom; CFI=comparative fit index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation; SRMR=standardized root mean

¹⁴ As before we do not provide global fit statistics for configural invariance as the model for a single latent construct with three indicators is just identified and fit indices cannot be obtained.

Our findings of the measurement invariance test allow meaningful comparisons of political trust means and regression coefficients between the two sophistication groups across four waves of panel study. Hence, we proceed with examination of the latent political trust means through a two group auto-regressive (simplex) model. *Table 4.7* presents the latent means for political trust among high and low sophistication groups obtained through the auto-regressive model (denoted by κ) as well as means computed through the composite score model (denoted by μ). Inspection of the mean estimates again reveals that politically more sophisticated citizens display slightly higher levels of political trust when compared to less sophisticated citizens. The gap between trust levels of the two sophistication groups is however only minor. The panel study shows that, on average, politically more sophisticated citizens display 0.7 points higher levels of trust on a political trust latent trait measured on an 11-point scale, which amounts to a difference of 7 percentage points¹⁵.

Table 4.7 *Implied Latent Means and Composite Score Means for Political Trust*

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4	
	κ	μ	κ	μ	κ	μ	κ	μ
High Sophistication	5.789	5.874	5.834	5.995	5.681	5.819	5.729	5.872
Low Sophistication	5.112	5.211	5.311	5.474	5.090	5.220	4.777	4.962
Difference in group means	.677	.663	.523	.521	.591	.599	.952	.910

Note. 'K' denotes latent mean estimates, 'μ' denotes composite score means.

Comparison of the latent and composite score mean estimates illustrates that the composite score model yields slightly higher levels of political trust in both sophistication groups at each measurement point. However, in the panel study where full scalar invariance is established the overestimation bias applies to high and low sophistication groups alike. In other words, when full scalar invariance holds across groups and over-time, the differences between mean political trust levels among high and low sophistication groups are observed not to be different than those estimated through composite score model. In the previous analysis of five rounds of ESS data where only partial scalar invariance was present, the bias was found to be different for the high- and low-sophistication groups, and hence the differences between sophistication groups were slightly exaggerated when composite score model was used. This in turn suggests that composite score model yields similar results as the latent means model only when the full scalar invariance condition has met.

¹⁵ Replication of the analysis with low and high educational attainment groups (Low Education=no university or university of applied sciences degree, High Education=university or university of applied sciences degree) yielded to similar results.

4.4 Conclusion and Discussion

In the current study, we have investigated the measurement properties of political trust construct composed of three political trust items by utilizing two datasets. First, we compared five successive rounds of the European Social Survey in the Netherlands (2004-2012), and secondly we analysed political trust in a four-wave panel survey in the Netherlands (2010-2012). We determined the extent to which measurement invariance is applicable to political trust. The analysis of political trust in the panel study pointed to full scalar invariance, which means that in this case a composite score model would basically be equivalent to a factor score model. In the panel study, although we do find minor differences in the mean estimates of political trust for high- and low-sophistication groups produced by composite and factor score models, these two models provide similar estimates of the differences between the levels of political trust for highly- and less-sophisticated. In the cross-sectional ESS studies covering biannual measures of political trust indicators over an 8 years' time span, on the other hand, the analysis pointed to partial scalar measurement invariance, suggesting that the level of measurement errors involved in measures were not invariant across time and across political sophistication groups. Comparing latent means with the results of a sum score model, we found that the sum score model tends to result in slightly exaggerated differences in trust between different sophistication groups. Our findings illustrate that commonly employed composite score models produce unbiased estimates of the differences between the levels of political trust for high- and low political sophistication groups provided that the full scalar invariance condition has been met.

The current study provides much needed evidence for investigating whether the observed differences in political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups are genuine, or merely methodological artefacts stemming from ignoring measurement properties of political trust construct. Confirming the findings of previous research, the current study illustrates that the highly sophisticated citizens display higher levels of political trust when compared to their less sophisticated counterparts. However, in a sharp contrast to earlier research¹⁶, the findings of the current study illustrate that the differences between political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups are minor. Comparing the means of the latent political trust construct, the differences between high- and low-sophistication

16 For example, Bovens and Wille cite a study by Dekker and van der Meer (in Dekker, van der Meer, Schyns, & Steenvoorden, 2009) to illustrate that educational groups differ significantly in their levels of political trust. They suggest that 57% of the less-educated respondents are dissatisfied with politics as opposed to 34% of the better-educated group. However, these findings partly stem from another common practice employed in the study of political trust, namely collapsing of the measurement scale of political trust scores into two categories, low and high. Dekker's analysis already illustrates that the differences between educational groups are as small as .8 points on a 10-point scale. Yet, 5.5 is used as the cut-off point to sort predicted probabilities from a logistic regression. Although the regression coefficients are small, since the constant is around the cut-off point, most of the lower-educated people are predicted to have scores below the cut-off point. This is largely an artefact of collapsing categories of the trust scale.

groups appeared to be relatively small in the Netherlands. Furthermore, we detected traces of a widening of the gap between these two groups starting from 2006. Our analysis with five successive rounds of European Social Survey in the Netherlands demonstrates that the gap between the trust levels of high- and low sophistication groups steadily increases between 2006 and 2012. A possible explanation for this seemingly growing gap is that the start of the time series occurred at a highly atypical level of trust. In 2004, shortly after the rise of the populist List Pim Fortuyn, and the murders of Fortuyn (2002) and of Theo van Gogh (2004), trust in political institutions in the Netherlands was temporarily rather low across the board.

Our research findings point at important implications for the practitioners of the political trust research. Although, cross-sectional time series data provide researchers with valuable information for the study of trends in political trust, findings of the current study demonstrate that repeated measures of identical political trust items cannot ensure comparability of political trust construct over time and across political sophistication groups. Our research findings suggest that overlooking the measurement properties of political trust constructs can lead to biased estimates. Therefore, we underline that researchers should pay attention to measurement invariance, especially when dealing with longitudinal data covering larger time intervals. Further on this point, our findings illustrate that comparing measures of political trust obtained with identical survey items over a longer period of time may be misleading when composite score models are utilized in the analysis. Therefore, we strongly recommend practitioners of political trust research to employ measurement invariance tests and to utilize composite score models for political trust, if and only if the full scalar invariance condition has been met.

Our findings further illustrate that political trust is a similar construct and has an equivalent meaning across high and low political sophistication groups in the Netherlands for the time period covered in the current study. This implies that researchers can make meaningful comparisons of political trust levels and regression coefficients between political trust and other theoretically related constructs across political sophistication groups by adopting structural equation modelling approach.

However, some limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the current study exclusively focuses on political trust in representative institutions, and in so doing, overlooks two other dimensions of political trust, namely trust in regulatory institutions (Denters, Gabriel, & Torcal, 2007) and trust in international or supranational political institutions (Schnaudt, 2013; Van Deth, 2000). Future research should try to validate our findings regarding the differences in mean levels of political trust between high and low political sophistication groups, and investigate whether these differences also apply to other dimensions of political trust. Secondly, it is important to note that the multi-

group confirmatory factor analysis applied in the current study is subject to criticism. As Steenbergen asserts, multi-group confirmatory factor analysis tends to over fit in small samples by extracting too many factors, and hence requires relatively large sample sizes (Steenbergen, 2000). Additionally, there is no consensus over the cut-off criteria for the goodness of fit indices, and Saris and his colleagues (Saris, Satorra, & van der Veld, 2009) offer alternative procedures to evaluate structural equation models instead of those utilized in the current study.

Furthermore, our research findings concerning the growing gap between the political trust levels of low-and high sophistication groups should be interpreted with caution. Although our findings point to a widening of the gap between the political trust levels of highly and less sophisticated individuals from 2006 onwards, the dataset we utilized for the study covers a relatively short period of time and hence falls short of providing us with compelling evidence for a trend analysis. Therefore, future research should try to validate these research findings by utilizing measures of political trust obtained over a longer period of time. Our study establishes some specific directions for future research on the relationship between political trust and political sophistication. Findings of the current study clearly establish that the differences in mean levels of political trust between highly and less sophisticated individuals are not merely methodological artefacts but are robust. Building on this point, future research should focus on the causal mechanisms that bring about the differences in political trust levels across political sophistication groups. We invite more research covering a longer period of time and a variety of political settings, which will make it possible to employ more sophisticated multivariate analyses for disentangling the causal mechanisms that can account for differing levels of political trust among high- and low- political sophistication groups. Additionally, findings of the current study demonstrate that overlooking the measurement properties of political trust can lead to biased results when levels and relationships of political trust constructs are compared across different (sub-) populations. Therefore, future research should also revisit and try to validate the findings of the earlier studies making comparisons across different samples of the respondents by employing measurement invariance tests and structural equation modelling approach.

To conclude, the current study illustrates that high- and low political sophistication groups display different levels of political trust even when measurement characteristics of political trust are taken into consideration. However, the relationship between political sophistication and political trust is weaker than it is often suggested by earlier research. Our findings also provide partial support for the argument that the gap between sophistication groups is widening over time. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that, although the between-method differences between the latent means and the composite score means of political trust for high- and low-sophistication groups are relatively minor,

it is important to analyse the measurement characteristics of the political trust construct rather than simply assume that these are good enough. Precisely because political trust is an important concept it needs to be measured as accurately as possible. Trends and relationships are easily overestimated when the measurement is faulty.

WHO IS LESS WELCOME? THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUATING CUES ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS*

5

5.1 Introduction

In recent decades, large inflows of immigrants and immigration policies attempting to deal with the influx have become a salient issue in immigrant-receiving nations across the globe (Card, Dustmann, & Preston, 2005; Fetzer, 2000). In the USA, where immigration from south of the border has triggered concerns over economic and cultural threats posed by low-skilled and Spanish-speaking immigrants, the immigration debate has taken a new turn after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012). Recent studies provide evidence that terrorist attacks elicited support for tighter restrictions on civil liberties of immigrants (Davis & Silver, 2004; Huddy, Feldman, Taber, & Lahav, 2005). The immigration issue has proved just as controversial in the Netherlands. Although the Netherlands has long been known as a 'country with a tradition of tolerance', the consensus among political elites on multiculturalism which was developed in the 1980's (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007) has come to an end when the right wing parties List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) and Party for Freedom (PVV) have enjoyed electoral success by campaigning on an anti-immigrant platform (Bos & van der Brug, 2010).

Academic research into attitudes towards migrants derives from two prominent theories; realistic group conflict theory (Giles, 1977; Hardin, 1995; Pettigrew, 1957; Quillian, 1995) and social identity theory (Brewer, 2001; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Tajfel, 1981). The former holds that opposition to immigration is a response to competition for scarce resources between natives and immigrants. The latter treats immigration-related attitudes as a symptom of in group favouritism and out group hostility. A large body of scholarly research adopting realistic group conflict and social identity perspectives treat immigrant groups as the relevant entities that drive opposition to immigration. However, the pitfall of these studies is that they fall short of measuring the effects of economic and cultural threat perceptions independently from relevant group sizes of the immigrant groups at regard. Addressing this gap, the current study investigates the role of economic and cultural characteristics of individual immigrants in shaping immigration-related attitudes.

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Building on recent studies adopting a novel experimental design, the current study examines the impact of economic and cultural characteristics of potential immigrants on anti-immigrant sentiments in the USA and in the Netherlands. Although previous studies have well established how immigrant characteristics are affecting the level of support for immigrants in the USA and various Western democracies (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013), to the best of our knowledge, no previous research has explored the role of individuating cues in the Netherlands. In the current study, we investigate the extent to which individuating cues affect public support for immigrants in the USA and the Netherlands from a comparative perspective. Our findings suggest that potential immigrants with stronger economic credentials are significantly more welcomed both as temporary residents and as permanent citizens in the USA, and even more so in the Netherlands. Cultural attributes including country of origin and skin complexion, however, have only a minor impact, and those attributes are even less pronounced in the respondents' evaluations of immigrants for citizenship status.

5.2 Theory and Previous Research

Most research on the attitudes towards immigrants derives from two theories of inter-group relations. Realistic group conflict theory, also referred to as group conflict theory, applies a rational choice perspective to the field of immigration politics and focuses on the economic motives of natives to explain their preferences on immigration. The theory postulates that immigrant groups represent a threat to the economic interests of the dominant group members as they compete over resources (Austin & Worchel, 1979; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Quillian, 1995). In other words, the theory suggests that hostility towards immigrants is triggered by fear of adverse economic outcomes such as job loss, reduced social welfare benefits and increase in tax rate.

Applied at the individual level, realistic group conflict theory predicts that individuals will hold negative attitudes towards immigrants with whom they are in direct competition over a set of economic resources. The theory predicts, for instance, that low-skilled natives will express higher levels of hostility towards low-skilled immigrants than towards high-skilled immigrants as they are more likely to be in direct competition with the former. Applied at the macro level, on the other hand, group conflict theory suggests that it is the threats against dominant group interests rather than the threats to self-interest that produces anti-immigrant sentiments. In other words, the theory as applied at macro-level, predicts that individuals will hold negative attitudes towards immigrants provided that those immigrants are perceived as posing a threat to collective economic interests of the native

society. Therefore, it is foreseen that those immigrants who are economically competent will elicit higher levels of support in all segments of the native society.

The empirical studies demonstrate only limited traces of direct competition as a motivating factor for holding anti-immigrant sentiments. Palmer's (1996) study provides some confirmatory evidence for the direct self-interest hypothesis as it illustrates that unemployed individuals are more likely to believe that immigrants take jobs away. Similarly, Malchow-Moller et al. (2008) confirm that the unemployed are more likely to have negative out-group attitudes provided that they also think it is difficult to get a job. A recent study in the USA demonstrates that American technology workers are more likely to oppose the granting of temporary entry visas for overseas technology workers (Malhotra, Margalit, & Mo, 2013). On the other hand, there is an extensive body of research reporting that individuals whose interests are not directly threatened by immigrant groups are just as likely to oppose immigration as those who experience direct economic competition with immigrant groups (Fetzer, 2000; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Sears & Funk, 1991). These studies suggest that prejudice against immigrants results from a real or perceived threat to the collective interest of the dominant group rather than the self-interest of the individual himself. Studies testing expectations of realistic group conflict theory at the macro level confirm the role of objective and perceived economic conditions as catalysts of anti-immigrant attitudes. Thus, opposition to immigration increases during times of economic hardship (Meuleman, Davidov, & Billiet, 2009; Tienhaara, 1974). The unemployment rate and relative size of the immigrant group are also found to trigger anti-immigrant sentiments (Quillian, 1995; Schissel, Wanner, & Friederes, 1989).

Social identity theory, on the other hand, centres on the notion of 'in-group favouritism' and focuses on the social and cultural aspects of immigration. It posits that prejudice towards immigrants stems from affective processes. People develop a strong sense of group identity and instinctively evaluate groups that constitute the basis of their identity (in groups) favourably, while evaluating other groups negatively (Brewer, 2001; Tajfel, 1981). The social identity perspective suggests that negative attitudes towards immigrants are not conditional on competition over resources. From this perspective, natives are expected to hold negative attitudes towards all immigrant groups, and those attitudes are fostered by cultural, religious and ethnic differences.

Many studies document that perceptions of social and cultural threat are the principal driving force behind immigration-related attitudes (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Schneider, 2008; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). These studies illustrate that anti-immigrant attitudes are attributable to beliefs that immigrants' distinct cultural practices pose a threat to the cultural unity of the nation, that immigrants

are unwilling to 'fit in' with mainstream values, and by the perceptions that immigrants are willing to engage in violent and criminal activities (Dinas & van Spanje, 2011). Studies on ethnic hierarchies further illustrate that dominant group members also rank order minorities primarily on the basis of cultural differences (Hagendoorn & Drogendijk, 1998; Verkuyten, Hagendoorn, & Masson, 1996).

Phalet and Poppe (1997) illustrate that the perceived desirability of ethnic minorities is mostly affected by considerations of morality or benevolence of the ethnic groups rather than their competences. Therefore, from a social psychological perspective, cultural similarity signalling the benevolence of immigrant groups is expected to have greater influence on attitudes towards immigrant groups when compared to economic competences of those immigrant groups (Hagendoorn, 2007). A thrust of previous work also suggests that group conflict contributes to anti-immigration sentiment, yet the evidence is stronger on the side of social identity theory. In their experimental study, Hagendoorn and Sniderman (2001) show that natives value cultural similarity over economic integration while evaluating immigrant groups and similar findings are documented by various studies investigating attitudes towards immigrant groups (Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). However, previous research demonstrates that the economic and cultural threat perceptions are magnified by the relative size of the immigrant groups (Quillian, 1995; Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2011). Therefore, a pitfall of these studies is that they fail to disentangle the effects of cultural and economic threats independently of size of the immigrant communities in regard. Those studies focusing on individual immigrants, on the other hand, illustrate that economic considerations play a larger role in shaping anti-immigrant attitudes when compared to the cultural considerations (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013).

5.3 Current Study

Current research investigates the role of economic and cultural cues in shaping public opinion on immigration in the USA and the Netherlands. Both the USA and the Netherlands are industrialized countries with noticeably sizable first generation immigrant populations, amounting to 15 and 11 % of their populations, respectively. While the USA has traditionally been an immigration country, the Netherlands has experienced large influx of immigration in the form of post-colonial immigration and labour recruitment after the Second World War (Zimmermann, Bauer, & Lofstrom, 2000). Currently, immigration issue has been highly politicized in both countries as the right-wing parties brought the issue to front lines in their election campaigns. In the USA and the Netherlands alike, those election campaigns usually draw attention on cultural

distinctiveness of the immigrant groups and also on the economic burden of immigration to mobilize support for more exclusionist immigration policies. Adopting realistic group conflict and the social identity frameworks, we examine the extent to which economic and cultural characteristics of immigrants affect public support for immigration in the USA and the Netherlands.

As mentioned earlier, the pitfall of earlier studies adopting realistic group conflict and the social identity frameworks is that they often treat immigrants as homogenous groups of individuals clustered on the basis of their ethnic and religious characteristics, if not as a single entity. Although a thrust of previous research explored the role of economic and social threat perceptions in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments towards various immigrant groups, only a handful of studies examine the role of economic and cultural threats as cues for evaluating individual immigrants (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013). Previous research allows us to understand the USA case, to our knowledge no previous research examined the impact of individual characteristic of immigrants on their admissibility in the Netherlands. Addressing this gap, the current study builds on the works of those previous studies expanding the scope to previously untapped data on the Dutch case, and examines the role of individuating cues- economic and cultural characteristics of individual immigrants -in shaping evaluations of individual immigrants in the Netherlands and in the USA. The aim of the study is, firstly, to provide much needed direct evidence on the predictions of realistic group conflict and social identity theories through systematic manipulation of economic and cultural characteristics; and secondly, to test whether cultural and economic threat considerations apply to evaluation of potential immigrants in the same way they apply to assessment of immigrant groups.

5.3.1 Theoretical Expectations

Realistic group conflict and social identity theories postulate that the level of support for exclusionist immigration policies increases when the immigrants are perceived as economic and cultural threats. Therefore, we expect that respondents' willingness to admit potential immigrants in the country will be influenced by the degree of perceived economic and cultural threats they pose to native society.

As far as the economic cues are concerned, firstly, we anticipate respondents to prefer immigrants with higher levels of economic integration as this group of immigrants is expected to generate larger efficiency gains for the local economy (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010). Previous research also demonstrates that immigrants with higher levels of occupational skills are less often exposed to unequal treatment while they are assessed for job positions (Bovenkerk, Gras, & Ramsoedh, 1995; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007), and

natives, irrespective of their own occupational skills, prefer high-skilled immigrants over low-skilled immigrants (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2012). Therefore, we expect natives to prefer immigrants with high educational and occupational skills over their less skilled counterparts. We formulate our hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Highly skilled potential immigrants should be supported for their temporary and permanent immigration applications more than their less-skilled counterparts.

Secondly, we anticipate that potential immigrants with family dependents will be perceived as economic threats since this group of immigrants are more likely to be recipients of government benefits, and the expected economic costs of immigration will be higher in their case. In the USA, research also documents that welfare programme participation rates for immigrant children are 15 percentage points higher than for the native children (Borjas, 2011). As far as the high welfare dependency rates among immigrant children are concerned, we expect natives to evaluate potential immigrants with family dependents less favourably. Moreover, immigrant children who are raised in households that receive welfare assistance are found to be more likely to become welfare recipients themselves as adults (Borjas & Sueyoshi, 1997). Therefore, we also expect natives to take long term prospects of welfare dependency into account while evaluating admissibility of potential immigrants with family dependents, especially if the immigrants are unskilled, and hence more likely to become welfare recipients themselves. In other words, we expect credentials and family status of immigrants to interact in such a way that the presence of dependents will further decrease willingness to admit immigrants with less educational and occupational skills. We formulate our hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Potential immigrants with family dependents should be supported for their temporary and permanent immigration applications less than those immigrants without family dependents.

Hypothesis 3: Presence of family dependents should be a better predictor of support for admissibility of temporary and permanent immigrants when the potential immigrants are unskilled.

In the case of cultural cues, on the other hand, we anticipate respondents will evaluate potential immigrants less favourably if those immigrants are perceived to be less similar to natives in terms of their ethnic and cultural characteristics.

Hypothesis 4: In the USA, potential immigrants with Hispanic origin should be supported for their temporary and permanent immigration applications more than those immigrants with Middle Eastern background. In the Netherlands, potential immigrants with Western origin should be supported as temporary and permanent immigrants more than those immigrants with Hispanic, North African and South Asian backgrounds in an increasing order.

With regards to skin complexion, we expect immigrants with dark skin complexion to be perceived as culturally and ethnically less similar to the native group both in the USA and in the Netherlands. Earlier studies also indicate that individuals with dark skin complexion are perceived as ethnically more distinct (Hunter, 2007), and that they are subject to higher levels of discrimination compared to lighter-skinned people of the same race or ethnicity (Espino & Franz, 2002; Mason, 2004). Therefore, we also anticipate that dark skin complexion will be perceived as more distinctive and therefore will lead to lower levels of admission.

Hypothesis 5: Potential immigrants with light skin complexion should be supported for their temporary and permanent immigration more than those immigrants with dark skin complexion.

5.3.2 Data

The data derive from a pair of online survey experiments conducted in the Netherlands and the USA. The USA study, fielded by YouGov in 2010 was administered on a sample of 2057 Americans recruited from the YouGov online panel (for details on the YouGov sampling methodology, see, Iyengar & Vavreck, 2012). The Dutch study was run in the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) Panel in 2011 with the participation of 5049 respondents representative of the Dutch speaking population aged over 16. Respondents in both studies were informed that the research concerned the public's view on immigration and related political issues.

5.3.3 Experimental Design

In both countries, respondents were randomly assigned to 16 experimental groups. Following a set of questions assessing their opinions on immigration policy and their beliefs about different immigrant groups in their respective nations, respondents in each experimental condition were presented with a vignette briefly describing a potential immigrant accompanied by a photo of the immigrant described in the vignette. The vignettes manipulated the potential immigrant's economic and cultural attributes. After reading the vignette, respondents were asked to play the role of government officials and

decide either to approve or reject the temporary work permit and citizenship requests made by the candidate presented to them. While Dutch respondents were asked to evaluate only one potential immigrant, the USA design required each respondent to evaluate two briefly described potential immigrants.

For the current study we employed a factorial design with 16 experimental treatments in both countries. The USA study design corresponds to $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design with two economic (high or low occupational status; none or three family dependents) and two cultural (Kuwaiti or Mexican nationality; light or dark skin complexion) attribute treatments. The Dutch study, on the other hand, utilized one economic treatment (high or low occupational status) and two cultural treatments (Canadian, Colombian, Libyan, or Pakistani nationality; light or dark skin complexion), leading to a $2 \times 4 \times 2$ factorial design.

5.3.3.1 *Experimental Manipulations*

Economic Cues. The vignettes manipulated the economic status of the immigrant. In the ‘high status’ condition, potential immigrants are described as college-educated and having a high-skilled occupation (engineer or computer programmer). In the ‘low status’ condition, the immigrant is a high school graduate seeking to find work in a low-skilled job (construction and landscaping worker or waiter). Additionally, English language skills are also used to signal the economic status of the potential immigrants. In all US conditions, the immigrant is described as learning English; in the high status conditions he is enrolled in a language course, in the low status conditions he is learning by conversing with friends who speak the language. In the Dutch study, high status immigrants are depicted as fluent in English, whereas low status immigrants are described as learning English. In addition to educational and occupational status, in the US design, we manipulated the family status of the immigrant; he is depicted as either single or married with two young children.

Cultural Cues. In both studies we had two treatments speaking for the cultural threat hypothesis, namely; ethnicity and complexion. For ethnicity, we described the potential immigrants as coming from different nationality and cultural backgrounds. In the US case, half of the conditions feature a Mexican immigrant whereas participants in the remaining conditions encounter an immigrant from Kuwait. These two groups were selected on the basis of their relevance for current discussions of immigration in the USA; Hispanic immigrants constitute the largest group of immigrants and Middle Eastern immigrants have become focus of attention in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In the Dutch study, on the other hand, the potential immigrants were described as from four different countries -Canada, Colombia, Pakistan and Libya-representing Western, Hispanic, South Asian and North African immigrant groups, respectively. While both Libya and Pakistan are countries with predominantly Muslim populations, these two

groups are expected to represent different levels of cultural proximity for a typical Dutch citizen; North African immigrants are much more visible in the Dutch population compared to South Asian immigrants. These four countries of origin were selected in order to enhance the realism of the vignette. Although immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and from other EU member states are more numerous in the Netherlands, for each of these states specific regulations may apply regarding work and residence permits. Therefore, four more distant countries were chosen.

Finally, in the case of the complexion treatment, we used visual images accompanying the texts presented to the respondents¹⁷. In order to manipulate for skin complexion, we used a morphing procedure where the original images are blended with either a Eurocentric or an Afrocentric image. For this procedure, we selected different images for each immigrant group. We further selected a Eurocentric image and an Afrocentric image. These images were selected from a database¹⁸ of faces previously rated for attractiveness and race stereotypicality. We used images with comparable levels of attractiveness and typicality. We generated images for light complexion condition by blending the original image of each immigrant with the Eurocentric image in the ratio of 6:4. Similarly, the images for the dark skin complexion condition are obtained mixtures of original immigrant images (60%) and the Afrocentric image (40%).

5.3.3.2 Variables

Dependent Variables. We assess the admissibility of potential immigrants in the country both as temporary workers and permanent citizens, using respondents' evaluations of the work permit and citizenship applications of the potential immigrants presented to them. The questions read as: (i)'Given what you know about [potential immigrant] do you think his application for work permit should be approved or rejected?' and (ii)'assume that [potential immigrant] comes to [country] on a work permit and then he decides to apply for citizenship. Do you think his citizenship application should be approved or rejected?' Response options are given in dichotomous format (0=reject, 1=approve).

Independent Variables. In our models, we introduce categorical variables for the experimental treatments of credentials (0=low status; 1=high status), country of origin (for US, 0=Mexico; 1=Kuwait and for NL, 0=Canada; 1=Colombia; 2=Pakistan; 3=Libya) and complexion (0=light; 1=dark). We additionally include family status (0=single; 1=married with children) treatment condition in the US study.

¹⁷ See Appendix D for the images used for skin complexion manipulation.

¹⁸ The face database is compiled in the Department of Psychology at Stanford University by Jennifer Eberhardt. The database consists of 100 European and 100 African American adult male images with neutral facial expressions. Images are rated for their levels of attractiveness and stereotypicality by a sample of undergraduate students on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high).

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Immigration Attitudes

We assess general attitudes towards immigration and immigrants through a standard battery of questions on immigration policies and the salience of illegal immigration, together with questions tapping sympathy towards immigrants in general¹⁹. *Table 5.1* below presents the standardized mean scores; where higher scores indicate higher levels of support for immigration on positive items and lower levels of support for negative items. The comparison of the US and Dutch cases reveals that Dutch people hold slightly more positive attitudes towards immigration whereas Americans express higher levels of sympathy towards immigrants themselves. However, the responses for the negative items suggest that both Americans and Dutch people think that their countries are taking too many immigrants that immigrants are taking advantage of welfare benefits and that illegal immigration is an important problem.

Table 5.1 General Attitudes towards Immigration and Immigrants, the USA and the Netherlands

	The USA	The Netherlands
Laws make it immigrants too difficult to acquire [American/Dutch] citizenship.	0,291	0,376
[The U.S./the Netherlands] is taking in too many immigrants.*	0,702	0,639
Increasing cultural diversity in [the U.S./the Netherlands] due to immigration is good.	0,459	0,457
Immigrants have a favorable effect on the country.	0,469	0,409
Immigrants come to [the U.S./the Netherlands] to take advantage of welfare benefits.*	0,619	0,663
Compared to other problems, how important is illegal immigration?*	0,729	0,622
How sympathetic do you feel towards immigrants in general?	0,569	0,515
N	1699	2947

Although many respondents expressed preference for more exclusionist immigration policies in both countries, they are inclined to evaluate individual immigrants favourably. As far as the response distributions of the questions on work permit, length of stay and citizenship are concerned, respondents were exceedingly willing to admit individual immigrants into the country (*Figure 5.1*). A large majority of American (70%) and Dutch

19 We measure immigration attitudes using respondents' assessments of five statements: (i) 'Laws make it too difficult foreign citizens to acquire [country] citizenship'; (ii) '[country] is taking too many immigrants'; (iii) 'Increasing cultural diversity in [country] from immigration is good for country'; (iv) 'Immigrants have favourable effect on country'; (v) 'Immigrants come to [country] to take advantage of government benefits'. Original responses (1=disagree strongly; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=agree strongly) are coded in a way that higher scores reflect pro-immigration positions. We measured sympathy towards immigrants in general on an 11-point scale where higher values indicated more positive evaluations.

respondents (57%) would grant a work permit to individual immigrants and admit them as temporary residents in the country. While the modal response to duration of the permit was 1 year in both countries, the average duration was longer in the USA (19.4 months) than in the Netherlands (15.3 months). Approval of citizenship applications, or to put it differently, admissibility on a permanent basis was slightly less extensive than approval of temporary residence in the USA (65%) and substantially less extensive in the Netherlands (46%).

Figure 5.1(a) *Admissibility of Individual Immigrants in the USA* **(b)** *Admissibility of Individual Immigrants in the Netherlands*

5.4.2 Support for Temporary and Permanent Immigrants: The Role of Economic and Cultural Cues

Our findings from the logistic regression models illustrate that the individual characteristics of individual immigrants significantly affect their levels of admissibility in the country both as temporary and permanent immigrants in the USA and in the Netherlands. As shown in the *Table 5.2*, respondents in both nations clearly reward individual immigrants with stronger occupational and educational credentials (*Hypothesis 1*). Respondents presented with high job status/high education immigrants were almost one and half times more likely to award work permit and citizenship applications in the USA. The predicted probabilities for American respondents to admit skilled candidates as temporary or permanent immigrants are found to be 10 percentage points higher when compared to admissibility levels of unskilled immigrants. Dutch respondents also rewarded economic credentials while assessing applications of individual immigrants, and they did even more so than their Americans counterparts. In the Netherlands, potential immigrants with high status credentials were approximately 5 times more likely to receive work permit approval than their low status counterparts, while these immigrants were also more than two times more likely to be granted citizenship. In the Dutch case, the effect size of occupational and educational credentials is observed to be as large as 34 and 22 percentage points for admissibility of temporary and permanent immigrants, respectively. Our findings illustrate that both American and Dutch have a strong preference for skilled immigrants over the unskilled.

The presence of family members, an attribute included in the US study only, proved marginally significant although the direct effects were not in the expected direction. Contrary to our expectations (*Hypothesis 2*), we found that potential immigrants with family dependents were evaluated slightly more favourably than their single counterparts. When we further inspect the interaction between the two economic cues, however, we observe the expected credentials x family status interaction effect (*Hypothesis 3*). *Figure 5.2* illustrates the joint effects of the two manipulations. The predicted mean levels of support for work permit and citizenship both indicate that Americans have a slight preference for single immigrants over immigrants with family dependents in the low status condition. In the high status condition, on the other hand, they prefer immigrants with families over single immigrants. The significant interaction effect suggests that the presence of family members is seen as a potential economic threat in the case of unskilled immigrants.

Table 5.2 Support for Work Permit and Citizenship in the USA and the Netherlands by Experimental Manipulations

	Work Permit		Citizenship	
	The U.S.	The Netherlands	The U.S.	The Netherlands
Complexion	.003 (.078)	.083*** (.062)	.114 (.085)	.038 (.058)
Job Status	.518*** (.079)	1.654*** (.063)	.463*** (.085)	.885*** (.059)
Family Status	.172** (.078)	-	.225*** (.085)	-
Middle Eastern	-.423*** (.078)	-	-.430*** (.084)	-
Colombian	-	-.505*** (.089)	-	-.452*** (.082)
Pakistani	-	-.795*** (.089)	-	-.587*** (.083)
Libyan	-	-.722*** (.089)	-	-.533*** (.082)
Constant	.753*** (.085)	-.034*** (.073)	.442*** (.093)	-.229*** (.069)
Nagelkerke's R ²	.034	.204	.035	.075
N	3223	5019	2531	5017

*p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Turning to our manipulations of cultural distinctiveness, nationality/ethnicity exerted significant effects in both countries (*Table 5.2*). In line with our expectations, the potential immigrants with Islamic backgrounds constituted the least welcomed group of immigrants in both countries (*Hypothesis 4*). In the USA, we observe that Hispanic immigrants are strongly preferred over Middle Eastern immigrants. Moving from Hispanic to Middle Eastern candidate, support levels for temporary and permanent immigrants decreased by 11 and 10 percentage points, respectively. In the Netherlands, again in line with our expectations, Western and Hispanic candidates are clearly preferred over their North African and South Asian counterparts to a significant degree. As far as the temporary immigration is concerned, the level of support for Western immigrant is found to be decreasing 12, 17 and 19 percentage points as we move from the Western immigrant category to Hispanic, Libyan and Pakistani candidates, respectively. Our findings also indicate that Dutch respondents also rank potential immigrants in the same order when

they evaluate their citizenship applications. The difference between the predicted levels of support for permanent immigration of potential immigrants decreases 10 percentage points for the Hispanic candidate and approximately 13 percentage points for the immigrants with Islamic backgrounds.

Figure 5.2(a) Predicted Support for Work Permit by Credentials and Family Status in the USA **(b)** Predicted Support for Citizenship by Credentials and Family Status in the USA

The effects of skin complexion, however, proved not to be significant in any of our models. Contrary to expectations, neither American nor Dutch respondents expressed any preference for immigrants with light skin complexion while evaluating the citizenship and work permit applications of potential immigrants (*Hypothesis 5*). Furthermore, we explored a possible interaction between the cultural treatments, and observed a significant interaction effect between complexion and ethnicity in the Dutch context. As *Figure 5.3*

illustrates, Dutch respondents expressed higher levels of support for the Pakistani and the Libyan candidates with darker skin complexion. Moving from dark to light skin complexion, the predicted levels of support for work permit applications of Pakistani and Libyan candidates shift downward by 8 and 6%, respectively. This pattern is consistent with the notion that stereotype-consistent features elicit greater support. Light skinned Pakistanis and Libyans might be perceived as ‘strange’, thus increasing the likelihood of rejection.

Figure 5.3(a) *Predicted Support for Work Permit by Complexion and Pakistani Origin in the Netherlands* **(b)** *Predicted Support for Work Permit by Complexion and Libyan Origin in the Netherlands*

In the USA, the predicted levels of support for temporary and permanent immigrants vary approximately 23 percentage points depending on the economic and cultural characteristics of potential immigrants. Americans evaluate those highly skilled Hispanic immigrants with family dependents most favourably, whereas the least welcomed group of

immigrants are observed to be those unskilled and single immigrants with Middle Eastern background. As we move from the former to the latter, the predicted level of support drops from 81 to 58% when those immigrants are evaluated as temporary immigrants, and it drops from 76 to 53% while they are assessed for a permanent immigrant status. When compared to the USA, we find that individual characteristics have a larger impact on the admissibility of immigrants in the Netherlands. The difference between the predicted levels of support for the most and the least welcomed immigrants are recorded to be as large as 53 percentage points for the temporary immigration and 38 percentage points for the permanent immigration. Like their American counterparts, Dutch respondents also evaluate highly skilled immigrants with similar cultural backgrounds most favourably. The predicted admissibility of a highly skilled immigrant with Western background as a temporary immigrant is 83%, as oppose to 30% for an unskilled South Asian immigrant. When those immigrants are assessed for a citizenship application, the likelihood of an immigrant to be admitted in the country drops from 76% to 28% as we move from the most welcomed to the least welcomed immigrant.

5.5 Discussion

This study investigated the extent to which economic and cultural individuating cues affect public support for immigrants in the USA and the Netherlands. Through an experimental design, we manipulated economic and cultural characteristics of immigrants, making them appear more or less likely to pose an economic burden and to display cultural distinctiveness. Our analysis shows that the revealed levels of support for individual immigrants are sensitive to the economic and cultural attributes of these immigrants. We demonstrate that individual immigrants elicit markedly different levels of public support depending upon their educational and occupational qualifications. Other attributes, such as the presence of family dependents, country of origin and skin complexion also affect the acceptance or rejection rates of individual immigrants, but to a much lesser extent. In particular, our study demonstrates that support for individual immigrants is predominantly influenced by considerations regarding the economic costs and benefits of immigration. Americans and Dutch citizens alike prefer highly skilled immigrants over their unskilled counterparts. We also find, in the US case, that the presence of family dependents makes natives' evaluations of unskilled immigrants more negative. In general, our findings suggest that natives' are more willing to admit candidates seen as more likely to contribute to the national economy and less likely to be recipients of government benefits. To put it differently, level of support for individual immigrants significantly decreases when the expected economic costs of admitting the immigrants are expected to be high.

Our results also demonstrate that cultural distinctiveness -- as registered by the immigrant's ethnicity and complexion -- affects citizens' evaluations of individual immigrants, but to a lesser extent. American and Dutch citizens prefer immigrants from countries perceived to be more similar to their own. In the USA, there is a strong preference for Hispanic immigrants over Middle Eastern immigrants, and in the Netherlands we observe that approval of the immigrant decreases as we move from immigrants of Western origin to those of Hispanic, North African and South Asian origins, respectively. Skin complexion, however, does not appear to matter greatly to evaluations of individual immigrants, at least in the USA. In the Netherlands, however, we observe an interaction between ethnicity and complexion; perhaps signalling a preference for dark skinned, stereotypical immigrants in the case of the Libyan and Pakistani cases.

Our findings suggest that economic and cultural considerations affect evaluations of immigrant groups and individual immigrants to different extents. While earlier studies indicate that negative attitudes towards immigrants groups are mainly driven by concerns over cultural unity, our findings illustrate that attitudes towards individual immigrants, on the contrary, are mainly driven by economic considerations. However, the experimental design of current study does not allow us to experimentally test the differences between the evaluations of individual immigrants and immigrant groups. Therefore future research should try to validate our findings through the comparison of individual and groups of immigrants by employing further experimental manipulations.

Our results concerning the effects of the economic status manipulations should be interpreted with caution. Earlier studies on labour market discrimination point out that the level of discrimination against foreign workers is higher when the demand for skilled manpower is relatively low (Goldberg, Mourinho, & Kulke, 1995). Therefore, the preferences of respondents for skilled or unskilled workers might be contingent on the perceived labour market needs of the country. Future research should try to validate these findings by increasing the number of occupational categories representative of high-skill and low-skill professions and by assessing respondents' beliefs about the amount of employment demand for individuals in these categories.

In conclusion, our study makes it clear that attributes of immigrants influence public support for immigration. This research suggests that the attributes most relevant to American and Dutch citizens are immigrants' job skills. Economic qualifications dominate cultural attributes as a basis for evaluating individual immigrants.

FEARING WHAT? VIGNETTE EXPERIMENTS ON ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENTS*

6.1 Introduction

Immigration policies have become a prominent issue that dominates election campaigns and public discussions in many European countries as these have witnessed large inflows of immigrants over the last few decades (Card, Dustmann, & Preston, 2005). Previous research has firmly established a strong positive link between anti-immigration attitudes and support for right-wing parties (Knigge, 1998; Lewis-Beck & Mitchell, 1993; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002). As these parties increasingly gain power in Europe, public attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy preferences have become even more crucial in understanding contemporary European politics.

Academic research into attitudes towards immigrants mainly adopts a ‘threat framework’ to explain anti-immigrant sentiments and support for exclusionist immigration policies. Based on the premises of group conflict (Blumer, 1958; Pettigrew, 1998; Quillian, 1995) and social identity theories (Brewer, 2001; Tajfel, 1981), earlier research explored the role of economic interests and social identities in explaining immigration related attitudes. Following these two lines of reasoning, previous research has established that both economic and cultural threat considerations play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes towards immigrants. However, previous research has not generally considered the role of emerging safety threats in shaping attitudes towards immigrants even though these are heavily emphasized in the political discussions on and media coverage of immigration issues.

Recent studies exploring the influence of safety threats on immigration-related attitudes illustrate that an increasing concern over ‘national security’ threats leads to more restrictive immigration policies (Bigo, 2002) and exclusionary public opinion towards immigrants (Lahav & Courtemanche, 2012). These studies indicate that the safety threat framework can contribute to our understanding of immigration-related attitudes. Yet, they focus only on aggregate-level life-and property-threatening risks that are rare and highly destructive such as the events on 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks. The impact of perceived safety risks that are less destructive but more likely, is still an understudied area in studies on attitudes towards immigrants.

Based on a novel experimental design, the current study examines the impact of economic and safety concerns on immigration-related attitudes from a group conflict theory

* Turper, S. (submitted). Fearing what? Vignette experiments on anti-immigrant sentiments.

perspective. On the basis of survey vignette experiments conducted as part of the *Panel Component of the European Social Survey (ESS)* in the Netherlands with a representative sample of the Dutch population, we investigate the extent to which considerations about economic costs and criminality of immigrants are affecting immigration-related attitudes in the Netherlands.

Our findings illustrate that safety concerns are yielding more exclusionist immigration policy preferences than economic threat considerations, especially when those safety threats are conceptualized at the individual level rather than at the collective level. Building on this point, we further elaborate on the type and domain of safety concerns that trigger anti-immigrant attitudes. The experimental design of the study also allows us to make comparisons between the severity of demanded punishments for immigrant and for native defendants.

6.2 Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

Group conflict theory argues that negative sentiments towards the out-group stem from the view that its members challenge certain prerogatives of the dominant group (Blumer, 1958; Giles, 1977; Hardin, 1995; Pettigrew, 1957; Quillian, 1995). In other words, group conflict theory adopts a rational choice perspective in explaining attitudes towards immigrants and postulates that natives' negative attitudes towards immigrants originate from their perceptions of immigrants as a threat to their self-interests defined either at the individual or at the collective level, or both levels (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007, p. 77). Accordingly, group conflict theory anticipates natives to develop anti-immigrant sentiments when they perceive immigrants as putting their self-interests or the collective interests of the host society as a whole at risk. More specifically, the theory predicts anti-immigrant attitudes and preferences for more exclusionist immigration policies to be fuelled by natives' fears of adverse outcomes of immigration, such as economic hardship, increased job competition, reduced social welfare benefits and increased taxes (Sides & Citrin, 2007), loss of political power (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, White Stephan, & Martin, 2005; Yakushko, 2008), and increased crime rates (Sides & Citrin, 2007) at either the individual or the collective level.

6.2.1 Immigrants as Economic Threats

Group conflict theory predicts natives to hold anti-immigrant sentiments to the extent that they perceive out-group members as threatening their in-group prerogatives. These prerogatives include the economic interests, and natives are expected to express hostility towards immigrants when they perceive immigrants as economically detrimental either to their self-interests or to collective interests of the nation.

As far as the motivating role of economic self-interest is concerned, group conflict theory foresees those individuals who are in direct competition with immigrants in the job market or in accessing social welfare benefits to be more threatened by immigrants, and hence, to display higher levels of anti-immigrant attitudes. Consequently, group conflict theory anticipates, for instance, low-skilled natives to display higher levels of hostility towards low-skilled immigrants than towards high-skilled immigrants because they are more likely to be in direct competition with the former. As far as the motivating role of collective economic interests of the nation is concerned, however, the theory foresees natives to hold anti-immigrant sentiments provided that they perceive immigrants as detrimental to the collective economic interests of the host society as a whole, even if they consider their individual economic interests not to be at risk. Accordingly, when applied at the collective level, the theory anticipates those natives who are not in direct competition with immigrants in the job market or in assessing social welfare benefits to display anti-immigrant sentiments when they consider immigrants as posing a threat to economic prerogatives of their fellow nationals. Therefore, the theory predicts natives to display higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiments as the expected contribution of immigrants to the national economy decreases.

Earlier research adopting a group conflict theory perspective found limited traces of self-interest as a motivating factor (Fetzer, 2000; Malchow-Møller, Munch, Schroll, & Skaksen, 2008; Malhotra, Margalit, & Mo, 2013; Palmer, 1996), whereas studies testing the predictions of group conflict theory firmly established that perceptions of economic threats to the collective interests of the dominant group play a crucial role in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments and support for more exclusionist immigration policies (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, 2010; Schneider, 2008; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). A vast amount of previous research demonstrated that perceived threats to the economic interests of the dominant group foster anti-immigrant sentiments especially during times of economic hardship (Meuleman, Davidov, & Billiet, 2009; Sides & Citrin, 2007). Furthermore, a thrust of experimental research focusing on evaluations of immigrants on individual basis illustrates that economic considerations are the principal driving force behind support for individual immigrants (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013; Turper, Iyengar, Aarts, & van Gerven, 2014).

6.2.2 Immigrants as Threats to Law and Order

Immigrants are frequently portrayed as a threat to law and order due to their allegedly greater involvement in criminal activities (Agozino, 1996; Bigo, 2002). Although a recent literature review of studies on immigrant criminality indicates that there is no consensus over immigrants' elevating effect on crime rates (Hiatt, 2007), concerns over

law compliance and criminality of immigrants are increasingly emphasized in public discussions on immigrants and immigration policies in many Western democracies. Political discourse utilized by anti-immigrant parties often connects the issue of crime rates with immigration (Dinas & van Spanje, 2011; Mudde, 2007, 2012). Many anti-immigrant parties including the Freedom Party of Austria and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands have consistently targeted immigrants and blamed them for being the main reason for crime (Ignazi, 2003, p. 114; Martins, 2012; Ray, 2012). While in Italy, banners in an anti-immigrant march organized by the Northern League read as 'Immigrants=Criminals' (Baker, Cappel, & Carlisle, 2002), the former leader of the German Republican Party, Franz Schönhuber, publicly labelled immigrants as 'carriers of crime' (Ignazi, 2003, p. 72). In a similar vein, news coverage on immigrants and immigration also stresses the costs of immigration rather than the benefits of it for the host country (Pande, 2006; van Dijk, 1991), and disproportionately reports on immigrants in association with criminal activities (Burns & Gimpel, 2000; van Dijk, 1993). A content analysis of Dutch newspapers covering the five year period between 1990 and 1995 illustrates that 34 per cent of the news coverage on immigrants and ethnic minorities in the largest Dutch newspaper *Telegraaf* was on violation of law by ethnic minorities and immigrants (Lubbers, Scheepers, & Wester, 1998).

Previous research illustrates that political discourse and representations in the media can be fairly influential in shaping public attitudes towards immigrants, especially for those citizens who lack personal contact with immigrants, and hence rely on the information they acquire through public discussions for forming their judgments on immigration and immigrants. Earlier research illustrated that voter support for anti-immigrant parties is effectively mobilised by discourses linking immigration to criminality and social unrest (Rydgren, 2008). Similarly, frequent representations of immigrants as outlaws in the media lead people to perceive immigrants as threats to law and order (Lubbers, Scheepers, & Vergeer, 2000), and elicit anti-immigrant sentiments and support for harsher punitive attitudes against immigrants among the citizens of the host society (Meeussen et al., 2013; Windzio & Kleimann, 2009).

In accordance with the tone of public representations of immigrants as outlaws and criminals, the idea that immigration has an elevating effect on crime is a commonly held belief among European publics. According to ESS data with questions tapping considerations about the presumed consequences of immigration, respondents are mostly concerned with increasing crime rates in 20 of the 21 European countries (Ceobanu, 2010). However, research focusing on the immigration and crime relationship mainly concentrated on comparing crime rates for immigrant and native populations (Engbersen, van der Leun, & de Boom, 2007; Melossi, 2014; Reid, Weiss, Adelman, & Jaret, 2005), and the impact of ethnic composition on the perceptions of neighbourhood safety

(Semyonov, Gorodzeisky, & Glikman, 2012). Previous studies have often overlooked the relationship between immigration attitudes and natives' perceptions of immigrants as threats to law and order.

From a group conflict theory perspective, natives are expected to perceive immigrants as endangering their prerogatives when those immigrants pose a real or perceived threat to their personal safety or to collective safety in the society as a whole. Therefore, according to group conflict theory, concerns about immigrant delinquency --both at the personal and the collective level-- are expected to lead to anti-immigrant sentiments among the members of the host society. However, there are only few studies focusing on how perceptions of immigrants as threats to personal safety, and to social law and order in the society affect attitudes towards immigrants. Existing research illustrates that concerns about the crimes committed by immigrants are strongly related to immigration attitudes and support for more exclusionist immigration policies (Espenshade & Calhoun, 1993; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Mayda, 2006; McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Palmer, 1996). Empirical studies further lend support to the predictions of group conflict theory regarding the relationship between safety threat perceptions and anti-immigrant sentiments. Studies testing the expectations of group conflict theory at the collective level by utilizing longitudinal and experimental data illustrate that concerns about immigrants' impact on crime rates in the society as whole is a strong predictor of anti-immigrant sentiments. A recent panel study demonstrates that fear of crime affects immigration attitudes even after controlling for pre-existing immigration attitudes (Fitzgerald, Curtis, & Corliss, 2011). In a similar vein, the decoupling experiments aiming at disentangling the perceptions over safety threats and the attitudes towards the immigrant groups that allegedly pose these threats, demonstrate that fear of increasing violence and vandalism in the Dutch society as a whole plays a significant role in shaping hostility towards immigrants (Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). Empirical studies testing the predictions of group conflict theory at the individual level, however, are far more scarce, and they suggest concerns over personal safety not to be a significant predictor of anti-immigrant sentiments (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007).

6.3 Current Study

The current study investigates to what extent concerns about economic costs of immigrants and the threats to social law and order that those immigrants pose to the host society affect the level of support for individual immigrants. By utilizing data from survey experiments, the current study provides much needed direct evidence for investigating the impact of economic threats and safety threats on natives' evaluations of *individual* immigrants. In the first experimental study, we investigate the extent to which economic considerations

and concerns over law and order affect support for individual immigrants. The second experimental study focuses on concerns over law and order only, and it explores to what extent different types of minor criminal offenses that are frequently associated with immigrants affect the levels of support for individual immigrants. Furthermore, we explore the extent to which the severity of punitive judgments differs for native and immigrant defendants.

6.3.1 Theoretical expectations

Group conflict theory predicts that natives' willingness to admit immigrants to the country is affected by their perceptions of immigrants as economic threats. More specifically, concerns over the increasing burden on the welfare state and increasing labour market competition are expected to play a role in shaping attitudes towards individual immigrants. Previous research illustrates that concerns over welfare costs of immigration play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards immigrants (Dustmann & Preston, 2004; Helbling & Kriesi, 2014). Findings of earlier research testing the predictions of group conflict theory regarding the impact of job competition on immigration attitudes suggest that fear of adverse outcomes of immigration on the labour market competition at the individual level leads to anti-immigrant sentiments (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Malchow-Møller, Munch, Schroll, & Skaksen, 2008). Therefore, we expect the level of support for individual immigrants to be influenced by their economic prospects, and we formulate our first hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1. The level of support for individual immigrants decreases as their expected contribution to labour market competition and costs on the social welfare system increases.

Despite the fact that there is no conclusive evidence indicating immigrants' aggravating effect on crime rates, immigrants are often portrayed as threats to social law and order in the host country. Anti-immigrant parties in Western democracies explicitly associate crime and immigration and hold immigrants responsible for crime. Similarly, news coverage on immigrants disproportionately reports crimes with immigrant defendants. Previous research demonstrated that both the frequency and the tone of news coverage of immigrant actors affect immigration-related attitudes (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009), and negative news about immigrants boosts opposition to immigration (Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008). Given the recurring emphasis on immigrant criminality in public discussions over immigrants and immigration, we expect considerations over immigrant criminality to affect natives' willingness to admit individual immigrants in

the country. Therefore, following the premises of group conflict theory, we formulate our second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2. The level of support for individual immigrants is higher for immigrants who are law abiding compared to those immigrants who are not.

Furthermore, earlier research adopting a group conflict theory perspective found limited traces of concerns over individual safety as a motivating factor for anti-immigrant sentiments (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007), whereas studies testing the predictions of group conflict theory at the collective level suggested that concerns about immigrants' impact on crime rates in the society as a whole play a crucial role in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments and support for more exclusionist immigration policies (Fitzgerald, Curtis, & Corliss, 2011; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). On the basis of previous research, we expect safety threats at the collective level to lead higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiments when compared to safety threats at the individual level, and formulate our third hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 3. The level of support for individual immigrants is lower for those immigrants posing threats to safety in the society as a whole than those immigrants posing threats to individual safety.

Cases involving immigrant defendants committing crimes against natives are hypothesized to be treated as matters of intergroup conflict. Accordingly, natives are expected to use ethnicity as an heuristic cue for judging the defendants' blameworthiness and deservingness of punishment (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006). Previous research confirms that perceptions of ethnic and immigrant populations as threats to social law and order excites support for harsher punitive policies (King & Wheelock, 2007). Studies demonstrate that ethnic typification of crime is a significant predictor of punitive attitudes (Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz, 2004; Pickett, Chiricos, Golden, & Gertz, 2012), and ethnic minorities are more severely punished than natives for criminal offenses they commit against the members of the dominant group (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006). Consequently, we expect immigrant defendants to be evaluated as deserving harsher punishment for the criminal conducts than their native counterparts. Our fourth hypothesis reads as follows:

Hypothesis 4. The proposed punishment is more severe for immigrant defendants compared to native defendants who committed the same criminal offense.

6.3.2 Data

For the current study, we utilize data from survey experiments conducted as part of the *Panel Component* of the ESS in the Netherlands. The panel study started with ESS Round-5 in October 2010 and with the participation of 1,829 respondents representative of the Dutch population over the age 16. After completing the ESS questionnaire, all respondents were approached to take part in the four-wave panel study to which 1,501 agreed. The subsequent waves of the study were conducted between May 2011 and January 2013 with eight-month intervals in-between. The response rates for the panel study were .60 in the initial ESS Round-5 study and .72, .70 and .86 in subsequent waves, respectively. A total of 647 respondents completed the final wave of the panel study.

The first experimental study was conducted as part of the third wave of the panel study with a subsample of 275 Dutch respondents excluding first generation immigrants. For the second experimental study, we utilized data obtained from the survey experiments conducted as part of the fourth wave of the study, which was completed with the participation of a full sample of 619 Dutch respondents born in the Netherlands.

6.3.3 Study I

6.3.3.1 Experimental Design

In the first experimental study, we investigated the extent to which the economic considerations and concerns over law and order affect the support for individual immigrants. To this end, respondents were randomly assigned to three experimental groups. Respondents in each experimental condition were presented with a brief vignette text describing an immigrant who placed a request for extending his residence permit (Appendix A). The vignettes manipulated immigrants' economic attributes as well as their levels of respect for law and order. Respondents were then asked to decide whether they would approve or reject the residence permit extension application placed by the immigrant presented to them.

As presented in *Table 6.1*, we employed a 3*2 between-subjects factorial design with six experimental conditions corresponding to three economic (low economic prospect, or medium economic prospect, or high economic prospect) and two respect-for-law-and-order (complete respect for law and order, or no complete respect for law and order) attribute treatments. Respondents in each experimental group were asked to evaluate two immigrants. Consequently, the restructuring of the data and list-wise deletion of missing cases yielded to a total sample of 492 cases for the analysis of the admissibility levels of individual immigrants.

Table 6.1 *Experimental Design for Experimental Study I*

Law Compliance	Economic Prospects		
	Low	Medium	High
Law-abiding	R	R	R
Not law-abiding	R	R	R

Note. Cells marked with ‘R’ indicate experimental conditions where ‘residence permit’ questions were present.

Economic Cues. The vignettes manipulated the economic prospects of the immigrants by presenting them as potential sources of more or less economic burden for the national economy. The immigrants were described as having either low economic prospects, or medium economic prospects or high economic prospects. In all three experimental conditions the immigrants are depicted as individuals whose work contracts are about to expire in two months’ time. While the low economic prospect condition featured immigrants who are willing to receive unemployment benefits, respondents in the medium economic prospect condition are presented with immigrants who are willing to seek a new employment once their residence permit is extended. In the high economic prospect condition, on the other hand, immigrants are depicted as individuals who are willing to start up their own business in the Netherlands once their application for residence permit extension is approved. To put it differently, the low economic prospect condition speaks to ‘social welfare threat’, whereas the medium economic prospect condition represents ‘job competition threat’ and the high economic prospect condition indicates ‘no economic threat’.

Respect for Law and Order Cues. The vignettes further manipulated immigrants’ level of respect for law and order. In half of the vignettes the immigrant is described as a person who is known to be complying with laws, whereas the other experimental condition featured an immigrant who is known to be not always complying with laws. The experimental conditions deliberately left this vague in order to allow respondents to utilize their pre-existing definitions of law-abidingness.

6.3.3.2 Variables

Dependent Variable. We assess the admissibility of individual immigrants by using respondents’ evaluations of residence permit extension applications placed by the immigrants presented to them. The question read as ‘Please indicate whether you would approve or disapprove a residence permit application of the individual described above?’, and the response options are given in dichotomous format (0=approve, 1=disapprove).

Independent Variables. We utilize categorical variables for the experimental treatments of economic prospects (0=high economic prospect, 1=medium economic prospect, 2=low economic prospect), and law compliance (0=law-abiding, 1=not law-abiding).

6.3.3.3 Results

Our findings from logistic regression models demonstrate that natives' willingness to admit immigrants in the country, in other words admissibility of immigrants, is affected by both the economic prospects and the law compliance of potential immigrants to a great extent. As presented in *Table 6.2*, Nagelkerke's R square statistics for the model predicting natives' levels of support for individual immigrants from the economic prospects and the law compliance of the potential immigrants is found to be strikingly high (.439).

Our findings demonstrate that respondents clearly prefer immigrants with high economic prospects over their low economic prospect counterparts. Compared to their economically self-sufficient counterparts, immigrants depicted as potential recipients of unemployment benefits are approximately five times more likely to have their application for an extended residence permit rejected. As illustrated in *Figure 6.1*, the predicted probabilities of admitting law abiding immigrants who are depicted as potential recipients of unemployment benefits are found to be 34 percentage points lower than those of their potential entrepreneurial counterparts. Similarly, the level of support for immigrants who do not always comply with the law decreases by 15 percentage points as we move from the high to the low economic prospect condition. The differences between the levels of support for high and medium economic prospect immigrants, on the other hand, are found not to be statistically significant. Our findings of economic prospect manipulations demonstrate that admissibility levels of individual immigrants are to a great extent affected by concerns about social welfare costs of immigrants rather than by considerations over increased job competition.

While the economic prospects of immigrants have a considerable impact on admissibility of individual immigrants, our results clearly demonstrate that law-compliance of potential immigrants is an even much stronger predictor of support for individual immigrants. Those immigrants who are depicted as not always complying with the laws are found to be 16 times more likely to be rejected for their applications to extend their resident permit than their law-abiding counterparts. As we move from the law-abiding to the non-law-abiding category, the predicted probabilities of approving residence permit applications of immigrants drop by approximately 60 percentage points for immigrants with high and medium economic prospects and by 42 percentage points for immigrants with low economic prospects.

Table 6.2 *Disapproval of Extended Residence Permit Applications by Economic and Safety Threat Manipulations*

<i>Economic prospect</i>			
	Medium	.236	(.268)
	Low	1.562***	(.302)
<i>Law Compliance</i>			
	Not complying with laws	2.825***	(.243)
	Constant	-1.498***	(.236)
<hr/>			
	Nagelkerke's R square	.439	
	Hosmere & Lemeshow Test	.903	
	N	492	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

The findings of our first experimental study demonstrate that both the economic threat perceptions and the concerns about social law and order are significant predictors of support for individual immigrants. Our findings provide partial support for *Hypothesis 1*, and reveal that while considerations about welfare costs of potential immigrants play a crucial role in shaping natives' willingness to admit individual immigrants to the country, the fear that immigrants will increase job competition is not found to be a significant concern for the assessment of individual immigrants. In line with the expectations stated in *Hypothesis 2*, we find that level of support for individual immigrants is higher for law-abiding immigrants when compared to their non-law-abiding counterparts. Our findings further demonstrate that law-compliance of potential immigrants is a much stronger determinant of admissibility of individual immigrants in the country.

Figure 6.1 *Predicted Probabilities for Rejecting Resident Permit Applications of Immigrants by Economic Prospects and Law-Compliance Manipulations*

6.3.4 Study 2

6.3.4.1 Experimental Design

In the second experimental study, we investigate the extent to which those criminal offenses that are frequently associated with immigrants influence the level of support for individual immigrants. To this end, respondents were randomly assigned to four experimental groups. Respondents in each experimental condition were presented with a brief vignette describing either an immigrant who placed an application to extend his residence permit, or a native citizen (Appendix B). The vignettes manipulated the criminal background of both the immigrants and the natives described in the vignettes. Respondents who were presented with immigrant vignettes were first asked to decide whether they would approve or reject the application for an extended residence permit. Secondly, they were asked to indicate how severely they would like the immigrant to be punished provided that he would actually be proven guilty for committing the criminal offense described in the vignette. Respondents who were presented with native citizen vignettes, on the other hand, were only asked to indicate how severely they would like this person to be punished provided that he committed the described criminal offense.

In this experimental study, we employed a factorial design with eight experimental conditions corresponding to a 2*4 between-subjects factorial design with two nationalities (Dutch citizen, or non-naturalised immigrant), and four types of criminal offense (public property, or individual property, or public safety, or individual safety) treatments. We included one further experimental condition where the immigrant was depicted as not accused of any criminal activities. Respondents presented with this vignette were requested only to state whether they would approve or disapprove the residence permit extension application placed by the immigrant described in the vignette, and they were not presented with the severity of punishment question. As *Table 6.3* illustrates, the design includes nine experimental conditions. While in three of the experimental groups respondents were asked to evaluate two vignettes, respondents in the fourth experimental group were asked to evaluate three vignettes. Consequently, the restructuring of the data and list-wise deletion of missing cases yielded to a total sample of 648 cases for the analysis of the admissibility levels of individual immigrants, and a total sample of 1205 cases for the analysis of punitive judgements towards the native and immigrant defendants.

6.3.4.2 Experimental Manipulations

Citizenship Status Cues. In the vignettes, half of the experimental conditions featured an immigrant who has been living in the Netherlands for two years and whose residence permit is about to expire in two months' time, whereas the respondents in the remaining experimental conditions were presented with a Dutch citizen.

Table 6.3 *Experimental Design for Experimental Study II*

Citizenship Status	Criminal Background				
	Public Offense		Individual Offense		No Criminal Offense
	Safety	Property	Safety	Property	
Immigrant	R - P	R - P	R - P	R - P	R
Native	P	P	P	P	-

Note. Cells marked with ‘R’ indicate experimental conditions where ‘residence permit’ questions were present. Cells marked with ‘P’ indicate experimental conditions where ‘severity of punishment’ questions were present.

Criminal Offense Cues. The vignettes further manipulate the criminal background of the immigrants and natives presented to the respondents. The vignettes manipulated the *domain of criminal offense* by making immigrants and natives appear as threats either to the general public or to individuals, and also the *type of criminal offense* by presenting those immigrants and natives as posing threats either to physical safety or to property. Except for the vignette which featured an immigrant who has not been accused of any criminal offenses, all vignette texts featured immigrants and natives who were described to have been accused of one of the four types of minor criminal offenses, namely; public property, individual property, public safety and individual safety. In the public property offense condition, immigrants and the Dutch citizens are described as having been accused of making an exaggerated insurance claim, whereas in the individual property condition they are depicted as having been accused of house squatting. Finally, the public safety and individual safety conditions featured immigrants and natives who have been accused of drunken driving and slight bodily assault offenses, respectively. While the public property and public safety manipulations speak to ‘safety threats at the collective level’, individual property and individual physical safety conditions speak to ‘safety threats at individual level’.

6.3.4.3 Variables

Dependent Variables. We again measure the admissibility of individual immigrants through respondents’ assessments of residence permit extension applications placed by the immigrants presented to them, and the response options are given in dichotomous format (0=approve, 1=disapprove). We further measure the severity of punitive judgements on an eleven point scale by using respondents’ responses for the question asking ‘assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offense, how severely do you think he should be punished?’ (0=not severely at all, 10=very severely).

Independent Variables. To predict the level of support for individual immigrants, we utilize categorical variables for experimental manipulations of domain of criminal offense (0=offenses against public, 1=offenses against individual), and type of criminal offense (0=offenses against property, 1=offenses against physical safety). The models predicting the severity of punishment further include citizenship of the person described in the vignette (0=Dutch citizen, 1=immigrant).

6.3.4.4 Results

In order to investigate to what extent the minor criminal offenses affect level of support for individual immigrants, we first focus on those vignettes featuring potential immigrants. Our findings from logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of rejecting resident permit applications of individual immigrants are presented in *Table 6.4* and they show that the admissibility of immigrants is contingent upon the criminal offenses that they were accused of. Our findings demonstrate that both the *domain* and the *type* of criminal offenses affect admissibility of individual immigrants in the country.

Table 6.4 *Disapproval of Extended Residence Permit Applications by Safety Threat Manipulations*

Offenses against:			
Public	.859**		(.314)
Individual	1.450***		(.299)
Physical Safety	-.256		(.271)
Individual*Physical Safety	.733*		(.366)
Constant	-1.765***		(.248)
<hr/>			
Nagelkerke's R square		.114	
Hosmere & Lemeshow Test		1.000	
N		684	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

As illustrated in *Figure 6.2*, the predicted probabilities of disapproving resident permit applications of immigrants gradually increase as we move from the ‘no criminal offense’ category to the categories of offenses against ‘public safety’, ‘public property’, ‘individual property’ and ‘individual safety’. While the predicted probability of disapproving resident permit applications of the immigrants who were not accused of any criminal offenses is 15 per cent, those immigrants who have been accused of committing offenses against public safety and property are approximately two times more likely to be rejected for their resident permit applications. The predicted probabilities of admitting those immigrants who have been accused of committing drunken driving and making exaggerated insurance

claim offenses in the public safety and public property conditions are predicted as 24 and 29 per cent, respectively.

While the concerns about criminal offenses against public property and public safety have a considerable impact on the admissibility of individual immigrants in the country, contrary to our expectations stated in *Hypothesis 3*, the effect size of individual property and individual safety treatments are observed to be even larger. When compared to the applications of immigrants with no criminal charge records, the resident permit applications placed by those immigrants who were accused of offenses against individual property and physical safety were approximately four times more likely to be disapproved. The predicted level of support for individual immigrants who have been accused of house squatting is 27 percentage points lower than that for their counterparts with no criminal charge records. In a similar vein, as we move from the ‘no criminal offense’ condition to the ‘individual safety’ condition, the predicted probabilities of disapproving resident permit applications of individual immigrants increase by 39 percentage points. Consequently, those immigrants who were accused of committing a slight bodily assault in the individual safety condition are observed to be the immigrants who are most likely to be disapproved for their resident permit applications (54%).

Inspection of the regression coefficients presented in *Table 6.4* and the predicted probabilities illustrated in *Figure 6.2* further reveals that there is a significant interaction between the type and the domain manipulations. The predicted mean levels of rejecting resident permit applications of individual immigrants indicate that natives are more concerned about offenses against property at the collective level. At the individual level, however, concerns over physical safety plays a larger role in shaping attitudes towards immigrants.

Figure 6.2 *Predicted Probabilities for Rejecting Resident Permit Applications of Immigrants by Safety Threat Manipulations*

So far, our findings from experimental study 2 illustrated that natives’ views on the admissibility of immigrants vary by the threats these immigrants pose to law and order. Next, we investigate whether the severity of punitive judgements of respondents differ for immigrant and native defendants. To this end, we run a multiple regression model predicting the severity of punishment demanded for the individual described in the vignette provided that he is found guilty of committing the mentioned criminal offense.

Table 6.5 presents the results of the regression analysis with experimental treatments and significant interaction terms. As the *Table 6.5* demonstrates, the severity of the punishment demanded for offenses against public is found to be significantly higher than severity of punishment demanded for offenses against individuals. As illustrated in *Figure 6.3*, in almost all experimental conditions, the predicted levels of punishment are higher for offenses committed against the public when compared to those corresponding offenses committed against individuals. Only in those experimental conditions featuring immigrant defendants committing offenses against physical safety, natives are found to be supporting slightly harsher punishment for defendants committing offenses against individuals than for those committing offenses against the general public. To put it briefly, our findings demonstrate that safety threats at the collective level are more likely to stimulate higher levels of support for harsher punishment when compared to safety threats at the individual level.

Table 6.5 Severity of Punishment by Safety Threat and Origin of Defendant Manipulations

	Immigrant	-.934***	(.173)
<i>Offenses against:</i>			
	Individual	-2.103***	(.211)
	Safety	1.251***	(.173)
	Immigrant*Safety	.923***	(.244)
	Individual* Safety	1.219***	(.244)
Constant		6.403***	(.152)
<hr/>			
Adjusted R square		.233	
N		1205	

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Our findings further show that those defendants committing offenses against physical safety are evaluated as deserving harsher punishment when compared to their counterparts committing offenses against public and individual property. In the case of offenses against public safety, the severity of punishment demanded for native and immigrant defendants is predicted to be 1.25 points higher on an eleven point scale than for offenses against

public property. In a similar vein, the severity of punishment for offenses committed by native and immigrants against individual physical safety is found to be approximately 2.45 points higher when compared to the demanded punishment for offenses against individual property.

Furthermore, contrary to our expectations stated in *Hypothesis 4*, the severity of punishment demanded for immigrant defendants is found not to be higher than the punishment demanded for their native counterparts. Inspection of *Figure 6.3* illustrating the predicted levels of punishment by experimental treatments reveals that the predicted levels of punishment are similar for native and immigrant defendants in the cases of offenses against individuals; whereas the severity of punishment demanded for the native defendants are noticeably higher for those offenses against public safety and public property.

To summarize, our findings from the second experimental study demonstrate that citizens' views on immigrants' admissibility and deservingness of punishment vary by the type and domain of the threats that immigrants pose to law and order. Our findings illustrate that concerns about criminal offenses against individual property and safety have a considerable impact on the admissibility of individual immigrants in the country, whereas concerns about criminal offenses against public property and safety affect the admissibility rates of immigrants to a lesser extent. Our findings further indicate that when compared to their native counterparts, immigrant defendants are evaluated as deserving similar punishment for offenses against individuals' physical safety and property. In case of public offenses, on the other hand, immigrant defendants are evaluated considerably more leniently when compared to their native counterparts.

Figure 6.3 *Predicted Probabilities for Severity of Punishment by Safety Threat and Origin of Defendant Manipulations*

6.4 Discussion

In this study we investigated the extent to which public support for individual immigrants is affected by considerations about economic prospects and criminality of potential immigrants. By utilizing a novel experimental design, we manipulated economic and criminal background characteristics of immigrants, making them appear more or less likely to be an economic burden and to pose various safety threats to the host society. Our findings demonstrate that public support for individual immigrants is highly influenced by the considerations about both economic and safety costs of admitting individual immigrants in the country.

Regarding economic threat perceptions, our findings reveal that considerations about economic prospects of potential immigrants play a crucial role in shaping public support for individual immigrants. Accordingly, public support for individual immigrants markedly diminishes when the immigrants' expected contribution to the national economy decreases. Most strikingly, we find that natives' willingness to admit individual immigrants to the country significantly decreases when the immigrants are presented as potential recipients of welfare benefits. Those low economic prospect immigrants who are presented as potential recipients of welfare benefits are considerably less welcomed when compared to their counterparts with medium and high economic prospects. Anxiety about increasing job competition due to immigration, on the other hand, is found not to be a significant predictor of support for individual immigrants. Taken as a whole, our findings from economic prospect manipulations demonstrate that the perceived welfare costs of immigration is crucial in explaining public support for individual immigrants.

While the economic prospects of immigrants have a considerable impact on the admissibility of individual immigrants, our results further demonstrate that safety concerns are stronger predictors of public support for individual immigrants. Our findings illustrate that concerns about immigrant delinquency lead to anti-immigrant sentiments among the host society. We find that citizens' views on admissibility of individual immigrants are predominantly shaped by considerations about law-compliance and criminality of potential immigrants. Public support for non-law-abiding individual immigrants is found to be profoundly lower when compared to their law-abiding counterparts. In particular, public support for individual immigrants is sensitive to the domain and type of safety threats that the individual immigrants pose. We find that concerns about criminal offenses against individual property and safety have a considerable impact on the admissibility of individual immigrants in the country, whereas concerns about criminal offenses against public property and safety affect the admissibility rates of immigrants to a lesser extent. In a similar vein, our findings show that the domain of criminal offense also plays a significant role in shaping punitive attitudes towards

immigrant and native defendants. We find that respondents are willing to punish those immigrants who pose threats to the safety and property of individuals equally severely as their native counterparts. In case of public offenses, on the other hand, immigrant defendants are evaluated considerably more leniently than native defendants. As far as the safety threat manipulations are concerned, the findings of the current study support the predictions of group conflict theory and indicate that considerations about safety at the collective level and, to a larger extent, at the individual level are crucial in explaining public support for individual immigrants.

Earlier research on the punitive judgements for criminal offenses suggests that those defendants of non-native origin are more likely to be punished more severely. Our findings, however, illustrate that for those criminal offenses against public property and public security, citizens' are willing to penalize native defendants markedly more severely than their immigrant counterparts. We speculate that attributing criminality to out-groups might have an identity-reinforcing function, and hence, offenses committed by native defendants might cause higher levels of cognitive dissonance and excite harsher punitive attitudes. Future research, however, should try to disentangle the relationship between the domain of criminal offense and the attitudes towards native and immigrant defendants.

It should be noted that the current study investigates the impact of considerations about economic prospects and criminality on public support for individual immigrants, and our research design does not allow us to experimentally test the differences between assessments of individual immigrants and immigrant groups. Therefore, future research should try to validate the findings of the current study by utilizing experimental manipulations for immigrant groups, and investigate whether the findings of the current study also apply to the evaluations of immigrant groups. Furthermore, the current study's empirical domain is restricted to the Netherlands. Although previous research on impact of individuating cues on public support for individual immigrants demonstrated that individuating cues affect public sentiments similarly in various settings, future research should also investigate whether the findings of the study are generalizable to other countries.

To conclude, the current study clearly illustrates that the concerns over economic prospects and criminality of individual immigrants are significant predictors of support for individual immigrants. Hence, further research adopting the group conflict theory perspective should not only focus on the economic considerations but also focus more on the crime aspect of immigration when investigating the public sentiments towards immigrants.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

7.1 Political Attitudes in a Rapidly Changing European Landscape: Insights from the ESS-Netherlands Panel Component Study

In political attitudes research, researchers have to make a series of methodological choices for investigating substantive research questions, and the findings of studies are to a large extent contingent upon the measurement characteristics of survey measures utilized and analytical strategies employed in these studies. This thesis aimed at investigating ways of improving political attitudes research by employing robust analytical strategies that identify attitude change patterns separately from measurement errors for examining citizens' attitudes towards political institutions and democratic regime, and also at investigating causes and consequences of immigration attitudes by means of innovative survey experiments. To these ends, this study primarily utilized data from the *Panel Component of ESS* in the Netherlands. Consequently, the four-wave panel and the experimental data from the *Panel Component* constituted the primarily basis of the empirical studies that comprised this thesis. This thesis, as such, contributed to existing knowledge on the study of political attitudes while at the same time and equally importantly, it contributed to public opinion research as the methodological findings would be applicable to attitudes research in general.

This concluding chapter begins by presenting an overview of the research findings in Section 7.2. Section 7.3 will present a discussion of the limitations of this study, and put forward suggestions for future research informed by the limitations of the current study. In Section 7.4, the implications of this thesis will be discussed, and this chapter will conclude with a brief conclusion section.

7.2 Overview of Research Findings

The main findings of empirical studies that comprise this thesis will be presented under thematically organized subheadings that are guided by the general aims of this study. While Section 7.2.1 will introduce the main findings from the studies on political attitude change and attitude uncertainty, Section 7.2.2 will present an overview of the findings regarding the underpinnings of attitudes towards immigrants.

7.2.1 Political Attitudes and Political Sophistication: Attitude Stability, Attitude Change and Measurement Errors

In the field of public opinion research, the question of whether only the politically sophisticated can hold coherent and meaningful political attitudes remains central, and with its rather unpleasant, yet striking implications for the normative theories of democracy, the ‘non-attitudes of mass public’ thesis continues to stimulate a growing body of literature. Recently developed attitudinal models also ascribe a central role to political sophistication in explaining the organization of political attitudes in the general public, and theorize political sophistication groups to differ in their attitudinal organizations as it would be evinced by the differences in the levels of attitude stability and susceptibility to measurement errors across political sophistication groups (Zaller, 1992). Having also important implications for the public opinion research in general, and for the study of political attitudes in particular, inspection of the differences in attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns between political sophistication groups is crucial for attaining statistically robust findings as overlooking different measurement characteristics across sophistication groups might jeopardize the research findings. Therefore, the first aim of this study was to investigate whether high and low political sophistication groups differ in their organizations of attitudes, and to utilize the methodological insights of the study for the examination of substantive research questions on the legitimacy of the political regime by taking different measurement characteristics across sophistication groups into account.

To this end, this study examined the differences in the levels of stability of political attitudes and susceptibility to measurement errors among high and low political sophistication groups by employing the recently developed quasi-Markov simplex approach which makes it possible to distinguish between stable trait, over-time change and measurement error components of attitude measures (Alwin, 2007, 2009), and further explored the cognitive underpinnings of attitude change and attitude uncertainty across political sophistication groups by employing an (in)consistency experiment that adopted a cognitive interview approach (Chapter 3). Our findings from the simplex analysis of the four wave panel data elucidated that although highly and less sophisticated individuals display response inconsistency to similar extents, response inconsistency observed among these two sophistication groups is predominantly induced by different mechanisms. We demonstrated that response inconsistency among less sophisticated is more likely to be a consequence of measurement errors, and hence, signal attitude uncertainty, whereas response inconsistency observed for highly sophisticated is more likely to be induced by genuine attitude change. Our findings from the (in)consistency experiment exploring the underlying mechanisms of self-reported attitude change through cognitive interviews provided the direct evidence needed to complement the findings of the quasi-Markov

simplex analysis, and further demonstrated that highly sophisticated individuals are more likely to update their attitudes in the light of new political information and display genuine attitude change, whereas less sophisticated individuals hold more stable attitudes yet they are as likely to display response inconsistency as their highly sophisticated counterparts predominantly due to difficulties in translating their opinions into response options. On the whole, this study elucidated that measurement characteristics of political attitudes significantly differ for highly and less sophisticated individuals. While the differences across political sophistication groups are found not to be large enough to lend support for the ‘non-attitudes of mass public’ thesis, they nevertheless suggested that overlooking differing measurement characteristics of political attitudes for high and low political sophistication groups can lead to biased estimates of attitude change patterns in the general public, and can jeopardize the research findings on the relationships between various attitude measures.

Building on this point, this thesis further explored the practical implications of our research findings on the differences in attitude change and attitude uncertainty patterns across political sophistication groups for the practice of political trust research (Chapter 4). We chose to focus on attitudes towards political institutions because, having crucial implications for political participation and law-abiding behaviour, political trust is considered to be an essential indicator of legitimacy in democratic regimes, yet scholarly research into political trust often overlooked the measurement characteristics of political trust measures despite the fact that these survey measures are documented as highly context-sensitive and susceptible to measurement errors (Dekker, 2012). Previous research examining the differences in political trust levels between the higher and lower educated citizens documented that highly educated individuals display higher levels of political trust when compared to their less educated counterparts, and these findings are often interpreted as lending support for the ‘diploma democracy’ argument referring to the alleged disappearance of politically less sophisticated citizens from political life (Bovens & Wille, 2009). However, the neglect of potential measurement problems of political trust raised doubts about the findings of these earlier studies documenting the gap between the levels of political trust across political sophistication groups. Therefore, this study revisited the ‘diploma democracy’ argument, and investigated whether the observed differences in political trust levels of high and low sophistication groups are genuine, or merely methodological artefacts stemming from overlooking measurement properties of political trust construct. Our findings demonstrated that political sophistication and political trust are positively related as suggested by earlier studies, and hence, lent support for the ‘diploma democracy’ argument asserting that politically less sophisticated citizens become increasingly alienated from politics. However, our results further illustrated that the relationship between political trust and sophistication is overestimated when the different measurement characteristics of political trust construct across political

sophistication groups are not accounted for by the statistical models utilized in the analysis. Therefore, in sharp contrast with the findings of earlier studies, this study illustrated that the differences in political trust levels of highly and less sophisticated individuals are minor.

On the whole, this study shed light on the micro level political attitude change patterns by paying special attention to differences between political sophistication groups. Thereby, this study elucidated that measurement characteristics of political attitudes significantly differ for highly and less sophisticated individuals, and neglect of these differences in measurement characteristics of survey measures across political sophistication groups leads to biased estimates of the trends in and the relationships between political attitudes.

7.2.2 Attitudes towards Immigrants and Immigration Policy Preferences

The study of attitudes towards immigration has far-reaching implications for the policy making in all European countries as Europe faces increasing numbers of internal and external immigrants, and there is an increasing need for research on public opinion towards immigrants in order to produce well-informed immigration policies. Therefore, the second aim of this thesis was to thoroughly investigate the causal mechanisms that derive anti-immigrant sentiments in the general public.

Academic understanding of public opinion towards immigration is mainly shaped by the realistic group conflict and the social identity theories that adopt threat frameworks for explaining natives' attitudes towards immigrants. Although previous research adopting these two streams of theories has extensively studied the relationship between threat perceptions and anti-immigrant sentiments, two important knowledge gaps in the literature remain. Firstly, despite the fact that an extensive amount of previous research has explored the role of economic and cultural threat perceptions in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments towards various immigrant groups, only a handful of studies examine the role of economic and cultural cues for evaluating individual immigrants, and to the best of our knowledge, no previous research examined the impact of individual characteristics of immigrants on immigration-related attitudes in the Netherlands. Secondly, research exploring the role of safety threats in shaping immigration attitudes mainly focuses on aggregate-level life- and property-threatening risks that are rare and highly destructive such as the events on 9/11, and the impact of perceived safety risks that are less destructive but more likely, is still an understudied area in studies on attitudes towards immigrants. Addressing these gaps, this thesis examined the role of economic and cultural characteristics of immigrants in shaping evaluations of individual immigrants in the Netherlands and in the USA from a comparative perspective, and further explored

how safety threats affect levels of public support for individual immigrants through a series of vignette experiments (Chapters 5 and 6).

Our findings indicated that support for individual immigrants is highly sensitive to the economic prospects and law-compliance of immigrants. This study demonstrated that individual immigrants elicit markedly different levels of public support depending upon their economic prospects, and their levels of respect for law and order. Starting with the economic prospects, our results showed that probability of admitting highly skilled immigrants as temporary and permanent residents in the country is strikingly higher when compared to that of unskilled immigrants. This study further demonstrated that the expected social welfare costs of immigrants is the main economic concern that drives native's anti-immigrant sentiments, whereas anxiety about increasing job competition due to immigration is found not to be a significant predictor of support for individual immigrants. Further on this point, our findings illustrated that social welfare costs of immigrants are more pronounced in the cases of unskilled immigrants with family dependants. Public support for an unskilled immigrant accompanied by family members is found to be significantly lower when compared to his counterpart with no family dependants, as the social welfare cost of the former is expected to be higher than the latter.

With regards to the law-compliance attributes of immigrants, our findings revealed that while the economic prospects of immigrants have a considerable impact on the admissibility of individual immigrants, immigrants' levels of respect for law and order are even stronger predictors of public support for individual immigrants. Our findings illustrated that public support for non-law-abiding individual immigrants is profoundly lower when compared to their law-abiding counterparts. In order to disentangle the previously understudied relationship between various kinds of safety threat considerations and anti-immigrant sentiments, this study further employed experimental treatments manipulating the type and domain of safety threats posed by immigrants. Our results demonstrated that public support for individual immigrants is sensitive to the domain and type of safety threats that individual immigrants pose. Results elucidated that considerations about safety, both at the collective level, and to a larger extent at the individual level, are crucial in explaining public support for individual immigrants. Previous research investigating the impact of domain on safety threat perceptions and their consequent impact on immigration attitudes often utilized observational survey data, and suggested that safety threats at the individual level are not significant predictors of anti-immigrant sentiments, whereas safety threats at the collective level have only a limited impact on immigration attitudes (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007). However, by utilizing experimental data and providing the much-needed direct evidence, this study clearly illustrated that crimes against individuals constitute the principal safety concern that drives native's anti-immigrant sentiments,

whereas concerns about criminal offenses against the public also affect the levels of public support for individual immigrants, but to a lesser extent.

Regarding the relationship between cultural threat perceptions and immigration attitudes, our findings illustrated that cultural attributes registered by country of origin and skin complexion affect the acceptance or rejection rates of individual immigrants to a much lesser extent than the economic prospects and law-compliance levels of individual immigrants. Although a thrust of previous research examining attitudes towards immigrant groups documented that cultural threats are the principal driving force behind immigration-related attitudes (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Schneider, 2008; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004), our findings are in line with earlier studies on individual immigrants documenting that economic considerations plays a greater role than cultural considerations in shaping natives' evaluations of immigrants on an individual basis (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012; Harell, Soroka, Iyengar, & Valentino, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2013). Comparison of our findings on attitudes towards individual immigrants with those of earlier studies on attitudes towards immigrant groups hints that natives prioritise considerations over economic, safety and cultural threats in different ways when they are evaluating individual immigrants and immigrants groups. However, the experimental design of this study did not allow us to experimentally test the differences between the evaluations of individual immigrants and immigrant groups, therefore we acknowledge the need for further research employing further experimental manipulations. Further on cultural attributes of immigrants, this study demonstrated that ethnic hierarchies in the Dutch society that were previously documented by Hagendoorn (1995) have been persistent over the last two decades, and the Muslim immigrants are rank ordered as the least preferred group of immigrants followed by their Hispanic and Western counterparts, respectively. By following up on the earlier studies on ethnic hierarchies, this study further elucidated that ethnic hierarchies are highly persistent social structures.

In this thesis some seemingly conflicting findings came forward regarding the punitive attitudes towards immigrant defendants. This study investigated the punitive attitudes towards immigrant and native defendants in an explorative way, and inspected whether natives' punitive attitudes towards immigrant and native defendants are contingent upon the type and the domain of the criminal offenses. Our findings revealed that the domain of criminal offense plays a significant role in shaping punitive attitudes towards immigrant and native defendants, yet, contrary to our expectations, we found that punitive attitudes towards immigrants are more lenient in cases of public offenses. For offenses against individuals, however, we found that natives are willing to punish immigrant defendants equally severely as their native counterparts. In the light of these findings on punitive attitudes, we speculated that attributing criminality to out-groups

might have an identity-reinforcing function, and hence, offenses committed by native defendants might cause higher levels of cognitive dissonance and excite harsher punitive attitudes. However, we further acknowledge the need for further research in order to disentangle the relationship between the domain of criminal offense and the attitudes towards native and immigrant defendants.

An important strength of this study is that it affords an elaborate understanding of how cultural, economic and safety threat perceptions affect the levels of support for individual immigrants by providing much-needed direct evidence derived from survey experiments. This study further broadened the scope of existing research on immigration attitudes by offering new avenues for research on the impact of various safety threats on immigration attitudes. As such, this thesis contributed to the present body of knowledge on the relationship between threat perceptions and anti-immigrant sentiments.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study contributed to the political attitudes and immigration attitudes research literatures by shedding light on the micro-level attitude change patterns and by providing an elaborate account of the impact of various threat perceptions on immigration attitudes. However, some limitations of this thesis also need to be acknowledged. In this section we will address the limitations of this study which will inform suggestions for future research directions.

To start with, the empirical domain of this study is mainly restricted to the Netherlands. While we evaluate this restriction as substantively not important for the study of micro-level attitude change patterns since the methods and –most likely– the results too can be generalized to other settings, utilization of a research design restricted to a single country analysis might constitute a crucial limitation for the study of immigration attitudes. Survey experiments are increasingly utilized in the field of immigration attitudes research, however, these experimental studies often focus on immigration attitudes in a single country, and comparative experimental research designs are far more scarce. Addressing this gap, future research efforts can enhance our understanding of immigration attitudes by adopting a meta-analysis approach for analysing the existing experimental studies by coding the experimental treatments and the population characteristics in a standard format, and charting and explaining the commonalities and differences between immigration attitudes in various political settings.

Furthermore, this thesis afforded an elaborate account of various threat perceptions in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments, and our findings pointed at the increasing relevance of anxiety over safety in framing immigration debate at the public level. Yet, the empirical

basis of the immigration attitudes studies included in this thesis had been restricted to the time period between October 2010 and January 2013, and hence, findings of this thesis cannot account for the possible changes in immigration attitudes that might have taken place in the face of recent Syrian refugee crisis. Although we have plausible reasons to suspect that the securitization of immigration will continue to dominate public discourse as evinced by the continued emphasis on the safety threats posed by the immigrants in the political discourses of various anti-immigrant parties in Europe, future research should follow up on the impact of concerns over safety, economic and cultural threats in order to chart and explain how the immigration attitudes are affected by the Syrian refugee crises, and whether the prioritisation of these concerns have been altered by the most recent socio-economic and political developments.

Lastly, this thesis investigated the trends in political trust across political sophistication groups and pointed at a growing gap between the political trust levels of highly and less sophisticated individuals, however, the time period covered by the current study was relatively short for a trend analysis. Therefore, future research should try to validate our findings by utilizing data covering an adequately larger time span for testing the growing gap argument presented in this thesis.

7.4 Implications for Political Attitudes Research and Practice

In this section, the implications of the research findings of this thesis will be discussed under three main headings. We will first address the implications of this study for the practice of the political attitudes and public opinion research that utilize observational survey data. Next, we will move to the discussion of the use of survey experiments in political attitudes research, and the section will conclude by contextualizing and interpreting the research findings on political attitudes in a rapidly changing European political landscape.

7.4.1 Analytical Strategies: Taking Measurement Seriously

In public opinion research in general, and in political attitudes research in particular, it is crucial that the measures employed in the study measure what they are actually intending intended to measure and the scores on these measures do not change in repeated occasions of measurement unless there is a genuine attitude change has taken place. However, these two conditions are not always easily achieved and indeed they can never be achieved at a perfection level. These problems of validity and reliability threaten the robustness of research findings as they lead to biased estimates of the trends in and the relationships between attitudes of interest. Theoretically, however, it is possible to correct for measurement errors and account for validity problems provided that the

underlying pattern regarding when, how and to what extent our measures are erroneous is known. Therefore, this thesis aimed at investigating the measurement characteristics of survey measures and how they differ across political sophistication groups. Findings of this study elucidated that measurement characteristics of attitudinal measures differ across highly and less sophisticated individuals. Our findings demonstrated that highly and less sophisticated individuals significantly differ in their levels of susceptibility to measurement errors and in the extent that they update their attitudes in the light of new information.

Guided by the findings of this thesis, we inform the importance of employing appropriate analytical strategies for attaining robust findings in the field of the political attitudes research in particular and the public opinion research in general when utilizing observational survey data. As our findings elucidated trends in and relationships between attitudes are easily overestimated when the measurement characteristics of survey measures are neglected, and hence, we strongly recommend researchers to employ statistical models that can account for differences in the levels of susceptibility measurement errors and attitude stability across political sophistication groups. We further provide answers for the practical questions of ‘which statistical methods need to be utilized’, ‘when they need to be utilized’, and ‘how need to be utilized’.

Our findings elucidates that taking measurement characteristics into account becomes especially important when making over-time and across group comparisons. This study demonstrated that although observational survey and cross-sectional time series data provide researchers with valuable information for the study of trends in political attitudes, employment of standard batteries of survey questions and repeated measures of attitude measures cannot ensure comparability of political trust construct over time and across political sophistication groups. Therefore, we underline that researchers should pay attention to measurement invariance, especially when dealing with longitudinal data covering larger time intervals and with diverse populations, in order to ensure that the attitudes of interest have equivalent meaning, and hence, can be meaningfully compared over time and across populations.

This study further illustrated that commonly applied strategies of using composite score models for dealing with attitude constructs with multiple indicators can lead to biased estimates. Comparing latent means with the results of a sum score model, this study illustrated that the sum score model tends to produce biased estimates of the trends in and relationships between the attitudinal variables of interest especially when full scalar invariance condition has not met. Therefore, we strongly recommend practitioners of political attitude research to utilize composite score models, if and only if, the full scalar

invariance condition has been met, and to resort to structural equation models with latent variables when full scalar invariance condition cannot be attained.

In those cases when measurement characteristics of survey measures cannot be obtained with the data at hand, it can still be possible to correct for measurement errors provided that the underlying pattern regarding when, how and to what extent our measures are erroneous is known. As the current study illustrated, simplex models allow for estimating random error, stable trait and attitude change components of attitudes by utilizing panel data with minimum of three waves, and hence, shed light on the measurement characteristics of attitude measures across time and across groups. Therefore, the findings of this study and of similar studies investigating the quality of survey measures across time and across populations can also be utilized for correcting measurement error when the data at hand does not allow for estimation of measurement characteristics²⁰.

7.4.2 Survey Experiments: Innovative Methods in Political Attitudes Research

Survey experiments open up new avenues for investigating political attitudes in a way that overcomes the shortcomings of observational survey research - such as social desirability effects and self-selection bias-, and provide researchers with complementary data that facilitate causal inference through random assignment of treatments. In this thesis, survey experiments with split ballot designs have been utilized for investigating the cognitive underpinnings of attitude change and uncertainty, as well for evaluating the causal impacts of various threat perceptions on immigration attitudes. The survey experiments that are conducted as parts of the *Panel Component of ESS* with subsets of respondents revealed that experimental data can supplement and facilitate the interpretation of observational survey data without seriously harming the inherent set up of the survey studies. This thesis demonstrated that the trade-off between the standardized batteries of survey questions and implementing survey experiments can be optimized by assigning a relatively small number of respondents to experimental studies, while at the same time implementing the standardized questionnaire with a larger group of respondents. Therefore, we further acknowledge need for accommodating survey experiments in large scale cross-sectional surveys in order to provide researchers with the opportunities to benefit from the advantages of the repeated measures of standardized questions as well as the experimental data that would facilitate and complement the observational data.

7.4.3 Political Attitudes in a Rapidly Changing European Context

Due to the economic, political and social transformations that Europe has been facing

²⁰ For a discussion of the methods for correcting measurement errors during data analysis, please see (Saris & Gallhofer, 2007)

over the last few decades, European political landscape has been rapidly changing, and these changes are also reflected in the changing political attitudes of European publics. This thesis contributed to our understanding of the probable causes of increasing support anti-immigrants parties in almost all European countries by investigating the trends in citizen's beliefs in legitimacy of the political system and their attitudes towards immigrants.

This thesis investigated how the individual characteristics of immigrants registered by their economic prospects, levels of respect for law and order, as well as their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, affect levels of citizens' support for individual immigrants. As highlighted by Aalberg, Iyengar and Messing (2012), examination of the impact of individual cues on natives' evaluations of individual immigrants have significant practical implications as the 'individual immigrant' represents an important attitude object that shapes public opinion towards immigrants and immigration policies. Accordingly, natives are likely to form and update their attitudes towards immigrants on the basis of the news coverage on immigrants that often takes the form of personalised stories on individual immigrants, and on the basis of their increasing personal encounters with individual immigrants. Therefore, we assert that studying attitudes towards individual immigrants can inform strategies for decreasing the tensions between the native and immigrant populations. On the basis of findings of this thesis, we acknowledge the existence of valuable opportunities for increasing public support for immigrants by undertaking conscious efforts of utilizing personalised stories of immigrants for raising public awareness on law-abidingness and economic contributions of immigrants.

This thesis further elucidated that highly and less sophisticated citizens' differ in their levels of confidence in political institutions. Our findings demonstrated that the less sophisticated citizens displayed lower levels of trust in democratic institutions, and hence, lent support for the 'diploma democracy' argument asserting that politically less sophisticated citizens are becoming increasingly alienated from politics. Taken together with our findings pointing at agitated anti-immigrant attitudes in the general public, we speculate that eroding legitimacy of the political system will continue to provide fertile grounds for right-wing and anti-immigrant parties to preserve their electoral base.

7.5 Conclusion

This thesis explored political attitudes from a both methodological and substantive standpoint. This study investigated the measurement characteristics of survey measures across political sophistication groups, and utilized the methodological insights of this study for investigating more substantive research questions on attitudes towards political institutions and the democratic regime. Furthermore, this study utilized innovative survey

experiments for examining the underpinnings of attitudes towards immigrants, and provided an encompassing account of the role of various threat considerations in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments. All in all, this thesis contributed to existing knowledge on the study of political attitudes, and equally importantly to the public opinion research literature by providing the methodological insights that would be applicable to attitudes research in general.

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APPENDIX A. Questions for Vignette Experiment I

Experimental Group 1

Q1. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to receive unemployment benefits in the Netherlands and requests his residence permit to be extended. He is also known as a person who is complying with laws.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to look for a new job in the Netherlands and requests his residence permit to be extended. He is known as a person who is not always complying with laws. Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Experimental Group 2

Q1. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to look for a new job in the Netherlands and requests his residence permit to be extended. He is also known as a person who is complying with laws.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to start his own business in the financial service sector in the Netherlands and he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is known as a person who is not always complying with laws.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Experimental Group 3

Q1. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to start his own business in the financial service sector in the Netherlands and he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is also known as a person who is complying with laws.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2. The contract of an individual who has been working in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he wants to receive unemployment benefits in the Netherlands and requests his residence permit to be extended. He is known as a person who is not always complying with laws.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

APPENDIX B. Questions for Vignette Experiment II

Experimental Group 1

Q1a. The residence permit of an individual who has been living in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he is recently admitted for a job and he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is 30 years-old and single. During his stay in the Netherlands, he has once been accused of drunk driving yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q1b. Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely		Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

Q2a. The residence permit of another individual who has been living in the Netherlands for three years is also going to expire soon. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is 28 years-old and single. During his stay in the Netherlands, he has once been accused of house squatting yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2b. Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely	Don't know	
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

Experimental Group 2

Q1a. The residence permit of an individual who has been living in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he is recently admitted for a job and he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is 30 years-old and single. During his stay in the Netherlands, he has once been accused of making an exaggerated insurance claim yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q1b. Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely	Don't know	
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

Q2a. The residence permit of another individual who has been living in the Netherlands for three years is also going to expire soon. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is 28 years-old and single. During his stay in the Netherlands, he has once been accused of slight bodily assault yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2b. Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10 88

Experimental Group 3

Q1. A Dutch person, who is 30 years-old and single, has recently been accused of drunk driving yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10 88

Q2. Another Dutch person, who is 28 years-old and single, has recently been accused of house squatting yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all									Very severely	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10 88

Experimental Group 4

Q1. The residence permit of an individual who has been living in the Netherlands for two years is going to expire in two months. He makes an application to the Dutch authorities stating that he is recently admitted for a job and he would like his residence permit to be extended. He is 30 years-old and single. During his stay in the Netherlands, he has not been accused of any law-breaking activities.

Please indicate whether you would like to grant residence permit to the individual described above?

Yes	1
No	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2. A Dutch person, who is 30 years-old and single, has recently been accused of making an exaggerated insurance claim yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all										Very severely	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

Q3. Another Dutch person, who is 28 years-old and single, has recently been accused of slight bodily assault yet charges against him have been dropped in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Assuming that this person has actually committed the above mentioned offence, how severely do you think he should be punished?

Not severely at all										Very severely	Don't know
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

APPENDIX C. Vignettes Texts Utilized for the Vignette Experiment III

United States

Low Status Mexican Immigrant with Family Dependents:

Roberto Sanchez is a native of Mexico. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a construction worker. He would like to bring his young family to live with him and for them to become American citizens. He is 30 years old and live in Mexico City. Roberto and his wife have two sons and one daughter. Roberto is a graduate of a vocational high school in Mexico City. After graduating, he has held various part-time jobs including construction worker, taxi driver, and house painter. He is learning English.

High Status Mexican Immigrant with Family Dependents:

Roberto Sanchez is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a computer programmer. He would like to bring his young family to live with him and for them to become American citizens. He is 30 years old and live in Kuwait City. Roberto and his wife have two sons and one daughter. Roberto completed his undergraduate degree in computer science at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. After graduating, he has worked at Polywell Computers as a quality assurance technician. He recently enrolled in an online language institute to learn English.

Low Status Kuwaiti Immigrant with Family Dependents:

Rashid Siddiqui is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a construction worker. He would like to bring his young family to live with him and for them to become American citizens. He is 30 years old and live in Kuwait City. Rashid and his wife have two sons and one daughter. Rashid is a graduate of Khalifa School – a vocational high school in Kuwait City. After graduating, he has held various part-time jobs including construction worker, taxi driver, and house painter. He is learning English.

High Status Kuwaiti Immigrant with Family Dependents:

Rashid Siddiqui is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a computer programmer. He would like to bring his young family to live with him and for them to become American citizens. He is 30 years old and live in Kuwait City. His father is in poor health and is no longer able to work. Rashid and his wife have two sons and one daughter. Rashid completed his undergraduate degree in computer science

at the Kuwait University. After graduating, he has worked at Polywell Computers as a quality assurance technician. He recently enrolled in an online language institute to learn English.

Low Status Mexican Immigrant with No Family Dependents:

Roberto Sanchez is a native of Mexico. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a construction worker. Eventually, he would like to settle in United States and become an American citizen. He is 30 years old and lives in Mexico City. His father is in poor health and is no longer able to work. Roberto helps pay for his parents' living expenses and for the education of his two younger brothers and one sister. Roberto is a graduate of a vocational high school in Mexico City. After graduating, he has held various part-time jobs including construction worker, taxi driver, and house painter. He is learning English.

High Status Mexican Immigrant with No Family Dependents:

Roberto Sanchez is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a computer programmer. Eventually, he would like to settle in United States and become an American citizen. He is 30 years old and lives in Kuwait City. His father is in poor health and is no longer able to work. Roberto helps pay for his parents' living expenses and for the education of his two younger brothers and one sister. Roberto completed his undergraduate degree in computer science at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. After graduating, he has worked at Polywell Computers as a quality assurance technician. He recently enrolled in an online language institute to learn English.

Low Status Kuwaiti Immigrant with No Family Dependents:

Rashid Siddiqui is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a construction worker. Eventually, he would like to settle in United States and become an American citizen. He is 30 years old and lives in Kuwait City. His father is in poor health and is no longer able to work. Rashid helps pay for his parents' living expenses and for the education of his two younger brothers and one sister. Rashid is a graduate of Khalifa School – a vocational high school in Kuwait City. After graduating, he has held various part-time jobs including construction worker, taxi driver, and house painter. He is learning English.

High Status Kuwaiti Immigrant with No Family Dependents:

Rashid Siddiqui is a native of Kuwait. He wants to come to United States and find a job as a computer programmer. Eventually, he would like to settle in United States and become

an American citizen. He is 30 years old and lives in Kuwait City. His father is in poor health and is no longer able to work. Rashid helps pay for his parents' living expenses and for the education of his two younger brothers and one sister. Rashid completed his undergraduate degree in computer science at the Kuwait University. After graduating, he has worked at Polywell Computers as a quality assurance technician. He recently enrolled in an online language institute to learn English.

The Netherlands

Low Status Canadian Immigrant:

Éric Bélanger is a 28 year-old native of Montreal, Canada. He completed secondary education (until he was 16 years old) in 1997. Since then he has worked as a waiter in various Montreal restaurants. Coming from French speaking part of Canada, he is learning English. He would like to work as a waiter in a Dutch restaurant.

High Status Canadian Immigrant:

Éric Bélanger is a 28 year-old native of Montreal, Canada. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry at the University of Montreal and has a graduate degree in engineering. Coming from French speaking part of Canada, he is fluent in English. He would like to work in the Dutch petrochemical industry.

Low Status Colombian Immigrant:

Manuel Gaviria is a 28 year-old native of Medellin, Colombia. He completed secondary education (until he was 16 years old) in 1997. Since then he has worked as a waiter in various Medellin restaurants. Coming from Spanish speaking Colombia, he is learning English. He would like to work as a waiter in a Dutch restaurant.

High Status Colombian Immigrant:

Manuel Gaviria is a 28 year-old native of Medellin, Colombia. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry at the University of Medellin and has a graduate degree in engineering. Coming from Spanish speaking Colombia, he is fluent in English. He would like to work in the Dutch petrochemical industry.

Low Status Pakistani Immigrant:

Abdul Umar is a 28 year-old native of Benghazi, Libya. He completed secondary education (until he was 16 years old) in 1997. Since then he has worked as a waiter in various

Benghazi restaurants. Coming from Arabic speaking Libya, he is learning English. He would like to work as a waiter in a Dutch restaurant.

High Status Pakistani Immigrant:

Yousaf Ali Khan is a 28 year-old native of Karachi, Pakistan. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry at the University of Karachi and has a graduate degree in engineering. Coming from Urdu speaking Pakistan, he is fluent in English. He would like to work in the Dutch petrochemical industry.

Low Status Libyan Immigrant:

Yousaf Ali Khan is a 28 year-old native of Karachi, Pakistan. He completed secondary education (until he was 16 years old) in 1997. Since then he has worked as a waiter in various Karachi restaurants. Coming from Urdu speaking Pakistan, he is learning English. He would like to work as a waiter in a Dutch restaurant.

High Status Libyan Immigrant:

Abdul Umar is a 28 year-old native of Benghazi, Libya. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry at the University of Benghazi and has a graduate degree in engineering. Coming from Arabic speaking Libya, he is fluent in English. He would like to work in the Dutch petrochemical industry.

APPENDIX D. Morphed Images Utilized for the Vignette Experiment III

Mexican

Kuwaiti

Canadian

Colombian

Pakistani

Libyan

APPENDIX E. Questions Utilized for the Vignette Experiment III

Q1. Given what you know about [candidate], do you think his application for a work permit should be approved or rejected?

Approve	1
Reject	2
(Don't know)	8

Q2. If his application were approved, for how long should he be permitted to work?

Six months	1
1 year	2
2 years	3
Three years	4

Q3. Assume that [candidate] comes to [US/the Netherlands] on a work permit and then he decides to apply for [American/Dutch] citizenship. Do you think his citizenship application should be approved or rejected?

Approve	1
Reject	2
(Don't know)	8

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

In onderzoek met betrekking tot politieke attitudes zijn onderzoekers genoodzaakt om voor het bestuderen van inhoudelijke onderzoeksvragen een aantal methodologische keuzes te maken, en de bevindingen in hun onderzoek worden in belangrijke mate beïnvloed door de methodologische eigenschappen van de toegepaste enquêtes of bevragsmethodes en hun analytische strategieën. Dit proefschrift richt zich in de eerste plaats op het verkennen van mogelijkheden voor de verbetering van onderzoek naar politieke attitudes; dit middels toepassing van krachtige analytische strategieën waarmee patronen in attitudeverandering kunnen worden gezien, en onderscheid kan worden gemaakt tussen meetfouten en patronen, in de attitudes van individuele burgers ten opzichte van politieke instellingen en democratisch bestuur. In de tweede plaats is in het kader van dit proefschrift door middel van innovatieve, experimentele bevragsmethodes onderzoek verricht naar oorzaken en gevolgen van attitudes ten aanzien van immigratie. Daartoe worden in dit onderzoek hoofdzakelijk de gegevens van de Panelcomponent van de European Social Survey in Nederland (ESS-NL) gebruikt. Deze in vier rondes uitgevoerde panelstudie, bestaande uit een herhaalde kernmodule en aanvullende experimentele bevragsmethodes voor politieke attitudes, vormt de primaire basis van het empirische onderzoek voor dit proefschrift. Dit proefschrift voegt daarmee nieuwe inzichten toe aan de bestaande kennis op het gebied van onderzoek naar politieke attitudes. Tegelijkertijd, en minstens zo belangrijk, wordt een bijdrage geleverd aan opinieonderzoek, aangezien de methodologische bevindingen ook van toepassing zijn op attitudeonderzoek in het algemeen.

Attitudestabiliteit, attitudeverandering en meetfouten

Op het gebied van opinieonderzoek is een centrale vraag steeds of alleen ingewijden of kenners op het gebied van politiek, samenhangende en betekenisvolle politieke attitudes kunnen hebben. De bekende stelling over de ‘non-attitudes van het massapubliek’, met zijn wat onaangename en ook ingrijpende gevolgen voor normatieve theorieën met betrekking tot democratie, blijft literatuur genereren. Ook recente attitudemodellen zien politieke deskundigheid als een belangrijk aspect in de verklaring van de verdeling van politieke attitudes onder de algemene bevolking, en zien een onderscheid tussen politieke deskundigheidsniveaus wat betreft de verdeling van attitudes binnen de groep, zoals zou blijken uit verschillen in de mate van attitudestabiliteit en gevoeligheid voor meetfouten tussen de politieke deskundigheidsgroepen (Zaller, 1992). Het onderhavige onderzoek levert een bijdrage aan dit debat door in te gaan op de patronen voor attitudeveranderingen en attitudeonzekerheid waarin de politieke deskundigheidsgroepen zich van elkaar onderscheiden. Daarvoor wordt een simplexanalyse uitgevoerd van paneldata uit vier

rondes naast een (in)consistentie-experiment met een cognitieve interviewbenadering. De methodologische inzichten van het onderzoek zijn vervolgens gebruikt in de inhoudelijke onderzoeksvragen over de legitimiteit van het politieke bestuur, waarbij de verschillende methodologische eigenschappen per deskundigheidsgroep in aanmerking worden genomen.

De onderzoeksresultaten van de simplexanalyse van de panelgegevens uit vier rondes en de inzichten verkregen uit het (in)consistentie-experiment brengen aan het licht dat, hoewel zeer deskundige en minder deskundige individuen in vergelijkbare mate inconsistente responsen vertonen, de waargenomen responsinconsistentie bij deze twee deskundigheidsgroepen in hoofdzaak wordt veroorzaakt door verschillende mechanismen. Deze studie toont aan dat de responsinconsistentie onder de minder deskundigen eerder een gevolg is van meetfouten, en dus een signaal is van attitude-onzekerheid, terwijl responsinconsistentie die bij politiek zeer deskundigen wordt waargenomen naar alle waarschijnlijkheid het gevolg is van echte attitudeverandering. Hoewel de verschillen tussen politieke deskundigheidsgroepen niet als groot genoeg worden beschouwd om de stelling van ‘non-attitudes van het massapubliek’ te rechtvaardigen, wekken deze evenwel de indruk dat het over het hoofd zien van verschillende methodologische eigenschappen van politieke attitudes voor hoge en lage politieke deskundigheidsgroepen kan leiden tot vertekende inschattingen van patronen van attitudeverandering onder de algemene bevolking. Dit zou kunnen leiden tot twijfels aan de onderzoeksresultaten met betrekking tot de relaties tussen de verschillende metingen van attitudes..

Voortbouwend op dit punt gaat dit proefschrift ook in op de praktische implicaties van onze onderzoeksresultaten wat betreft de patronen voor attitudeverandering en attitudeonzekerheid tussen en in de verschillende politieke deskundigheidsgroepen voor de praktijk van het onderzoek naar politiek vertrouwen. Bij deze studie wordt ook de stelling van de ‘diplomademocratie’ betrokken in een onderzoek naar de vraag of de waargenomen verschillen in mate van politiek vertrouwen onder groepen van hoge en lage mate van deskundigheid reëel zijn, of slechts methodologische artefacten die voortkomen uit het over het hoofd zien van methodologische eigenschappen van het construct ‘politiiek vertrouwen’. Uit onze bevindingen blijkt dat er een positieve relatie bestaat tussen politieke deskundigheid en politiek vertrouwen, zoals ook uit eerdere studies naar voren is gekomen, en ze sluiten daarin aan bij de stelling van de ‘diplomademocratie’, die inhoudt dat politiek minder deskundige burgers steeds meer vervreemd raken van de politiek. Uit onze resultaten komt echter ook naar voren dat de relatie tussen politiek vertrouwen en deskundigheid wordt overschat als de verschillende methodologische eigenschappen van het construct ‘politiiek vertrouwen’ onder de verschillende deskundigheidsgroepen niet verklaard worden met behulp van de statistische modellen die in de analyse zijn gebruikt. In sterk contrast met wat uit eerder onderzoek naar voren kwam, laat deze studie dan

ook zien dat de verschillen in mate van politiek vertrouwen tussen zeer deskundige en minder deskundige individuen gering zijn.

Over het geheel genomen maakt dit onderzoek op microniveau patronen van politieke attitudeverandering inzichtelijk door speciale aandacht te besteden aan verschillen per mate van politieke deskundigheid. Op die manier laat deze studie zien dat de methodologische eigenschappen van politieke attitudes van zeer deskundige en minder deskundige individuen significant verschillen, en dat verwaarlozing van deze verschillen bij de bepaling van methodologische eigenschappen voor bevraging van politieke deskundigheidsgroepen leidt tot vertekende inschatting van de trends in en de relaties tussen politieke attitudes.

Attitudes ten aanzien van immigranten en voorkeuren betreft het immigratiebeleid

Het bestuderen van attitudes ten aanzien van immigratie heeft verstrekkende gevolgen voor de beeldsvorming in alle Europese landen. Europa wordt immers geconfronteerd met een toenemend aantal interne en externe immigranten, en er is een groeiende behoefte aan onderzoek naar opinies ten aanzien van immigranten om zo een goed geïnformeerd immigratiebeleid tot stand te kunnen brengen. Daarom is het tweede doel van dit proefschrift grondig onderzoek te doen naar de causale mechanismen die leiden tot het ontstaan van anti-immigrantengevoelens onder de algemene bevolking.

Daartoe wordt in dit onderzoek door middel van een aantal vignetexperimenten onderzocht in hoeverre de perceptie van economische en culturele bedreiging en veiligheidsrisico's van invloed zijn op het draagvlak voor individuele immigranten. Onze onderzoeksresultaten laten zien dat de steun voor individuele immigranten in grote mate afhankelijk is van de economische vooruitzichten van de immigranten en hun naleving van de wet. Opvattingen over culturele dreiging zijn ook van invloed op het draagvlak voor individuele immigranten, maar in veel mindere mate. Deze studie toont aan dat op economisch gebied het vooral de verwachte kosten voor het sociaal welzijn van immigranten zijn waardoor de anti-immigrantengevoelens van autochtonen aangewakkerd worden. De angst voor toenemende concurrentie op de arbeidsmarkt als gevolg van immigratie bleek geen significante voorspeller van draagvlak voor individuele immigranten te zijn. Wat betreft het naleven van de wet door immigranten laten onze onderzoeksresultaten zien dat het publieke draagvlak voor niet-gezagsgetrouwe individuele immigranten veel kleiner is dan voor gezagsgetrouwe immigranten, en dat op het gebied van veiligheid de angst voor misdaden tegen individuele personen de voornaamste reden voor bezorgdheid is en leidt tot versterking van anti-immigrantengevoelens. Wat betreft de relatie tussen de perceptie van culturele bedreiging en attitudes ten aanzien van immigratie wordt in deze

studie aangetoond dat de etnische hiërarchieën in de Nederlandse samenleving die eerder al in andere studies zijn beschreven, in de afgelopen twee decennia zijn blijven bestaan, waarbij islamitische immigranten als de minst geprefereerde groep worden gevolgd door respectievelijk Latijns-Amerikaanse en westerse immigranten.

Een belangrijke verdienste van dit onderzoek is dat het heeft geleid tot een gedetailleerd inzicht in de manier waarop het ervaren van economische en culturele bedreiging en veiligheidsrisico's van invloed is op het draagvlak voor individuele immigranten, door het leveren van het zo essentiële directe bewijs middels bevragingsexperimenten. Dankzij deze studie wordt de reikwijdte van bestaand onderzoek over attitudes ten aanzien van immigratie verder verbreed door het bieden van nieuwe richtingen voor onderzoek naar de invloed van verschillende bedreigingen van de veiligheid op immigratieattitudes. Als zodanig draagt dit proefschrift bij aan de huidige kennis over de relatie tussen de perceptie van dreiging en anti-immigrantensentimenten.

Implicaties voor onderzoek naar politieke attitudes

Vanuit de bevindingen in dit proefschrift wijzen wij op het belang van het gebruik van de juiste analytische strategieën voor het behalen van overtuigende resultaten op het gebied van het onderzoek naar politieke attitudes in het bijzonder, en van opinieonderzoek in het algemeen, wanneer daarbij gebruik wordt gemaakt van observationele enquêtegegevens. Zoals uit onze bevindingen naar voren is gekomen, worden trends in en relaties tussen attitudes gemakkelijk overdreven wanneer de methodologische eigenschappen van bevragingsmethodes onvoldoende in aanmerking worden genomen. Om die reden raden wij onderzoekers aan statistische modellen te gebruiken waarmee verschillen in de mate van gevoeligheid voor meetfouten en in attitudestabiliteit onder politieke deskundigheidsgroepen kunnen worden verklaard.

Met dit proefschrift wordt tevens aangetoond dat de wisselwerking tussen gestandaardiseerde reeksen vragenlijsten en het uitvoeren van enquête-experimenten kan worden geoptimaliseerd door te werken met experimentele studies met een relatief klein aantal respondenten, en gelijktijdig de gestandaardiseerde vragenlijst af te nemen bij een grotere groep respondenten. Daarom willen wij nogmaals wijzen op de behoefte aan het realiseren van bevragingsexperimenten binnen grootschalige cross-sectionele surveys, om onderzoekers op die manier de mogelijkheid te bieden niet alleen met herhaalde metingen met gestandaardiseerde vragen te werken, maar ook met experimentele data die een verrijking van en een aanvulling op de observationele data kan zijn.